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THE REFORMED AND CELIBATE PASTOR: RICHARD
BAXTER'S ARGUMENT FOR CLERICAL CELIBACY

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE REFORMED AND CELIBATE PASTOR: RICHARD
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For the glory of God

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BLM* Richard Baxter, *A breviare of the life of Margaret* (1681).
- CCRB* N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, eds., *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols. (1991).
- CD* Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience*, 2nd ed. (1678).
- CR* Richard Baxter, *Confirmation and restauration the necessary means of reformation, and reconciliation; for the healing of the corruptions and divisions of the churches* (1658).
- D.W.L.* Dr. Williams's Library.
- FD* Richard Baxter, *Five disputations of church-government and worship* (1659).
- HA* Richard Baxter, *Humble advice: or The heads of those things which were offered to many Honourable Members of Parliament by Mr Richard Baxter* (1655).
- PNT* Richard Baxter, *A paraphrase on the New Testament with notes, doctrinal and practical* (1685)
- PF* Richard Baxter, *Poetical fragments heart-employment with God and it self*, 2nd ed. (1689).
- RB* Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Mathew Sylvester (1696).
- RP* Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor*, 2nd ed. (1657)

PREFACE

Many individuals have been an invaluable aid in the production of this work. First, I owe an immense debt to my parents for their love, support, and encouragement. I would not have had the opportunity to complete a PhD at Southern without them. I would also like to thank all the baristas of Vint Coffee for providing not only much needed coffee to aid in the research and writing, but also a delightful atmosphere in which to work. Ben Ruppert and Emilee Smith, the interlibrary loan employees of Boyce Library, worked diligently to procure all the dissertations and theses that I needed. Academically, I owe an immense debt to several individuals. Dr. Joel Beeke was kind enough to read one of my early conference papers on Puritan marriage and then offer to publish it as an article in his school's academic journal. Dr. Michael Haykin displayed a keen interest for the project in its beginning stages and quickly volunteered to serve on the committee. Dr. Timothy K. Beougher's help was appreciated as I developed the prospectus and sought to understand Baxter as a pastor and evangelist. I owe an immense debt to the scholarship and friendship of another Baxter expert, Dr. Tim Cooper. He influenced this project not only through his publications, but also many helpful conversations that clarified my thoughts and urged me to explore areas concerning Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton that I would never have considered significant. Without his aid, this project would have missed much of the influence that Baxter's personality and life experiences exerted upon his theology. Finally, I could not imagine a better person than Dr. David Puckett to serve as my *doktorvater*. From the very beginning of the project he encouraged me by noting not only its academic value but also its great benefit for the church in thinking through the issues of marriage, family, and singleness. His careful attention to detail greatly improved the language and argument of each chapter, and like John Calvin,

he has always urged me to aim for “lucid brevity” as a writer. I also am grateful that he allowed me to finish my degree under him after his retirement; it is a great honor to be his final doctoral student and close out his long and dedicated career training pastors and missionaries.

Seth D. Osborne

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CHAPTER 1
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

The Mixed Legacy of Richard Baxter

Richard Baxter's (1615-91)¹ life and theology have been a catalyst for both pious imitation and withering criticism. His fourteen year pastoral ministry at Kidderminster (1647-61) was remarkable in terms of the spiritual revival which came to a people that had seen little effect from the Reformation.² His tenure there also witnessed his pioneering method of personally catechizing every parishioner, which J.I Packer judged to be his "main contribution to the development of Puritan ideals for the ministry."³ Furthermore, the influence and sheer size of his literary corpus is "incalculable"; from the early 1650s, his books "enjoyed greater sales than those of any other English writer."⁴ Reflecting on his life of assiduous labor, Packer extolled Baxter as "the most outstanding pastor, evangelist, and writer on practical and devotional themes

¹Unless otherwise noted, all dates given in this study refer to the Common Era (CE).

²At the conclusion of his parish ministry, Baxter reflected that when he first arrived, "There was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away [left Kidderminster] there were some streets where there was not past one family in the side of a street that did not do so" (Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Mathew Sylvester [London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, J. Dunton, 1696], bk. 1, pt. 1, 84 §136).

³J. I. Packer, introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*, by Richard Baxter, ed. William Brown (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2007), 13.

⁴N. H. Keeble made this assertion based upon Baxter's preserved letters, in which he was consulted by men of wide ranging stature and conviction on matters spanning from private vexations to national church problems (N. H. Keeble, introduction to *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, abridged by J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, ed. N. H. Keeble [London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1931; repr., Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974], xiv). For a complete listing of the works of Richard Baxter, including those published posthumously, see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), 131-36.

that Puritanism produced.”⁵ Yet many of his theological works also produced immense controversy almost immediately from the time of their printing.⁶ His eclectic soteriology—commonly portrayed as an attempt to find a middle path between Calvinism and Arminianism—has drawn the most substantial criticism out of all his doctrines.⁷ However, another controversial issue that has been relatively neglected is his vigorous advocacy for clerical celibacy, in contrast to the Reformers’ strong defense of clerical marriage.⁸ Baxter never made a universal declaration forbidding pastors from marrying if they could not remain chaste in the single state.⁹ Nevertheless, his outspoken support for celibacy as the ideal state for clergymen has caused some historians to label him “the late seventeenth century scourge of matrimony”¹⁰ or a “medieval ascetic” who expressed a

⁵Packer, introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*, 9. However, J. William Black asserted that Packer and other historians have erred somewhat in seeing Baxter as the paragon of Puritan pastoral ministry (J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004], 5-13). Black’s views will be discussed more fully in chap. 3.

⁶Writing even at the turn of twentieth century, Stoughton asserted that “his opinions have been a battle ground for critics ever since he left the world” (John Stoughton, *From the Opening of the Long Parliament to 1850, History of Religion in England*, vol. 4, 4th ed. [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901], 381). The last hundred years of scholarship over Baxter has substantiated this claim even further.

⁷William Orme, for instance, gave the following comment which typified the attitudes of many towards Baxter’s soteriology throughout the centuries: “He was inimical to all the existing systems of doctrine and discipline then contended for, or ever before known in the world; while he did not present any precisely defined system as his own. He opposed Calvinism; he opposed Arminianism” (Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, ed. William Orme, vol. 1 [London: J. Duncan, 1830], 481-82). To sum up his opinion, Orme declared, “Baxter was probably such an Arminian as Richard Watson; and as much a Calvinist as the late Dr. Edward Williams” (ibid., 484).

⁸For a short study of how the first Reformers approached this relationship between marriage and ministry, see Steven Ozment, “Marriage and Ministry in the Protestant Churches,” in *Celibacy in the Church*, eds. William Bassett and Peter Huizing, Religion in the Seventies 78 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

⁹Baxter declared, “I confess I would not have men lie too long under endangering strong temptations to incontinency; lest they wound themselves and their profession by their falls” (Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor shewing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechizing: with an open confession of our too open sins, prepared for a day of humiliation kept at Worcester, Decemb. 4, 1655 by the ministers of that county, who subscribed the agreement for catechizing and personal instruction, at their entrance upon that work*, 2nd ed. [London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657], 239). See also Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience directing Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1678), pt. 2, 9, §41.

¹⁰Levin L. Schucking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from the Literary Sources*, trans.

“fundamental hostility towards marriage.”¹¹ Baxter’s place among the Puritans as the sole advocate of clerical celibacy contributes even more to his reputation as one of the most elusive English theologians. However, additional reasons invite further investigation.

Importance of the Study

The Protestant Reformers did not deem the issue of clerical celibacy to be a doctrinal quibble in comparison to weightier soteriological controversies such as justification by faith. Rather, they understood the exaltation of celibacy, but especially when connected with its imposition on the clergy, as woven into many of the key doctrinal issues disputed during the Reformation. Early English Protestants targeted clerical celibacy for promoting a false, unscriptural faith based on works righteousness. Consequently their attacks on the institution amounted to a direct attempt to bridge the secular and sacred spheres erected in part by the Roman Catholic prohibition against clerical marriage.¹² Furthermore, across the breadth of Reformation Europe, the decision of clergy and laity to marry constituted an “important act of solidarity with the new Protestant cause,” since the acts amounted to a deliberate breach of the governing decrees of canon law.¹³ Thus, it is vitally important to correctly understand Baxter’s promotion of

Brian Battershaw, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books 1970), 24.

¹¹Alan McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1840* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1986), 173.

¹²John K. Yost, “The Reformation Defense of Clerical Marriage in the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI,” *Church History* 50, no. 2 (June 1981):152-65. Yost’s brief treatment was one of the first to draw attention to the immense output of Protestant literature on clerical celibacy during the English Reformation and the corresponding importance of the issue for the Continental Reformation. Eric Josef Carlson qualified Yost’s argument by stating that the English Reformers did not promote marriage and prosecute the celibate ideal with the same verve as Continental Reformers did, nor did they meet with success as quickly in this endeavor (Eric Josef Carlson, “Marriage and the English Reformation” [PhD diss., Harvard University, 1987], 3, 7; Carlson, “Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation,” *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 1 [January 1992]: 1-31). However, Helen L. Parish has argued that Carlson erred by downplaying or ignoring the vigor with which clerical celibacy dominated Protestant polemics, the efforts Roman Catholics put forth to defend it and smear clerical marriage, and the literary involvement of many key Continental thinkers in the debate (Helen L. Parish, *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent, Policy and Practice* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000], 9-11).

¹³John Witte, “Anglican Marriage in the Making: Becon, Bullinger and Bucer,” in *The Contentious Triangle: Church, State and University Triangle*, eds. Ronald L. Peterson and Calvin Augustine Pater, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 51 (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University

clerical celibacy, since his convictions appeared to resurrect a number of the alleged errors that Protestants perceived to be part of the warp and woof of Roman Catholicism's exaltation of the single life.

Baxter's argument for a celibate ministry can also shed light on the Church of England's ambivalence toward celibacy. According to Richard Schlatter, by the time Baxter had risen to prominence in the 1650s, English Protestants had nearly extinguished the notion that celibacy possessed any intrinsically superior spiritual value over wedlock. "So far as marriage was concerned," Schlatter asserted, "the attack had succeeded in England; by 1660 the theory that virginity was especially virtuous was all but dead."¹⁴ Nevertheless, esteem for celibacy did not die so easily in England. Levin L. Schucking has pointed out that, far into the seventeenth century, the proverb that "marriage fills the earth, but virginity fills the heavens" still persisted to the point that William Secker felt compelled to retort in 1658 by exclaiming, "How the heavens be full if the earth be empty?"¹⁵ More recent scholarship has upheld Schucking's observation. Sarah Apetrei asserted that the spiritual value of virginity, though still contested, made a resurgence from 1660-c.1700 among certain Anglicans and religious radicals who desired a more disciplined spiritual life, modeled after the early church. According to her study, the mixed attitudes of English Protestants toward early Christian asceticism reflected their continued ambivalence toward the place of celibacy in Christian piety, even so many

Press, 1999), 242.

¹⁴Richard Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 11. Schlatter went on to say, "It was replaced by a belief in the positive and moral and religious values of marriage and family life" (ibid.).

¹⁵Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, 23; William Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger: or, The salve of divinity on the sore of humanity* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1658), 22-23. Charles H. George and Katherine H. George pointed to authors such as Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and John Cosin who continued to esteem celibacy higher than wedlock in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Charles H. George and Katherine H. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961], 266-67).

years after the English Reformation.¹⁶ Eamon Duffy came to similar conclusions in his study of England after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.¹⁷ B. W. Young observed that while the Church upheld the virtue of clerical marriage, it simultaneously has always exhibited an “ambiguity” toward celibacy, which betrayed the “inherent tensions” between its “Catholic and Protestant dimensions.”¹⁸ Even if English Protestants succeeded in eliminating the notion that celibacy inherently possessed a meritorious virtue, it was not the end of the issue. Charles H. and Katherine H. George have noted that authors began to switch the basis for preferring celibacy from “moral or spiritual” reasons to a “practical” appeals, based on the expediency and convenience it offered for serving God.¹⁹ The debate over celibacy’s value in the Church of England has historically been far more complex than one might think, and a more nuanced treatment of Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy could shed additional light.

Baxter’s personal actions contribute even more complexity to the importance of understanding his argument for clerical celibacy. Despite his discouragement of clerical marriage and his faithfulness to that conviction through fourteen years of ministry, he shocked London when he seemingly reversed his convictions by marrying Margaret Charlton.²⁰ The fact that he was forty-six at the time of marriage and Margaret

¹⁶Sarah Apetrei, “‘The Life of Angels’: Celibacy and Asceticism in Anglicanism, 1660-c.1700,” *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 13, no. 2 (2011): 247-74. See also her study of the revival of celibacy among “enthusiasts” and “some High Church Circles” (Sarah Apetrei, “Masculine Virgins: Celibacy and Gender in Late Stuart London,” in *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660-1760*, eds. Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith, 41-59 [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014; repr., New York: Routledge, 2016], 42, 50-58).

¹⁷Eamon Duffy, “Primitive Christianity Revived: Religious Renewal in Augustan England,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History 14 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 287-88.

¹⁸B. W. Young, “The Anglican Origins of Newman’s Celibacy,” *Church History* 65, no. 1 (March 1996): 15.

¹⁹George and George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation 1570-1640*, 267.

²⁰Baxter commented on the controversy this caused among the upper echelons of British society: “About this time also it was famed at the Court that I was married, which went as the matter of a most heinous Crime, which I never heard charged by them on any Man but on me. Bishop *Morley* divulged it with all the Odium he could possibly put upon it: telling them that once in Conference with him I said that Minister’s marriage is [*lawful, and but lawful*], as if I were not contradicting my self. And it every

was twenty-years his junior did nothing to lessen the scandal. The same bewilderment has been expressed by scholars such as Levin L. Schucking, Alan McFarlane, and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, who asserted that Baxter’s decision to marry appeared to contradict his argument for clerical celibacy.²¹ If his decision to marry seemed enigmatic, then the tribute he wrote to her (the *Breviate*) “*under the power of melting Grief*” seems no less so.²² On the one hand, he recounted his wife’s profound piety and the tremendous effort she put forth to advance his ministry; indeed, she proved the Proverb that said “*there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*, Prov. 18. 24.”²³ And yet only a few pages later, he asserted that he had never altered nor contradicted his conviction that pastors should ideally be celibate and recounted again the inconveniences of wedlock to pastors.²⁴ Scholars such as Frederick J. Powicke, Packer, Geoffrey F. Nuttall, Timothy K. Beougher, and J. T. Wilkinson have puzzled over how such renowned pastor, writing a tribute to his deceased wife, would both praise the many benefits of his wife and in nearly the same breadth enumerate so many hindrances in clerical marriage.²⁵ One might be

where rung about, partly as a Wonder, and partly as a Crime, whilst they cried, [This is the Man of Charity]: little knowing what they talkt of. . . . And I think the King’s marriage was scarce more talked of than mine” (Baxter, *RB*, bk 1, pt. 2, 384 §275).

²¹Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, 24; McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, 173; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “The Personality of Richard Baxter,” in *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* (London: Epworth Press, 1967), 108. In his earlier biography of Baxter, Nuttall did note how Baxter justified marrying, in spite of his stance on clerical celibacy, by pointing to his expulsion from pastoral ministry (Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 95). However, it seems Nuttall found this explanation somewhat unsatisfying.

²²Richard Baxter, *A breviat of the life of Margaret, the daughter of Francis Charlton and wife of Richard Baxter: there is also published the character of her mother, truly described in her published funeral sermon, reprinted at her daughters request, called, The last work of a believer, his passing-prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ, to be received by him* (London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681), A2v.

²³*Ibid.*, 98.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 101-4.

²⁵Frederick J. Powicke found it “strange” that one of the lessons Baxter drew from his marriage experience was the confirmation of his view that in normal parish ministry pastors would be better served by remaining single (Frederick J. Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter’s Love Story,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 4 [1918]: 461); J. I. Packer considered this a “lapse” and expressed puzzlement as to why Baxter would include these comments in the tribute written to his wife (J. I. Packer, *A Grief Sanctified: Passing through Grief to Joy and Peace* [Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1997], 183-85); Timothy K. Beougher noted his surprise that Baxter’s

tempted therefore to portray Baxter as an ascetic, misogynist, or Roman Catholic, which is precisely what some of the scholarly investigations have concluded.

History of Research

In 1925 A. R. Ladell declared, “The day to discuss Baxter’s theology has long since passed.”²⁶ Nevertheless, one hundred years of Baxter scholarship since then has proven the opposite to be true. Though it has been over fifty years since the last biography was published,²⁷ a considerable number of dissertations, theses, and book-length works have elucidated his theology on a number of issues. The topics drawing the most extensive attention have been his controversial soteriology,²⁸ his pastoral ministry at

exceptional marriage did not alter his convictions but made no attempt to resolve this tension in Baxter’s thought (Timothy K. Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage: The Husband/Wife Relationship in Puritan England as Taught and Experienced by a Representative Puritan Pastor, Richard Baxter,” *Trinity Journal* 10, no. 2 [Fall 1989]: 152; Nuttall noted Baxter’s resilience in affirming clerical celibacy but could offer no attempt to resolve it apart from saying that, to the end of his life: “he preserved objectivity of judgment of a kind suggesting the detachment of a naturally celibate mind” (Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 93); J. T. Wilkinson also sees this feature of *the breviate* as strange, though he does see it as more consistent with Baxter’s absolute dedication to God (J. T. Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton: A Puritan Love Story*, by Richard Baxter [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928], 55-56).

²⁶A. R. Ladell, *Richard Baxter: Puritan and Mystic* (London: S.P.C.K., 1925), 132.

²⁷See Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*. Other scholarly biographical treatments include Frederick J. Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter, 1615-1691* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1924; facsimile repr., La Vergne, TN: Kessinger Publishing, 2010); Powicke, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross (1662-1691)* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927); Timothy Ronald Cooke, “Richard Baxter, Puritan Churchman” (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1991).

²⁸See Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan Concept of Becoming a Christian* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007); Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1993); Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003); Thomas Eugene Hicks, “An Analysis of the Doctrine of Justification in the Theologies of Richard Baxter and Benjamin Keach” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009); How Chuang Chua, “Christ, Atonement, and Evangelism in the Theology of Richard Baxter: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Puritan Soteriology” (ThM thesis, Regent College, 1997); Jonathan David Lindell, “John Owen and Richard Baxter: A Conflict Concerning the Nature of Divine Satisfaction” (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010); David J. Richards, “Richard Baxter's Theory of the Atonement” (MA thesis, Wheaton College, 1982); Masaru Nagashima, “Owen and Baxter on Justification: An Exposition and Theological Examination of the Thought of John Owen and Richard Baxter on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith” (MCS thesis, Regent College, 1995)

Kidderminster,²⁹ and various aspects of his ecclesiology.³⁰ However, a string of other topics have attracted scholarly attention as well, including Baxter's political theory,³¹ the

²⁹Black, *Reformation Pastors*; Charles F. Kemp, *A Pastoral Triumph: The Story of Richard Baxter and his Ministry at Kidderminster* (New York: Macmillan, 1948); Nathaniel Harrington Mair, "Christian Sanctification and Individual Pastoral Care in Richard Baxter: An Analysis of the Relation between Richard Baxter's Understanding of Christian sanctification and the Form and Content of His Individual Pastoral Direction" (ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1966); William Ross Shealy Jr., "The Power of the Present: The Pastoral Perspective of Richard Baxter, Puritan Divine: 1615-1691" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1966); Glenn Paul Kinder, "Richard Baxter's Understanding of the Cure of Souls as it Appears in The Reformed Pastor (1656): A Study in Historical Theology" (MA thesis, Graduate Theological Union, 1976); Zachary K. McCoy, "Acts 20:28 and the Scriptural Basis of Richard Baxter's The Reformed Pastor" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary 2012); John Sanders Pearsall, "An Investigation of Pastoral Care as Exemplified in the Life and Ministry of Richard Baxter with a Consideration of its Relevance for Today" (ThM thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1953); Kenneth L. Roth, "The Cure of Souls in the Thought of Richard Baxter (1615-1691): A Study in Historical and Practical Theology" (ThM thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 1995); Barbara Anne Stewart, "Richard Baxter: The Beloved Pastor of Kidderminster" (MCS thesis, Regent College, 1985); Thomas Loren Strong, "An Evaluation of Richard Baxter's Pastoral Ministry" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978).

³⁰Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 62 (Boston: Brill, 2004); A. H. Wood, *Church Unity without Uniformity: A Study of Seventeenth-century English Church Movements and of Richard Baxter's Proposals for a Comprehensive Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1963); Hans Boersma, *Richard Baxter's Understanding of Infant Baptism*, Studies in Reformed Theology and History 7 (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2002); R. L. McCan, "The Conception of the Church in Richard Baxter and John Bunyan; a Comparison and Contrast" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1955); Donald George Miller, "A Critical Reappraisal of Richard Baxter's Views of the Church and their Applicability to Contemporary Church Problems" (PhD diss., New York University, 1935); Gordon Livingstone Toombs, "The Puritan Idea of the Holy Communion with Special Reference to John Eliot and Richard Baxter" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1956); Glen James Segger, "Petition for Peace: A Theological Analysis of Richard Baxter's 'Reformed Liturgy' in Its Ecclesiological Context" (PhD diss., Drew University, 2008); Travis Talmage Du Priest Jr. "The Liturgies of Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter: A Study of Structure, Language, and Rhythm" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1972); Eileen Lucy McGrath, "Richard Baxter and the Restored Church of England" (MA thesis, Vanderbilt, 1973); Teddy W. Booth, "In Utrisque Charitas: The Life and Ecumenical Theology of Richard Baxter" (MA thesis, Emmanuel School of Religion, 2003); Benjakmin F. Moore, "A Study of Richard Baxter's Contribution to Church Unity" (ThM thesis, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1960); Earl Kent Brown, "Richard Baxter's Contribution to the Comprehension Controversy" (PhD diss., Boston University School of Theology, 1956); Donald George Miller, "Factors in the History of the English Church which Contribute to an Understanding of Richard Baxter" (STM thesis, Biblical Seminary in New York, 1934); Walter Benjamin Theophilus Douglas, "Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference of 1661" (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1972).

³¹Julius P. Jaeger, "An Introduction to Richard Baxter's 'A Holy Commonwealth'" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1936); Thomas Wheeler Nuckols, "A Holy Commonwealth: The Political Thought of Richard Baxter" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1968); Alexander Gillon MacAlpine, "Ecclesiastical and Civil Polity in the Writings of Richard Baxter" (STM thesis, Union Theological Seminary, 1934).

methodology of his ethics and casuistry,³² his literary contributions,³³ his pronounced emphasis on heavenly meditation,³⁴ his family theology,³⁵ his polemical tactics,³⁶ his leading role in English nonconformity,³⁷ and various other topics.³⁸ However, none of

³²For studies of Baxter's ethics, see Albert Grady Harris, "Motives for Christian Living as Understood by Richard Baxter" (ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1959); W. Lawrence Highfill, "Faith and Works in the Ethical Theory of Richard Baxter" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1955); James McJunkin Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law: The Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615-1691)" (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1959); Gavin John McGrath, "Puritans and the Human Will: Voluntarism within Mid-Seventeenth Century Puritanism as Seen in the Works of Richard Baxter and John Owen" (PhD diss., University of Durham, 1989). For Baxter's casuistry or practical divinity, see Norman Keith Clifford, "Richard Baxter: A Study of Puritan Casuistical Divinity" (BD thesis, United College, 1955); Clifford, "Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century: Its Origins, Development and Significance" (PhD diss., University of London, 1957); John F. Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's Christian Directory: Content and Context" (PhD, diss. Cambridge University, 2005); Ruth Morrison, "A Summary and Evaluation of Richard Baxter's A Christian Directory" (MA thesis, Andover Newton Theological School, 1975).

³³N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Linda Jo Samuels Banks, "The Poems of Richard Baxter: A Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1967); William Culver Wright, "The Literary Attitude of Richard Baxter" (MA thesis, University of Maryland, 1965).

³⁴Ladell, *Richard Baxter*; Keith Graham Condie, "The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2010); Kathy Ann Knight, "A Study of Richard Baxter's Claim for the Indispensability of Heavenly Meditation as Presented in The Saints Everlasting Rest" (MCS thesis, Regent College, 1987); Logan Craft, "The Place and Power of the Hope of Heaven in the Teaching of Richard Baxter's The Saints Everlasting Rest" (ThM thesis, Regent College, 2001).

³⁵Elisa Jill Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family: Spheres of Soul Care and Sacrifice" (MCS thesis, Regent College, 2010); Drew W. Gentile, "Richard Baxter's Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984); H. Ladyman-Walker, "Speak to Youth and Those That Educate Them: A Study of the Educational Philosophy of Richard Baxter" (ThD diss., University of Nottingham, 1975). I attempted to procure a copy of Ladyman-Walker's study but was unable to do so.

³⁶Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001); David S. Sytsma "Richard Baxter's Philosophical Polemics: A Puritan's Response to Mechanical Philosophy" (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2013); Gael Mansell, "'Simple Catholick Christianity': The Style of Religious Debate in Richard Baxter's Nonconformist Pamphlets, 1679-81" (MA thesis, University of Warwick, 1981).

³⁷Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011); Morgan Irons, *The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter* (London: The Epworth Press, 1946).

³⁸Simon J. G. Burton, *The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter's Methodus Theologiae*, Brill's Series in Church History 57 (Boston: Brill, 2012); Richard Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* (London: Crook and Helm, 1979); Hugh Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (London: SCM Press, 1954); Eifon Evans, "The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture in the Thought of Richard Baxter" (PhD diss., University of London, 1958); Carolyn Cornelia Cummins Damon, "The Influence of Pascal on Richard Baxter" (MA thesis, Stanford University, 1966); William Ward Bass, "Platonic Influences on Seventeenth Century English Puritan Theology, as Expressed in the Thinking of John Owen, Richard Baxter, and John Howe" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1958); Ping-Tong Herrick Liu, "Towards an Evangelical Spirituality: A Practical-Theological Study of Richard Baxter's Teaching and Practice of Spiritual Disciplines with Special Reference to the Chinese Cultural Context" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological

these works has offered a comprehensive examination of Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy. Furthermore, many authors writing on English Protestant marriage doctrine have omitted him altogether, since his marriage writings fell outside the geographic or temporal boundaries of their studies.³⁹ Meanwhile, several other general studies of marriage and celibacy in church history omitted discussion of his views.⁴⁰ Therefore, one must largely rely on briefer treatments to find studies of Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy.

Powicke provided a detailed account of Baxter's romance and marriage to Margaret Charlton in his article titled "A Puritan Idyll." While devoting less attention to Baxter's convictions on clerical celibacy, Powicke did attempt to understand what prompted him to apparently lay aside his opposition to clerical marriage and enter the married state.⁴¹ Baxter had always allowed ministers to marry in a case of "necessity," and the "necessity" of love for Margaret "took possession of him" so powerfully that it

Seminary, 1999); Margaret L. Wiley, "Skepticism in the Writings of John Donne, Richard Baxter, Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Brown and Joseph Glanvill" (PhD diss., Radcliffe College, 1940).

³⁹Sylvia Brown, "Godly Household Government from Perkins to Milton: The Rhetoric and Politics of Oeconomia, 1600-1645" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994); Daniel Doriani, "The Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640: Ethics, Family, Marriage, Parents, Authority" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986); George and George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640*; Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); James Turner Johnson, *A Society Ordained by God: English Puritan Marriage Doctrine in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970); Chilton Latham Powell, *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653: A Study of Matrimony and Family Life in Theory and Practice as Revealed by the Literature, Law, and History of the Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917; repr., New York: Russell & Russell, 1972.); Robert Victor Schnucker, "Views of Selected Puritans, 1560-1630, on Marriage and Sexuality" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1969). The following have not included Baxter since their focus concerned New England Puritanism: Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth Century New England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970)

⁴⁰Derrick Sherwin Bailey ignored the Puritans altogether and instead limits his discussion of England to Anglicans (*The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought* [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1959], 167-230); Helen L. Parish, *Clerical Celibacy in the West: c. 1100-1700* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Bernard Murstein, *Love, Sex, and Marriage through the Ages* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1974); Katherine Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966); Henry Charles Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1966).

⁴¹Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 436-37, 443-44, 461-63.

eventually overcame his scruples and swept away all the logic that had previously convinced him to remain single.⁴² Powicke's explanation is highly problematic, however, since he proposed a loophole in Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy that never existed. Baxter never spoke of love, in itself, as a necessity demanding marriage. Indeed, by speaking of romantic love as a "necessity," Powicke seemed to have read into Baxter Victorian notions of romantic love that would have been strange not only to seventeenth-century England but also to Baxter's theology of marriage.⁴³

Max Weber's famous thesis has heavily informed scholarly perceptions of the Puritans, especially their attitude toward marriage.⁴⁴ Taking Baxter as his representative, Weber traced how the Puritan concept of "calling"—performing God's will through diligent labor in a vocation or trade—created a spirit of resistance to any idleness that might distract Christians from the optimal fulfillment of their calling.⁴⁵ The Puritans

⁴²Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 436-37, 463.

⁴³Packer observed the tendency among early twentieth-century scholars to depict Richard and Margaret's marriage as Victorians who "dwelt entirely on the beauty of rose-colored rapport between souls, with bodies right out of the picture" (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 24-25). He cited as an example Wilkinson's depiction of Richard and Margaret as "two souls who love God and love each other with that sublime, spiritual beauty in which souls are wed, which gives orientation to life and is eternal" (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 43-44). As Packer noted, Wilkinson even quoted a poem praising human love by the great Victorian poet Robert Browning (182-89) to "ram the idea home" (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 25). One finds almost exactly the same Victorian sentiments in Powicke's explanation of Richard and Margaret's decision to marry: "For the simple truth was that they loved each other—with a love of that high spiritual character which unites soul to soul, and transfigures life, and is immortal" (Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 444). Therefore, Powicke reasoned, "Love stepped in and decreed the necessity [of Baxter marrying]. Love is always stepping in and experience bears witness that the Reasons of Love are wiser than all the reasons of abstract logic, even when they emanate from so great a divine as St. Paul" (ibid., 463). J. M. Lloyd-Thomas also seemed to speak in Victorian terms when he described the inevitable momentum of romantic love that brought Margaret and Baxter together: "Margaret needed a Protector. Love could not forever be denied" (J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love-Story and Marriage," in *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, abridged by J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, ed. N. H. Keeble [London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1931; repr., Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974], 273).

⁴⁴I am indebted to Benson for this insight (Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 18). Benson connected Weber's conclusions about the Puritan family with very similar negative pronouncements by Ernest Troeltsch, who actually cited Weber's citation of Baxter for his own support (Ernest Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960], 809). For critiques of the Weber thesis, see H. M. Robertson, "The Puritan Doctrine of Calling," in *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Winthrop Hudson, "The Weber Thesis Reexamined," *Church History* 57 (1988): 61.

⁴⁵Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), 157-59.

ascetic attitude, Weber argued, “turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer.”⁴⁶As a result, Weber characterized Puritan marriage and family life as coldly austere and ascetic.⁴⁷ Surprisingly, Weber never connected his thesis with Baxter’s argument that pastors should remain single to maximize the effectiveness of their ministry.

Schucking seemed heavily influenced by Weber’s characterization of the Puritans as worldly ascetics but also pointed to the progressive end goal of their austerity. The Puritans dedicated themselves to “ascetic practices” such as self-examination, but only in so far as they led to measurable, beneficial achievements for the individual and others. Thus, the Puritans actually fostered a “spirit of activism.”⁴⁸ Whereas Weber used Baxter as a representative of the Puritans, Schucking depicted him as quite distant from their largely positive theology of marriage. He also identified “signs” that Baxter had relapsed “to the basic Catholic view.” Baxter echoed mediaeval preachers by speaking of the sex drive as a “disease” which “gradually dies away in marriage,” and so he commended marriage as “little more than a ‘remedy against lust.’” Pointing to Baxter’s tedious catalogue of marital burdens and their hindrance to piety, Schucking likened him to a “medieval ascetic” who expressed a “fundamental hostility towards marriage.”⁴⁹ Therefore, Baxter’s teaching on the home should not be treated as an archetype of Puritanism, since he was “very far from embodying the most advanced ideas of the Puritan movement.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 166.

⁴⁷Again, I am indebted to Benson for this insight (Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 18). For example, Weber asserted that Puritans, like Baxter, practiced their own form of sexual asceticism by condoning marriage only for the purpose of bringing God glory through child bearing (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 158, and 263-64n22).

⁴⁸Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, 14-15.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 18. However, Schucking does acknowledge the significance of Baxter’s *Christian Directory* (*ibid.*, 18, 19).

Yet Schucking made no attempt to reconcile Baxter's seemingly negative statements toward marriage, and especially clerical marriage, with the sheer number of pages he wrote praising matrimony as instituted by God for the benefit of humanity.⁵¹

Richard Schlatter asserted that Baxter expressed continuity with English Protestant marriage doctrine but also considerable discontinuity as well. Baxter was fairly typical in his list of the legitimate reasons which justified marrying: the will of parents, bodily necessity (sexual concupiscence), and the more expedient service of God and humanity.⁵² However, Schlatter pointed out the uniqueness of Baxter's emphasis that lust was rarely unconquerable and could usually be subdued by means other than marriage, contrary to other Protestants and the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁵³ Furthermore, Schlatter asserted that Baxter's "ascetic . . . nature" led him to a "dislike of sex," and so he "could find little place for love between man and wife."⁵⁴ Though Baxter believed that "some emotional tie" was essential and beneficial to the nuptial relationship, he could not think of affection in terms of "sexual passion" but only "rational love."⁵⁵ Baxter "was not

⁵¹See Richard Baxter, *The catechizing of families a teacher of housholders how to teach their housholds: useful also to school-masters and tutors of youth : for those that are past the common small chatechisms, and would grow to a more rooted faith, and to the fuller understanding of all that is commonly needful to a safe, holy comfortable and profitable life* (London: Printed for T. Parkhurst and B. Simmons, 1683); Baxter, *The Mother's Catechism*, in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, 4:34-64 (London: George Virtue, 1846; repr., Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000); Baxter, *The poor man's family book in plain familiar conference between a teacher and a learner : with a form of exhortation to the sick, two catechisms, a profession of Christianity, forms of prayer for various uses, and some Psalms and hymns for the Lords day : with a request to landlords and rich men to give to their tenants and poor neighbours either this or some fitter book*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for Benjamin Cox, 1691); Baxter, *Compassionate counsel to all young-men especially I. London-apprentices, II. students of divinity, physick, and law, III. The sons of magistrates and rich men* (London: Printed by H. Clark for George Conyers, 1691), 166-69, 169-79; Baxter, *Methodus theologiae Christianae I. naturae rerum, 2. Sacrae Scripturae, 3. praxi, congrua, conformis, adaptata : plerumque (corrigenda tamen & perficienda)* (London: Typis M. White & T. Snowden, & prostant venales apud Nevil Simmons, 1681), 224-28; Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest, or, A treatise of the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in glory*, 12th ed. (London: printed for Thomas Parkhurst, Ric. Chiswell, and Dorman Newman, 1688), 529-35; Baxter, *A treatise of self-denial* (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1675), 420-27; Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3-77; Baxter, *BLM*.

⁵²Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688*, 15.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 16. According to Schlatter, "Baxter insisted that the love which compels a person to marry must be a 'rational love,' founded on the 'worth and fitness' of a person, not on blind sexual passion:

typical,” Schlatter concluded, “for religious thought concerning marital relations was not, on the whole ascetic.”⁵⁶ Once again, however, portraying Baxter as ascetic is difficult to reconcile with the many works he wrote commending the value of marriage and the family. Moreover, Schlatter made no attempt to explain the reason for Baxter’s unique views apart from calling him “the supreme example of the Puritan individualist, weighing and reinterpreting the ideas of his contemporaries according to his own judgments.”⁵⁷

The later twentieth-century produced several short treatments which came closer to understanding Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy. In contrast to previous authors, Beougher depicted Baxter’s theology as largely harmonious with the Puritan view of matrimony, except of course on the issue of clerical marriage.⁵⁸ Beougher’s treatment served as a valuable corrective to earlier scholarly evaluations. In particular, he corrected Schucking’s sweeping, negative generalizations by placing Baxter’s negative comments against marriage in the context of his pastoral concern to guard Christians from rushing hastily into matrimony.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, he mistakenly concluded that Baxter never asserted that marriage could be a sin for pastors.⁶⁰ While it is true that Baxter refrained from declaring it sinful for all clergymen, since God had made no universal law commanding or forbidding them, he did assert that it was a sin for those who foresaw that

a love for which none can be assigned is not love, but lust or foolishness” (Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688*, 16). Mair also made similar criticisms of Baxter for having an “essentially negative view of marriage” which was consistent with his “devaluation of the passionate area of human behavior. Marriage is to be entered into rationally and be sustained by duty” (Mair, “Christian Sanctification and Individual Pastoral Care in Richard Baxter,” 226).

⁵⁶Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688*, 16.

⁵⁷Ibid., 15.

⁵⁸Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage,” 153-57.

⁵⁹Ibid., 135n15, 153n123.

⁶⁰According to Beougher, “Baxter maintains that ministers of the gospel should think twice before marrying. He clearly states that it is not unlawful for a minister to marry (“as in the Kingdom of Rome”)” (ibid., 137).

wedlock would hinder rather than help their capacity to serve God. Furthermore, he adopted Powicke's faulty explanation for explaining Baxter's decision to marry, though he eventually reversed his support in a later work.⁶¹ Finally, Beougher was also handicapped by the constraints of his study. Since he aimed to give a broad overview of Baxter's theology of marriage, the issue of clerical celibacy was given very brief treatment with little elaboration beyond simply presenting his viewpoint.⁶² Consequently, he did not have space to explore Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy in the broader context of his theory of pastoral ministry or his theology of the Christian life. Nor did he have space to adequately examine the complex continuity and discontinuity of Baxter's marriage doctrine with other Puritans, apart from mentioning clerical marriage as the chief issue on which they disagreed.⁶³ Yet the most glaring question raised by Beougher's study concerns his depiction of Baxter as a representative of the Puritan view of marriage. If true, what caused him to advocate for clerical celibacy, which was a striking departure from Puritan marriage doctrine?

Packer also gave a more favorable depiction of Baxter's views on marriage and celibacy in his edited republication of the *Breviate*.⁶⁴ He found little inherently negative with Baxter's marriage doctrine, and depicted it as thoroughly consistent with the best of Puritan marriage literature.⁶⁵ Indeed, Packer considered Baxter's frank warnings about marital tribulations and his discouragement of clerical marriage as evidencing a far more

⁶¹Beougher commented, "Yet it must be remembered that Baxter allowed for a minister to marry, when pressed by 'some kind of necessity.' And here we see the beauty in this relationship. *Love* captured Baxter and decreed the necessity" (Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 152). Next, Beougher quoted Powicke to drive home his point (ibid). However, Beougher later reversed himself and said that Baxter justified his marriage on the basis that the 1662 *Act of Uniformity* barred him from continuing his regular pastoral ministry, and so he felt free to marry (Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion*, 29).

⁶²Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 135-38, 148, 152, 153.

⁶³Ibid., 155.

⁶⁴Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*.

⁶⁵Ibid., 24-30, esp. 26.

sober-minded, realistic view of marriage than modern Christianity.⁶⁶ Therefore, in a manner similar to Beougher, Packer correctly interpreted Baxter's focus on the "inconveniences of marriage" as reflecting his wise pastoral concern: Baxter wanted Christians to approach marriage with their eyes wide open rather than rush into it without considerable forethought.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Packer correctly pointed to Baxter's expulsion from parochial obligations—due to his refusal to affirm the 1662 *Act of Uniformity*—as the primary factor that gave him freedom to marry without violating his convictions.⁶⁸ However, Packer's treatment calls for further exploration and correction in a few areas. First, Packer claimed that Baxter never declared clerical marriage to be a sin, whereas in actuality Baxter only intended to say there was no universal command forbidding clerical marriage.⁶⁹ Second, since he only briefly examined Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy, he missed many of its nuances and he did not analyze in detail the specific "inconveniences" which threatened married clergymen.⁷⁰ Nor did he seek to understand those impediments by placing them in the larger context of Baxter's theory and practice of the pastorate or his theology of the Christian life. Finally, like Beougher, Packer's study faced the question of why Baxter contended for clerical celibacy if his view of marriage was so thoroughly Puritan?

Edmund Leites very briefly evaluated Baxter's views on marriage celibacy in his work *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*.⁷¹ He distinguished Baxter from

⁶⁶Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 27-30.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 27-28, 30

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 22, 184.

⁶⁹According to Packer, "Baxter went on record that clerical marriage, while not sinful, should be eschewed whenever possible" (*ibid.*, 184).

⁷⁰Packer did mention very briefly the ministerial conditions motivating Baxter's preference for celibacy: the responsibilities of the pastorate necessitated a tremendous amount of freedom from care that family duties habitually hinder, even when a Christian married well (*ibid.*, 184). Packer hinted that Baxter might have had other motives in asserting this, but did not explore them (*ibid.*, 184-85).

⁷¹Edmund Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Leites, "The Duty to Desire: Love, Friendship, and Sexuality in Some Puritan

other Puritans through stressing his neglect of “the sensual and sexual side of marriage” and failure to make wedlock’s “mutual delights and comforts . . . a chief reason to marry.”⁷² Baxter’s stress on mutual help as the primary motivation for marrying indicated he was less eager than other Puritans to “integrate the sexual with the affective, ethical, and even spiritual elements of marriage.”⁷³ Leites also offered helpful insights through contrasting Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy with those of Roman Catholics. Baxter lacked the typical exaltation of sexual renunciation found in Roman Catholic authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, such as Ignatius of Loyola and Blaise Pascal. Instead, he viewed celibacy as generally more suitable to the chief ends of the Christian life: serving God, advancing one’s spiritual welfare, and increasing personal holiness. The primary faults Baxter found in wedlock lay in the worldly cares and concerns into which it drew spouses, which hindered their contemplative focus on eternal realities. Roman Catholics would have resonated with Baxter’s observation that the worldly cares of marriage distracted Christians, though they viewed this as meritorious in itself rather than as a means to an end.⁷⁴ Thus, Leites detailed lines of continuity and discontinuity between Baxter and Roman Catholics in their respective rationales for clerical celibacy. Nevertheless, he did not explore what caused Baxter to view the worldly cares of marriage as so deleterious to piety and the contemplative life, whereas most Puritans did not.⁷⁵ Puritans agreed on the benefits yielded by meditation upon

Theories of Marriage,” *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 383-408.

⁷²Leites, “The Duty to Desire,” 403-4n50; Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*, 88.

⁷³Leites, “The Duty to Desire,” 403-4n50. See also Leites’ nearly identical comments in *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*, 88.

⁷⁴Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*, 172n23.

⁷⁵J. I. Packer noted how the Puritans endeavored to sanctify all the relationships and duties of life, rather than elevating the contemplative life—free of the attachments and commitments of family—as the ideal for holiness (J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990], 14, 233-34).

heaven and the transitory nature of earthly life,⁷⁶ yet they did not view marriage as hindering those practices to the same extent as Baxter.

Baxter's vision for the Christian household has also received more favorable treatment in the late twentieth century. Brent Waters hailed Baxter's *Christian Directory* as an "exemplary piece of Puritan literature on the family."⁷⁷ According to Waters, Baxter did not believe the family existed to gratify the self-interests of individual members, but rather God intended for households to "bear witness to a *social order based on mutual and sacrificial love.*" Spouses helped each other in charitable works and hospitality, and children were trained, both morally and practically, for useful vocations that would serve the public good of the church and society.⁷⁸ Elisa Benson built off Water's brief treatment by providing a fuller picture of Baxter's vision for domestic spirituality. She did not address the issue of clerical celibacy in depth, yet her work nevertheless highlighted the tension between Baxter's paradoxical emphasis on the spiritual benefits of marriage and the great impediments matrimony imposed on clergymen. According to her, Baxter extolled the family, because it provided the ideal environment in which Christians could offer one another mutual help and accountability. The scriptural imperatives of sacrificial love and soul care shaped the relationships between spouses, parents and children, and domestic servants.⁷⁹ Benson also noted that Baxter demonstrated a paradoxical view of women, both in his writings and marriage to Margaret, that largely reflected the attitudes of the period. He considered women too emotional and unstable, while at the same time citing their longsuffering love and

⁷⁶Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 13-14. See also Tom Schwanda, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

⁷⁷Brent Waters, *The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 32-33, 35.

⁷⁹Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 60, 62-67.

patience as their significant strength.⁸⁰ Drew W. Gentile came to very similar conclusions in his study of the invaluable role played by the family in religious education and moral instruction.⁸¹ However, the observations of Waters, Benson, and Gentile leave a few crucial questions unexplored. If the family unit was such an ideal structure for providing religious instruction, sanctification, sacrificial service, and accountability, why would such a seedbed for holiness be so deleterious to ministers? Moreover, the extent to which Baxter commended the benefits of marriage sheds light on a great weakness to his argument for clerical celibacy, for who watches over the pastor's soul if he is single?

Michael A. G. Haykin's essay focused primarily on the nature of Richard and Margaret's married life as well as the Puritan theology undergirding it. While briefly noting Baxter's outspoken support for clerical celibacy, he did not probe deeply into the reasons motivating it, but instead depicted Baxter as largely in harmony with the Puritan tradition on marital matters.⁸² Furthermore, Haykin argued that Baxter's discouragement of clerical marriage did not lead to a poor marital experience; on the contrary, "once he was married . . . Baxter found that marriage agreed with him very well."⁸³ Not only was their union a happy one, but Haykin also detailed the numerous ways in which Baxter discovered Margaret to be a remarkable helper both in his personal sanctification and advancing his pastoral ministry.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, he did not explore why Baxter continued to argue for clerical celibacy after having experienced so many of the benefits

⁸⁰Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 70-75.

⁸¹Drew W. Gentile, "Richard Baxter's Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), esp. 21-24, 28-30, 34-39.

⁸²Michael A. G. Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light': The Marriage of Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton," in *The Reformers and Puritans as Spiritual Mentors: Hope is Kindled* (Kitchener, Canada: Joshua Press, 2012), 152. Haykin reproduced much of the same material in his essay on Margaret titled "Richard Baxter's Testimony about Margaret Baxter," in *8 Women of Faith*, 37-52 [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016].

⁸³Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light,'" 154.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 152-161.

accompanying wedlock. Why did marriage to Margaret reinforce rather than overturn or modify his convictions?

Norman Keith Clifford's work on Baxter's casuistry, and its relation to Puritan casuistry, has yielded helpful insights but also problematic assumptions.⁸⁵ In one work, he argued that Baxter's casuistry, and Puritan casuistry as a whole, was not only influenced by Medieval and Puritan Theology but also Renaissance cosmology, psychology, and physiology.⁸⁶ The practical divinity of Baxter and Puritanism was shaped by many of the basic Renaissance assumptions underlying the seventeenth-century world in which he lived.⁸⁷ One problem, however, is his assumption that Baxter "undoubtedly" represented the "culmination of Puritan writing on casuistical divinity," and his *Christian Directory* served as the "determinative treatment" on the subject in terms of "method and form and content."⁸⁸ His assumptions, however, led to faulty generalizations when he analyzed Baxter's treatment of celibacy. Clifford asserted that Baxter was informed by and consistent with English Protestant marriage literature reaching back over a hundred years.⁸⁹ Therefore, he concluded that Baxter "clearly"

⁸⁵For published works on English Protestant casuistry, see Thomas Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952); Elliot Rose, *Cases of Conscience: Alternatives Open to Recusants and Puritans under Elizabeth I and James I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); H. R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology* [London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1949]; George L. Moss, *The Holy Pretence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957); Edmund Leites, ed., *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). For unpublished works treating Puritan casuistry, see Ian Breward, "The Life and Thought of William Perkins" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1963); Arthur William Lindsley, "Conscience and Casuistry in the English Puritan Concept of Reformation" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1982); Clifford, "Richard Baxter"; Clifford, "Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century."

⁸⁶Clifford, "Richard Baxter," 15-16, 210. In another work, Clifford extended his conclusions regarding Baxter's casuistry to include Puritan casuistry as a whole: "throughout its development, Puritan theology was a product of both the Renaissance and the Reformation" (Clifford, "Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century," 89-90, and see the larger discussion in 99-118).

⁸⁷Clifford pointed out that the influences of renaissance cosmology, psychology, and physiology had been overlooked in early discussions of English casuistry (Clifford, "Richard Baxter," 210). The works Clifford critiqued tended to stress the Puritans' dependence on the schoolmen (Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century*; McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology*).

⁸⁸Clifford, "Richard Baxter," vi. See also Clifford's assertion that the *Christian Directory* was the "high water mark in English casuistical divinity" (ibid., 15).

⁸⁹Clifford, "Richard Baxter," 138-40, 142, 144-45; Clifford, "Casuistical Divinity in English

followed “the pattern of Puritan handbooks on marriage and the government of the family.”⁹⁰ He portrayed Baxter’s listing of the hindrances wedlock brought to piety as merely reflecting the care and thought that Puritans demonstrated toward the decision to marry.⁹¹ However, there is hardly any precedent in Puritan marriage literature for Baxter’s frank, vivid, and tedious listing of the deleterious aspects of marriage. Even on the issue of clerical celibacy, he sought to downplay the uniqueness of Baxter’s support for it.⁹² Clifford’s work highlights the problem of reconciling Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy with not only with his Puritan marriage doctrine but also the Puritan nature of his casuistry.

John Brouwer proposed a solution to explain the apparent inconsistency between Baxter’s Puritanism and his appeal for pastors to remain single. By delving into the formation of the *Christian Directory*, he clarified Baxter’s intended purpose for the work.⁹³ When understood in light of its complicated background,⁹⁴ Brouwer contended that the *Christian Directory* should not be considered as a “stand-alone” work or as the highest example of Puritan casuistry.⁹⁵ Rather, Baxter intended for the work to benefit

Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century,” 212, 216.

⁹⁰Clifford, “Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century,” 216. See also *ibid.*, 216-20; Clifford, “Richard Baxter,” 142.

⁹¹Clifford, “Richard Baxter,” 142-44; Clifford, “Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century,” 218-20.

⁹²According to Clifford, “Many have felt that Baxter’s statements in the Directory and elsewhere on the subject of ministerial marriage, indicated that he was entirely against it”; however, Clifford believed Baxter “merely felt that if ordinary individuals should make extensive preparations, than those who had entered such a high calling as the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should consider the matter even more seriously” (Clifford, “Richard Baxter,” 144-45).

⁹³John F. Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory: Content and Context” (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2005).

⁹⁴Brouwer’s aim was to place the *Christian Directory* in the context of the Roman Catholic and Protestant casuistical advising that Baxter inherited, Baxter’s pastoral practice of advising, his broader literary corpus, and the immediate political and ecclesiastical context in which he wrote or collated the *Christian Directory* (*ibid.*, 1).

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 84, 88.

posterity by acting as a detailed record of his pastoral instruction and practice at Kidderminster.⁹⁶ Consequently, Baxter's extensive reliance on his own parochial knowledge meant that "to the extent that his Kidderminster ministry was unique, his advice [in the *Christian Directory*] was unique also."⁹⁷ Brouwer's insight into the book's formation explains how Baxter could operate within the godly tradition and yet so often "transcend standard godly practice." The lessons gleaned from his successful reform of Kidderminster, combined with the eminence he gained as a result of that success, granted him the latitude to strike out on his own both in terms of the content and methodological approach to cases of conscience.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Brouwer's study highlighted the chief principles for Christian living in the *Christian Directory*, and how they served as a hermeneutical tool for interpreting individual passages or topics.⁹⁹ Consequently, issues such as Baxter's discouragement of clerical marriage can be understood as a product of the overarching principles he provided to guide practical Christian living.

The work of Tim Cooper and J. William Black have also been influential in providing a context for Baxter's argument clerical celibacy. Cooper has drawn attention to the importance of studying Baxter's personality and the life experiences that shaped it. Baxter's personality influenced not only his doctrinal positions but also the supremely confident and magisterial manner in which he approached doctrinal disputes.¹⁰⁰ While he does not connect his conclusions with Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy, his study

⁹⁶Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory*," 88. Brouwer went on to say that Baxter also intended the *Christian Directory* as a "topical index for his corpus," a guide for converting households into house churches, and finally a "seminary syllabus and curriculum, and ministry manual" for younger, inexperienced pastors (ibid.).

⁹⁷Ibid., 67.

⁹⁸Ibid., 69. Brouwer corrected attempts to take the teaching of the *Christian Directory* as exemplary of the Puritans on the basis that "Baxter was Baxter" and was perfectly willing to modify practice, based on his own experience, if he believed there was a need to" (ibid., 84).

⁹⁹Ibid., 197-98.

¹⁰⁰Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 46-59; Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 124-33.

nevertheless sheds light on why Baxter's particularities made him far more likely to support such a controversial position as clerical celibacy. Black's study of Baxter's pastoral method in *The Reformed Pastor* raises the question of whether Baxter's theology of soul care contributed to his argument for clerical celibacy. He noted that most popular treatments of Baxter's pastoral method and Kidderminster ministry have tended to depict him as the epitome of Puritan diligence and faithfulness in the pastorate.¹⁰¹ However, his study boldly challenged that common assumption.¹⁰² Baxter's pastoral initiatives, he contended, departed from nearly one hundred years of English Protestant rhetoric regarding the nature of pastoral work and the means by which to complete the work of the Reformation in England.¹⁰³ Though Black surprisingly does not explore Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy, his conclusions support the possibility that Baxter's new and more burdensome model of soul care would be far more feasible for single clergymen than married ones.

The above survey amply illustrates the significant gap in scholarly literature covering Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy. No comprehensive study exists to date, nor have any smaller attempts placed his argument within the context of his larger theology of marriage, pastoral ministry, and his practical divinity. Instead, his convictions have either been overlooked, analyzed superficially in brief studies, or examined only as a component of larger survey works. Perhaps this has in part produced the remarkably mixed judgments surveyed thus far. Opinions of Baxter span from authors labeling him a medieval ascetic fundamentally antagonistic to marriage, to those who consider him one

¹⁰¹See Black's evaluation of these works in *Reformation Pastors*, 6-8.

¹⁰²Black also published chaps. of his book in the following articles: J. William Black, "From Martin Bucer to Richard Baxter: 'Discipline' and Reformation in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England," *The American Society of Church History* 70, no. 4 (December 2001): 644-73; Black, "Richard Baxter's Bucerian 'Reformation,'" *Westminster Theological Journal* 63, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 327-49.

¹⁰³For a collection of studies on the long course the Protestant Reformation took in England, see Nicholes Tyacke, ed., *England's Long Reformation*, Neale Colloquium 2 (Bristol, PA: UCL Press, 1998).

of the most balanced, realistic, and sober-minded Puritans to write on marriage and celibacy life. The deficiencies in scholarly treatments demonstrate the need for a more nuanced and expanded discussion. Perhaps most importantly, no study has sought to explain Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy in light of a comprehensive examination of its continuities and discontinuities with English Protestant marriage literature.

Explanation of Thesis and Chapter Outline

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to answer the question: how and why did Richard Baxter argue for clerical celibacy against the majority of English Protestants who defended the legitimacy and virtue of clerical marriage? This dissertation will also examine several related questions. First, what were the points of continuity and discontinuity between Baxter and other English Protestants on the relative merits of celibacy and marriage? Second, what ecclesiastical, theological, social, and personal factors shaped Baxter's belief that pastors should ideally remain single? Third, how did his argument for clerical celibacy relate to his thinking on marriage, family, and pastoral ministry? Fourth, did he contradict his convictions when he elected to marry Margaret Charlton? Fifth, was he able to successfully adapt to a life of marriage? To be as complete as possible in my answers, I will examine not only Baxter's published corpus but also his unpublished treatises and letters.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, I will seek to be as exhaustive as possible in consulting every resource from Elizabethan and Stuart England

¹⁰⁴Baxter's correspondence and unpublished manuscripts are housed in the Dr. Williams Library in London. Though the letters have never been transcribed in full, they have been meticulously catalogued and edited: see N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991]). All footnote citations of the letters from Dr. Williams Library are followed by the volume and corresponding number of the letter in Nuttall and Keeble's work. The treatises have been catalogued by Roger Thomas (*The Baxter Treatises: A Catalogue of the Richard Baxter Papers (Other than the Letters) in Dr. Williams's Library* [London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1959]). In all footnote citations of the treatises, I have given the title or description of the treatise provided by Thomas.

Furthermore, in all the primary resources used in the study I have retained the original spelling, punctuation, and capitalization throughout; the only exception is the changing of the "long s" to an "s," "v" to "u," and "u" to "v." However I have not altered any spelling, capitalization, or punctuation in the titles of works. When quoting from Baxter's manuscripts and letters, I have spelled out abbreviated words.

to shed light on how English Protestants approached the issues of marriage, family, celibacy, and clerical marriage.¹⁰⁵

This dissertation will argue that Richard Baxter's teaching on clerical celibacy was a very controversial way of resolving tensions in English Protestant marriage doctrine. His argument was a product of a very stringent model of pastoral care developed in response to England's ecclesiastical situation, was deeply influenced by his personal qualities and life experiences, and was rooted in his overarching ethical principles for Christian living. Baxter remained remarkably consistent, even when appearing to violate his convictions by marrying later in life. Chapter 2 examines English Protestant attitudes toward marriage and celibacy in Elizabethan and Stuart England in

¹⁰⁵English books, sermons, and treatises on domestic conduct have drawn extensive discussion from scholars in the last century and a general consensus has evolved regarding the most important works (Anthony Fletcher, "The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England," in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, eds. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 163-67). But while special attention has been given to major texts, every effort has been made to incorporate all available English Protestant sources from Elizabethan and Stuart England.

This study will not examine the works of English Protestants before the reign of Elizabeth. The decision to limit the scope stems from the fact that scholars have already contributed extensively to the literature on marriage and celibacy in Reformation England. It is not based on the assumption that post-Reformation Protestants simply rehashed old arguments from the first generation of reformers or that they represent a more sophisticated, second generation flowering of Protestant marriage theology. For helpful book-length studies of the debate over marriage and celibacy during the English Reformation, see Parish, *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation*; Carlson, "Marriage and the English Reformation"; Muriel Porter, "The Defense of the Marriage of Priests in the English Reformation" (Ph. D. University of Melbourne 1988). For articles, see Carlson, "Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation"; Carrie E. Euler, "Heinrich Bullinger, Marriage, and the English Reformation: *The Christen state of Matrimonye* in England, 1540-53," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 2 (2003): 367-93; Helen L. Parish, "'It was Never Good World Sence Minister Must Have Wyves': Clerical Celibacy, Clerical Marriage, and Anticlericalism in Reformation England," *Journal of Religious History* 36, no. 1 (March 2012): 52-69; Parish, "'Beastly is their Living and their Doctrine': Celibacy and Theological Corruption in English Reformation Polemic," in *The Medieval Inheritance*, ed. Bruce Gordon, 138-52, Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe 1 (London: Scholar Press, 1996); Parish, "'By this Mark you Shall Know Him': Clerical Celibacy and Antichrist in English Reformation Polemic," in *The Church Retrospect*, ed. R. N. Swanson, 253-66, Studies in Church History 33 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1997); Patrick Collinson, "The Role of Women in the English Reformation Illustrated by the life and Friendships of Anne Locke," in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, 273-87, History Series 23 (London: Hambledon Press, 1983); Peter Sherlock, "Monuments, Reputation and Clerical Marriage in Reformation England: Bishop Barlow's Daughters," *Gender & History* 16, no. 1 (April 2004): 57-82; Richard M. Spielman, "The Beginning of Clerical Marriage in the English Reformation: The Reigns of Edward and Mary," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 56 (1987): 251-63; John K. Yost, "The Development of a Reformist Approach to Marriage and Celibacy in Early English Humanism," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 57 (January 1976): 1-15; Yost, "The Reformation Defense of Clerical Marriage in the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI"; Witte, "Anglican Marriage in the Making."

order to determine the theological milieu influencing Baxter. Chapter 3 explores his argument for clerical celibacy in the context of his pastoral theology of soul care in the church and the family. Chapter 4 examines the internal and external factors shaping his life, which contributed to his uniqueness as a theologian and pastor. Chapter 5 studies Baxter's *Christian Directory* in order to show that his argument for clerical celibacy arose from the chief principles he set forth to govern Christian living. The following two chapters explore the issues surrounding Baxter's seemingly contradictory marriage to Margaret Charlton. Chapter 6 examines the early life and conversion of Margaret Charlton, her growing relationship with Baxter, and finally the events of 1660-1662 which led to their union. Chapter 7 examines their married life to determine why Baxter continued to argue for clerical celibacy, despite having a very positive experience of marriage. A concluding chapter provides a summary of answers to the primary and secondary questions asked. It will also reflect on how this study of Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy has contributed to a better understanding of English Protestant marriage doctrine as well as Baxter's place as a pastor and theologian.

CHAPTER 2

ENGLISH PROTESTANT MARRIAGE DOCTRINE IN ELIZABETHAN AND STUART ENGLAND

Introduction

Richard Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy contributed to a long, ongoing discussion among English Protestant authors who had written at length on celibacy, marriage, and family. The soaring popularity of domestic conduct books and marriage sermons from the mid-sixteenth century onwards demonstrates the continuing interest to defend the honor, legitimacy, and holy duties of wedded life, in the face of negative medieval attitudes toward wedlock that proved slow in dying.¹ This body of literature has drawn the interest of numerous scholarly works analyzing English Protestant marriage literature.² However, the primary question this chapter seeks to answer concerns how English Protestants counseled Christians to determine whether they should marry or remain single.³ Baxter's approach to answering this very practical question was a key

¹For a discussion of the development of domestic conduct books in the Reformation, Elizabethan and Stuart era of England, see Chilton Latham Powell, *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653: A Study of Matrimony and Family Life in Theory and Practice as Revealed by the Literature, Law, and History of the Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917; repr., New York: Russell & Russell, 1972), 101-46; for a study covering strictly the Elizabethan era, see Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 201-27.

²See Sylvia Brown, "Godly Household Government from Perkins to Milton: The Rhetoric and Politics of Oeconomia, 1600-1645" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994); Daniel Doriani, "The Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640: Ethics, Family, Marriage, Parents, Authority" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986); Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); James Turner Johnson, *A Society Ordained by God: English Puritan Marriage Doctrine in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970); Robert Victor Schnucker, "Views of Selected Puritans, 1560-1630, on Marriage and Sexuality" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1969); Levin L. Schucking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from the Literary Sources*, trans. Brian Battershaw, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1970); L. Joseph Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); Jody Kent Anderson, "The Church within the Church: An Examination of Family Worship in Puritan Thought" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009); Powell, *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653*.

³The goal of this chap. is to elucidate prescription rather than practice. I intend to provide an

factor shaping his argument for clerical celibacy. Therefore, it is imperative to examine how his English predecessors and contemporaries addressed the issue.

This chapter offers a comprehensive survey of English Protestant marriage literature in the Elizabethan and Stuart eras to understand how they answered key questions regarding the married and single states.⁴ English Protestants during this period struggled to reconcile a tension they saw in Scripture. They believed matrimony was a lawful and honorable state open to all people without distinction, and yet they also acknowledged that celibacy usually provided greater expedience for holy living than wedlock. The tension between these two emphases will be evident as the chapter analyzes several key issues around which English Protestants shaped their teaching on whether it

overview of what English Protestants taught rather than the extent to which they, or the larger English society, lived consistently or inconsistently with their instructions. The question of actual marital practice lies outside the focus of this chap., which endeavors to lay a foundation for evaluating Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy in chaps. 3-5. However, chap. 7 will consider the issue of marriage practice by examining Baxter's marriage to Margaret Charlton and the degree to which their life together bore continuity and discontinuity with seventeenth-century marital norms.

⁴This chap. has striven to be as comprehensive as possible in consulting every English Protestant work on marriage, family, and celibacy from Elizabethan and Stuart England up to end of the seventeenth century. The major texts most frequently cited in other scholarly studies have been included but also lesser known treatises. I have included in this chap. discussion of the spiritual or radical English Protestant sects. I have also sought to focus not only on authors often considered "Puritan" but other English Protestants as well. For discussions both in favor of and opposed to using the term Puritan, see Jerald C. Brauer, "Reflections on the Nature of English Puritanism: Three Interpretations," *Church History* 23, no. 2 (June 1954): 99-108; Charles H. George, "Puritanism as History and Historiography," *Past & Present* 41, no. 1 (1968): 77-104; Basil Hall, "Puritanism: The Problem of Definition," in *Studies in Church History*, ed. G.J. Cumming, *Studies in Church History 2* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Publishers, 1965), 283-96; Brian H. Cosby, "Toward a Definition of 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism': A Study in Puritan Historiography," *Churchman* 122 (2008): 297-314; Richard Greaves, "The Nature of the Puritan Tradition," in *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall*, ed. R. Buick Knox (London: Epworth Press, 1977), 255-73; John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Charles H. George and Katherine H. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961], 6-8; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Lake, *Conformity and orthodoxy in the English church, c. 1560-1660*, *Studies in modern British Religious History 2* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2000); Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

I have not included discussion of the marriage literature originating from New England, since their major treatises, domestic conduct books, and sermons were written after Baxter. For helpful studies of New England marriage doctrine, see John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth Century New England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966); Judith Graham, *Puritan Family Life: The Diary of Samuel Sewall* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000).

would be best to marry or remain single. The issues included marriage and celibacy as *adiaphora* (indifferent things),⁵ the function of Christian liberty in such matters, the influence of Genesis 1-2 in shaping one's outlook on matrimony, the significance of the gift of chastity, and finally how to reconcile Genesis 1-2 with Paul's praise of celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7. By analyzing how those issues were pastorally addressed, one finds a tension among English Protestants between insisting on the liberty of all people to marry and simultaneously restraining that liberty due to the practical spiritual advantages celibacy provided.

Marriage and Celibacy as Issues of *Adiaphora*

English Protestant thought on marriage and celibacy was shaped by their conviction that Scripture neither commanded nor forbade either estate, so the choice bore no determination on a person's final salvation.⁶ Roman Catholics had made two grievous errors in the soteriological importance they ascribed to each state. First, they had made the state of wedlock itself a sacrament and thus a means of salvific grace.⁷ Second, they had elevated the single state far above marriage, so that a person could be especially certain of earning God's favor and grace through remaining celibate.⁸ Beginning with the

⁵In this chap. and throughout this dissertation, I will be using the terms *adiaphora*, indifferent things, matters of indifference, and areas of moral neutrality to describe those ethical issues in everyday life which Scripture neither commands nor forbids.

⁶Thomas Rogers, *The faith, doctrine, and religion, professed, & protected in the realme of England, and dominions of the same expressed in 39 articles, concordable agreed vpon by the reuerend bishops, and clergie of this kingdome, at two seuerall meetings, or conuocations of theirs, in the yeares of our Lord, 1562, and 1604* ([Cambridge?]: Printed by Iohn Legatt, 1607), 185-86. An explicit assumption in this was that marriage was not a universal obligation for all people, as the Jews thought it was (Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium, or, The rule of conscience in all her generall measures serving as a great instrument for the determination of cases of conscience: in four books* (London: Printed by James Flesher for Richard Royston, 1660), bk. 2, 420; Gabriel Towerson, *An explication of the catechism of the Church of England, containing an explication of the Decalogue or ten commandments* (London: Printed by J. Maddock for Richard Chiswell, Thomas Sawbridge, George Wells and Richard Bently, 1685), 368-69.

⁷See for instance, Paul Baynes, *An entire commentary vpon the vvhole epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians wherein the text is learnedly and fruitfully opened, with a logicall analysis, spirituall and holy observations confutation of Arminianisme and popery, and sound edification for the diligent reader* (London: Printed by M. F. for R. Milbourne, and I. Bartlet, 1643), 668-69.

⁸Richard Adams, "How may Child-bearing Women be most supported, and encouraged against, in, and under the hazard of their Travail?" in *A Continuation of morning-exercise questions and*

early Christian ascetics and continuing in medieval monasticism, celibacy increasingly came to be viewed as a voluntary evangelical counsel— along with poverty and obedience—that one could choose as a path to greater holiness.⁹ Rejecting the evangelical counsels, most English Protestants contended that marriage fell into the realm of *adiaphora*, since Scripture gave neither a clear command nor a prohibition against one

cases of conscience practacly resolved by sundry ministers in October, 1682, ed. Samuel Annesley (London: Printed by J. A. for John Dunton, 1683), 645; Thomas Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation, glosses and annotations on the Nevv Testament so farre as they containe manifest impieties, heresies, idolatries, superstitions, prophanesse, treasons, slanders, absurdities, falsehoods and other evils. By occasion whereof the true sence, scope, and doctrine of the Scriptures, and humane authors, by them abused, is now given* (Leiden: Printed by W. Brewster, 1618), 4, 95-96, 390-92; John Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, in *The remains of the reverend and learned Mr. John Corbet, late of Chichester printed from his own manuscripts*, 225-48 (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, 1684), 233-34; Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed by R. D. for John Williams, 1652), 31; William Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures into the English tong against the manifolde cauils, friuolous quarels, and impudent slaunders of Gregorie Martin, one of the readers of popish diuinitie in the trayterous Seminarie of Rhemes* [London: Printed by Henrie Bynneman, 1583], 39, 274; Joseph Hall, *The honor of the married clergie, maintayned against the malicious challenges of C.E. masse-priest: or, The apologie written some yeeres since for the marriage of persons ecclesiasticall, made good against the cauils of C.E., pseudo-Catholike priest* (London: Printed by W. S. for N. Butter, 1620), 54; John Robinson, *Essays, or Observations Divine and Moral*, in *The works of John Robinson, pastor of the pilgrim fathers*, ed. Robert Ashton, vol. 1 (London: J. Snow 1851), 236-37; William Perkins, *A reformed Catholike: or, A declaration shewing how neere we may come to the present Church of Rome in sundrie points of religion: and vwherein we must for euer depart from them with an advertismnt to all fauourers of the Romane religion, shewing that the said religion is against the Catholike principles and grounds of the catechism* (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legate, 1598), 161; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience distinguished into three bookes: the first whereof is revised and corrected in sundrie places, and the other two annexed. Taught and deliuered by M. W. Perkins in his holy-day lectures, carefully examined by his owne briefes, and now published together for the common good, by T. Pickering Bachelour of Diuinitie* (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legat, 1606; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 418-19; Samuel Shaw, *The True Christians Test, or, A Discovery of the Love and Lovers of the World* (London: Printed by Thomas James for Samuel Tidmarsh, 1682), 234; Thomas Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, which Forbiddeth to Marry, is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” in *The morning-exercise against popery, or, The principal errors of the Church of Rome detected and confuted in a morning-lecture preached lately in Southwark / by several ministers of the Gospel in or near London*, ed. Nathaniel Vincent (London: Printed by A. Maxwell for Tho. Parkhurst, 1675), 591-95; William Whately, *A care-cloth: or a treatise of the cumbers and troubles of marriage intended to aduise them that may, to shun them; that may not, well and patiently to beare them* (London: Printed by Felix Kyngston for Thomas Man, 1624), 3; Gervase Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements by way of questions and answers for greater plainnesse together with an application of euery one to the soule and conscience of man* (London: Printed by R. Robinson for Thomas Charde, 1596), 140-45, 146, 149; John Terry, *The second part of the trial of truth wherein is set downe the proper fountain or foundation of all good works, & the fowre principal motives which the Spirit of God so often useth in the sacred scriptures to perswade therevnto: together with the contrariety of the doctrine of the Church of Rome to the same* (Oxford: Printed by Joseph Barnes, 1602), 35-37; Robert Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XI,” in *Twenty sermons viz. XVI Ad Aulam, III Ad Magistratum, I Ad Populum* (London: Printed for Henry Seile, 1660), 216.

⁹See C. H. Lawrence for a brief discussion of the development of these “evangelical counsels” in the early and medieval church (C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in the Western World in the Middle Ages*, 4th ed., The Medieval World [New York: Routledge, 2015], 2-3).

state or the other. Christian faith depended no more on whether one lived married or celibate than it depended on one's dietary choices, as Matthew Griffith declared: "Mariage in it selfe is a thing indifferent; and the *Kingdome of Heaven* stands no more in it, than it doth in *meates*, and *drinks*; so that God accepts no man the rather for being married, neither yet for that *rejects* him."¹⁰ As a result, English Protestants were keen to point out that neither marital state possessed any superior virtue in itself (by its inherent nature) that would commend a person to God.¹¹ Categorizing one's marital state as indifferent did not diminish the influential role marriage or celibacy could exert on a person's piety and service to God, though it did mean that Christians were free to decide for themselves which would be best for them.

English Protestants defended the freedom of all people to marry or remain celibate. The Christian's liberty had a soteriological grounding. According to Robert Sanderson, humanity had been deprived of its free right to partake of the created world—

¹⁰Matthew Griffith, *Bethel: or, A forme for families in which all sorts, of both sexes, are so squared and framed by the Word of God, as they may best serve in their severall places, for usefull pieces in God's building* . . . (London: Printed by Richard Badger for Robert Allot, 1633), 18-19. See also Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 391, 557; William Perkins, *Christian oeconomie, or, A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a familie according to the Scriptures*, trans. Thomas Pickering (London: Felix Kyngston, 1609), 11; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, 1:237; Richard Stock, *A learned and very usefull commentary upon the whole prophesie of Malachy by . . . Mr. Richard Stock . . . ; whereunto is added, An exercitation upon the same prophesie of Malachy, by Samuel Torshell* (London: Printed by T. H. and R. H. for Daniel Frere and William Wells, 1641), 136; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 7-8; Robert Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," in *XXXIII sermons XVI. Ad aulam, III. Ad clerum, VI. Ad magistratum, VIII Ad populum* (London: Printed by R. Norton for Henry Seile, 1657), 294-95; Terry, *The second part of the trial of truth*, 36.

¹¹Adams, "How may Child-bearing Women be most supported, and encouraged against, in, and under the hazard of their Travail?" 634-35, 645; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 4, 95; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 228; William Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ, translated out of the vulgar Latine by the papists of the traiterous seminarie at Rhemes* (London: Printed by the deputies of Christopher Barker, 1589), 38, 39, 273; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31; William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties: eight treatises*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed by George Miller for Edward Brewster, 1634), 213; Griffith, *Bethel*, 21; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 26, 54; Christopher Ness, *A Christians walk and work on earth, until he attain to heaven which may serve as a practical guide, and a plain direction in his pilgrimage thither, through his personal and relative duties* (London: Printed by John Harding, 1679), 219-20; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 12; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 161; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, Works, 1:237; Shaw, *The True Christians Test*, 234-35; Stock, *A learned and very usefull commentary upon the whole prophesie of Malachy*, 136; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 591-95; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 3; Gervase Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements by way of questions and answers for greater plainnesse together with an application of euery one to the soule and conscience of man* (London: Printed by R. Robinson for Thomas Charde, 1596), 146, 147; Terry, *The second part of the trial of truth*, 36; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 3, 338.

meat, drink, marriage—due to its fall into sin, and the Jews had also been forbidden certain cloths, foods, and drinks under the Mosaic Law. Yet Christ had reconciled humanity to God through his death and thereby had “also reconciled *the Creatures* both to us and him.” Therefore, Christians should “*stand fast in*, and contend earnestly” for the liberty to partake of all created things, which Christ had purchased on their behalf.¹² Similarly, William Perkins asserted Christ’s redeeming work had fundamentally altered the Christian’s conscience, so that they now possessed liberty in matters of indifference.¹³ One of the chief benefits stemming from Christian liberty was freedom from bondage to the ordinances of the Jewish ceremonial law, involving meat, drink, feast days, etc.¹⁴ With the ritualistic law abolished by Christ, the way had now been opened for believers to partake of anything considered “indifferent” without the slightest pang of conscience.¹⁵ Perkins stressed the breadth of issues falling into the category of moral neutrality, including not only Jewish ceremonial law but also numerous other external aspects of life.

I adde further, that things indifferent; as bondage, outward libertie, riches, poverty, single estate, marriage, meate, drinke, apparrell, buildings may be used *freely*, because they are neither commanded by God nor forbidden: and in themselves considered, they may be used or not used without breach of conscience.¹⁶

The redemptive work of Christ meant that a host of external matters, some of which were part of the worship of God in the Old Testament, had now been re-categorized as

¹²Sanderson, “The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum,” 284-85.

¹³William Perkins, *A discourse of conscience wherein is set downe the nature, properties, and differences thereof: as also the way to get and keepe good conscience* (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legate Cambridge, 1596), 97.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 98-99. The other two key beneficial aspects of Christian liberty were freedom from the need for justification through the moral law and freedom from the rigorous nature and demands of the law. Perkins noted that a vitally practical and comforting consequence of this truth was the fact that God now accepted Christians’ imperfect obedience so long as it was a sincere, willing endeavor (*ibid.*).

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 102.

“indifferent” for Christians. Individuals could freely enjoy or refuse pleasures such as marriage, since they were neither expressly proscribed nor prohibited.¹⁷

English Protestants also looked to Paul’s guidelines for exercising Christian liberty in defending the liberty of all Christians to marry. By examining his condemnation of those forbidding marriage and certain foods (1 Tim 4:1-5), they observed that he defended their free enjoyment, since they were sanctified for Christians by the word of God and prayer. William Whately insisted that “All creatures” were sanctified in this manner. First, Scripture confirmed to people’s consciences that marriage was “warrantable & welpleasing,” and that they were thus free to enjoy the “comfort of the creature.”¹⁸ Secondly, prayer executed another key function, since by supplication believers crave the “favorable and gracious leave of God” to enjoy the benefit of God’s blessings in spite of their own sins. By praying with thanksgiving, they rightly pay honor to God as “the fountaine of all comfort.”¹⁹ Thus, through the testimony of Scripture and prayer, a person’s conscience was freed to enjoy anything in God’s creation whether meats, drinks, or wedlock.²⁰ Echoing the same interpretation of Paul, numerous English Clergymen defended the liberty of all of people to marry as an extension of Christian liberty in all matters of indifference.²¹ Clergymen and laity both lived by the same rule,

¹⁷Perkins saw a two-fold purpose of usage that encompassed “natural” partaking simply to alleviate human necessities or provide sincere enjoyment, and “spiritual” usage to aid in drawing the mind toward divine things (Perkins, *A discourse of conscience*, 101-2). See also Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 548-49.

¹⁸Whately, *A care-cloth*, 35. Perkins asserted that the specific Scripture Paul had in mind was God’s spoken word of blessing to freely partake of the creation in Gen 1:28-29, which was then repeated in Gen 9:3 after the entrance of sin (Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 544). Elsewhere, Perkins asserted that Scripture functioned as “our charters” wherein “our liberties are recorded” (Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience*, 107).

¹⁹Whately, *A care-cloth*, 35.

²⁰William Whately, *A bride-bush. Or, A direction for married persons Plainely describing the duties common to both, and peculiar to each of them. By performing of which, marriage shall prooue a great helpe to such, as now for want of performing them, doe finde it a little hell* (London: Printed by Bernard Alsop for Benjamin Fisher, 1623), 16.

²¹See Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 557; Samuel Clarke, *Medulla theologiae, or, The marrow of divinity contained in sundry questions and cases of conscience, both speculative and practical : the greatest part of them collected out of the works of our most judicious,*

as Sanderson observed. Citing Paul's vigorous defense of his liberty as an apostle, he pointed out that "whatsoever is lawful for any *other man* to do, is also *lawful* for a *Church-man* to do."²²

English Protestants did acknowledge the need to qualify and restrain Christian liberty by stressing the need for moderation in the enjoyment of *adiaphora*. While indifferent things were invariably lawful by their nature, which could never be altered, they could be abused or become inexpedient for Christian living.²³ Therefore, Christians might need to refrain from them under certain circumstances and occasions. English Protestants laid out a few key guidelines to instruct Christians in the proper enjoyment of *adiaphora*. First, matters falling under the category of moral neutrality should only be

experienced and orthodox English divines, the rest are supplied by the author (London: Printed by Thomas Ratcliff for Thomas Underhill, 1659), 3-5; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 225, 247; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 375-77; Thomas Gataker, "A Good Wife Gods Gift," in *Certaine Sermons, first preached, and after published at severall times, by M. Thomas Gataker B. of D. and pastor at Rotherhith. And now gathered together into one volume* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Fulke Clifton, 1637), 140-41; Thomas Gataker, "A Marriage Prayer," in *Certaine Sermons, first preached, and after published at severall times, by M. Thomas Gataker B. of D. and pastor at Rotherhith. And now gathered together into one volume* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Fulke Clifton, 1637), 122-23; Samuel Hieron, *The bridegroom* (London: Printed [by M. Bradwood] for Samuel Macham, 1613), 26-28; Matthew Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages stablysshed by the imperiall lawes of the realme of Englande, agaynst a ciuilian, namyng hym selfe Thomas Martin doctour of the ciuile lawes, goyng about to disproue the saide mariages, lawfull by the eternall worde of God, [and] by the hygh court of parliament, only forbydden by forayne lawes and canons of the Pope, coloured with the visour of the Churche. Whiche lawes [and] canons, were extynguyshed by the sayde parliament* (London: Printed by Richarde Iugge [and John Kingston], [1567]), 47-48; Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience*, 102-6; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 544; Sanderson, "Ad Aulam Sermon XI," 215-16; Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 300-303, and see also the sermon as a whole which is an extended exposition of 1 Tim. 4:4; Terry, *The second part of the trial of truth*, 35-36. Other authors cite this scriptural text but not with the same detail: Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 146; Thomas Comber, *A companion to the temple: or, A help to devotion in the use of the Common prayer divided into four parts*. 3rd ed. (London: Printed by Miles Flesher for Robert Clavell, 1688), 12; Thomas Pierce, *The primitive rule of reformation delivered in a sermon before his Majesty at Whietehall, Feb. 1, 1662: in vindication of our church against the novelties of Rome*, 8th ed. (Oxford: Printed by H. H. for Ric Royston, 1663), 28.

²²Sanderson, "Ad Aulam Sermon XI," 228. Several authors also noted that Paul made no distinction between the obligations of clergy and laity when he discussed the benefits of celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7: Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 392; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 236-37, 247; Richard Rogers, *Seaven treatises containing such direction as is gathered out of the Holie Scriptures, leading and guiding to true happinesse both in this life and in the life to come: and may be called the practise of Christianitie*, 4th ed. (London: Printed by Felix Kyngston, for Thomas Man, 1616), 189; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 597-98; Sanderson, "Ad Aulam Sermon XI," 228-29; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 3, 333, 338; John Terry, *Theologicall logicke: or the third part of the Tryall of truth wherein is declared the excellency and aequity of the Christian faith* (London: Printed by Iohn Lichfield and William Turner, 1625), 180.

²³Hall, for instance, wrote that Paul taught Christians the difference "between lawfulness and expedience" (Hall, *Resolutions and decisions*, 353-54).

enjoyed when their enjoyment redounded to the greater glory of God.²⁴ Second, marriage and other indifferent things ought to be used thoughtfully, wisely, and with moderation, out of concern for offending fellow Christians or violating the civil and ecclesiastical laws of men.²⁵ In particular, parental consent was necessary in the decision to marry and the choice of a spouse, though parents could not compel their children to marry or not marry.²⁶ Finally, the aim in using *adiaphora* should be edifying oneself or others and

²⁴Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 95, 391; Clarke, *Medulla Theologiae*, 2, 4, 5; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 229, 233-34; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 39; Hall, *The Honor of the Married Clergy*, 46-47; Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience*, 103; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 550; Robert Sanderson, "Ad Aulam Sermon XII," in *Twenty sermons viz. XVI Ad Aulam, III Ad Magistratum, I Ad Populum*, 231-50 (London: Printed for Henry Seile, 1660), 237; Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 237.

²⁵See Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience*, 104-5; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 551-54. See also, John Bunyan, *Christian behaviour, or, The fruits of true Christianity shewing the ground from whence they flow, in their godlike order in the duty of relations, as husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, &c. : with a word of direction to all backsliders* (London: Printed for F. Smith, 1663), 47-48; Clarke, *Medulla Theologiae*, 1-4; Richard Greenham, *A godlie exhortation, and fruitfull admonition to vertuous parents and modest matrons Describing the holie vse, and blessed institution of that most honorable state of matrimonie, and the encrease of godlie and happy children, in training them vp in godly education, and houshold discipline* (London: Printed by [Ihon Windet and Thomas Iudson] for Nicholas Lyng, 1584), fols. Aiiiii(r-v); Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions for the Dve Examination and Direction of al Men, to the attaining and retaining of faith and a good conscience*, in *The workes of the reuerend and faithfull seruant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham*, ed. Henry Holland, 5th ed. (London: Printed by Thomas Snodham and Thomas Creede for VVilliam VVelby, 1612), 645, 653, 742; Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 189; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 600-601, 616; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 17-19; Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 283-84, 289-90; Terry, *The second part of the trial of truth*, 35-36.

²⁶Joseph Hall concluded that it was "altogether unlawful for a child to sleight his parents' consent" in the choice of spouse and simultaneously unlawful for parents to force their children to marry against their will (Joseph Hall, *Resolutions and decisions of divers practical cases of conscience in continuall use amongst men very necessary for their information and direction in these evill times* (London: Printed by R. Hodgkinson and J. Grismond, 1654), 294-95, 330). For similar comments on the need for parental consent to marry, see Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 4; Robert Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government for the ordering of priuate families, according to the direction of Gods Word . . .* (London: Printed by Felix Kingston for Thomas Man, 1598), 115-16, 133-34; Iohn Dod, *A plain and familiar exposition of the Ten commandements With a methodicall short catechisme, containing briefly the principall grounds of Christian religion* (London: Printed by [Thomas Harper for] the assignes of Ioane Man, and Benjamin Fisher. 1635), 174, 183-84; Thomas Gataker, "A Wife in Deed," in *Certaine Sermons, first preached, and after published at severall times, by M. Thomas Gataker B. of D. and pastor at Rotherhith. And now gathered together into one volume* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Fulke Clifton, 1637), 176, 179; Thomas Gouge, *Christian directions shewing how to walk with God all the day long* (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, Benjamin Tooke, Samuel Lee, Samuel Crouch, and Thomas Cockeril, 1680), 173, 174-75; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 214; Richard Greenham, *A Short Forme of Catechising: wherein are briefly set downe the principles of Christian religion, in The workes of the reuerend and faithfull seruant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham*, ed. Henry Holland, 5th ed. (London: Printed by Thomas Snodham and Thomas Creede for VVilliam VVelby, 1612), 77; Greenham, *Graue Counsels and godly obseruations: serving generally to direct all men in the waies of trve godlines, bvt principally appyled to instruct, and comfort all afflicted consciences*, in *The workes of the reuerend and faithfull seruant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham*, ed. Henry Holland, 5th ed. (London: Printed by Thomas Snodham and Thomas Creede for VVilliam VVelby, 1612), 20-21, 21; Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions*, Works, 743; Alexander Nicholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing and of the greatest*

consequently could only be employed when they proved expedient toward that purpose.²⁷ Thus, English Protestants affirmed a certain degree to which Christian liberty should be guided, and occasionally moderated, according to practical wisdom and the particular conditions under which a person lived. Christians should not justify their right to *adiaphora* by their lawfulness alone but with an eye toward always doing what was most beneficial.²⁸

The issue of expediency in *adiaphora* created a potential tension for advocating the free enjoyment of indifferent things. If a person's circumstances clearly indicated that a morally neutral issue, such as marriage, would be less pragmatically convenient than the single life, was such a person then obligated to forego wedlock? After all, under such circumstances, refraining from the free enjoyment of matrimony might be most consistent with glorifying God, exercising Christian charity, and edifying as many people as possible. English Protestants did recognize that marriage or celibacy

mystery therein contained: how to choose a good wife from a bad...(London: Printed by G. Eld. for Leonard Becket, 1620), 4; Perkins, *Christian oeconomia*, 69, 143; Daniel Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour, or, The mutuall crowne and comfort of godly, loyall, and chaste marriage wherein the right way to preserve the honour of marriage unstained, is at large described, urged, and applied : with resolution of sundry materiall questions concerning this argument* (London: Printed by Th. Harper for Philip Nevel, 1642), 71-87; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations, Works*, 1:238; Shaw, *The True Christians Test*, 276-77, 280; Henry Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage The summe whereof was spoken at a contract, and enlarged after. Whereunto is annexed A Treatise of the Lords supper: and another of vsurie* (London: Printed by R. Field for Thomas Man, 1591), 34-37; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 32-34, 69-71, 75; Richard Allestree, *The ladies calling in two parts* (Oxford: at the Theater, 1677), 174-78; Allestree, *The whole duty of man laid down in a plaine and familiar way for the use of all, but especially the meanest reader* (London: Printed for Timothy Garthwait, 1661), 290, 304-5; Lancelot Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large, or, A learned and pious exposition of the Ten Commandments with an introduction, containing the use and benefit of catechizing, the generall grounds of religion, and the truth of Christian religion in particular, proved against atheists, pagans, Jews, and Turks* (London: Printed by Roger Norton, 1650), 431-32; Rogers, *The faith, doctrine, and religion, professed, & protected in the realme of England*, 187; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 3, 381-96; Towerson, *An explication of the catechism of the Church of England*, 375; James Ussher, *A body of divinitie, or The summe and substance of Christian religion catechistically propounded, and explained, by way of question and answer: methodically and familiarly handled*, 4th ed. (London: Printed for Tho. Downes and Geo. Badger, 1653), 107, 263.

²⁷Edward Bury, *A help to holy walking, or, A guide to glory containing directions how to worship God, and to walk with him in the whole course of our lives* (London: Printed by F. L. for Nevil Simmons, 1675), 260-61; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 228; Hall, *Resolutions and decisions*, 353-54; Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience*, 105; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 18-19, 21; Sanderson, "Ad Aulam Sermon XI," 214-15, 228; Sanderson, "Ad Aulam Sermon XII," 237-38, 241-43; Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 290.

²⁸Sanderson, "Ad Aulam Sermon XII," 232. See also Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 1.

could indeed become more advantageous—for certain people, at certain times, and under certain conditions—as they proved more expedient and conducive to profitable Christian living.²⁹ Such counsel, as John Wing and George Swinnock pointed out, was the rationale behind Paul’s comments to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7) regarding the great freedom celibacy provided from family cares; his advice was occasional and based on the distresses particular to the early church, which prompted him to counsel the accidental benefits of the single life for that time.³⁰ But while Paul’s counsel was occasional in nature, Wing concluded that God had spoken “*intentionally, and universally*” concerning the lawfulness and goodness of wedlock when he declared “*it is not good for man to be alone*” (Gen 2:18).³¹ The hermeneutical importance of those two texts for English Protestants will be further explored later in this chapter. For now, however, their pastoral counsel confronted a tension between Scripture’s teaching on the universal lawfulness of marriage and the circumstantial advantages of celibacy. Could a Christian be barred forever from matrimony if it proved less expedient than the single state, and if so, did

²⁹Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 96; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 228; Fulke, *The text of the New Testament*, 39; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213-14; Hall, *Resolutions and decisions*, 353-54; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38, 46-47; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49-50; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 598-99; Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A4r-6r, 2-3, 18-19; John Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall or The Spouse Royall. A Discovery of the true honour and happinesse of Christian matrimony. Published for their consolation who are married, and their encouragement who are not, intending the benefit of both* (Middelburgh: Printed by Iohn Hellenius, 1620), 122-23; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 146, 149; Richard Field, *Of the Church five bookes* (London: Printed by Humfrey Lownes for Simon Waterson, 1606), 499; Robert Sanderson, *Nine cases of conscience occasionally determined* (London: H. Brome, J. Wright, and C. Wilkinson, 1678), 1-2; Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XI,” 228; Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XII,” 232-46; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 3, 338-39.

³⁰Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 122-23; George Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling, or, A treatise of making religion ones business wherein christians are directed how to perform it in the relations of parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, servants, in the condition of prosperity, adversity*, vol. 2 (London: Printed by J. B. for Tho. Parkhurst, 1663), 63. See also Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 167-68; Stock, *A learned and very usefull commentary upon the whole prophesie of Malachy*, 136; Jeremy Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring,” in *XXV sermons preached at Golden-Grove*, 219-31 (London: Printed by R. Norton for Richard Royston, 1655), 220-21; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 407 and bk. 3, 334, 338, 340.

³¹Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 122-23. See also Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage* 17.

marrying in such a circumstance constitute a sin? The answer of English Protestants to that question was complex.

English Protestants did not believe occasional expediency implied that people could be perpetually disqualified from the free use of lawful liberties. Perkins clarified his admonition for the occasional necessity of restraint by opining that “it is not Gods will utterly and absolutely to barre us of the use of such things [adiaphora].”³² In his view, Scriptural guidelines for *when* indifferent things could be prudently and piously enjoyed never amounted to the conclusion that individual Christians might be bound by conscience to reject marriage, or any other good gift of creation, wholly and forever. Even though a “case of offence” might moderate the free use of indifferent things “for the common good,” it never revoked that liberty utterly and entirely.³³ To legalistically impose such a prohibition, Perkins contended, echoed one of the chief faults with monastic vows, namely categorizing those things as “necessarie” for “God’s worship” which he had “made indifferent” and free to enjoy as a part of Christian liberty.³⁴ It blurred the key distinction between scriptural commands necessary for obedience (lawful and unlawful), and those only counseled in so far as they proved expedient. Several other English Protestants followed Perkins in asserting that the advantageous nature of celibacy only pertained to certain circumstances.³⁵ What seems to have eluded them however was

³²Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience*, 104.

³³Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 414-15. See also Bury, *A help to holy walking*, 260-61; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 18-19, 22; Vincent noted the key difference between forbidding, which was what the papists pleaded, and following Paul’s counsel to abstain from marrying during an extraordinary situation to pray and fast (Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 597).

³⁴According to Perkins, “No ordinance of man, can make things simply necessarie, and part of God’s worship, which he himselve hath made indifferent, and left free to the will of man. And hence it was that the forbidding of meates and marriage, were tearmed by the Apostle, The doctrine of Deuills, I Tim. 4.1” (Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 414-15).

³⁵Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 167-68; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:63; Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 122-23; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 407 and bk. 3, 334, 338, 340; Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring,” 220-21.

the possibility that the particular conditions which might make wedlock inexpedient for an individual could be long lasting or even permanent.³⁶ Their reticence regarding that possibility might derive from their tendency to roundly condemn any hint of forbidding marriage as a “doctrine of demons” (1 Tim 4:1-3).³⁷ Whatever the reason, while their guidelines for the use of *adiaphora* provided the grounds for potentially barring people from wedlock, they seemed to doubt such a situation could arise. However, they had in fact provided a loophole that could be exploited for precisely that purpose.

English Protestants diverged regarding the moral necessity of choosing the most expedient marital state. While they instructed their readers to moderate the enjoyment of *adiaphora* for beneficial purposes, few authors directly addressed whether Christians still possessed liberty to marry if the yoke of wedlock would prove a hindrance to achieving those goals. On the one hand, authors such as Whately, John Corbet, William Gouge, and Jeremy Taylor defended the individual’s liberty to marry, regardless of circumstances. Whately stressed that God had given liberty of conscience to choose, even to those with the ability to contain their desires, though he also counseled the unmarried that “it may seem” the “best” and “wisest way” to choose the single state, since Scripture “doth seeme to commend” it.³⁸ On the other hand, Thomas Vincent

³⁶See Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 122-23; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 146, 147-48; Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XI,” 228; Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XII,” 239-40; Caleb Trenchfield, *A cap of grey hairs for a green head, or, The fathers counsel to his son* (London: Printed by J. C. for Henry Eversden, 1671), 108-12.

³⁷Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 555-57; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 227; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 183-84; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ*, 274; Gataker, “A Good Wife Gods Gift,” 138-39; Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions*, Works, 653; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 21-22; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 28, 153, 277, 286-87; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 415; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 10; William Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger. Or, The salve of divinity, on the sore of humanity Laid open in a sermon at a wedding in Edmond* (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, 1658), 413; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, which Forbiddeh to Marry, is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine”; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 22; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 146; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 143; Edwin Sandys, “Marriage is honourable in all,” in *Sermons made by the most reuerende Father in God, Edwin, Archbishop of Yorke, primate of England and metropolitan*, 277-93 (London: Henrie Midleton for Thomas Charde, 1585), 285-86; Pierce, *The primitive rule of reformation*, 28; Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XI,” 215-16; Terry, *The second part of the trial of truth*, 35-36.

³⁸Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A5r-v. Taylor seemed to make a similar assertion when reasoning that virginity should be freely “chosen and voluntary” by a person or else “it is not pleasing to

acknowledged that marriage could cause pastors to be “less serviceable to the Lord” in times of “persecution, or in such circumstances,” since they had “more wordly cares and distraction.” Under such conditions, he concluded unmarried clergy should remain single so long as they had the gift of chastity.³⁹ Vincent did qualify his statement by rejecting any inference that the distracting nature of family meant clerical marriage, in itself, was unlawful or “that it is the will of the Lord that ministers should not marry.”⁴⁰ Nonetheless, he had clearly detailed the moral obligation for unmarried pastors, who could remain chaste, to forbear marriage when the single state would be more pragmatically convenient for their ministry.⁴¹ The only restraint against a broader application of the principle was Vincent’s conviction that it primarily applied to periods of persecution. Agreeing with Vincent were Joseph Hall, Thomas Cartwright, William Fulke, and Daniel Rogers. They also interpreted the pragmatic benefits of celibacy as not simply counsels God left people to obey or dismiss at their discretion but commands all Christians were bound to follow, if the single state was more expedient for them and they possessed the gift of chastity.⁴² Thus, while English Protestants uniformly rejected

God” (Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 3, 338). John Corbet pointed to Paul’s clear statement that to marry, even under inexpedient circumstances, constituted no sin (Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 228). Finally, Gouge said that virginity was not commanded of any persons but only advised, even though Paul persuaded such people to use their liberty and keep themselves free (Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213-14).

³⁹According to Vincent, “such of them [ministers] as are unmarried, and have the gift of continency, in the time of the church’s persecution, or in such circumstances of their condition in the world, that by marriage they are likely to be plunged and encumbered with more worldly cares and distraction, and to be less serviceable unto the Lord in a married estate than they are in the single; that in such a case they ought to continue single, so long as God doth continue the gift unto them” (Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 601).

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Sanderson made the same distinction as Vincent between lawfulness and expedience concerning pastors. On the one hand he rejected the argument of those who would make matrimony unlawful for priests, as if the state of wedlock was incompatible with the ministry. This was false because everything falling under lawful liberties was never unlawful in its own nature, but generally available for all people. Nevertheless, he pointed out that what is “decent and expedient” for a minister to do was another question (Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XI,” 228). Sanderson also detailed how a person was to judge whether something is expedient (Sanderson, “Ad Aulam Sermon XII,” 236-48).

⁴²Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 96; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 39; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38, 46-47; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49-50;

attempts to limit Christian liberty based on the unlawfulness of matrimony, some of them also acknowledged their liberty could be constrained on the basis of expediency and under certain conditions.

Though the typical starting point for English Protestant casuistry was to view one's marital state as indifferent by nature, some Protestants dissented by praising celibacy as an especially virtuous state. The first group were certain radical Protestant sects that had arisen during the tumultuous English Revolution.⁴³ John Pordage⁴⁴ commended the "Virgin-life" as a fundamental component of the pursuit for spiritual illumination and perfection. The Christian's journey to "Life Eternal" and the "new *Jerusalem*," he expounded, was essentially the "Virgin life," which involved shedding external, earthly desires such as the "concupiscible lustings of *Venus*" in order to exercise the "spiritual senses." Therefore, since sexual renunciation lay at the heart of the spiritual quest, he presented celibacy not merely as a voluntary option for the spiritual elite, but the norm for all Christians.⁴⁵ Similarly, some Ranters forbade marriage on the basis that the restoration of humanity's fallen state involved forsaking all fleshly living, including

⁴³For a guide to the radical ideas produced in response to the cultural, religious, and political upheaval in English Revolution, see N. H. Keeble, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975). Richard Baxter was well aware of the sects and catalogued their views (Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Mathew Sylvester (London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, J. Dunton, 1696), bk. 1, pt. 1, 74-79 §119-27.

⁴⁴For a short biography of John Pordage and his theology, see Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 39-56. Baxter was well aware of John Pordage and named him as one of the chief leaders in the Behemenist sect, accusing them of pretending "to hold visible communion with Angels" and dissuading "married Persons from the Carnal Knowledge of each other" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 77 §124).

⁴⁵John Pordage, *Innocencie appearing, through the dark mists of pretended guilt. Or, A full and true narration of the unjust and illegal proceedings of the commissioners of Berks, (for ejecting scandalous and insufficient ministers) against John Pordage of Bradfield in the same county* (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1655), 77-78, and see also his comments on 33. See also John Pordage, *Mundorum explicatio wherein are couched the mysteries of the external, internal, and eternal worlds: shewing the true progress of a soul, from the court of Babylon to the city of Jerusalem, from the Adamicall fallen state, to the regenerate and angelical*. London: Printed for Lodowick Lloyd, 1663. See also Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 35-36; Gregory Claeys, ed., *Restoration and Augustan British Utopias* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), xiv.

wedlock, in order to receive the spirit.⁴⁶ Not every sect may have held to the malicious rumors of sexual abstinence pinned to them. The Quakers, or at least their founder George Fox, may have been falsely accused of denigrating marriage in favor of celibacy.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, perpetual virginity, not only as a spiritual allegory but also in a literal sense, often comprised a fundamental part of the soteriology for radical sects in seventeenth-century England and marked their divergence from most English Protestants.⁴⁸

In addition to various sects, a number of seventeenth-century English Protestant divines attributed a level of natural superiority to celibacy by comparing it to the *vita angelica*. This patristic term for the single life, employed by notable theologians such as Jerome and Augustine, derived from Christ's teaching on the absence of marriage in heaven, since believers would then become like angels (Matt 22:30, Luke 20:34-36).⁴⁹

⁴⁶See "A treatise of virginity," in *A Looking-glasse for the ranters in two short treatises, the [brace] 1. Being some glimpses of the good-old-way, 2. A treatise of virginity / by one that longeth for the perfection of the creation in the love of God* (London: Printed by T. M. for Richard Moon, 1653), 15-17.

⁴⁷While the Quaker denomination certainly held a reputation for asceticism, George Fox (1624-1691) bore no evidence of rejecting or denigrating marriage nor commending sexual abstinence between spouses but quite oppositely asserted the honorableness of wedlock and condemned those who prohibited it (George Fox, *Concerning marriage how God made them male and female in the beginning* [London: Printed for Thomas Simmons, 1661], 3-4, 7; George Fox, *The true marriage declared, or, Seven testimonies from the record of Scripture concerning the true marriages and such as are not according to the truth for Friends and all others concerned to read in the feare of the Lord* [London: n.p., 1679], 12, 13, 18-19). Scholars such as Christopher Hill have overlooked this evidence and instead depicted Fox as denigrating matrimony and procreation based on misunderstood comments in Fox's journal (Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), 319, and see also 323). Hill was referencing a conversation Fox reported between himself and a Puritan named Walter Newton. When Newton said that marriage was for procreation, Fox said that he "judged such things below me" (*The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls, with an epilogue by Henry J. Cadbury and an introduction by Geoffrey F. Nuttall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 557). However, Kristianna Polder has made case that Fox was not denigrating marriage but instead was rejecting an understanding of marriage that limited the biblical motives to procreation (*Matrimony in the True Church: The Seventeenth-Century Quaker Marriage Approbation Discipline*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 247-53).

⁴⁸Sarah Apetrei, "'The Life of Angels': Celibacy and Asceticism in Anglicanism, 1660-c.1700," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 13, no. 2 (2011): 253-54. See also Sarah Apetrei's study of these radical sects (Sarah Apetrei, "Masculine Virgins: Celibacy and Gender in Late Stuart London," in *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660-1760*, eds. Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith, 41-59 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014; repr., New York: Routledge, 2016), 50-59).

⁴⁹See for instance Jerome and later Augustine who used the term *vita angelica* to commend the celibate state (Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, trans. C. I. Cornish (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887), 417-38; Jerome, *Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, trans. W. H. Fremantle,

While this concept had been argued in the late sixteenth century by Richard Hooker,⁵⁰ it gained broader traction as the seventeenth-century progressed due to three causes. The latter part of the century saw the Church of England experience a “flowering of patristic learning,” which resulted in primitive or apostolic Christianity increasingly becoming “the criterion of orthodoxy.”⁵¹ Also, Laudian, royalist, and Restoration divines sought to counter their eroding ability to discipline members through ecclesiastical courts by stressing holy living, especially in the form of chastity. Their emphasis was especially important in the face of the growing antinomianism, sexual laxity, and hypocrisy of Restoration society.⁵² Finally, female celibacy became a means for women to practice a uniquely feminine form of holiness as “brides of Christ” and protest the increasingly stringent insistence that female identity solely consisted in being a wife and mother.⁵³ The exaltation of celibacy met very pragmatic social, political, and spiritual goals in England, but its clerical supporters still proceeded cautiously.

English Protestants who advocated the superiority of the celibate state also refrained from diminishing matrimonial honor. John Cosin defended wedlock’s necessity for the continuance of society and the church, and so God had instituted and blessed matrimony for the dual purposes of propagating the earth as well as filling heaven with saints. Nevertheless, he viewed the single state as epitomizing a life “more angelical and

G. Lewis, and W. G. Martley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 228.

⁵⁰Richard Hooker both exalted the celibate state as more “more angelical and divine” while concurrently honoring matrimony as a good and lawful ordinance of God (Richard Hooker, *Of the lawes of ecclesiasticall polittie. The fift booke* [London: Printed by Iohn Windet, 1597], 214). See also the comments by Edmund Tilney (1536-1610), a courtier best known as Master of the Revels for Queen Elizabeth and the early reign of King James. Though he praised marriage as a “holy and most necessary” estate, he seemed to have qualified this by naming virginity the “the purest estate” (Edmund Tilney, *A briefe and pleasant discourse of duties in mariage, called the flower of friendship* [London: Abell Ieffs, 1587], fols. A7r-v).

⁵¹Eamon Duffy, “Primitive Christianity Revived: Religious Renewal in Augustan England,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History 14 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 287. See also Apetrei, “The Life of Angels,” 260-63.

⁵²Apetrei, “The Life of Angels,” 250-52, 260-63; Duffy, “Primitive Christianity Revived,” 288.

⁵³Apetrei, “Masculine Virgins,” 41-42, 50-58, 58-59.

divine.”⁵⁴ His comments were not meant to disparage wedlock, for Cosin readily affirmed the “honour and honesty” of wedlock as a state of life “both pleasing and acceptable to God.” Yet he simultaneously asserted the inherent superiority of celibacy by stating that “married life itself seems to be but an imperfect state” whereas “the state of perfection is virginity,” so highly commended by Christ, Paul, and the patristics who were little in love with marriage.⁵⁵ Cosin’s sentiments were echoed by Taylor,⁵⁶ Thomas Culpeper,⁵⁷ and Richard Allestree⁵⁸ who affirmed the celibate life as an elevated, angelic existence, more suited for practical piety and holiness than wedlock. Furthermore, Taylor, Culpeper, and Allestree praised single persons for the sexual renunciation and mortification of fleshly desires they had attained.⁵⁹ Anthony Horneck and Edward Stephens echoed the same benefits of the *vita angelica* in their efforts to bring about moral reform in England through discipline and communal accountability. Horneck established the first religious society in 1678, and Stephen founded the first society for the reformation of manners in 1691.⁶⁰ They appealed to the rigorousness of early Christians, and especially their sexual asceticism, which made them seem “Angels more than men” and “nearer to God, to

⁵⁴John Cosin, *The Works of the Right Reverend Father in God John Cosin, Lord Bishop of London*, vol. 1, *Sermons* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1843), 48-49.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 1:56-57.

⁵⁶Jeremy Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy living In which are described the means and instruments of obtaining every vertue, and the remedies against every vice, and considerations serving to the resisting all temptations* (London: Printed by James Flesher for Richard Royston, 1663), 66-67, 73-74. B. W. Young asserted that “Taylor’s work was central in the devotional life of restoration readers, both clerical and lay” (B. W. Young, “The Anglican Origins of Newman’s Celibacy,” *Church History* 65, no. 1 [March 1996]: 19). But despite his enthusiasm for celibacy, Taylor also wrote nearly as warmly in praise of marriage (Edmund Newey, “Jeremy Taylor and the Theology of Marriage,” *Anglican Theological Review* 84, no. 2 [Spring 2002]: 269-85).

⁵⁷Thomas Culpeper, *Morall discourses and essays, upon severall select subjects* (London: Printed by S. G. for Charles Adams, 1655), 89.

⁵⁸Allestree, *The ladies calling in two parts*, 156-57, 239-40

⁵⁹Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy living*, 67; Culpeper, *Morall discourses and essays*, 89; Allestree, *The ladies calling in two parts*, 240, 244-45.

⁶⁰Duffy, “Primitive Christianity Revived,” 290-94, 297-98.

whom they lived, than to the World, in which they lived.”⁶¹ By the end of seventeenth century, the Church of England had witnessed a clear renewal of interest in the celibate life among some Restoration divines, despite the vigorous objections of a goodly number of other English Protestant clerics.⁶²

Beyond promoting greater holiness and communion with God, English Protestants advocating the inherent superiority of celibacy saw the pursuit of their ideal as especially virtuous. Culpeper provided a glimpse into his rationale that consequently indicated their continuity with patristic and medieval streams of thought. Matrimonial and single life both deserved honor, he asserted, but celibacy earned its honor as an “Angelical Estate,” since the celibate “is not content to obey the Commands of the

⁶¹Anthony Horneck, *The happy ascetick, or, The best exercise to which is added A letter to a person of quality, concerning the holy lives of the primitive Christians* ([London]: Printed by T. N. for Henry Mortlock and Mark Pardoe, 1681), 533, and see also similar statements on 10, 38, 395. See also Edward Stephens, *A letter to a lady concerning the due improvement of her advantages of celibacie, portion, and maturity of age and judgment : which may serve indifferently for men under the same circumstances* (Printed for the Religious Society of Single Women [after 1695]), 5. For a later work which commended the ascetic discipline of the early Christian hermits and monastic communities, see Edward Stephens, *Asceticks, or, The heroick piety & virtue of the ancient Christian anchores and coenobites. exemplary asceticks* (London: Printed for the authour, 1696), 4, 52, 128.

⁶²A number of English Protestant clerics either critiqued or disputed outright the angelic nature of celibacy as well as the slavish dependence on patristic sources to support it: Pierce, *The primitive rule of reformation*, 14; Gilbert Burnett, *The history of the reformation of the Church of England. of the progress made in it till the settlement of it in the beginning of Q. Elizabeths reign* (London: Printed by T. H. for Richard Chiswell, 1683), 2:89-92; Burnett, *An exposition of the Thirty-nine articles of the Church of England* (London: Printed by R. Roberts, for Ri. Chiswell, 1699), 356-62; Thomas Barlow, *A few plain reasons why a Protestant of the Church of England should not turn Roman Catholick by a real Catholick of the Church of England* (London: Printed for R. Clavel, 1688), 430; Henry Wharton, *A treatise of the celibacy of the clergy wherein its rise and progress are historically considered* (London: Printed by H. Clark for James Adamson, 1688), preface 9, 13, 19-20, 50, 65.

As Apetrei observed, these pamphlet debates reached a fever pitch from 1687-88 when the threat of a Popish plot to reestablish Catholicism under King James II (1685-88) climaxed in a crisis moment for the Protestant identity of both the English Church and Monarchy (Apetrei, “The Life of Angels,” 260). Consequently, a number of treatises were written. The first was composed by Abraham Woodhead, an English convert to Roman Catholicism (Abraham Woodhead, *Two discourses the first concerning the spirit of Martin Luther and the original of the Reformation: the second concerning the celibacy of the clergy* (Printed at Oxford, 1687). This publication provoked direct refutations from Francis Atterbury and George Tullie (Francis Atterbury, *An answer to some considerations on the spirit of Martin Luther and the original of the Reformation lately printed at Oxford* [Oxford: Printed at the Theater, 1687]; George Tullie, *An answer to a discourse concerning the celibacy of the clergy* [Oxford: Printed for Richard Chiswell, 1688]). See also the Anonymous tract titled *Sodom fair: or, The market of the man of sin Containing, a true account of the prices of the Pope's pardons and dispensations; being a treatise very useful and necessary for all young English papists who intend to take Holy Orders, or travel through Italy; and all such as intend to be cheated both out of their souls and money. To which is added, the history of adultery, as it is now at Rome by law established; with the life of Clement the Sixth, and blasphemous bull which he published for the year of jubele, 1350* ([London? n.p.]: Printed in 1688), 12, 26, 27.

Gospel but pursues even its counsels and intimations.”⁶³ The special virtue of the single state lay squarely in the celibate’s voluntary decision to embrace, rather than slight, a higher path of spiritual devotion, which was “not necessary” for all Christians to obey.⁶⁴ Culpeper’s distinction echoed the patristic and medieval distinction between duties morally binding on all Christians and the “evangelical counsels”—celibacy, poverty, and obedience—operating as a helpful means for obtaining spiritual perfection.⁶⁵ However, unlike the radical sects, neither Culpeper nor similarly minded English Protestants ventured to advocate celibacy as necessary for salvation.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, they did perceive the single state to be inherently superior and therefore diverged from the opinion of most English Protestants that marriage and celibacy were *adiaphora*. The divergence revealed the fundamentally different assumptions the two groups operated under. Those advocating the inherent superiority of celibacy did so because it was more expedient, edifying, and sanctifying for all Christians. Most English Protestants, however, asserted the responsibility of every Christian to answer the question themselves, based upon their own circumstances, calling, and ability to remain sexually continent. Indeed, several scholars have noted that a defining trait of English Protestant casuistry was not to proscribe the correct moral choice for every situation, as in Roman Catholic practice, but rather to equip Christians with scriptural guidelines for moral decision making that could be applied broadly.⁶⁷

⁶³Culpeper, *Morall discourses and essays*, 89.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 90-91.

⁶⁵Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 2-3.

⁶⁶Culpeper, *Morall discourses and essays*, 90-91; Allestree, *The whole duty of man*, 173; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 430, 453, 455; Cosin, *Sermons*, Works 1:56-57; Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy living*, 67-68.

⁶⁷Thomas Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), xv, 47-51; H. R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1949), 79-80, and see also 16, 71-73; Arthur William Lindsley, “Conscience and Casuistry in the English Puritan Concept of Reformation” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1982), 3-4, 278; Norman Keith Clifford, “Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century:

In sum, most English Protestants classified the married and single states as *adiaphora*, which meant God had left individual Christians free to enjoy or forbear them at their discretion. Despite being a key starting point, it is surprising how little attention has been devoted to the debate over marriage and celibacy within the context of moral decision making for areas of Christian liberty.⁶⁸ Scholars have tended to devote far more attention to the role played by Genesis 1-2 in shaping the positive attitude of English Protestants toward wedlock.

The Influence of Genesis 1-2 on Marriage Doctrine

English Protestants not only sought to establish the lawfulness of wedlock but also its status as an honorable state of life for all people. An oft repeated refrain came from Hebrews 13:4, “Let marriage be held in honor among all.” English Protestants interpreted this verse as not only saying marriage should be honored *by all*, but that the state of matrimony was honorable *for all*.⁶⁹ They freely cited the verse while contending for wedlock as a noble and suitable condition of life for all “orders, conditions, states, and qualities” of men without exception.⁷⁰ The author of Hebrews was simply repeating the

Its Origins, Development and Significance” (PhD diss., University of London, 1957). 67-71.

⁶⁸Bernard J. Verkamp did incorporate the issue of marriage into his analysis of *adiaphora* in the history of the church up through the English Reformation (Bernard J. Verkamp *The Indifferent Mean: Aphorism in the English Reformation to 1554*, Studies in the Reformation 1 [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977], 2-5, 22, 41, 48, 50-52, 101-2, 104-6, 119-20, 122-23, 112n67, 113n78); however, he did not cover Elizabethan or Stuart Era of England when the Puritan authors were writing. Charles and Katherine George briefly summarized the connection between marriage and indifferent things but overlooked the internal tensions discussed thus far in this chap. (George and George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640*, 267-68); Doriani only briefly mentioned it with hardly any elaboration (Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 130). All other treatments overlook this issue.

⁶⁹Fulke was most explicit in critiquing this distinction in his polemical text against a Roman Catholic who conceded that marriage was honorable, but deny that it was honorable for all people (Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 409-11).

⁷⁰Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 423. See also Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 99; Corbet, *Matrimoniall purity*, 227; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 409-10; Gataker, “A Wife in Deed,” 167; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 183-84; Griffith, *Bethel*, 228; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 109; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 112-13; Ness, *A Christians walk and work on earth*, 220; Niccholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, 220; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 10; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 15-16; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine”; Whately, *A bride-bush*, 15-16; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 429; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 12; Cosin, *Sermons*, Works, 1:48; Rogers, *The faith, doctrine, and religion, professed, & protected in the*

Scripture's consistent and positive testimony of marriage which could be traced all the way back to the Genesis creation account. The fact that God himself had instituted marriage indicated that it had been consecrated for all people to enjoy.⁷¹ Paul Baynes reasoned that even though marriage did not serve as a sacramental means of imparting grace *to people*, God's role in the creation of wedlock meant that it had been sanctified *for all people*. Matrimony, he asserted, "is an Ordinance of God which hath grace annexed to it in those that are his: for . . . every ordination or creature is sanctified to us: our painfull callings are meanes and have grace going with them."⁷² Similarly Whately asserted that "if the condemning of marriage be of the Devill, the allowing of it is from God, and so have all sorts of men universally a full allowance from God to take the benefit of this estate . . . is it not an ordinance of God, instituted for such purposes, as do generally concern all men?"⁷³ Numerous other English Protestants explicitly rooted the goodness of marriage for all people in the scriptural truth that God himself had authored the institution in paradise, before the entrance of sin, as part of his perfect plan for humanity.⁷⁴

realme of England, 187; Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 222.

⁷¹I am indebted to Doriani for this insight (Doriani, "The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640," 125-26). See also Schnucker, "Views of Selected Puritans, 1560-1630, on Marriage and Sexuality," 46-47, 60-63, 65-66.

⁷²Baynes, *An entire commentary vpon the vvhole epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians*, 668-69.

⁷³Whately, *A care-cloth*, 22.

⁷⁴William Bradshaw, "A Mariage Feast: A Sermon on the Former Part of the Second Chapter of the Evangelist John," in *Tvvo mariage sermons the former on Prov. 19. 14. By Thomas Gataker B. of D. and pastor of Rotherhith. The latter on Iohn 2. 1--12. By that learned and judicious divine Mr William Bradshaw some time fellow of Sidney Colledge in Cambridge* (London: Printed by Edward Griffin for Fulke Clifton, 1620), 2-6; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 99 (margin note); Corbet, *Matrimoniall purity*, 225; Gataker, "A Good Wife Gods Gift," 138; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213; Ness, *A Christians walk and work on earth*, 220; Niccholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, 1; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 4-6; Shaw, *The True Christians Test*, 276; Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage*, 2-6; Stock, *A learned and very usefull commentary upon the whole prophesie of Malachy*, 132-33; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:59-60; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 584; Comber, *A Companion the Temple*, 9; Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 287-88; Sandys, "Marriage is honourable in all," 278-79; Rogers, *The faith, doctrine, and religion, professed, & protected in the realme of England*, 187.

English Protestants likely derived this conviction from Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75), Zwingli's successor as leader of the Reformation in Zurich. In 1540, Bullinger wrote *Der Christlich*

The prelapsarian foundation of marriage in the time of man's innocence was also helpful in countering lingering doubts concerning the sinfulness of marriage, specifically the conjugal act. Scholars have noted how parishioners in the Elizabethan Church still feared that married clergymen might undermine the ceremonial purity so crucial to the efficacy of the sacraments and well-being of the village community.⁷⁵ Yet their objection persisted well into the seventeenth century, for several English Protestants still labored to correct the accusation that wedlock was sinful or unclean.⁷⁶ William

Eestand, arguably one of the most comprehensive and influential treatises on marriage during the Reformation (Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Christlich Eestand* [Zurich: Christoff Froschauer, 1540]). In 1541, it was translated by Miles Coverdale and published in England as *The Christian State of Matrimony* (Heinrich Bullinger, *The Christen state of matrimonye The orygenall of holy wedlock . . .*, trans. Myles Coverdale [London: Printed by M. Crom, 1541]). Bullinger's treatise became a massive success in England and went through numerous printings, as the work of Carrie E. Euler and John Witte has shown (Carrie E. Euler, "Heinrich Bullinger, Marriage, and the English Reformation: *The Christen state of Matrimonye* in England, 1540-53," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 2 [2003]: 367-93; John Witte, "Anglican Marriage in the Making: Becon, Bullinger and Bucer," in *The Contentious Triangle: Church, State and University Triangle*, eds. Ronald L. Peterson and Calvin Augustine Pater, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 51 [Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999], 249-53, 256-59). Furthermore, Charles William Pfeiffer and Carrie E. Euler both argued that Bullinger's theology of marriage significantly deviated from the views of pre-Reformation and early Protestant theologians because of his stress on the prelapsarian foundations of marriage. Bullinger insisted that nothing had been changed or added to marriage after it was instituted by God himself in paradise, even though sin had entered into the world. He was unique among the reformers in emphasizing the continuity of God's purposes for marriage before and after the fall; God had created marriage for humanity's blessing and benefit before the fall and this continued to be his plan even after it (Charles William Pfeiffer, "Heinrich Bullinger and Marriage" [PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 1981], 65-71, 76-79, 88-90; Carrie E. Euler, "Bullinger's *Der Christlich Eestand*: Marriage and the Covenant," in *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504-1575*, eds. Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi, 255-75, *Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004], 260-62). Furthermore, as Pfeiffer and Euler contended, Bullinger's unique marriage theology stemmed from his teaching that marriage complemented and bore witness to the one, bilateral covenant that God had made with humanity for all time, beginning with Adam; this covenant meant that the Old and New Testament were united into a hermeneutical and soteriological unity (Pfeiffer, "Heinrich Bullinger and Marriage," 90-105; Euler, "Bullinger's *Der Christlich Eestand*," 260-62).

⁷⁵Philip Tyler, "The Status of the Elizabethan Parochial Clergy," in *The Province of York*, ed. G. J. Cumming, *Studies in Church History* 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 87-88; Mary Prior, "Reviled and Crucified Marriages: The Position of Tudor Bishops' Wives," in *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (New York: Methuen, 1985), 126. For clerical efforts to refute this notion, see Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 392; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ*, 272, 273, 274; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 30; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 112; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 17-18; Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 189; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 145-46; Sandys, "Marriage is honourable in all," 285-86.

⁷⁶Bradshaw, "A Mariage Feast," 3-4; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 229-30, 242, 245-46; David Clarkson, *The practical divinity of the papists discovered to be destructive of Christianity and mens souls* (London: Tho. Parkhurst and Nath. Ponder, 1676), 353-54, 357; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 22-24; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:63; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, which Forbiddeth to Marry, is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 586-98, 598-99; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 17; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 4-5, 7-8; Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 283-84; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 407-8; Ussher, *A body of divinitie*, 106.

Secker sardonically commented on the oddness of the Pope calling “a pollution” that “which was instituted before corruption,” or calling an “impurity” that “which was ordained in a state of innocence,” or making “that to be a sinne which they make to be a sacrament.”⁷⁷ Since wedlock was founded in paradise, all people—no matter their order, condition, state, or calling—could freely enjoy it without any fear of pollution.

To defend the lasting primacy of Genesis for marriage theology, English Protestants sought to demonstrate the continuity of matrimonial dignity throughout Scripture. Establishing their convictions was even more important, since the entrance of sin could be employed to argue against the normative functioning of Genesis.⁷⁸ The wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12) supplied Protestants with additional support for canonically linking God’s affirmation and blessing of wedlock across Scripture. Pointing to Christ’s deliberate choice to be present at the ceremony, Daniel Rogers, Robert Clever, Lancelot Andrewes, Matthew Parker, and Taylor believed that Jesus’ action had not only honored that wedding but the state of matrimony itself and affirmed its goodness for all people.⁷⁹ However, some English clerics ventured beyond utilizing this passage as simply additional scriptural evidence to affirm marriage. Indeed, several asserted that Jesus’s attendance at the ceremony served to reaffirm God’s original blessing of marriage in Eden. Thomas Carter asserted that by gracing this nuptial feast with his presence, Christ himself had confirmed “on earth what his Father had done in paradise.”⁸⁰ Echoing Carter, several English Protestants interpreted the Cana wedding as evidence that the honorable

⁷⁷Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 17-18.

⁷⁸Perkins for instance sought to draw attention to how God’s spoken word of blessing in Gen 1:28-29 was repeated in Gen 9:3 after the entrance of sin (Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 544).

⁷⁹Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 99; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 159, 354; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 6; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 429; Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring,” 222.

⁸⁰Thomas Carter, *Carters Christian common vvealth; or, Domesticall dutyes deciphered* (London: Printed by Tho: Purfoot, 1627), 14.

nature of wedlock spanned across the breadth of Scripture.⁸¹ Marriage should still be treated as a commendable and suitable state for all people, since its divine author continued to positively affirm it even after the entrance of sin.⁸² Therefore, many English Protestants viewed Genesis 1-2 as providing Scripture's normative teaching on the state of matrimony, and it was through this hermeneutical lens that they interpreted, as well as subordinated, all other texts touching upon marriage and celibacy.

The exegetical mining of Genesis 1-2 extended to glean evidence for its superior benefits vis-à-vis celibacy. The categorization of marriage and celibacy as *adiaphora* did not mean English Protestants refrained from evaluating the two states by comparing their relative merits. Authors employed God's institution and blessing of wedlock in Genesis to extrapolate wedlock's "relative superiority" over celibacy.⁸³ Several key arguments frequently arose in the conduct books, sermons, and treatises of the period to assert matrimony's tangible benefits. First, the time and place of wedlock's institution did much to commend its honor and benefits, since God ordained it during humanity's innocence in paradise and prior to the ruinous corruption of the fall.⁸⁴

⁸¹Isaac Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus a view of the everlasting gospel, or, the souls eying of Jesus as carrying on the great work of mans salvation from first to last* (London: Printed by Edward Mottershed for Nathanael Webb and William Grantham), 394; Bradshaw, "A Mariage Feast" 5-6; Niccholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, 12-13; Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage*, 4-5; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:71-72; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 11-12; Cosin, *Sermons*, Works, 1:56-57; Sandys, "Marriage is honourable in all," 278-79.

⁸²See also Doriani, "The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640," 126. For a similar discussion on the importance Puritans laid on God's role in instituting marriage and the timing of this before the fall of humanity, see Schnucker, "Views of Selected Puritans, 1560-1630, on Marriage and Sexuality," 46-47, 60-63, and 65-66.

⁸³Doriani, "The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640," 130. Doriani pointed out that no Puritan would argue for the absolute superiority of marriage, since they acknowledged Paul's clear testimony that the single state could be preferable at some times and for certain reasons (1 Cor 7). Nevertheless, many argued for its superiority on the basis of comparing its benefits to those of the single life (*ibid*).

⁸⁴Carter, *Carters Christian common vvealth*, 2; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 4; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 97, 99, 156; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 228-29; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 210; Griffith, *Bethel*, 19; Hall, *Resolutions and decisions*, 285; Ness, *A Christians walk and work on earth*, 220; Niccholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, 1, 3; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 11; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, Works, 1:236; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 6; Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 188; Shaw, *The True Christians Test*, 236-37, 276; Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage*, 2-4; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:58, 59-60; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 584; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 22;

Swinncok illustrated this principle quite winsomely when he observed, “Man *struck a Covenant* with a Woman, before he *broke his Covenant* with his God. He was *married* to a Wife, before he was *mard* by the wicked one.”⁸⁵ It seemed utterly illogical for a state of life established in perfect purity to be anything less than honorable and beneficial for all people. Second, English Protestants drew attention to the scriptural note that all three persons of the Trinity paused for serious counsel and reflection together prior to creating Adam and Eve.⁸⁶ They sought to show how the distinction between man and woman, and thus the idea of marriage itself, was an outgrowth of God’s intentional and thoughtful wisdom. Third, English Protestants agreed with Paul that the act of man and woman becoming one flesh in wedlock served as a tangible symbol of Christ’s union with his church.⁸⁷ That symbol spiritually benefitted the married by allowing them to experientially know the loving and faithful disposition of Jesus Christ towards them far better than single persons could.⁸⁸ Finally, God had instituted marriage to populate the world and thus serve as the foundation of all life, both in society and the Church.⁸⁹

Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 145-46; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 1, 11; Cosin, *Sermons*, Works, 1:48-49; Sanderson, “The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum,” 284; Sandys, “Marriage is honourable in all,” 278-79; Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring,” 222.

⁸⁵Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:60.

⁸⁶Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 210-11; Griffith, *Bethel*, 19; Ness, *A Christians walk and work on earth*, 222; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 11; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 6.

⁸⁷Baynes, *An entire commentary vpon the vvhole epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians*, 669, 670; Bunyan, *Christian behavior*, 51; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 94-96; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 424; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 212-13; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 116-17; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 16; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:58; Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 124; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 9; Cosin, *Sermons*, Works, 1:49; Sandys, “Marriage is honourable in all,” 279; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 407; Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring,” 223-24.

⁸⁸Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213.

⁸⁹Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 13; Corbet, *Matrimoniall purity*, 229, 231; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 17; Griffith, *Bethel*, 20; Greenham argued that parents should procreate with the focus of not simply having physical children (“carnal generation”) but also strive to see that their children are spiritually regenerated also (Greenham, *A godlie exhortation*, fols. aiiii[r-v]); Griffith, *Bethel*, 20, 21; Hieron, *The bridegroom*, 10; Hieron, *The mariage-blessing*, 69-71; Ness, *A Christians walk and work on earth*, 215; Nicholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, 5, 12-13; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 11-12; Thomas Pickering, “The Epistle Dedicatorie,” in *Christian oeconomie, or, A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a familie according to the Scriptures*, trans. Thomas Pickering (London: Felix Kyngston, 1609), fols. A2r-v; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, Works, 1:236,

William Robinson noted this dual benefit of wedlock when he taught that God has ordained it not only to profit the “natural life” of humans but also their “spiritual life” as well.⁹⁰ The creation account yielded considerable evidence to support the relative superiority of wedlock, yet English Protestants did not reject the advantages offered by the celibate life. Rather, when the two were juxtaposed, the advantages of single life clearly were “too light to be compared with honest marriage.”⁹¹

English Protestants utilized many of arguments for the relative superiority of marriage when they propounded the chief purposes of wedlock.⁹² The second Prayer Book of Edward VI (1552) enumerated three “causes” or purposes for which God had ordained marriage: the procreation and raising of godly offspring, as a remedy against lust for those without the gift of continence, and the spouse’s mutual help, comfort, and companionship.⁹³ All three ends of marriage found support among English Protestants.⁹⁴

242; Rogers, *Matrimonial honour*, 7; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 10-11; Daniel Tuteville, *St. Pauls threefold cord vherewith are severally combined, the mutuall oeconomicall duties, betwixt husband. wife. parent. childe. master. Servant* (London: Printed by Anne Griffin for Henry Seile, 1635), 1; Whately, *A bride-bush*, 90; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 22-23; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 429; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 14-15; Samuel Cradock, *Knowledge and practice, or, A plain discourse of the chief things necessary to be known, believ'd, and practiced in order to salvation useful for private families* (London: Printed for William Grantham, Henry Mortlock, William Miller 1673), pt. 2, 7-8; John Goodman, *The old religion demonstrated in its principles and described in the life and practice thereof* (London: Printed by J. M. for R. Royston, 1686), 283-84; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 420; Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring,” 219, 222, 223.

⁹⁰Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, Works, 1:236.

⁹¹Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213.

⁹²I will be using the term “ends,” “causes,” and “purposes” interchangeably. For a discussion of Puritan thought on the ends of marriage, see James Turner Johnson, “English Puritan Thought on the Ends of Marriage,” *Church History* 38, no. 4 (December 1969): 429-36; Johnson, *A Society Ordained by God*, 51-119. For a critique of Johnson’s views, see Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 476-78.

⁹³See the full exposition of the purposes for marriage in the second Prayer Book: “One was the procreation of children, to be brought up in the feare and nurtoure of the Lorde, and praise of God. Secondly, it was ordeined for a remedy against synne, and to avoide fornication, that suche persones as have not the gifte of continencie might marry and kepe themselves undefiled members of Christes body. Thirdly, for the mutual societie, helpe, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperitie, and adversitie” (*The boke of common praier, and administracion of the sacramentes, and other rites and ceremonies in the Churche of Englande* [London: in officina Richardi Graftoni: Regij impressoris, 1552], 113v).

⁹⁴Thomas Adams affirmed the creation of Eve for procreation and mutual help but also added two additional reasons: for replenishing the church and to be the mother of Christ (Thomas Adams, *Meditations upon some part of the Creed*, in *The workes of Tho: Adams Being the summe of his sermons*,

Thomas Gataker reasoned that if man required a help mate for his labor before the ingress of sin, when labor was pleasing rather than taxing, then how much more did he need a helper now that his work had “become toilesome and burdensome?”⁹⁵ Gouge argued for the essential role of domestic life by likening it to a “Bee-hive” for raising up swarms of bees that go out into the church and society. The individual family functioned as the foundation of all society, since it constituted “a little Church,” “a Little Commonwealth,” and a “school” for training. Thus, the well-ordering of the family tended to the well-ordering of society and the church.⁹⁶ Finally, even though marriage only came to serve as a remedy against lust after Adam and Eve’s transgression,⁹⁷ Gataker pointed out that the sexual desires of men and women stemmed from the natural propensity and disposition God had given all human beings. Sexual incontinence was simply the corruption of humanity’s natural, God-given inclination. Referencing the origins of sexual attraction in Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib, Gataker explained that “[t]he *man* misseth his *rib*, and

meditations, and other diuine and morall discourses. Collected and published in one intire volume. VVith additions of some new, and emendations of the old [London: Printed by Tho. Harper for Iohn Grismand, 1630], 1134); Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 3; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 97-98, 156-59; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 227; Gataker, “A Wife in Deed,” 160-65; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 211-12; Griffith, *Bethel*, 223-25, 237-44; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 13-14; Secker did not explicitly acknowledge mutual help as an end of marriage; however his subsequent comments reveal that he affirmed this as a part of God’s purpose to make Adam a helper (Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 20-23, 25-28); Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 10-19; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:58; Wing lacked an explicit statement that marriage was for mutual support and companionship (Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 65), but his statements elsewhere on the blessings and comforts provided by a wife show that he never denied it either (ibid., 20-32); Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 429; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 14-18; Sandys, “Marriage is honourable in all,” 289-91; Towerson omitted marriage as a remedy against sin, but this should not necessarily be seen as a rejection of this purpose, since his purpose in the treatise was to exposit the Church of England catechism rather than reject certain parts of it (Towerson, *An explication of the catechism of the Church of England*, 370); Ussher, *A body of diuinitie*, 106.

⁹⁵Gataker, “A Wife in Deed,” 161.

⁹⁶Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 16-17. Gouge’s comments reflect the attitudes of several authors who introduced a slight variation by adding to procreation the benefit of marriage in replenishing the church: Adams, *Meditations upon some part of the Creed*, Works, 1134; Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 3; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 211; Griffith, *Bethel*, 237-39; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 13-14; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 21-23; Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 65; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 15.

⁹⁷Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 14; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:58; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 15; Ussher, *A body of diuinitie*, 106.

seeketh to recover it againe, and the *woman* would bee in her old place againe, *under the man's arme or wing*, from whence at first she was taken.”⁹⁸ Because the natural sexual inclinations could rage to such violent extremes, the remedy of marriage should “bee esteemed as a singular benefit and *blessing*” for those lacking the gift of chastity.⁹⁹ English Protestants rooted all three ends of marriage in God’s design to bless humanity and the world through the estate of wedlock. When compared to the advantages afforded by celibacy, the three benefits for which God ordained marriage seemed far superior.

A smaller group English Protestants argued for the relative superiority of the single state. They did not deny the benefits of wedlock discussed above, nor did they view virginity to be inherently more virtuous. Rather, they asserted that the pragmatic convenience of celibacy meant less troublesome cares and far greater freedom to serve God and others. First of all, non-clerical authors such as Thomas Cogan, Francis Bacon, and Thomas Culpeper combined scriptural, practical, and classical pagan arguments to stress the single-minded focus upon the public good that celibacy afforded.¹⁰⁰ Bacon mused that “He that hath *Wife* and *Children* has given Hostages to Fortune; For they are Impediments, to great Enterprises Certainly the best works and of greatest merit to the Publike, have proceeded from the *unmarried*, or *Childless Men*.”¹⁰¹ Bacon also noted that his observation had a particular relevance to clergy and their ability to sacrificially

⁹⁸Gataker, “A Wife in Deed,” 165.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Francis Bacon, *The essayes or counsels, ciuill and morall, of Francis Lo. Verulam, Viscount St. Alban* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviiland for Hanna Barret, 1625), 32, 36; Culpeper, *Morall discourses and essays*, 89-90; Thomas Cogan based his evaluation more upon Scripture and less upon classical authors (Thomas Cogan, *The hauen of health chiefly made for the comfort of students, and consequently for all those that haue a care of their health, amplified vpon fiue wordes of Hippocrates, written Epid. 6* [London: Printed by Melch. Bradvwood for Iohn Norton, 1605], 247-48).

¹⁰¹Bacon, *The essayes*, 36. Bacon did qualify this by reasoning that those with children often express the “greatest” concern for “future times,” since they recognized their “dearest pledges[children]” would inherit that future; also, he observed that some of those who choose a single life were only selfishly concerned with themselves and “account future Times, Impertinences” (ibid., 36-37).

give for others: “A *Single Life* doth well with Church men: For Charity will hardly water the Ground, where it must first fill a Poole.”¹⁰²

A few English Protestant clergymen concurred regarding the relative superiority of the single life, albeit on a more scriptural grounding. They concluded that celibacy was by far the better estate, due to the freedom it allowed for serving God without the distraction of familial cares. Richard Rogers counseled Christians to only pursue marriage if their “minds and bodies are hailed” and “distracted” by sexual lusts so that “they cannot serve God with peace.”¹⁰³ Citing 1 Corinthians 7:32, Rogers based his rationale in the scriptural truth that single people were able to “*best care for the things of the Lord*” and how to please him.¹⁰⁴ In contrast, spouses must shoulder the extra burden of domestic cares without any “especial grace” to help them, so that considerable coldness and neglect of God takes root in them “before thei be aware.”¹⁰⁵ Even though Rogers married twice, despite the “distractions” of wedlock, he nevertheless highly admired those able to live contentedly in a single state.¹⁰⁶ Parker, Hall, William Fulke,

¹⁰²Bacon, *The essayes*, 37. Bacon’s observations challenged two key assumptions of English Protestantism and Protestantism in general. First, by stressing the public good done by single persons, he questioned the fundamental Protestant assumption, noted by Steven Ozment, that the home and family was the “superior context for the service of God and man” (Steven Ozment, “Marriage and Ministry in the Protestant Churches,” in *Celibacy in the Church*, eds. William Bassett and Peter Huizing, Religion in the Seventies 78 [New York: Herder and Herder, 1972], 54). Second, Bacon’s observation that charity would prove more difficult for a married pastor pointed to a weakness in Protestant propaganda regarding the symbiotic relationship between marriage and ministry. Far from viewing wedlock as a hindrance, Ozment noted how Protestants stressed how clerical marriage was “a boon” to ministry by providing ministers with a “warm-up in love” which made possible a “more skillful exercise of love toward others” (ibid., 46-47).

¹⁰³Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 188. See also Richard Rogers, *The Diary of Richard Rogers*, in *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, ed. M. M. Knappen, Studies in Church History 2 (Chicago: American Society of Church History, 1933), 57, 95.

¹⁰⁴Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 188. At one point in his diary, Rogers noted the distractions married life created for Christians: “We complaine that many thinges are amisse in or lives, but we can see no cause of it. And this is a veray comon thing for good men that when thei come to have dealings, occupyeinges, and families much of their delight is employed upon them, which was wont to be geven to the lord, and yet all was thought to be too little” (Rogers, *The Diary of Richard Rogers*, 57).

¹⁰⁵Rogers, *The Diary of Richard Rogers*, 57.

¹⁰⁶Rogers apparently felt that he did not have the capacity to live contentedly in the single life, for he married and then resolved to remarry after his wife’s death, even though he recognized that marriage would cast household cares on him, cause “neglect of study,” and involve him in the “care and looking after children” (ibid., 73-74). After meeting with the Puritan minister John Knewstubs, Rogers mentioned how he desired to “better mine estate” by his example, and one of the things he commended in Knewstubs

Thomas Fuller, Richard Allestree and Andrewes argued similarly for the comparative superiority of celibacy.¹⁰⁷ In their evaluation, while matrimony was indeed lawful and honorable for all, celibacy nevertheless would prove more expedient in serving and glorifying God for those with the gift of chastity. Indeed, Parker and Hall wrote lengthy treatises vigorously defending the marriage of clergyman while simultaneously asserting that chastity would be better for ministers if they were able to remain chaste in the single state.¹⁰⁸

In sum, many English Protestants interpreted God's direct institution of marriage as Scripture's normative teaching on the relative supremacy of matrimony over celibacy. However, two key issues remained that could prove problematic. First, the gift of chastity¹⁰⁹ was a key point of concern for English Protestants in light of Roman Catholic teaching on the subject. Second, Christ (Matt 19:10-12) and Paul (1 Cor 7) seemed to esteem and commended the celibate state for the greater convenience it provided. Those two issues threatened the assumptions upon which English Protestants defended marriage as a lawful and honorable estate for all people, and the next section

was his "contentation in a sol lif" (Rogers, *The Diary of Richard Rogers*, 95).

¹⁰⁷Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 274; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38-39, 54, 109, 339-40; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, fols. 11r and 18v, 128 (misprinted as 136), 249; Allestree, *The ladies calling in two parts*, 156-57, 239-40; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 453.

¹⁰⁸Hall declared, "Wee doe therefore from our hearts honour true Virginitie, as the most excellent estate of life, which is incident to fraile Humanity; . . . ; Neither doe wee thinke that the Earth affords anything more glorious, than Eunuchisme for the Kingdom of Heaven; which is therefore commanded by our Saviour, not as a thing meerely arbitrarie, by way of advice, but of charge to the able. . . every man therefore (not Ecclesiastiques only) should labour, and strive to aspire unto this estate, as the better, using all holy means both to attayne, and continue it" (Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38-39). Parker wrote, "Remember this also, good reader, that we do not deny . . . that virginity is an excellent vertue, and that pure chastitie and single life without hypocrisie, is more to be wished to priests and ministers in the churche, than is marriage, considering both the states in themselves. But the question is, whether to them that cannot containe, mariage were not more meet to be granted" (Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, fol. 11r). This quote calls for qualification of Nancy Basler Bjorkland's conclusion that Parker was an "unqualified defender of priestly matrimony" (Nancy Basler Bjorkland, "'A Godly Wyfe Is an Helper': Matthew Parker and the Defense of Clerical Marriage," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 2 [Summer 2003]: 347).

¹⁰⁹I will be using the phrases "gift of chastity" and "gift of sexual continence" interchangeably as synonyms for the supernatural ability to remain chaste as a celibate person.

will answer how they responded to Scriptural and Roman Catholic teaching on the gift of chastity.

The Gift of Chastity and Christian Liberty

The opinions of English Protestants diverged when they considered whether and how the gift of chastity altered the universal lawfulness of marriage. On one end of the spectrum, a group of clergymen unequivocally asserted that those with the gift of chastity could marry. On the opposite end, a group of authors denied their liberty to marry, since Christians divinely enabled to live in the more expedient state of celibacy were obligated to do so. In the middle of the spectrum were those who tentatively affirmed the conclusions of both groups. The result was a peculiar tension in the pastoral advice of many clergymen as they stressed the liberty of all people to marry and simultaneously counseled Christians not to marry if they possessed the gift of chastity.

English Protestants rooted their discussions of the gift of chastity in Matthew 19:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 7. In the former passage, Jesus responded to his disciples' exclamation that, in light of the strict divorce laws expected of Christians, it would be "better not to marry" and remain single instead (Matt 19:10). While not wholly rebuking his followers, Jesus qualified their remarks by pointing out "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given" (Matt 19:11). English Protestants expressed particular interest in identifying the persons whom Jesus described as having "made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:12)." These "eunuchs" were "able to receive" the disciples' exclamation that "it is better not to marry" (Matt 19:10, 12), since they had received the divine gift of chastity which enabled them to live chastely without marriage.¹¹⁰ The existence of this unique gift was then more

¹¹⁰Bury, *A help to holy walking*, 261; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 94-96; Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 253; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 130-31; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 231, 233; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 314-16, 411-12; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ*, 38-39; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 182-84; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38-39, 54; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 164-65; Perkins,

explicitly affirmed and explained by Paul as a divine blessing given to certain individuals (1 Cor 7:7).

Nearly all English Protestants, even those who advocated the relative superiority of celibacy, contended that only those possessing the gift of chastity should elect to remain single. Their polemics reflected a fourfold denial of Roman Catholic teaching on the vow of perpetual celibacy and its relationship to the gift of chastity. First, they rejected claims that the vow of lifelong chastity, as an evangelical counsel, was especially meritorious toward salvation, since votaries performed a voluntary work above and beyond the duties compulsory for all Christians.¹¹¹ This doctrine clearly contradicted justification by grace through faith, and only the spiritualist sects ventured that far. Second, English Protestants regarded the gift of sexual continence as exceptionally rare, rather than readily available to any who sought it. Since Scripture described it as a special endowment given by God to only a select few, it could never be obtained or merited through striving, even if one deeply desired it.¹¹² Third, due to the divine origin of the

The whole treatise of the cases of conscience, 420; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 11-12, 49; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 17; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 430; Cosin, *Sermons*, Works, 1:56; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 420 and bk. 3, 335; Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 220-21; Towerson, *An explication of the catechism of the Church of England*, 369; Trenchfield, *A cap of grey hairs for a green head*, 108-9.

¹¹¹Adams, "How may Child-bearing Women be most supported, and encouraged against, in, and under the hazard of their Travail?" 645-46; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 4, 95-96, 390-92; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 233-34; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 39, 274; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 54; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, Works, 1:236-37; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 161; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 418-19; Shaw, *The True Christians Test*, 234; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 590-95; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 3; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 140-45, 146, 149; Terry, *The second part of the trial of truth*, 37.

The bifurcation between Scripture's binding commands and "evangelical counsels," such as perpetual chastity, constituted a key ideological foundation of medieval monasticism and stretched back further to early Christian ascetics and the first desert monks (Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 2-3).

¹¹²Adams, *Meditations upon some part of the Creed*, Works, 1134; Bury, *A help to holy walking*, 261; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 95, 388; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 231, 233; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 315-16; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 273; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 34-35; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 184, 211; Griffith, *Bethel*, 20, 22, 23-24, 228; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 39-40, 46-47; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, fols. 18r, 64, 128 (misprinted as 136), 141; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 17; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 161-63; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 415-17; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 16-17; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 589-90; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 67.

gift, God was responsible for sustaining it in a person and could choose to withdraw it whenever he chose to do so.¹¹³ Finally, in place of binding vows, English Protestants tended to favor simply resolving to remain single in order to more freely serve and worship God.¹¹⁴ Even the few clergymen who supported the legitimacy of perpetual vows of chastity nevertheless concurred that only individuals assured of the gift of continence should invoke such a declaration.¹¹⁵ Thus, despite rigorously critiquing the theology of works based righteousness underlying perpetual vows of chastity, English Protestants

¹¹³Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 95; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 130; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, fol. 18v; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 161-63; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49-50; Vincent implied this when he counseled people that had the gift of chastity to remain single (but only in times of persecution), so long as they continued to possess the gift (Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 598-601).

¹¹⁴Adams, "How may Child-bearing Women be most supported, and encouraged against, in, and under the hazard of their Travail?" 645-46; Bury, *A help to holy walking*, 260-61, 264; Clarkson illustrated this indictment well with his lengthy recitation of the sinful practices of clergy who lived blatant lives of fornication, with the churches approval, despite their vows of chastity (Clarkson, *The practical divinity of the papists*, 348-57); Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 130-31; Corbet, *Matrimoniall purity*, 228; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 315-16, 404, 412; Fulke also asserted that only those assured of the gift of chastity up to their life's end may lawfully vow to remain celibate, and without this assurance no person may vow perpetual continence lawfully (Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 39, and see also 273); Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31, 34-35; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38, 40, 271; Hall, *Resolutions and decisions*, 193, 195; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 17; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 163-65; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 420; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49-50; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 598-601.

¹¹⁵Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 316, 404, 412; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ*, 39, 191; Hooker, *Of the lavves of ecclesiasticall politie. The fift booke*, 463, 499. Hall condoned perpetual vows of chastity as long as they were not entered into rashly and one could be assured of the gift of continence (Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38, 40, 56, 271; Hall, *Resolutions and decisions*, 192-201). Smith also seemed to approve vows of chastity when he asserted that if a virgin made a vow it should not be kept unless the father approves it (Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage* 35).

On the other end of the spectrum were those Protestants who explicitly rejected the perpetual vow of chastity altogether. Perkins argued that a person could resolve to remain single, so long as they had the gift of chastity but should not surrender their liberty through a vow, since it was not in an individual's power to maintain this gift (Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 161-63; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 407, 408-22). Rogers agreed with Perkins that while resolving to live in the single state was good, provided one had the gift, one should not vow, since God could alter the inclinations of a person's mind and body (Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49-50). Vincent refrained from promoting perpetual vows of chastity but only counseled that those with the gift of continence should remain single (in times of persecution), so long as God continued the gift to them (Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 598-601). For similar comments, see Bury, *A help to holy walking*, 259-64; Corbet, *Matrimoniall purity*, 233, 236; Allestree, *The ladies calling in two parts*, 157; Allestree, *The whole duty of man*, 156-57; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 16; Ussher, *A body of divinitie* 106, 284. Andrewes considered the chastity of virginity to be better than the chastity found in marriage (Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 429, 453) and approved of the single state for those with the gift of sexual continence (ibid., 453), but did not explicitly approve of perpetual vows. Cogan expressed a view that was similar to Andrewes (Cogan, *The hauen of health*, 246-51).

continued to affirm the practical advantages of celibacy if God miraculously enabled a person to live in the single state.

The twofold insistence that the gift of chastity was not only rare but also a precondition to remaining single helped English Protestants resolve the tension between the lawfulness of marriage and the expediency of celibacy. Scripture's commendation of celibacy only applied to those few whom God had empowered to live in that state for the sake of the kingdom. The vast majority of humanity received the gift of marriage to quench their burning sexual passions. English clergymen overwhelmingly saw the matrimonial remedy as not merely a suggestion, but a clear call and command from God to marry for everyone lacking sexual continence.¹¹⁶ For such Christians, living purely in marriage, despite all its additional burdens, was far better than fornication or adultery. As Corbet reasoned, wedlock was certainly less convenient than the single state "in "divers respects," by being less "commodious to the Christian life" and "the freer exercise of godliness,"¹¹⁷ yet the necessity "to avoid fornication" bore far more decisive weight.¹¹⁸ While celibacy might prove more expedient in the sense of freedom from worldly cares,

¹¹⁶Adams, *Meditations upon some part of the Creed*, Works, 1134; Bury, *A help to holy walking*, 260-61; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 95-96, 386, 388; Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 254; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 128-30; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 226, 231, 232, 233, 236; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 272, 273; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 34-35; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 184, 211, 213; Greenham, *A Short Forme of Catechising*, 78; Griffith, Bethel, 18, 20, 21, 23-24, 228; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38-40, 271, 339-40; Ness, *A Christians walk and work on earth*, 219-20; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 12, 15, 17, 143; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, fols. 21v, 30, 142-43, 249, 287; Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 161-65; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 415-17, 420; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49-50; Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 188; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 16; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 588-89, 600; Whately, *A bride-bush*, 13; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 67; Whately, *A pithie, short, and methodicall opening of the Ten commandments...* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Thomas Pauier and Leonard Greene, 1622), 165; Allestree, *The whole duty of man*, 173; Lancelot Andrewes, *The morall law expounded ... that is, the long-expected, and much-desired worke of Bishop Andrewes upon the Ten commandments: being his lectures many yeares since in Pembroch-Hall Chappell, in Cambridge* (London: Printed for Michael Sparke, Robert Milbourne, Richard Cotes, and Andrew Crooke, 1642), 783; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 455; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandments*, 140; Cogan, *The hauen of health*, 251; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 215; Field, *Of the Church fiue bookes*, 463; Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 287-88; Sandys, "Marriage is honourable in all," 280-81; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 335; Terry, *Theologicall logicke*, 180, 221-22; Ussher, *A body of divinitie*, 277.

¹¹⁷Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 228.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 232.

living in sexual sin was a far more deleterious burden to carry. By limiting the biblical commendations of celibacy to those possessing the gift of chastity, English Protestants had defended their commendation of marriage to all people, without violating the principle of expediency. Nevertheless, their efforts to apply their principles to those possessing sexual continence proved more challenging and varied.

The critical point of divergence among English Protestants concerned whether those endowed with the gift of chastity still possessed liberty to marry. On one end of the spectrum were those authors who unequivocally asserted that individuals with the gift of chastity could indeed marry. Perkins contended that “all orders and sorts” of people were free to marry “without exception,” even those God had enabled to remain chaste in the single state, and Thomas Pickering concurred with him.¹¹⁹ Fulke pointed out that since God had given no injunction regarding celibacy, every person was free to use the liberty God had given them, “yea though he hath [the] gift of continencie.”¹²⁰ Likewise, Gouge and Richard Stock pointed out that possessing the gift of chastity did not bar a person from matrimony, since other valid reasons existed for marrying—such as procreation and mutual support—apart from the need to avoid sexual immorality.¹²¹ They stressed that the Apostle Paul never commanded celibacy but only commended and advised it to those able to restrain their sexual desires in the single state. If certain individuals possessed the gift and saw “just occasion” to refrain from marrying, then Paul “perswaded” them “to use their liberty and keepe themselves free.”¹²² But to Gouge and Stock, such people

¹¹⁹Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 14-15; Pickering wrote, “This estate is free to all men, even to such as have the gift of continencie; and for those who have not the power to abstaine, it is expressly enjoyed by God as necessarie” (Pickering, “The Epistle Dedicatorie,” fol. A5r).

¹²⁰Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 15. Fulke went on to cite Paul as justification for this principle, since Paul was unmarried and had the right to exercise his liberty and take a wife as the rest of the Apostles did (ibid.).

¹²¹Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213; Stock argued that possessing the gift did not prove a hindrance to marrying, because procreation, which helped beget a godly seed for the church, was the greatest end of marriage (Stock, *A learned and very usefull commentary upon the whole prophesie of Malachy*, 135-36).

¹²²Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213-14; Stock, *A learned and very usefull commentary upon*

were under no obligation to do so. Finally, Thomas Comber opined that wedlock “was honorable to all” but only commanded for Christians lacking the ability to remain continent outside wedlock.¹²³ All the above authors recognized that possessing the gift of continence enabled Christians to more expediently worship and serve God in the state, yet they saw such individuals as under no obligation to forego marriage.

Corbet and Clever agreed that Christians possessing the gift of chastity were free to marry but also felt their remarkable gift should ideally be used to live a life free from domestic cares. Clever cited Jesus (Matt 19:12) and Paul (1 Cor 7:27) to argue that persons possessing sexual continence “are called and counselled to chastitie” as long as they have that gift.¹²⁴ At the same time, however, he cited Paul as evidence that such individuals who married nonetheless did not transgress by doing so.¹²⁵ Using the same texts, Corbet postulated that individuals receiving the gift of chastity may be called, in periods of ecclesiastical distress, to forego wedlock in order to devote “themselves more freely in serving God, either in a publick or private calling.”¹²⁶ It was only in the sense of “moral convenience,” Corbet reasoned, that celibacy was “vertuous,” since virtue consisted in choosing “that which is most commodious to Christian life” and avoiding all encumbrances to “the freer exercise of godliness.”¹²⁷ However, he also acknowledged that not all individuals endowed with the gift may be called to celibacy, since many of them may in fact be called to glorify God in wedlock because of “some special reason.”

the whole prophesie of Malachy, 136.

¹²³Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 16.

¹²⁴Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 130. As evidence, Clever cited Christ who acknowledged that, “*All men cannot receive this thing* [being a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven], *save they to whom it is given*,” and if a person can receive this advice then they should receive it (Matt 19:12). Citing Paul, Clever asserted that it was good to follow his model and remain single (1 Cor 7:7) and that if you were loosed from a wife do not seek one (1 Cor 7:27) (ibid., 130-31).

¹²⁵Ibid., 131.

¹²⁶Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 233.

¹²⁷Ibid., 228.

Therefore, since relatively few received the gift, logic dictated they “should make use of it” (but not under a vow) “for those holy and good ends which are best obtained by it.”¹²⁸ And yet if they chose to enter wedlock they did not sin, even though the single state was “more expedient.”¹²⁹ Both Corbet and Clever reflected a tension between affirming the universal lawfulness of marriage without exceptions and exhorting Christian to live in the most expedient state.

Cartwright reflected some continuity with Corbet and Clever but with a key difference. Cartwright argued that Paul had given a general rule that all virgins may marry, to which no exception existed since the Apostle had given none (1 Cor 7:27).¹³⁰ Furthermore, the decision to remain celibate was not always commendable for persons with the gift of chastity. Consequently, its “preferment” before matrimony was not absolute, but depended on “the ends and circumstances” accompanying the two states of life.¹³¹ Nevertheless, when Jesus commended the value of remaining celibate (Matt 19:12), his “counsel” still carried the weight of necessary obedience, just as all Scripture did. Cartwright was seeking to counter the traditional distinction between the commands of Scripture binding upon all Christians and the voluntary “evangelical counsels,” such as celibacy.¹³² Therefore, though Jesus’ commendation of celibacy did not bind all people, since not all could obey it, it was still an injunction for those who had been enabled to submit to it through the gift of chastity. If Christians possessed the gift of chastity and

¹²⁸Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 233.

¹²⁹Ibid., 228.

¹³⁰Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 391.

¹³¹Ibid., 4. Later, Cartwright reasoned that just as eating or not eating certain foods did not commend a person to God, so to neither the single state nor wedlock, considered in themselves, commended people to God. Rather, just as the circumstances of time and place might make it better to take meat rather than to abstain from it, so to diverse considerations might make it more acceptable that a person marry rather than remain celibate (ibid., 95-96)

¹³²Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 2-3. Fulke also attacked this same distinction between counsels and commands (Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament*, 39, 274).

foresaw that wedlock “will bee a snare” or prevent them from the “better service of the Lord,” then they clearly sin by refusing to heed Christ’s “counsel.”¹³³ Hall, Vincent, and Caleb Trenchfield concurred with Cartwright concerning the moral obligation of all people endowed with the gift to choose the path of most expedient service to God by refraining from wedlock.¹³⁴ What unified all of them was their conviction that Christians who had been enabled to live celibate were duty bound to do so, so long as celibacy was the most advantageous state of life for them. Refusing to do so constituted a transgression against God that should not be taken lightly. For those with the gift of chastity, obedience to the principle of expedience trumped a Christian’s liberty to marry.

Other English Protestants constrained Christians’ liberty to marry by arguing that people first had to prove they lacked the gift of chastity. Christians could only marry once they had exhausted all efforts to mortify their lusts in the single state. M. M Knappen and Richard Greaves have briefly noted this tendency among Elizabethan Puritans, yet the attitude was more prevalent than their limited investigations indicated.¹³⁵ Richard Greenham provided a concrete example through his advice. He once responded to a man considering “whether it were good to marry,” since he felt strong inclinations toward it when “concupiscence pricked him,” while on occasions when he felt no such

¹³³Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 96.

¹³⁴Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38, 46-47; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 601; Trenchfield, *A cap of grey hairs for a green head*, 108-9.

¹³⁵M. M. Knappen asserted that while Puritans acknowledged marriage as a divinely ordained institution, it was not “for the pure enjoyment of mankind, however, but only as a remedy for lust . . . for there was another and a better—the gift of having no necessity This emancipated the blessed beneficiary from worldly cares and left him free for the service of the gospel”; marriage therefore was typically looked on solely “as a last resort, when it became clearly evident that one had not the coveted gift of celibacy” (M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939], 452-53). See also M. M. Knappen, *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, Studies in Church History 2 (Chicago: American Society of Church History, 1933), 4, 21. Richard L. Greaves argued that a “strong minority” of Puritans focused on the role of marriage “as a remedy for incontinency” (Richard L. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981], 118). I am indebted to Knappen for pointing me toward both Richard Greenham and Richard Rogers and the significance of their opinions; however, the following analysis is my own, based upon a more comprehensive analysis of this issue among English Protestants.

temptation, he believed abstinence from wedlock to be quite possible. Greenham advised the individual to only pursue marriage after exhausting all other means of self-denial, since it proved he lacked the gift of chastity and was called to marry.

Many come hastily into that calling, not using the means of trying their estate thoroughly before; as namely, whether they by prayer, fasting, and avoiding all occasions of concupiscence, have the gift of chastity or no? Many use some of the meanes, and not all: many use all the meanes, but a small time: therefore it is good to use first the meanes, not part of them, but all of them [and] not for a while, but long. If so be that all these things will not prevaile, attend upon the Lord's ordinance, and waite when the Lord shall give just occasion of using that estate, to his glorie and our comfort.¹³⁶

The most significant aspect of Greenham's counsel concerns how he believed Christian liberty should function in the decision to marry. He readily affirmed the goodness of marriage as an institution ordained by God for raising godly offspring and mutual support just as all other English Protestants did.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, those purposes alone did not serve as sufficient causes for marrying. The primary justification came through discovering one lacked the gift of chastity which occurred after exhausting all possible means of suppressing lust in the single life.¹³⁸ While Greenham's approach to marrying did not serve as the standard paradigm, as Knappen unduly generalized,¹³⁹ it did find

¹³⁶Greenham, *Graue Counsels and godly obseruations*, Works, 21.

¹³⁷While Knappen seemed correct in asserting that Elizabethan Puritans emphasized marriage as a remedy against sin, he exaggerated when he claimed they thought of marriage "only as a remedy for lust" (Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, 452-53). Greenham was intensely concerned that couples marry not for carnal reasons, such as the slaking of lust, but for the spiritual motivation of raising godly offspring (Greenham, *A godlie exhortation*, fols. Aiiii[r-v] and Biii[v]-iiii[r]). He also emphasized marriage for the purpose of mutual support, comfort, and furthering one another's holiness and piety (Richard Greenham, *A Treatise of Contract before marriage*, in *The workes of the reuerend and faithfull seruant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham*, ed. Henry Holland, 5th ed. (London: Printed by Thomas Snodham and Thomas Creede for VVilliam VVelby, 1612), 123-24; Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions*, Works, 742; Greenham, *Graue Counsels and godly obseruations*, Works, 21. But Knappen was correct in his evaluation that, for Greenham, only lacking the gift of chastity served as the primary justifications for entering wedlock.

¹³⁸Greenham gave a more lengthy list of these spiritual disciplines earlier when discussing how one should avoid concupiscence, and in the margin he pointed the reader to this section; Greenham recommended that a person struggling with strong sexual desires should examine themselves by the law, meditate daily on the word, be diligent in an honest calling, practice holy shame of themselves, fear themselves before their friends, practice temperance in diet, sleep and apparel, keep a careful watch over their eyes and other parts of their body, avoid all places, times, and persons that might encourage concupiscence, and be present at those places which breed mortification (Greenham, *Graue Counsels and godly obseruations*, Works, 8). See also a similar list Greenham gave when discussing the means to use to keep oneself chaste (Greenham, *A Short Forme of Catechising*, Works, 78).

¹³⁹Knappen alleged that this method served as the standard clerical counsel toward single

sympathy among other notable English Protestants throughout Tudor and Stuart England. Parker, Richard Rogers, Andrewes, Daniel Rogers, Hall, William Ames, Whately, and George Herbert all counseled that the single life was to be greatly desired and sought after first, and Christians should not seek wedlock unless their sexual desires seemed unconquerable.¹⁴⁰ One might object that they were only urging their parishioners to bridle their lust rather than view wedlock as the sole instrument for curbing sexual sin.¹⁴¹ However, their statements do not give any suggestion of that intent but instead point to lacking the gift of chastity as *the* indicator of a legitimate call to marry.¹⁴² Once again, for Christians endowed with sexual continence, the obligation to choose the most expedient state of life overruled one's liberty to marry on the basis of wedlock's lawful and honorable nature for all people.

If a significant minority of English Protestants emphasized marrying primarily as a remedy against lust, scholarly conclusions regarding the trend toward companionate marriage need to be revised. According to James Turner Johnson, Puritans over the

people in Tudor England under Elizabeth I (Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, 452-53). However, this is a broad sweeping generalization that is based solely off of an analysis of Richard Greenham and Richard Rogers. Greaves has pointed out the method of pastoral counsel was more varied and nuanced (Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England*, 119-30).

¹⁴⁰William Ames, *Conscience with the power and cases thereof Devided into V. bookes. Written by the godly and learned, William Ames, Doctor, and Professor of Divinity, in the famous University of Franeker in Friesland. Translated out of Latine into English, for more publique benefit* (London: Printed by W. Christiaens, E. Griffin, and J. Dawson, 1639; facsimile repr., Norwood, NJ: Walter J. Johnson, 1975), bk. 3, 197-98; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 38, 46-47, 54; George Herbert, *A priest to the temple, or, The country parson his character, and rule of holy life* (London: Printed by T. Maxe for T. Garthwait, 1652), 32, 32-33; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, fols. 11r and 18v, 29, 30, 64-65, 128 (misprinted as 136), 129, 130, 141-42, 159, 205-6, 249, 277; Rogers *Matrimoniall honour*, 48-49, 50; Rogers, *The Diary of Richard Rogers*, 57, 95; Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 188; Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A4r-5v, 63-64, 66, 67; Andrewes, *The morall law expounded*, 783; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 453, 455.

¹⁴¹Comments by several authors seem to reflect this concern: Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 389; Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 254; Allestree, *The whole duty of man*, 172-73; Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy living*, 78-82; Ussher, *A body of divinitie*, 277.

¹⁴²In addition, one might object that the lack of comments regarding other justifications for marriage did not imply their absence in the author's minds. But this objection misses the point of contention, which is not to assert that these English Protestants dismissed additional reasons for marrying (procreation and mutual support). Rather, these clergymen were noteworthy, because they saw the absence of the gift of chastity as *the* primary justification for seeking wedlock. In other words, needing the remedy of wedlock was the proof of God's call to that state of life.

seventeenth century dedicated substantial energy towards reordering the ends of marriage, as listed in the second Prayer Book, to stress the primacy of marrying for mutual support over procreation and as a remedy against sin.¹⁴³ Johnson seems correct in suggesting a growing emphasis on marriage for the purpose of mutual help in seventeenth-century literature on marriage. Nevertheless, that trend went hand in hand with continuing directives that marriage was only meant for those who lacked the gift of chastity and needed it as a bulwark against sexual sin. Moreover, the advocates were not only English Protestants such as Herbert and Andrewes but clergymen widely regarded as Puritan: Greenham, Parker, Whately, Ames, Hall, Richard Rogers, and Daniel Rogers. While they were a minority among Puritans, their teaching qualifies Richard Schlatter's contention that "English Puritans . . . attacked the idea that marriage was a compromise for the weak," in contrast to the early Church of England and the Prayer Book.¹⁴⁴ On the contrary, these Puritans made explicit what the Prayer Book had implied: God intended marriage only for those lacking the gift of chastity.¹⁴⁵ The tension between emphasizing marriage primarily for companionship or to curb lust reveals a larger division among English Protestants and even Puritans. While they all agreed that wedlock was a lawful and honorable state of life, since God himself had ordained it, a significant minority asserted that liberty to marry only extended to those who were unable to live in the more advantageous state of celibacy.

¹⁴³Johnson, "English Puritan Thought on the Ends of Marriage," 429-36. See also L. Joseph Stone who argued for a growing emphasis on companionate marriage during the seventeenth century (L. Joseph Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* [New York: Harper and Row, 1977], 136, 325). Doriani seemed to emphasize the Puritan's stress on companionship as the primary purpose of marriage (Doriani, "The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640," 142-45).

¹⁴⁴Richard Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 9-10.

¹⁴⁵According to the second purpose for Marriage in the second Prayer Book, the state "was ordeined for a remedy against synne, and to avoide fornication, that suche persones as have not the gifte of continencie might marry and kepe themselves undefiled members of Christes body" (*The booke of common praier*, 113v).

To summarize, the gift of chastity played a significant role in English Protestant pastoral counsel concerning the decision to marry or remain single. Scholars have often drawn attention to how English Protestants urged people to marry based on the rare occurrence of the gift. However, clergymen noticeably diverged into multiple camps of conviction when they considered whether those possessing the gift of chastity still had liberty to marry. The tension over the gift of chastity further demonstrates the tension between the twin themes of English Protestant marriage doctrine: the universal liberty of all to marry and the obligation to constrain people from exercising their liberty due to the pragmatic advantages of celibacy. The tension did not seem to be a significant concern, because the paucity of people gifted with chastity limited the scope of the problem. But English Protestants also used the context of 1 Corinthians 7 to justify limiting the applicability of the advantages celibacy provided.

Objections to Wedlock from 1 Corinthians 7

Paul's apparent adulation of the single state posed a particularly vexing problem for English Protestants. In his view, the decision to marry or remain single was not a matter of indifference but critically influential to a Christian's piety. Furthermore, his candid evaluation of the hindering nature of wedlock and the advantages of celibacy for serving God without distraction seemed to call into question whether wedlock was a lawful and honorable estate for all people. Clergymen partly remedied the problem by asserting that Paul's commendation of celibacy was only binding on those possessing the gift of chastity. But they also posited the Corinthians' distressing ecclesiastical context, as well as other arguments, to justify limiting the applicability of the single state's expediency.

English Protestants heavily qualified Paul's commendation of the single life through their interpretation of a key verse. The pressing hermeneutical question concerned whether the "present necessity" (1 Cor 7:26), which formed the basis for

Paul's advice that virgins remain unmarried, denoted a unique, passing tribulation afflicting the Corinthians or whether it applied to the church throughout all times and contexts. Nearly all English Protestants favored the former interpretation and saw Paul's counsel to the Corinthians stemming from the unique exigencies faced by the first Christians.¹⁴⁶ The pervasiveness of this interpretation may be indicated by the fact that even Jeremy Taylor, who advocated celibacy as a higher angelic state, supported it. He reasoned that the shortage of ministers, the necessity to spread the gospel through constant travel, and the threat of persecution all prompted a temporary deviation from the "first blessing" God gave to humanity through the society of marriage (Gen 1-2).¹⁴⁷ Due to such pressures, celibacy was taught and encouraged in the Scriptures, since it allowed for singular devotion to God, greater dissemination of the gospel, and the ability to flee quickly from persecution, while wedlock became more hindering toward those goals.¹⁴⁸ Paul's urging of celibacy was an act of charity, since nursing and pregnant women would have "to suffer a heavier load of sorrow because of the imminent persecutions;" these

¹⁴⁶Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 387, 392; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 129; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 228; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31; Gouge was not as explicit in identifying the "present necessity" as persecution, but he did assert that the applicability of Paul's commendation of celibacy only circumstantial and accidental, owing to expediency in light of the present necessity (Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213); Griffith, *Bethel*, 31-32; Hall said that one explanation for why the early church became so enamored with celibacy was due to exigence of persecution (Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 157-58); Perkins, *A reformed Catholike*, 163-64; Perkins also cited 1 Cor 7:26 to support his contention that "when dangers are either present, or imminent, in matters belonging to this life, the single person is in this case happie, because he and his are more secure and safe, than others be who are in married state" (Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 12-13); Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:63; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 598-99, 600-601; Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 122-23; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 430; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 147; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 407 and bk. 3, 334, 338, 340.

¹⁴⁷Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 219-20.

¹⁴⁸"But when the Messiah was come, and his doctrine was published, and his Ministers but few, and the Disciples were to suffer persecution, and to be of unsettled dwelling . . . and that to all these purposes the state of marriage brought many inconveniences; it pleased God in this new creation to inspire into the hearts of his servants a disposition and strong desires to live a single life, lest the state of marriage should in that conjunction of things become an accidental impediment to the dissemination of the Gospel, which call'd men from a confinement in their domestic charges to travell and flight, and poverty and difficulty and Martyrdom; upon this necessity the Apostles and Apostolical men published Doctrines, declaring the advantages of single life, not by any commandment of the Lord, but by the spirit of prudence . . . for the present and then incumbent necessities and in order to the advantages which did accrew to the public ministries and private prayer" (Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 220).

were the troubles in the flesh Paul warned would come upon the married (1 Cor. 7:28).¹⁴⁹ However, when “that storm was over” and the gospel had “gone out into all the nations,” the state of marriage returned to the original place God had intended: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18).¹⁵⁰ By identifying the “present necessity” as persecution, English Protestants had drastically constrained the applicability of Scripture’s teaching regarding the pragmatic convenience of celibacy. Surprisingly, scholars have largely failed to document this hermeneutical approach, even though they have often wondered why and how such biblically committed Protestants could ignore Paul’s commendation of the single state.¹⁵¹

English Protestants employed the same hermeneutic to refute contentions that the burdensome nature of family life severely hindered a Christian’s ability to fully devote themselves to God. To an extent, English Protestants agreed with such observations. Perkins noted the expediency which the single life normally provided by freeing people from the “common cares, molestations, and distractions” of married life (1 Cor 7:2, 28) and allowing greater “bodily ease and libertie” to focus on worshiping God (1 Cor 7:34).¹⁵² Nonetheless, he heavily qualified his admissions due to his conviction that Paul’s counsel applied solely to eras of persecution or a distinctive calling to apostolic missions.¹⁵³ Under such unique circumstances, Christians certainly may be

¹⁴⁹Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring,” 221.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 221.

¹⁵¹Katherine Rogers gave the clearest indication of this tension (Katherine Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966], 135). See also William Haller, “Hail Wedded Love.” *Journal of English Literary History* 13, no. 2 (June 1946): 81; William Haller and Malleville Haller, “The Puritan Art of Love.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 5 (1941): 243-44; Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688*, 9; Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England*, 123, 125. Doriani is the only scholar who noted the argument for restraining Paul’s advice to times of persecution but only cited one author (Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 136-37).

¹⁵²Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke*, 164-65, and see also Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 12-13. For all their praise of matrimonial life, the Puritans had no allusions about its many afflictions and burdens. Yet they almost all believed the blessings outweighed the suffering (Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 134-35).

¹⁵³I am indebted to Gordon Stevens Wakefield for pointing me toward this passage (Gordon

called to forsake all their goods or withdraw to isolated areas for a period of time due to harassment (Heb 11:37).¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, “for the time of peace,” Perkins insisted, “I see no cause of solitary life.” Nor was isolation necessary for heavenly meditation or spiritual exercises. On the contrary, Perkins asserted, the family was exceedingly beneficial as an ideal “schoole of God” for training Christians in a myriad of spiritual virtues. Indeed, he concluded, domestic life yielded far more opportunities for doing and receiving good “then be or can be in a cloister.”¹⁵⁵ For Perkins, neither wedlock’s tendency to pile more cares upon a Christian, nor the single life’s tendency to grant more freedom to worship God necessarily implied that the state of matrimony was inexpedient toward God’s purposes. Since Paul’s commendation of the single state was not normative, it consequently did not function as directives that universally bound the conscience of any Christian.¹⁵⁶ Concurring with Perkins, most English Protestants cited the context of ecclesiastical persecution to dismiss the obligatory nature of Paul’s appeal to celibacy.¹⁵⁷

Stevens Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion: Its Place in the Development of Christian Piety* [London: The Epworth Press, 1957], 55).

¹⁵⁴Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke*, 167-68, and see also Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 532-33.

¹⁵⁵Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke*, 168. Perkins listed several virtues family members might learn and exercise in the domestic sphere: “the acknowledgement of God, invocation, the feare of God, love, bountifullnesse, patience, meekenes, faithfulness, &c.” (ibid.). In doing this, Perkins followed the common approach of the continental reformers of the sixteenth century. Ozment argued that Protestants sought to transfer the accolades and values of the single life to domestic life, asserting that it was the most effective arena of Christian sanctification (Ozment, “Marriage and Ministry in the Protestant Churches,” 39).

¹⁵⁶Perkins most extensive critique of Roman Catholics beliefs on the freedom to marry or remain celibate occurred in his discussion on whether monastic vows were binding (Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke*, 151-65; Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, 411-23).

¹⁵⁷Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 392; Clever noted that Paul’s command to the Corinthians—that it is better to marry than to burn with passion—was written to those undergoing persecution; therefore, since eras of persecution are terrible times to marry, apart from all the natural incommunities of marriage, Christians have even more reason to follow Paul’s command in times of peace (Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 129); Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 228; Fulke, *The text of the New Testament*, 274; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31-32; Gouge argued that the benefits of the single life only arise from “expediency” and “present necessity”; these reasons for celibacy stem from the wickedness of men who stir up trouble and the weakness of those who are too distracted and disquieted by the cares of family (Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 213-14); Griffith, *Bethel*, 21-22, 23; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 157-58; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 49, see also 25-26; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 598-99, 600-601; Wing refuted the argument that married people are live through being taken up with the worldly cares of marriage, and therefore cannot please; he appealed to the occasional nature of Paul’s advice to the Corinthians under the

Furthermore, they argued that for individuals lacking the gift of chastity the flames of sexual temptation could prove just as inconvenient to holiness as the anxieties of caring for spouse and children.¹⁵⁸ By qualifying Paul's praise of celibacy, English Protestants could argue that marriage still constituted God's plan for nearly all of humanity, just as it did in Genesis.¹⁵⁹ They had harmonized, at least in their minds, Scripture's testimony of wedlock as lawful and honorable state for all people with a crucial text seeming to commend celibacy as the most advantageous state for serving God.

English Protestants also endeavored to refute allegations that the worldly nature of domestic life proved inherently inexpedient to a Christian's piety. In 1 Corinthians 7:32, Paul seemed to depict marriage as driving a wedge between the Christian's loyalty to God and a spouse, since the unmarried devoted themselves to pleasing God while the married were distracted by the worldly concerns of pleasing their spouse. Several authors did indeed caution their readers against the *potential* distractions wedlock could bring. Henry Smith warned his readers "to live in marriage as in a temptation," which would likely make them worse than before unless they guarded themselves against being overwhelmed by anxiety over money, children, servants, etc.¹⁶⁰ English Protestants employed varying methods to qualify the Apostle's apparent indictment of the worldly, distracting nature of marriage. Perkins interpreted the

situation of persecution (Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 122-23); Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 147-48; Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 220-21 and 222-24; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 408 and bk. 3, 333, 338-40.

¹⁵⁸Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 232; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 598-99; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 3, 339-340; Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 221.

¹⁵⁹See Doriani, "The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640," 136-37. See also Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion*, 55.

¹⁶⁰Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 87, and see also 39-40, 41. See also, Bunyan, *Christian behavior*, 47-48; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 391-92; Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 1-3; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 214; Greenham, *A Treatise of Contract before marriage*, Works, 123-24, 125, 126; Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions*, Works, 645, 743; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 142-43, 276; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 25; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 600-601.

statement as pertaining only to spouses “that are carnall and fleshly” rather than all marital unions, thus revealing his conviction that the state of matrimony, by its fundamental nature, did not reduce Christians to lukewarm devotion.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Parker pointed out the absurdity of taking Paul’s comments to mean that all married people were worldly while all single people were godly, as if each state naturally produced such effects. “It is manifest and evident to all men,” Parker asserted, that Paul was not making general pronouncements of either state.¹⁶² Instead of seeing marriage as unavoidably splintering one’s loyalties, Perkins, Parker, and other clergymen believed a married Christian could have both a family as well as an ardent zeal for God: “And he that is married, is to bee so carefull for the things of the world, as that he ought, and may have also a special regard of those things that concerne God and his kingdome.”¹⁶³ Another approach to Paul’s problematic comments was suggested by John Bunyan. Pointing to the larger context of the verse (1 Cor 7:29-31), he demonstrated that Paul was only speaking of the need to love worldly things, such as a spouse, in moderation rather than abusing them.¹⁶⁴ Bunyan’s approach found support among Cartwright, Clarke, Greenham, Parker, and Daniel Rogers.¹⁶⁵ Finally, Whately, Swinnock, and Robert Steele provided a unique retort by presenting the spouse’s duty to please and care for one another “in all worldly businesses” as a “praise-worthy” burden, commendable in the husband or wife.¹⁶⁶ Citing

¹⁶¹Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 16.

¹⁶² Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 340, and see also the larger response to this objection in 340-42.

¹⁶³Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 16. See also Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 340-42; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 131-32; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 86-87; Swinnock, *The Christians calling*, 2:60, 65; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 597-98, 599-601; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 147-48.

¹⁶⁴Bunyan, *Christian behavior*, 47-48.

¹⁶⁵Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 391-92; Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 228; Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions*, Works, 645; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 340-42; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, fols. A4r, 26.

¹⁶⁶Whately, *A bride-bush*, 54. See also Robert Steele, “What are the Duties of Husbands, and Wives toward each other?” in *A supplement to The Morning-exercise at Cripple-Gate, or, Several more cases of conscience practically resolved by sundry ministers*, ed. Samuel Annesley (London: Printed for

Paul's principle for selfless Christian living (1 Cor 10:31), Whately saw the spousal relationship as an ideal context for the highest display of the same sacrificial love all Christians were charged to exhibit in their relationships and which Christ ultimately displayed to his church.¹⁶⁷ Thus, English Protestants swept away the assertion that celibacy should be equated with true spiritual devotion and wedlock with carnal living. The godly life of wholehearted devotion, they adamantly contended, could be lived just as abundantly in matrimony as in the single state.¹⁶⁸ Rather than appealing to the Corinthians' ecclesiastical context of persecution, they argued that Paul's meaning should be understood in relative rather than absolute terms.

English Protestants also disputed the assumption that the practical advantages of celibacy bore any more relevance to clergy than laymen. As they pointed out, Paul had made no particular plea to ministers when commending the usefulness of the single life but addressed his counsel to the entire Corinthian church, without any distinction between clergy and laity.¹⁶⁹ Cartwright readily acknowledged how the single state

Thomas Cockerill, 1676), 369; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:64.

¹⁶⁷Whately, *A bride-bush*, 54-55, 59.

¹⁶⁸Adams, "How may Child-bearing Women be most supported, and encouraged against, in, and under the hazard of their Travail?" 635, 644-46; Cartwright claimed that to those called by God to marriage were given grace to bear with and overcome all the trials of their estate, and that God would turn those hindrances into "helps to the kingdom of God and a richer crown, that virgins shall not have" (Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 392); Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 229; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 424; Fulke, *The text of the Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ*, 39, 272; Griffith provided several examples to demonstrate that, even if single people display their best acts of devotion, the married have done just as much as they have (Griffith, *Bethel*, 25-26, 26-27); Hall wrote, "All those who live the naturall life [meaning chaste wedlock] may also live the spiritual, and glorious" (Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 76); Rogers frequently warned of the temptations to worldliness and distraction through the cares of marriage, yet he believed Christian could honor God in the state of matrimony (Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 21, 60-61, 126); Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:59, 76; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 599-600; Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 122-23; Babinton, *A very fruitful exposition of the Commandements*, 147-48; Taylor compared the virtues of celibacy and marriage, but consistently emphasized that the opportunities for piety in the married state were certainly not secondary to those in the single state (Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 222-24); Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 2, 407-408 and bk. 3, 338-41.

¹⁶⁹Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 392; Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, 236-37, 247; Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 189; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 597-98; Sanderson "Ad Aulam Sermon XI," 228-29; Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. 3, 333, 338; Terry, *Theological logicke*, 180.

allowed people to more easily serve and worship God, particularly in times of persecution, without the interruptions stemming from domestic responsibilities.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, he pointed out the logical and biblical inconsistency of utilizing Paul’s appeals to claim that clergy should live as celibates, since they needed to wholly devote themselves to various ministerial duties. Even though pastors should be the most fervent in prayer, both they and the laity were obligated as Christians to perform the same “Publicke prayers” and “private prayers.”¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the typical lay person found it just as difficult to manage the “affaires” of his labor and family as the clergymen who had to balance “the honest care of the household” with teaching, admonishing, administering discipline, and shepherding souls.¹⁷² In Cartwright’s view, if people sought to invalidate clerical marriage using such reasoning, they would be logically compelled to prohibit the marriage of all Christians. English Protestants pointed to Paul’s assertion of his right to take a wife (1 Cor 9:5) as definitive proof that both clergy and laity possessed an equal measure of liberty to marry, especially if sexual purity necessitated it.¹⁷³ After

¹⁷⁰Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 392.

¹⁷¹Cartwright wrote, “Publicke prayers that the Minister maketh, the private man is bound to make with him. There remaineth onely private prayers which are commanded unto the private man as well as to the publicke M[i]nister. And although the prayers of the Minister ought to be both with more knowledge and greater fervencie; yet that they [the prayers] ought to be longer and oftner than the private mans, the Iesuites [Jesuits] cannot shew out of the word of God” (ibid., 387). For similar reasoning, see Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 598, 599-600; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 82-83.

¹⁷²Cartwright observed, “And the necessary labour bestowed in prov[i]ding for the p[r]eaching of the word, administer[i]ng the discipline of the Church, comforting the discomforted, admonishing those that goe astray, and encouraging those that have set themselves in a good way, together with the honest care of the household ; will take up that time that a man of most businesse (if he be not over busie) will require for the overcoming of his affaires. Wherefore if a perpetual abstinence from the company of a wife be necessary for the Minister in regard of prayer or other exercises (whereat the *common man* ought to be present, and to bee partaker as well as the minister) it must needs follow that the use of marriage is as unlawful for the people as for the minister” (Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 387). For similar reasoning, see Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 598, 599-600; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 82-83.

¹⁷³Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 236; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 403-4; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 137-38; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 585; Field, *Of the Church five bookes*, 469-70; Pierce, *The primitive rule of reformation*, 28; Sanderson “Ad Aulam Sermon XI,” 228-29. Sanderson noted that Paul “used his liberty indeed very sparingly, but yet he *maintained* it most stoutly” (ibid., 228)

all, if clergy and laity were equally subject to the danger of temptations from sexual immorality (1 Cor 7:2), the remedy for those enticements should be mutually accessible to both groups of people.¹⁷⁴ A few individuals—Vincent, Herbert, Cogan, Bacon—demurred, because they perceived Paul’s commendation of the single life to have a distinct germaneness to pastors.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, most English Protestants rejected any grounds for singling out ministers as especially obligated to forego marriage due to its inconveniences. As Gataker and many others pointed out, a wife could indeed become a snare and a source of grief, but God’s purposeful design for the woman was to be an expedient *helper* in man’s labors rather than a hindrance.¹⁷⁶

English Protestants, and especially Puritans, defended the wife’s scriptural role as a helper to her husband, yet their apologetic was not without certain tensions created by the period’s conception of women. Scholars have documented how England’s intense pamphlet war from 1540-1640 over the perceived virtues and flaws of the female sex

¹⁷⁴Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 65-66; Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage*, 15-16; Terry, *Theologicall logicke*, 180.

¹⁷⁵Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 601; Herbert, *A priest to the temple*, 32; Bacon, *The essayes*, 37-38; Cogan, *The hauen of health*, 247-48.

¹⁷⁶Gataker, “A Good Wife Gods Gift,” 139, 142; Gataker, “Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together Out of Colossians, 3. 18, 19,” in *Certaine Sermons, first preached, and after published at severall times, by M. Thomas Gataker B. of D. and pastor at Rotherhith. And now gathered together into one volume* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Fulke Clifton, 1637), 194, 196-97; Gataker, “A Marriage Prayer,” 128; Gataker, “A Wife in Deed,” 151-52, 161, 162, 163. Clarke wrote that God intended all lawful things, including marriage, as helps to heaven but it was humans that made them hindrances (Clarke, *Medulla theologiae*, 1-2). See also Robert Bolton, *Some generall directions for a comfortable walking with God delivered in the lecture at Kettering in North-hamptonshire, with enlargement . . .* (London: Printed by Felix Kyngston for Edmund Weaver, 1630), 252-55; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 59-61, 128, 158-59; Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, 185, 211, 214; Greenham, *A Treatise of Contract before marriage*, Works, 123-24, 125; Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions*, Works, 742-43; Griffith, *Bethel*, 740-44; Niccholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, 1; Parker, *A defence of priestes mariages*, 340-42; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, 236; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 283, and see also 283-303; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 15, 25-26, 30-36, 39; Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage*, 1, 41-42, 58-68; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:58-59, 70, 92, and 98-99; Touthville, *St. Pauls threefold cord*, 4-6; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 600; William Whately, *Prototypes, or, The primarie precedent presidents out of the booke of Genesis shewing, the [brace] good and bad things [brace] they did and had practically applied to our information and reformation* (London: Printed by G. M. for Edvvard Langham, 1640), chap. 1, 3-4 (since pagination of this work changes after chap. 23, the chap. is included in each citation for clarity); Allestree, *The whole duty of man*, 313; Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 429; Cogan, *The hauen of health*, 252; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 17; Cosin, *Sermons*, Works, 1:49-49; Hooker, *Of the lavves of ecclesiasticall politie. The fift booke*, 214; Ussher, *A body of divinitie*, 106.

evidenced the widespread popularity of the topic.¹⁷⁷ Nicholas Ling, a London publisher and bookseller, quipped that “a woman bringeth a man two joyful days, the first of her marriage, the second of her death.”¹⁷⁸ Clergymen usually denounced slanderous jests against women as a “necessary evil,”¹⁷⁹ but the wider English populace propagated them with glee.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, preachers also contributed to the difficulty of presenting women as suitable helpers to men. Citing Peter’s reference to the wife as the “weaker vessel” (1 Pet 3:7), among many other texts, clergymen taught that women were not only physically weaker than men, but also intellectually, spiritually, and morally as well.¹⁸¹ Even Hooker’s statement concerning “the imbecilitie” of women’s “nature and sex” was intended to stress their weakness, inferiority, and inequality when compared to men.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷Katherine U. Henderson and Barbara F. McManus have put together a historical background of this pamphlet war as well as critical editions for ten of the more notable treatises: Katherine U. Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985). They noted that perhaps the most infamous of these tracks was Joseph Swetnam’s misogynistic 1615 tract: *The Arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward, and vnconstant women* (ibid., 189-216).

¹⁷⁸Nicholas Ling, *Politeuphuia VVits commonwealth* (London: Printed by H. B. for Iohn Smithvveck, 1608), fol. 176v.

¹⁷⁹Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 159, 160; Adams, *Meditations upon some part of the Creed*, Works, 1134; Bolton, *Some generall directions for a comfortable walking with God*, 244; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 32; Griffith, *Bethel*, 24-25, 242; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 37-39; Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 1, 4; Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 11; Andrews, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large*, 429.

¹⁸⁰Dorani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 123-24.

¹⁸¹Adams insisted that women were “equal in condition” to men, and yet they also were weaker spiritually and more susceptible to being led astray by Satan (Adams, *Meditations upon some part of the Creed*, Works, 1169); Bolton, *Some generall directions for a comfortable walking with God*, 242-45; Clever said women are rational creatures just as men are and yet also insisted they were by nature weaker than men who had more wisdom from God (Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 160, 162-63); Gataker, “Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together Out of Colossians, 3. 18, 19,” 204; Greenham, *Godly Instrvctions*, Works, 742; Greenham, *A Treatise of Contract before marriage*, Works, 126; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 133; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 21, 64, 67-68; Steele, “What are the Duties of Husbands, and Wives toward each other?” 377-78; *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:70; Whately, *A bride-bush*, 131-32, 152-53, 153-55; Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall*, 132-33; Hooker, *Of the lavves of ecclesiasticall politie. The fift booke*. 214-15.

For an analysis of how Puritans used the Bible, and especially the Apostle Paul, to support female inferiority, see Margaret Olofson Thickstun, *Fictions of the Feminine: Puritan Doctrine and the Representation of Women* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 2-36. See also Antonia Fraser’s book arguing that seventeenth-century English women consistently sought to brake out of the roles they were consigned to due to their assumed weaker condition (Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman’s Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984]).

¹⁸²Hooker, *Of the lavves of ecclesiasticall politie. The fift booke*, 214-15. The term “Imbecility” comes from the Latin word *imbecilitas* which means “weakness” or “feebleness” (Leo F.

Consequently, Hooker, asserted, women should “be alwaies directed, guided and ordered by others.”¹⁸³ The influence of Medieval scholasticism, which relied upon the classical tradition and especially Aristotle, further supported the inherent inferiority of women due to their nature. Merry E. Weisner has observed that sixteenth and seventeenth century reformers did not break with this intellectual tradition.¹⁸⁴ The inferiority of women was also demonstrated by comparing their qualities vis-à-vis men. Numerous historians have noted the early modern characterization of women as emotional, intuitive, and irrational in contrast to men’s proclivity for mature, rational, and intellectual thinking.¹⁸⁵ In short, widely held conceptions of women—in the academy, the pulpits, and the pews—posed a considerable challenge for arguing that God created women to be suitable helpers to their husband’s spiritual life, vocation, and effort to raise godly

Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin with an Appendix of Latin Expressions Defined and Clarified* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995], 121).

¹⁸³Hooker, *Of the lavves of ecclesiasticall politie. The fift booke*, 215. Martin Luther, for instance, insisted that “woman was half child” and warned new husbands to remember they were becoming “the guardian of a child” (Martin Luther, “Predigt am 2. Sonntag nach Ephiphantias” on 1 Pet. 3:7 (1524), WA 15:419-20; cited in Joel F. Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 72). See also Jeffrey Watt, “The Impact of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation,” in *Family life in Early Modern Times (1500-1789)*, eds. David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, *The History of the European Family*, vol. 1 [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001], 151).

¹⁸⁴Merry E. Weisner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, New Approaches to European History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 21. See also Eleanor McClaughlin, “Male and Female in Christian Tradition: Was there a Reformation in the Sixteenth Century?,” in *Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality*, eds. Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes III (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 40-41, 48-49; Susan C. Karant-Nunn, “Reformation Society, Women and the Family,” in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (New York: Routledge, 2000), 440, 442; Watt, “The Impact of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation,” 151-52.

¹⁸⁵Margaret R. Somerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London: Arnold, 1995), 10, 10-13, 16-29; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 69, 33-34, 60-74; Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 277-81; Manfred P. Fleischer, “‘Are Women Human?’- The Debate of 1595 between Valens Acidalius and Simon Gediccus,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 12, no. 2 (1981): 119; Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate*, 137, 142-43, 145, 146, 147, 152, 154, 155, 157. See also Genevieve Lloyd who argued that the western tradition has a long history of associating rationality almost exclusively with “maleness” (Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

Phyllis Mack demonstrated that the evaluations of women as emotional and men as rational sprang from early modern European beliefs concerning the differing physiological composition of the sexes, which effected their respective personalities and behavior (Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth Century England* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992], 25-28).

offspring.¹⁸⁶ How could wives be expected to faithfully execute such crucial roles if they were so naturally weak, childish, and susceptible to being ruled by their passions?

Katherine Rogers' observation aptly captured the paradoxical attitudes shared by English Protestant clergy and laity: "while these men assumed that marriage was the proper state of man, they often described women in terms which would encourage male celibacy."¹⁸⁷

The issue of expediency did not comprise the sole problem raised by 1 Corinthians 7 against the honorable nature of matrimony for all people. English Protestants also had to counter the critics who decried the many misfortunes, duties, and discord that wedlock brought.¹⁸⁸ The common complaints against matrimony seemed to vindicate Paul's desire to "spare" his readers from the "worldly troubles" of marriage (1 Cor 7:28). English clergyman rarely enumerated the misfortunes of marriage in graphic detail.¹⁸⁹ However, they never shied away from acknowledging them and consequently sought to exonerate wedlock in two ways.¹⁹⁰ First, they pointed to matrimony's origin as a divinely blessed institution, which meant the fault for any blemishes in God's creation should be assigned to the corrupting influence of sinful humanity rather than the creator.¹⁹¹ Gataker employed such reasoning when he answered how a good wife could

¹⁸⁶According to Thickstun, the "tendency to dismiss women as spiritually incapable flourished in English society, Separating or Non-Separating, throughout the seventeenth century" (Thickstun, *Fictions of the Feminine*, 19).

¹⁸⁷Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate*, 159.

¹⁸⁸See Doriani, "The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640," 123-24, 220-314.

¹⁸⁹The key exceptions to this are William Whately's treatise *A care-cloth* and Richard Baxter's *Christian directory*. The internal and external evidence for Whately's connection with Baxter will be discussed later in this chap.

¹⁹⁰Bolton, *Some generall directions for a comfortable walking with God*, 235-36, 256; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 391; Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 230, see also 228; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 138, 141-42; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31-32, 207-8; Gataker, "A Good Wife God's Gift," 139-40; Gataker, *A Wife in Deed*, 171, 173, 179-80; Gataker, "Marriage Duties Briefely Couched Together Out of Colossians, 3. 18, 19," 196; Griffith, *Bethel*, 22; Niccholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, B2; Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke*, 163-64; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:59, 63; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 50; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 53-54; Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 1, 9-10 and chap. 6, 76; Vincent, "The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine," 598, 600, 601.

¹⁹¹Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 159-60; Griffith, *Bethel*, 29; Gouge, *Of*

be an extraordinary gift from God if marriage contained so many burdens, disruptions, and conflicts. Critics blaming wedlock, and particularly their wives, for marital griefs were simply following the example of Adam, who shifted the fault for eating the fruit back to God through blaming Eve.¹⁹² Furthermore, humans corrupted God's unblemished ordinance through the foolish choice of an ungodly spouse or neglect of their marital duties. If Christians followed the biblical guidelines for marriage, then domestic life would be far more blissful and free of the miseries spouses so frequently bemoaned.¹⁹³ Indeed, while English Protestants admitted that marital strife was unavoidable, they nearly all remained convinced that the blessings of marriage would more than outweigh its tribulations.¹⁹⁴ Pastoral counsel regarding marital strife operated almost as if nothing had been altered in God's original plan to bestow happiness, joy, and blessing upon humanity through wedlock, despite the disorder brought by sin.

domesticall duties, 214; Gataker, "A Wife in Deed," 171-72; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*. 4-5; Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger*, 39; Whately, *A bride-bush*, A3v; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 42-43; Cogan, *The hauen of health*, 251; Sanderson argued that in the creatures (food, drink, and marriage) people could see, "as in a glass," both God's wisdom and their own ignorance; therefore even when they become a source of evil, sin alone was to blame (Sanderson, "The Fifth Sermon Ad Populum," 281-82); Sandys, "Marriage is honourable in all," 290.

¹⁹²According to Gataker, "The evil and inconvenience is not the fault of Gods ordinance, but of mans corruption accompanying it. If we shall find then in the married estate troubles and distractions, &c. (as the single life is commonly commended for quietnesse;) let us not accuse God; as Adam sometime closely did; *The women*, saith hee, *that Though gavest me; shee gave mee of the tree, and I ate . . .* God's gifts are all good. But let us lay the fault where it is; upon ourselves and our owne corruption, that turneth honey into gall" (Gataker, "A Good Wife Gods Gift," 140).

¹⁹³Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 160-61; Gataker, "A Good Wife Gods Gift," 141-42; Gataker, "A Marriage Prayer," 123, 128; Gataker, "A Wife in Deed," 171-74; Greenham, *A Treatise of Contract before marriage*, Works, 123; Samuel Hieron, "The marriage-blessing," in *The spirituall sonne-ship as jt hath beene collected out of 1. Iohn 3.1. and deliuered in two sermons*, 59-81 (London: Printed by VVilliam Hall for Samuel Macham, 1611), 61-62; Rogers, *Seaven treatises*, 189; Steele, "What are the Duties of Husbands Wives towards Each Other?" 362, 387; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:59, 63; Whately, *A bride-bush*, A4r; Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 1, 3-4.

¹⁹⁴Fuller, *The Holy State*, 208; Gataker, "A Good Wife Gods Gift," 136, 138; Gataker, "A Wife in Deed," 172-73; Griffith, *Bethel*, 28-29; Niccholes, *A discourse, of marriage and vviuing*, 12-13; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 50; Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage*, 18-19; Steele, "What are the Duties of Husbands Wives towards Each Other?," 369; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:62-63; Sandys, "Marriage is honourable in all," 290; Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 222-23. Again, William Whately (*A care-cloth*) and Richard Baxter appeared to be the only ones who believed the sufferings of wedlock would outweigh the benefits, though in another work Whately seemed to argue the exact opposite position (Whately, *A bride-bush*, 47-48).

As a second tactic, English Protestants asserted that God providentially acted to counter the negative effect of domestic afflictions. While a suitable match and obedience to marital duties comprised the two key elements in cheerful marriages, they also recognized even the most pious spouses still experienced acute sorrow. Fear of these tribulations could cause despondency in spouses as well as deter the unmarried from pursuing wedlock. In response, clergymen repeatedly stressed God's power to transform outward evils into blessings by directing the deepest suffering of matrimony for the benefit of spouses.¹⁹⁵ Even Whately, whose rhetoric detailed marital tribulations with unusually grim imagery, repeatedly highlighted God's sanctifying providence over the misfortunes spouses experienced due to the corrupting influence of sin on their union.

Men must arme and furnish themselves for marriage, that they may not dishonour this honourable estate by turning backe from it, in their minds and wishes. Specifically, he that will bee married, must arm himselfe with patience against the troubles of that kind of life, and resolving . . . that hee will behave himselfe, not alone quietly, but even cheerfully, though they come apace about him. Digest in the serious consideration of thy mind, the cause of trouble, sinne, the use of trouble, the healing of sin; the Sender and Moderator of trouble, God; and the end and issue of trouble, glorie; that thine heart may neither faint nor fret, because of trouble.¹⁹⁶

Since Christians could trust in God's promise to bless their matrimonial afflictions, Whately exhorted his readers to turn their crosses "into medicines as Physicians doe some poysons, causing the sorrow which they will worke in us to become a medicine against our sinnes."¹⁹⁷ Thus, English Protestants urged their readers to neither deride nor avoid wedlock due to its griefs, since God efficaciously sanctified the effect of distresses upon spouses so that their sorrow turned into joy.

¹⁹⁵Adams, "How may Child-bearing Women be most supported, and encouraged against, in, and under the hazard of their Travail?" 634-35, 644-45; Bradshaw, "A Mariage Feast," 17-18; Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation*, 392; Clever, *A godlie forme of householde government*, 99; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 424; Fuller, *The Holy State*, 31-32, 207; Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour*, 50, 131-32; Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A5v-6r, 76-77, 78, 83; Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 1, 10-11; Comber, *A companion to the temple*, 12; Taylor, "Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring," 222-23.

¹⁹⁶Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A5v-6r.

¹⁹⁷Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 1, 10.

In sum, English Protestants never entirely dismissed Paul's pragmatic advice about the expedient advantages afforded by the single state, but the dominant hermeneutical response consisted in constraining its relevance by limiting it to times of persecution. However, since the crucial plank in their argument derived from their contextual assumption, it rose or fell based upon the acceptance or rejection of the supposition. If rejected, it would not only imply that Paul's counsel continued to be valid to the church in all eras but also modify the viewpoint that Genesis 1-2 provided Scripture's normative perspective of wedlock. Consequently, the theological priority of the creation account would now become qualified by, if not subordinated to, Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7. The result would be a strikingly different outlook on the decision to marry or remain single, and in actuality this departure can be glimpsed in the literature of two of Baxter's predecessors: William Whately and William Ames.

Key Theological Influences on Richard Baxter

The contributions of Whately and Ames call for closer examination due to their influence upon Baxter and their differing perspectives on how Christians should approach the decision to marry or remain single. Their casuistical approach bore close continuity overall with other English Protestants. Nevertheless, they diverged by challenging or qualifying key theological and hermeneutical assumptions. The result was not so much a different perspective on the principles balancing the expedience of celibacy with the universal lawfulness of wedlock but rather *to whom* and *when* those principles became germane. Furthermore, Whately and Ames are particularly pertinent, since Baxter explicitly credited their influence on his own practical divinity. If their marriage doctrine laid an intellectual foundation for Baxter, it will help establish the continuity of his argument for clerical celibacy with English Protestant, and especially

Puritan, practical divinity.¹⁹⁸ Conversely, it will also correct scholarly conclusions that Baxter's views were Roman Catholic, ascetic, or misogynist.¹⁹⁹

The Influence of Ames on Baxter

Baxter's debt to Ames was evident in his theology but especially his syllogistic method for resolving cases of conscience.²⁰⁰ When extending his advice to theological students on the selection of books, Baxter urged that "the poorest or smallest library that is tolerable" must consist at least the Bible, a concordance, a commentary, English catechisms as well as soteriological works, and finally Ames' *Marrow of Theology* and *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*.²⁰¹ Baxter expressed a particular reverence for the contribution Ames, of all the English casuists, made to practical divinity through

¹⁹⁸J. I. Packer's dissertation, originally written in 1954 but not published till 2003, proved to be a landmark in Baxter scholarship. He argued that all his life Baxter excepted and promoted the characteristic features of Puritan theology and religion, and that this is true even of his unusual soteriology, (J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003). For his argument of Baxter's thoroughly Puritan upbringing, education, and theological mindset, see 45-99.

¹⁹⁹See the discussion in chap. 1, 11-14.

²⁰⁰The finest biographical treatment of William Ames is Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972). Other helpful works include Benjamin J. Boerkoel, "Uniqueness within the Calvinists Tradition: William Ames (1576-1633) Primogenitor of the theologia pietatis in English-Dutch Puritanism" (ThM thesis, Calvin Theological Seminary, 1990); Jan van Vliet, "William Ames: Marrow of the Theology and Piety of the Reformed Tradition" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2002); Brian Richard Davis, "Reformation while Tarrying for Many: The Radical Puritan Ecclesiology of William Ames" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010); Lee Wayland Gibbs, "The Technometry of William Ames" (ThD diss., Harvard University, 1967); Jonathan D. Beeke "The Watchman William Ames: The Nature of Justifying Faith in Ames's Soteriology in Light of his Emphasis on the Divine and Human Wills" (MA thesis, Westminster Seminary California, 2006). For articles, see Keith L. Sprunger, "Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966): 133-51; George L. Mosse, *The Holy Pretence: A Study in Christianity and Reason of State from William Perkins to John Winthrop* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1968), 68-87; Douglas Horton, "Let us Not Forget the Mighty William Ames," *Religion in Life* 30 (1960): 434-42; John Dykstra Eusden, introduction to *The Marrow of Theology*, by William Ames, ed. and trans. John Dykstra Eusden, 1-66 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997); Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 41-55.

²⁰¹Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience directing Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, 2nd ed. [London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1678], pt. 3, 194. For a brief survey of Ames's significant influence on Reformed theology—in England, New England, and the Netherland—through these two theological works, see Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 41-55. In particular, Beeke and Jones noted that Ames *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof* "became a landmark work in moral theology, passing through nearly twenty editions in one generation" (ibid., 52).

his *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, even though his book was shorter than the works of others: “Long have our divines been wishing for some fuller casuistical tractate: *Perkins* began well; Bishop *Sanderson* hath done excellently with *de juramento*; *Amesius* hath exceeded all, though briefly.”²⁰² Most significantly however, Baxter acknowledged basing his own casuistry in the *Christian Directory*, which contained his most systematic treatment of marriage and celibacy, on the casuistry of Ames. Since Baxter was separated from most of his library while writing the *Christian Directory*, he confessed to having “no one Casuist but *Amesius* [Ames]” on hand to rely on.²⁰³ Beeke and Jones, John Brouwer, and James McJunkin Phillips have all argued that Baxter depended upon an Amesian method of casuistry in resolving cases of conscience.²⁰⁴ Considering the long shadow Ames cast on reformed theology throughout the seventeenth century, it should come as little surprise that Baxter owed an intellectual debt to Ames.²⁰⁵ Thus, an examination of Ames’ casuistry will help illuminate why Baxter approached the issue of clerical celibacy in the manner that he did.

²⁰²Baxter, *CD*, advertisement to the reader fol. A3r.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, advertisement to the reader fol. A2v.

²⁰⁴Beeke and Jones contended that Baxter “built his own *Christian Directory*” on Ames’ casuistry (Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 52, 935). John Brouwer, who produced the most comprehensive analysis of Baxter’s *Christian Directory*, noted on several occasions how Baxter followed an “Amesian” model in solving cases of conscience for Christians. (John F. Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*: Context and Content” [PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2005], 35, 50, 51, 67). Finally, James McJunkin Phillips enumerated three key areas where Ames influenced Baxter and English casuistry in general. First, Ames constructed a moral syllogism to be used for ethical questions of everyday life, rather than the issue of assurance of one’s personal salvation; this enabled him to apply the tools of logic to the major and minor point of the syllogism to elaborate what he felt one’s duty was (James McJunkin Phillips, “Between Conscience and the Law: The Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615-1691)” [PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1959], 147). Second, Ames related the doctrines of duty and law to the work of the conscience (*ibid.*, 147-49). Whereas Perkins had used the makeshift doctrine of virtue to as a way to describe the parts of the moral life, Ames made “duty” the category under which all issues of the moral life could be subdivided; in essence, the point in casuistry was to help people determine what their specific duty was in various circumstances (*ibid.*, 151-52). Third, Ames refused to separate theology from ethics, even though he found it useful to treat them in separate though parallel works. Ames’ methods, according to Phillips, were indicative of trends within English Protestantism and furnished the most important link with Baxter’s ethics which were to follow (*ibid.*, 152).

²⁰⁵See Beeke and Jones’ chap. on William Ames and the significant influence of his theology (Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 41-55).

The Significance of Ames' Casuistry

William Ames' key contributions consisted in three interrelated concepts that shaped his pastoral counsel on the decision to marry or remain single. The concepts included a heightened emphasis on self-denial with *adiaphora*, the conviction that Paul's teaching on celibacy applied to all eras of the church, and the resulting subordination of Genesis chapters 1-2 to 1 Corinthians chapter 7 in determining the Bible's normative teaching on marriage. When combined, these concepts fashioned Ames' distinctive approach to balancing the expedience of celibacy with the lawful nature of marriage for all people. As a result, he stressed the need for sacrificial, pragmatic "living to God" over the liberty of all people to marry.²⁰⁶

In terms of its content and outline, Ames' practical instructions on matters of indifference exhibited strong continuity with fellow English Protestants. He set a hedge against legalistically forbidding *adiaphora* universally but also counseled the necessity of moderation and restraint according to circumstances. Ames defined *adiaphora* as those "things of a middle nature" between "morall good and evill" that were neither enjoined nor prohibited and which, considered in their own nature, were "neither points of obedience, or disobedience."²⁰⁷ Ames however stressed that there was "no action" so morally indifferent that it could not "be made good, or evill" by the "circumstances" of life.²⁰⁸ Even though *adiaphora* were inherently indifferent and therefore lawful, any of

²⁰⁶In *The Marrow of Theology* Ames asserted that the highest goal of life, indeed the essence of living theology practically, is "living to God" (William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. and trans. John Dykstra Eusden [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997], bk. 1, 77). This emphasis on "living to God" as the starting point of theology was Ames' unique theological contribution and runs a consistent theme throughout his casuistry (Horton, "Let us Not Forget the Mighty William Ames," 440). Elsewhere, Ames stated his intention to follow in the footsteps of the pioneer of English practical divinity, William Perkins, by stressing the practicality of theology (Ames, *Conscience with the power and cases thereof*, fols. A3r-v).

²⁰⁷Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 88. In contrast to indifferent actions, Ames argued that any deed that, by its own nature, proved beneficial is not a matter of indifference at all: "Whatsoever it is that of its owne nature serves for order or comlinesse, or edification, is not indifferent: for when they doe participate the nature of goodnesse, they are not in the middle betwixt good and bad. And when they produce good, they must needs have some good force and efficacy in them: everything brings forth its like" (Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 89).

²⁰⁸According to Ames, "There is therefore no action of its own nature so indifferent, but by circumstances it may be made good, or evill; but there be divers actions which in their common and bare

them could potentially become beneficial or sinful in due to the conditions surrounding them.²⁰⁹ He recognized his point could possibly lead to a dangerous legalism, so that Christians might begin to enjoin or forbid certain indifferent matters “simply, absolutely, and forever.” Yet he steered clear of this peril by stressing that an indifferent thing could only be “commanded, as it drawes neer to good” or “forbidden as it approacheth to evill.”²¹⁰ Thus, Ames insisted each Christian must personally determine the benefits or hindrances of morally neutral issues on a case by case basis for themselves.

The method Ames constructed to guide Christian liberty with *adiaphora* came in the form of a syllogism.²¹¹ Ames employed the traditional structure for the syllogism, only substituting the terms “general proposition” and “assumption” for what were traditionally called the major and minor premises. His particular use of the method to solve pressing ethical questions for Christians was his unique contribution to Puritan casuistry.²¹² According to Ames’ syllogism, when considering the practicality of

nature, before they be as it were clothed with circumstances, doe include in themselves no goodnesse or badnesse; as, to eat, to drink, to take a journey, to walk, &c” (Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 89).

²⁰⁹Ibid. Further complicating matters, Ames asserted that indifferent actions differ amongst themselves, for while some incline more towards good, others lean more towards evil. Regardless, in each case the inclination of an action towards good or evil arises from the circumstances, whether good or evil, that tend to be associated with it (ibid).

²¹⁰Ibid. Ames made this statement in response to the following question: “Whether do indifferent things cease to be indifferent when any certain thing is set down concerning them, by such as are in authority?” (ibid.)

²¹¹Ames first explained the function of this syllogism while establishing principles for distinguishing between good works universally enjoined on all Christians and those that are not. Ames pointed out that the lines occasionally become blurred regarding what believers are commanded to do and under which circumstances. Some good works, on the one hand, explicitly call for obedience from all people in the same manner as the “morall law”; yet on the other hand, certain good works lack this explicit universal injunction, but they gain their power to bind the conscience only “consequently” and “under the supposition of certaine circumstances,” rather than “expresly.” Under such instances, Ames argued, good works take on “the nature of precepts,” even though they do not exist as commands on their own. Thus, when a Christian’s particular situation approvingly meets the three parts of this syllogism, the “good work” in question “hath the same force of binding, with a generall Commandement” (ibid., bk. 3, 83).

²¹²Eusden, introduction to *The Marrow of Theology*, 44. According to Eusden, “At this point we see Ames going beyond Ramus, for he rethinks the terminology and usage of this ancient form of knowledge. What had traditionally been called the major proposition of the syllogism becomes a ‘light’ or a ‘law’; the minor proposition becomes a ‘witness,’ an ‘index,’ or ‘book,’ or ‘review’ (sometimes an ‘assumption,’ using the Aristotelian term); and the conclusion becomes a ‘crisis,’ a ‘judge,’ or a ‘judgment.’ Most importantly, the syllogism is used to produce the needed argument or middle term between the minor and major parts of the question; the argument is not discovered and then put into a

indifferent things (marriage, food, wealth, etc.), Christians should first consider whether it will aid in meeting a certain good commanded in Scripture (the general proposition). Second, Christians should contemplate whether their circumstances—such as gifting, vocation, position—called for the use of the *adiaphora* to meet the good commanded in Scripture (the minor proposition). If both conditions were met, individuals could easily determine that their conscience was bound to use the indifferent thing in question.²¹³ Conversely, if the indifferent thing proved a hindrance toward accomplishing the scriptural good, then the Christian was forbidden from using it. By following Ames' casuistical approach for *adiaphora*, Christians could easily determine when they did and did not have liberty to enjoy them.

Thus far, Ames' method bore little evidence of doctrinal deviation from other English Protestants. He generally concurred with them on the nature of indifferent things, the liberty to use them, distinguishing lawfulness and expedience to avoid legalism, and the need for biblical guidelines to moderate the use of *adiaphora* according to circumstances. Ames' divergence consisted more in his tone or stress. English Protestants such as Perkins tended to make frequent declarations accentuating and defending the believer's full liberty toward indifferent things and only secondarily stressed the need for restraint.²¹⁴ Ames lacked such repeated assertions, though not because he rejected them. Rather, his goal seemed to consist more in stressing the necessity of moderation and self-denial based upon one's circumstances, and the syllogism he developed to guide

syllogism, as it was for Ramus. In other words, the syllogism, Ames suggests, can help the questioner find the middle term" (Eusden, introduction to *The Marrow of Theology*, 44).

²¹³According to Ames, "In such things, the will of God is to be gathered and collected by a sillogisme, whose *generall proposition* [major proposition] is contained in the Scripture; the *assumption* [minor proposition] dependeth upon gift, call or such like speciall circumstances; and the *conclusion* is out of the proposition so derived by the assumption, that in respect of this or that man, such or such a time, it hath the same force of binding, with a generall commandement [italics mine] (Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 83).

²¹⁴Perkin's stress most likely derived from the great threat he saw in Roman Catholic beliefs regarding marriage and celibacy. I am indebted to J. Stephen Yuille for pointing out that Perkins saw Roman Catholicism as the great enemy of the Church.

Christians in their use of *adiaphora* also indicates his heightened interest in that goal. However, points of departure begin to appear upon examining the way Ames demonstrated his syllogism from Scripture.

Ames employed biblical texts concerning ethical dilemmas in morally neutral areas to illustrate his syllogism. He saw several scriptural instances—concerning issues of food, marriage, and financial support—when Paul, after taking into account his circumstances, asserted his liberty and right to partake of these things. Nevertheless, the Apostle surrendered his claims to avoid all slander or scandal (2 Cor 11-12), to advance the gospel further (1 Cor 9:23), and to edify the church (1 Cor 9:19).²¹⁵ In the matter of Paul’s celibacy, Ames demonstrated how the rationale for surrendering his liberty to marry could be gathered through his syllogism. First, Paul asserted that all Christians were obligated to advance the gospel through their vocation and according to their particular gifts (1 Cor 7:17). Secondly, he observed that he possessed the gift of sexual continence, and his circumstances (the “present necessity,” 1 Cor 7:26)²¹⁶ showed the single state to be more advantageous for spreading the gospel. Therefore, by taking these factors into account, Paul concluded that he should continue living in the single state rather than exercising his liberty to marry.²¹⁷ Ames’ key departure came in his use of Paul. Whereas most English Protestants cited Paul’s assertion of his right to take a wife (1 Cor 9:5) to prove a pastor’s liberty to marry,²¹⁸ Ames came to a different conclusion.

²¹⁵Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 83.

²¹⁶Ames did not explicitly state the nature of the “present necessity” that lead Paul to counsel virgins to remain unmarried. He did write that Paul’s praise of the single life should be heeded “especially in times of persecution or the like” (ibid., bk. 5, 198). However, he seemed to believe that the “the present necessity” included the varying circumstances in any Christian’s life that might clarify whether single or married life would provide more freedom and opportunity to serve God (ibid., bk. 3, 83 and bk. 5, 197).

²¹⁷Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 83. At the conclusion of his discussion on how one should use this syllogism to discern the will of God, Ames declared, “If this explication be duely observed, it will easily without any longer dispute, overthrow the Doctrine of the Papists, who make distinction between Evangelicall counsells and the Lawes of God” (ibid.).

²¹⁸Corbet, *Matrimonial Purity*, 236; Fulke, *A defense of the sincere and true translations of the holie Scriptures*, 403-4; Hall, *The honor of the married clergie*, 137-8; Vincent, “The Popish Doctrine, Which Forbiddeth to Marry, Is a Devilish and Wicked Doctrine,” 585; Field, *Of the Church fiue bookes*,

Paul did not possess the liberty to marry, even if he desired to, so long as he possessed the gift of continence and his circumstances continued to indicate that the single state would be more profitable for his labors to extend and build up the Church.

Ames considerably broadened the ethical implications of Paul's decision by refusing to constrain it according to Paul's unique era or leadership role. He believed that Paul's outlook applied to all Christians at all times, not just on the issue of matrimony, but in forsaking any Christian liberty for the sake of the gospel.²¹⁹ However, in order to apply his syllogism to the decision to marry or remain single, Ames would have to call into question the widespread conviction that Paul's counsel for the unmarried to remain single strictly applied to times of persecution or to Paul's apostolic position. He demonstrated how his syllogistic method practically functioned when examining a certain case of conscience: "which is the more excellent state, Marriage or Single Life?"²²⁰

At first, Ames' pastoral counsel largely echoed English Protestant convictions by classifying the married and single states as "natural forms of living" that were neither commanded nor prohibited. They therefore contained neither "virtue or vice" nor "any worke morally good or bad" as a feature of their inherent nature. Since neither state was "morally good but indifferent," Christians should refrain from considering one condition more excellent than the other in absolute terms.²²¹ Yet, since some issues of a "middle

469-70; Pierce, *The primitive rule of reformation*, 28; Sanderson "Ad Aulam Sermon XI," 228-29.

²¹⁹In Ames's view, Eusden noted, "The question 'Am I not free?' is not one, . . . , for only the first-century apostles; it is a question raised by each individual Christian as he decides the delicate issue of adopting or denying the ways of the world about him" (Eusden, introduction to *The Marrow of Theology*, 45). This serves as a much-needed corrective to Wakefield's generalization that Puritans only envisioned Paul's mindset toward marriage and celibacy as pertinent for the persecuted church or apostolic missionaries. Wakefield drew solely from Perkins to assert that Puritans did not think their times required the same decision making as made by Paul and others in the early church: "A kind of monasticism may be necessary in apostolic missions or persecutions, but normally 'God's grace may be as well exercised in the family as in the cloister.' Neither can it be claimed that discipline and communion with God demand complete withdrawal from family life. The family is a 'Schoole of Christ,' and there we can learn all the necessary virtues, and practice all needful spiritual exercises" (Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion*, 55). Perkins did represent the dominant stream of English Protestant thought, but it was not the only one.

²²⁰Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 5, 196-98.

²²¹*Ibid.*, bk. 5, 196-97. This approach typified the Puritan attitude toward marriage and celibacy, namely that they could only be evaluated in light of the relative benefits each offered, according

nature” will further “vertue and good works” while others will do so less, Christians should either esteem or neglect them “according to the power they have that way.”²²² The decisive question in discerning whether one should marry or forbear wedlock consisted in which state would further one’s spiritual welfare and capacity to serve God. In his comparison, Ames acknowledged that marriage “seemed” far better for two reasons. First, at creation God had ordained matrimony to improve man’s condition (Gen 2:18), and secondly, after the fall it supplied an outlet for sexual desires, thus preserving and advancing virtue (1 Cor 7: 2, 5, 9).²²³

After acknowledging the benefits of wedlock, Ames illustrated the extent to which Paul’s example influenced his interpretation and application of 1 Corinthians 7 to the decision to marry or remain single. He qualified the two benefits of marriage by pointing out that, despite their scriptural basis, they nevertheless were only general truths which might not be true for every individual. The appraisal of matrimony’s expediency or in expediency must be done on an individual basis. Each Christian should arrive at a decision by taking into account their particular gifting (1 Cor 7:7) as well as the conditions of life “which *Paul* comprehendeth under the name of present necessity” (1 Cor 7:26).²²⁴ The circumstances included persecution or similar distresses but could also be broadened to include other contextual factors.²²⁵ Christians should come to a conclusion by discerning, first, which marital state would advance the gospel and personal holiness further; second they should discern whether they possessed the gift of

to one’s circumstances.

²²²Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 5, 197.

²²³Ibid.

²²⁴Ibid.

²²⁵Ames concluded that “the summe of the Apostle’s advice” is that the single life should be heeded, “especially in times of persecution or the like” (ibid., bk. 5, 198). Note that Ames said “especially” and not *only* during those times. This indicates that Ames thought the conditions included under “the present necessity” to be far broader, encompassing the varying circumstances in any Christian’s life (ibid., bk. 3, 83 and bk. 5, 197).

sexual continence; finally, based on the previous two conclusions, Christians could determine the course of action they were obligated to follow.

And if any man, according to this consideration hath the gift or power, that other conditions concurring, hee findeth himself better able decently and fitly to serve God in his single life, it is better for him to remaine so, *Verse 26* [1 Cor 7:26]. But if any after diligent examination, see that hee cannot doe his businesse so holily and conveniently in single life as in Wedlock, to such a one, the state of Marriage, is better then single life.²²⁶

Thus, if a Christian possessed the gift of continence and, based upon his or her circumstances, discerned the single life would afford superior opportunity to serve God, then for that Christian it was “better” to remain single, and the believer should choose his marital state accordingly.²²⁷ But if sexual concupiscence prevented one from living “peaceably and fruitfully in such a state,” then a Christian should marry. For Ames, “the summe of the Apostle’s advice” was that celibacy was the “better” state of life and should be chosen, so long as it would be more expedient to a person who possessed the gift of chastity.²²⁸

Ames’ syllogistic method for evaluating and choosing between marriage and celibacy diverged from English Protestant thought in three significant ways. First, he broke from the dominant English Protestant interpretation of Paul’s recommendation for Christians to remain single in light of the “present necessity.” Though Ames did perceive the “present necessity” to have a special reference to a “time of persecution or the

²²⁶Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 5, 197.

²²⁷Ames kept Paul’s wording that for Christians with the gift of continence the choice to remain married is “better,” yet one should refrain from supposing that Ames was only suggesting rather than thinking in terms of moral obligation. From what has been examined in this section, it is clear Ames stressed that issues of a “middle nature” will inexorably tend more toward good or evil based upon circumstances and Christians were bound to choose that which will tend more toward good. Therefore, Ames’ argument does suggest that it is a sin for a Christian to marry, if he has the gift of continence, and his current circumstances showed that he is better fitted to advance the gospel as a single person. In such a case, God’s will is clear, the “judgment” is given, and the conscience is bound to obey (ibid. bk. 3, 83).

²²⁸According to Ames, “This is the summe of the Apostle’s advice, that hee, who by temperance, and diligent warinesse and prayer, cannot avoyd burning, (id est.), such a burning of concupiscence which disturbeth the peace of conscience, should choose wedlock; But as long as by such meanes, a man may avoid burning all things being equally considered, it is better for a man to continue single, specially in time of persecution or the like” (ibid., bk. 5, 197-98).

like,²²⁹ he also greatly broadened the phrase's application to encompass not only such eras of ecclesiastical distress but also any of the general circumstances of life affecting one's devotion to God. His hermeneutical departure was driven by his conviction that all Christians should think of their liberty to marry in the same manner as Paul. Just as he possessed the freedom to take a believing wife but refrained for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor 9:5, 12, 15, 19), the general liberty all Christians had to marry did not imply that all should. Christians were obligated to choose the state of life which was best over that which was merely good. Therefore, they could only marry if they were confident that wedlock would allow them to serve God more easily and conveniently.²³⁰ While Ames' hermeneutical position was in the minority, he shows there were diverging viewpoints among English Protestants.

Second, Ames rejected the prevalent assumption that nothing had been altered in God's original plan to bless humanity through their participation in the state of matrimony. Ames readily affirmed English Protestant teaching on the divine origins, purposes, blessings, and inherent goodness of marriage.²³¹ However, he refused to subordinate 1 Corinthians 7 to Genesis 1-2, but instead gave Paul's outlook primacy in shaping pastoral counsel on the married and single states. By changing which text was normative, Ames promoted a fundamentally different outlook regarding the suitability of matrimony for all people. Nearly all English Protestants were convinced the godly life could thrive in wedlock just as fruitfully as in celibacy, despite the extra cares of family.

²²⁹Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 98.

²³⁰*Ibid.*, bk. 5, 197.

²³¹Though Ames does not give a point by point enumeration of the ends of marriage—procreation, relief of concupiscence, and mutual help—they can be collected from various points in his discussion of chastity (Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, bk. 2, 318-20). Ames also commented on companionship and mutual support in his discussion of the mutual obligations between man and wife (Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 5, 156-57). Moreover, while Ames did praise the single state, he also denounced the vow of celibacy in its Roman Catholic manifestation (Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, bk. 2, 320).

Ames labored under a profoundly dissimilar assumption. For any person, matrimony could potentially be a far more hindering state of life for their capacity to serve God, and such individuals should refrain from marrying.

Third, Ames' syllogism clarified and strengthened the governing role of expedience in matters of indifference. English Protestants had disagreed on how to respond to Scripture's counsel for Christians to remain celibate, if they were able to do so. While they rejected dividing Scripture into universal commands and evangelical counsels, they seemed uncertain regarding what moral system should replace it. Were Christians morally obligated to live in the state of life that would be most expedient and if so did it take away their liberty to marry? Ames was convinced his syllogistic method had solved the dilemma by elevating the principle of expedience over Christian liberty. After elucidating the use of his syllogism to discern God's will in areas of moral neutrality, Ames concluded that "if this explication be duely observed, it will easily without any longer dispute, overthrow the Doctrine of the Papists, who make distinction between Evangelicall counsells and the Lawes of God."²³² Thus, by giving priority to expedience in indifferent matters and supplying people with a syllogistic method to illustrate its proper function, Ames had solved the ethical tension created by removing the traditional distinctions between scriptural counsels and commands.²³³ In essence, Ames had shifted the goal of discussions concerning matters of indifference such as marriage. No longer did the issue concern what people were *free* to do with their liberty, but what they were *obligated* to do according to scriptural obligations and their particular life circumstances. Expedience had been an important principle in the casuistry of other

²³²Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, bk. 3, 83.

²³³Phillips also noted how Ames believed his syllogistic method would solve the ethical dilemma concerning scriptural counsels and commands, though I think he did not draw adequate attention to the role of expedience or circumstances in Ames' approach (Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law," 149).

English Protestants, but Ames made “duty” the governing and organizing principle for casuistry.²³⁴

The Influence of Whately on Baxter

Significant evidence exists to establish Baxter’s intellectual debt to Whately and especially his views on marriage and celibacy.²³⁵ Baxter praised him as one of “those holy renowned preachers” sharing his own Amyraldian convictions on universal redemption.²³⁶ Furthermore, Baxter recommended his practical treatise *The Nevv birth* as one of the most profitable books for pastors to give their parishioners: “See that [family heads] have some profitable moving book (besides the Bible) in each family: If they have not, perswade them to buy some of small price, and great use; such as *Mr. Whatelye’s New Birth*.”²³⁷ But more relevant is establishing an intellectual debt between the two pastors in their attitudes toward marriage and celibacy. Baxter indicated just such a linkage in his preface to the reprinting of Whately’s *The redemption of time*. There he recalled how he had been nurtured by Whately’s practical divinity since his youth, and that influence had only increased with time: “Among the rest, I well remember that even

²³⁴Phillips, “Between Conscience and the Law,” 147-48.

²³⁵Secondary works on Whately are scant. For studies including Whately as a part of the larger history of Banbury where he preached, see William Potts and Edward T. Clark, *A History of Banbury: The Story of the Development of a Country Town*, 2nd ed. (Banbury: Gulliver Press, 1978); John Barton Blankenfield, “Puritans in the Provinces: Banbury, Oxfordshire, 1554-1660” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1985). For more specialized studies of his marriage theology, see Jacqueline Eales, “Gender Construction in Early Modern England and the Conduct Books of William Whately (1583-1639),” in *Gender and Christian Religion*, ed. R. N. Swanson, Studies in Church History 34 (New York: Boydell Press, 1998), 163-174; Robert Matz, introduction to *Two Early Modern Marriage Sermons: Henry Smith’s A Preparative to Marriage (1591) and William Whately’s A Bride-Bush*, ed. Robert Matz, The Early Modern Englishwoman 1500-1750, 1-52 (New York: Routledge, 2016).

²³⁶Richard Baxter, *Certain disputations of right to sacraments, and the true nature of visible Christianity defending them against several sorts of opposents, especially against the second assault of that pious, reverend and dear brother Mr. Thomas Blake* (London: Printed by William Du-Gard for Thomas Johnson, 1657), fols. B2v-3r. Indeed Baxter, who was so often assailed for his soteriological originality both during his lifetime and after, was encouraged by the support that Whately and many other “excellent Divines for Learning, Judgment, Holiness and powerful preaching” offered him on this theological point of contention (ibid.).

²³⁷Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor shewing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechizing*, 2nd ed. [London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657], 85.

in my youth (and since much more) the writings of Mr. *Whately* were very savoury to me: especially his *New-Birth*, his *Care-cloth*, and his *Sermon of Redeeming Time*.²³⁸ Among the three titles that had a particularly profound impact on Baxter, the most pertinent was *A care-cloth*, which was a treatise of Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 7:28: "But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that."²³⁹ While not forbidding marriage, *Whately* spent numerous pages describing marital tribulations in great detail and consequently exhorted Christians to remain single if they were able to do so. Thus, an investigation *Whately's* marriage doctrine will shed light on how his points of departure from other English Protestants likely influenced Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy.

Whately's Unique Marriage Theology

As with Ames, *Whately's* approach to the decision to marry exhibited both strong continuity with English Protestants as well as noticeable departures. He concurred with fellow English Protestants in a number of their arguments used to support and commend marriage to all people. First, he classified the married and single states as *adiaphora*, and therefore neither was intrinsically unlawful nor superior or inferior to the other. Rather, they only gained their relative merit or expedience according to an individual's place, time, etc.²⁴⁰ Second, he echoed the ends of matrimony as enumerated

²³⁸Richard Baxter, Preface to *The redemption of time, or, A sermon containing very good remedies for them that have mis-spent their time shewing how they should redeem it comfortably / by William Whately; now published for general good by Richard Baxter* (London: Printed for Francis Tyton, 1673), fol. A2v.

²³⁹Baxter had a copy of the book in his library (Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue (Concluded)," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 3, no. 1 [January-April 1952]: 95). While one should be careful about how much to read into the possession of a book in a person's library, it is worth noting.

²⁴⁰*Whately, A care-cloth*, 3, 13, 18-19. *Whately* argued that Christians can practice their Christian liberty in lawful things, such as marriage, in ways that caused scandal, offences, or inconvenient effects and consequences. Yet these effects did not prove an indifferent thing to be unlawful, but they only showed its inexpedience. Instead, when such inconvenient effects applied, they only showed that the certain matter of indifference may not be conveniently done in a certain place, time, or in the company of certain

in the Prayer Book: procreation and rearing of offspring, as a remedy against sin, and for mutual help.²⁴¹ Finally, he rooted the universal lawfulness of marriage in the “exceedingly great” benefits it yielded to people,²⁴² its origin as an “ordinance of God” meant to be enjoyed by all people without distinction,²⁴³ and its being sanctified by the word of God and prayer. However, Whately also had to confront the problematic tensions posed by Scripture’s commendation of celibacy as a more expedient state of life.

Whately concurred with those English Protestants who taught that Christians should marry only as a last resort, when lust seemed proved unconquerable.²⁴⁴ Even if a person met the first two conditions for a call to marriage, not being bound as a servant and financially able to support a family,²⁴⁵ he asserted the final and crucial indicator of God’s “call to marriage” was lacking the gift of chastity.

Lastly, when a man, after diligent labour, convenient watching, due abstinence, earnest prayers, and a carefull shunning of all times, places, companies, exercises, that may provoke ill affections, doth yet still find his heart so restlesly possessed

people. And so, the thing itself was not unlawful, but the doer may sin in a lawful thing by using it inexpediently. In such a case, the person causes a “scandal” by abusing Christian liberty through their indiscreet and uncharitable use of a lawful thing, without regard of the neighbors hurt that may come from it (Whately, *A care-cloth*, 18-19). For Whately’s broader application of this principle to matters of indifference in the Christians life, see *ibid.*, 13-20.

²⁴¹Whately affirmed these three ends of marriage most explicitly and concisely in *A care-cloth*, 22-23. For statements on procreation and rearing of children, see, Whately, *A bride-bush*, 17, 87-88, 89-93; Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 6, 77 and chap. 11, 120. For statements on marriage as a remedy against sexual sin, see Whately, *A bride-bush*, 13, 17, 176; Whately, *A pithie, short, and methodicall opening of the Ten commandments*, 165, 166; Whately, *A care-cloth*, 25. For statements on mutual help/support, see Whately, *A bride-bush*, 47-48, 60-61, 116, 217-18; Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 11, 119-20.

²⁴²Whately, *A care-cloth*, 22-24.

²⁴³*Ibid.*, 22-23.

²⁴⁴Whately’s position on this was not unique, for similar advice existed among a minority of English Protestants discussed earlier in the chap.: Richard Rogers, Richard Greenham, Joseph Hall, Lancelot Andrewes, Daniel Rogers, Matthew Parker, and George Herbert.

²⁴⁵These were the first two signs indicating God’s “call” to marriage (Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A4r-v). In the first case, Whately was describing when a man had become “his owne man, not bound by covenant to continue another man’s servant: for God never crosseth himselfe: whom he hath called for a certain time to be a servant unto a Master, him he doth not call, during that time, to breake from that service, without his Masters liking” (*ibid.*, fols. A4r-v). The second indicator of a call to marriage was having the financial resources to do so (*ibid.*, fol. A4v). Whately said if a man did not meet either of these conditions, then he must concede that God has providentially debarred him from marriage, at least for the time being, and will provide the ability to contain his lust (*ibid.*)

with these desires, that he cannot with-hold his will, at least, from often consenting unto them; and so is disabled from serving God in duties of Religion and his calling, with comfort and chearefulnesse; to whom God, after all these meanes used, vouchsafeth not the power of containing, him he calls, to enter into Matrimony.²⁴⁶

Whately therefore maintained the universal lawfulness of marriage as a divine institution²⁴⁷ but in tension with his insistence that wedlock should only be pursued after exhausting all other means of suppressing concupiscence. It seems that even though marriage was open to all, one also needed a clear call from God. If Christians had no need to marry for the prevention of lust then they did “best to forbear matrimony.”²⁴⁸ Citing 1 Corinthian chapter 7, Whately stressed that “it may seeme the wisest way” to select the marital state which, of the two, “Scripture . . . doth seeme to commend” as more advantageous.²⁴⁹

Like many English Protestants, Whately seemed to struggle with balancing the tension between the expedience of celibacy and the lawfulness of marriage for all people. On the one hand, to soften Paul’s commendation of celibacy, Whately interpreted it as “advise and counsel” directed to “what was most fit and commodious” rather than “a precise Commandment” which “bound the conscience strictly.”²⁵⁰ Consequently, even Paul’s decision to remain celibate ought to be interpreted in a descriptive rather than prescriptive manner. In matters of indifference, the scriptural examples of godly people never bound consciences to perform or refrain from certain actions, but only indicated their lawfulness.²⁵¹ On the other hand, he reminded his readers of their responsibility to imitate how Paul pondered the issue. Each person should evaluate the relative benefits

²⁴⁶Whately, *A care-cloth*, fol. A4v.

²⁴⁷Ibid., 3-8, 8-20, 21-23, 24-26; Whately, *A bride-bush*, 13, 14-16.

²⁴⁸Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A5r-v.

²⁴⁹Ibid.

²⁵⁰Ibid., 2.

²⁵¹Ibid., 13-14.

and inconveniences of the married and single states, and then, guided by “the direction of reason,” choose the state of life “which shall bee most for his comfort.”²⁵² For Whately, celibacy usually proved to be more expedient in the sense that it was less troublesome, for it lacked the burdensome cares and afflictions accompanying wedlock.²⁵³ The tension between his two points of emphases was expressed most clearly in his response to whether Christians should marry if they had no need to do so for “preventing of sinne, or other important considerations”:

For albeit in such case the Lord hath left a mans conscience at libertie (so that he sins not either by abiding in his present estate, or altering it, which he likes best) yet it may seem the wisest way to make choice of that part, which the Scripture rather of the twaine doth seem to commend.²⁵⁴

The subtle nuances of Whately’s position were missed by Jacqueline Eales when she only noted his defense of universal liberty to marry.²⁵⁵ True, Whately defended the liberty of all to marry, including those with the gift of chastity.²⁵⁶ Christians did not sin if they choose the less convenient option of wedlock, so long as they chose a “fit” person and had parental consent.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he couched his allowance for liberty within another

²⁵²Whately, *A care-cloth*, 61-62.

²⁵³Ibid., 3.

²⁵⁴Ibid., fols. A5r-v. At times Whately vocalized this point in an even more forceful manner. While defending Paul’s rationale for dissuading marriage for those that “can contain,” Whately stressed people’s obligation to choose the most convenient state of life for themselves: “for who cannot say, that what brings more profit, then losse, must be done, though it brings some losse? And what brings more comfort, then trouble, must rather be done though it bring some trouble” (ibid., 67).

²⁵⁵Though Eales rightly pointed out that Whately defended the freedom of all people to marry, including clerics, she failed to recognize that he still urged Christians to refrain from marrying unless they clearly lacked the ability to remain chaste in the single state (Eales, “Gender Construction in Early Modern England and the Conduct Books of William Whately,” 167).

²⁵⁶Whately did not desire anyone to abstain from matrimony “whom God calleth unto it,” nor to cause people to perpetually suffer under concupiscence in order to evade the many burdens and hindrances of wedlock (Whately, *A care-cloth*, fol. A4r).

²⁵⁷Ibid., 21, 27-28. Whately understood that even a sinless action could be made sinful to a person who does it in a sinful manner. Thus, he clarified Paul’s statement, “if you marry you do not sin,” by saying the apostle only meant the act of marriage itself and not the manners and circumstances, for one could transgress through disorder in this way, even though the act of marriage itself is not a sin (ibid., 27-28). To qualify as a “fit” person, Whately presented three conditions: first they must have sufficient distance between them in their bloodlines, without which it is not a marriage; second, they must not be bound in service to a master; third, they must agree in true religion, without which they greatly sin in marrying (ibid., 28-32). Also, Whately strongly emphasized parental consent. In his view, God did not join

admonition urging people to take heed of the fact that Scripture commended celibacy as the more pragmatically convenient state of life.

Whately's attempt to balance the tension between the expedience of celibacy and the universal lawfulness of marriage made three noteworthy deviations from other English Protestants. First, Whately echoed Ames' contention that Paul's counsel regarding the expedience of celibacy had a timeless application for the church instead of being circumstantially limited. He was fully aware of the pervasive view that the "present necessitie," which Paul cited as the reason for refraining from wedlock (1 Cor 7:26), merely pertained to periods of ecclesiastical persecution rather than "all times indifferently." He countered by insisting that the "present necessitie" in fact bore a universal application to the church in all eras. Even though Paul's counsel was particularly applicable during periods of persecution, it should also encompass "the distresses of this present life."²⁵⁸ The distress Whately had in mind were the tribulations of the flesh (1 Cor 7:28) that Paul warned would accompany marriage. Those who married should anticipate "more trouble and adverstite" than the single life, since Paul composed his observation under inspiration from God.²⁵⁹ Such tribulations were a product of sin's disordering effect upon all estates of life, including wedlock.²⁶⁰ In a fallen world, any estate which involved people "with more business, and with more persons" would consequently cause them to be "molested with more troubles." Marriage represented the supreme example of that relationship at work, since wedlock engaged

together those whom their parents had not given their consent and blessing, and when a couple married against their parents wishes they sinned (Whately, *A care-cloth*, 32-34). Thus, he associated the consent and favor of parents in marriage with the consent and favor of God (ibid., 69).

²⁵⁸Ibid., 65. Whately reasoned that the application had to extend beyond beyond times of persecution otherwise Paul's logic would have made little sense to the Corinthians who were not suffering from ecclesiastical repression at the time (ibid.).

²⁵⁹Ibid., 40.

²⁶⁰As a result of sin, Whately argued, wedlock had become exceedingly more troublesome than the single state, whereas before the fall it would not have agitated spouses "with the least touch of misery" (ibid., 42).

people in far more duties and anxieties than before, which consequently caused sin and corruption to become more visible.²⁶¹ Whately urged single persons to judiciously consider, before marrying, the greater challenges spouses confronted in providing for worldly necessities and pleasing all the members of their household.

Married men must care for the things of this world, how to please their yokefellowes, how to maintaine their families, live amongst their neighbours, pay every man his owne, how to get something for their children, in which care, though they prosper so much, as to bring to passe the thing cared for, yet is the labor great, and the burthen heavie, and the trouble much unto the flesh.²⁶²

In sharp contrast, unmarried people only had to be concerned for their own needs.²⁶³ In Whately's view, Scripture's contrast between the practical convenience of the single state and the numerous cumbers of wedlock was just as germane to seventeenth-century English Protestants as first-century Christians. Just as Paul desired the Corinthians "to be free from the anxieties" found in wedlock (1 Cor 7:32), Whately urged his readers to forbear marriage, if possible, because "the labor is great, and the burthen heavie, and the trouble much unto the flesh."²⁶⁴ While most English Protestants acknowledged that marriage tended to bring more distractions and worldly cares, they did not believe it was a valid reason for eschewing matrimony, except in circumstances of persecution or individuals called to apostolic ministry.²⁶⁵

Whately's second noteworthy deviation can be glimpsed in the considerable space he devoted to enumerating and graphically depicting the tribulations of the flesh that accompanied marriage. Although English Protestants never shied from warning the newly married of the troubles awaiting them, they never elucidated them with the same

²⁶¹Whately, *A care-cloth*, 40-41.

²⁶²Ibid., 58. See also the wider context of Whately's discussion on how providing for all the necessities of life casts exceedingly great burdens on married couples (ibid., 55-60).

²⁶³Ibid., 58-59.

²⁶⁴Ibid., 58.

²⁶⁵See the discussion earlier in this chap., 69-72.

vigor and detail.²⁶⁶ Whately began by describing the suffering caused by the moral/spiritual failings of family members. Every member of a household—husband, wife, children, servants—possessed moral failings that would spring up in a myriad of sinful, grievous vices.²⁶⁷ Beginning with men, he detailed a litany of “twentie, and twice twentie sinful and offending dispositions” that “shew themselves in all the sonnes of *Adam*.”²⁶⁸ He urged “the woman that is to marrie” to consider the grief she would suffer if her husband proved “bitter and rageful,” so that he heaped verbal and physical abuse upon her.²⁶⁹ Even if husbands might prove to be “not so mad,” Whately copiously listed numerous lesser sufferings they might inflict on their wife such as carelessness, unkindness, grumbling, impatience, insensitivity, drunkenness, hedonism, and wastefulness.²⁷⁰ Therefore, every woman should carefully contemplate in advance “the

²⁶⁶As Doriani argued, the act of enumerating and bemoaning the myriad of crosses common to wedlock reflected more harmony with nominal Christians in the Middle Ages and early modern era, whom Doriani referred to as “secularized Englishmen” (Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 123-24, 134-35).

²⁶⁷Whately, *A care-cloth*, 43. For Whately’s lengthy discussion of the vices of men, see *ibid.*, 43-44. For the vices of women, see *ibid.*, 44-45. For a list of the pain Whately warned wives to expect from their husbands, see *ibid.*, 45-47. For a list of the pains a husband might endure from his wife, see *ibid.*, 47-48. For Whately’s discussion of the troubles of raising children, see *ibid.*, 52-54.

²⁶⁸According to Whately, “Some men are churlish, sowre, & unkind; some, wrathfull, passionate, and furious; some hard, miserable, and niggardly; some uncleane, unsatiable, and ranging after other women; some suspicious mistrustful, and iealous of their owne wives; some rash and hare-brain’d; some fond and giddie; some simple; some subtill; some idle; some toylesome; some carking; some carelesse; yea, twentie, and twice twentie sinful and offending dispositions, shew themselves in all the sonnes of *Adam*, and what woman can meete with a man in all the world, in whom some or other of these disorders do not dwell?” (*ibid.*, 43).

²⁶⁹Whately counseled women to consider several possibilities: “What if mine husband should prove unkind, and disregardfull of me? What is hee bee bitter and ragefull towards me? What if he should rate me with words of disgrace, more then ever my Father or Master have done? What if he should lay upon me with his unmanlike fist? and that when I seeke to give him all content? Or what if he should strike mee with a more painful and mischievous weapon, though I gave him no cause? How should I beare railing, taunting, or cutting termes, at his mouth? How cruell, fierce, and causelesse blowes at his hand?” (*ibid.*, 45).

²⁷⁰Whately urged women to ask themselves the following questions: “How if it fall out yet, that he bee carelesse and unkind? What if hee denie me the reasonable libertie which I desire, and should enjoy? And will not suffer me to have my will in things convenient? How if he shew me a lowring countenance, and an estranged carriage, and that also undeservedly? How if he grumble and grudge at mine expences . . . ? What if he thinke much to allow me necessarie helps and comforts, in my weaknesse, sicknesses, and lying in, and then most unkind, when I need most kindness, because his niggardly humour can beare no charges? . . . Or what if he prove a voluptuarie, a drunkard, and epicure, spending that riotously, and wastefully, which were better saved, to provide for me and his children? What if he be an haunter of Alehouses, or Tavernes, and come home half drunk, halfe mad, and powre forth all his rage

evils that may befall her in marriage.”²⁷¹ Women could possess many particular vices of their own, prompting Whately to warn men that a “hundred, and a thousand faults, doe lie hid in the painted box of the bosome of everie of [Eve’s] daughters.”²⁷² A wife could prove careless, lacking in prudence, discontent due to vanity, difficult to please, froward, adulterous, or a gossip, and all these faults could cause a wife to “become an hindrance, rather than an helper to [her husband’s] estate.”²⁷³ Some women were so prone to foolish and childish behavior that Whately even allowed physical correction by the husband. Though English Protestants as a whole denounced domestic violence,²⁷⁴ Whately justified it as a last resort by reasoning that adults acting as silly juveniles deserved to be treated as such: “I think the husband shall not offend, in using a foole according to her

upon me and my innocent children? What if he consume himself in sports, pastimes, and gaming, and make us all beggers by his unthriftinesse? How could I suffer all, or any of these troubles, in the flesh? How tedious? How bitter? How terrible would they seeme unto me?” (Whately, *A care-cloth*, 45-46).

²⁷¹Ibid., 47.

²⁷²Ibid., 44. Whately noted, “Some women are proud, arrogant, and scornefull; some, violent, headstrong, and masterful, some, sullen and dogged; some, tongue-tied; some, light; some, coy; some, sinish; some, fluttish; some, over-spending; some, oversparing; some, lewd and unchaste; some raging and iealous; yea am hundred, and a thousand faults, doe lie hid in the painted box of the bosome of everie of Evahs daughters” (ibid.).

²⁷³Whately urged men to consider several possibilities: “What if my wife should prove carelesse, and unhuswifely, wanting forecast and skill to make the best of things, and so become an hindrance, rather than an helper to mine estate? What if she bee daintie and lavish, and will not content her selfe with mine attire and my fare? What if she be sluttish and uncleanely, and worke loathing in mee, by the ill ordering of those things that should give me most comfort? What if she bee forward and snappish, and returne my words unto mee with advantage? What if shee prove a blab, and withall inquisitive, so that she will bee ignorant of nothing, and yet can keepe no counsel? What if she be sullen, and sowrie, and will give me no good countenance, unless she have her unreasonable will performed in all things? What if she waste my goods in vaine, costlinesse of attire, and in idle meetings amongst her Gossips? What if she be loose and wanton, and discredit my family with an evill name? What if she be a very harlot, and defile my bed, and fill mine house with bastards? . . . What if she be mischeivoulsy iealous, and thinke that I am naught with all I speake to, laying whoredome to my charge, when I never meant it, and almost inforce me to be wicked, by putting that into mine head, which I never dreamt of? How should I brooke this life? How should I sustaine this burden, and undergoe this trouble to the flesh?” (ibid., 47-48).

²⁷⁴Doriani noted, “The Puritans and Continental never, as a group, tolerated wife-beating” (Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 305 and see the larger discussion in 304-9). See for example Carter, *Carters Christian common vvealth*, 21; Gouge, *Christian directions*, 168; Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage*, 54-58; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 2:78-79; Jeremy Taylor, “Sermon XVIII: The Marriage Ring or the Mysteriousness and Duties of Marriage. Part II,” in *XXV sermons preached at Golden-Grove* (London: Printed by R. Norton for Richard Royston, 1655), 234-36. Despite the preaching of clergymen, however, historians have noted that domestic violence seemed to be a widespread problem, not only in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England but also Europe (Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 305).

folly; a child in understanding, like a child in yeeres; and a woman of base and servile condition, in base and servile manner.”²⁷⁵ For men, therefore, seeking a godly wife and a happy marriage was no less treacherous and fraught with peril. Whately conceded that grace and sanctification may help subdue the faults of husbands and wives, yet they will never be completely purged “so as long as flesh and spirit do strive together” in this earthly life.²⁷⁶ While not every man or woman exhibited his litany of vices in their entirety, Christians could be assured that any spouse would possess at least some which would “vexe and torment their yoke-fellow.”²⁷⁷ Whereas most English Protestants claimed that a wisely chosen spouse and biblical obedience would ensure a happy marriage, Whately depicted significant moral and spiritual failings as nearly inescapable.²⁷⁸

Physical sorrows easily and frequently afflicted family members. Whately devoted pages to vividly describing a host of bodily diseases that could easily, and without warning, afflict or eventually strike down each family member.²⁷⁹ Both men and women should consider the possibility that their spouse might become an invalid. What if

²⁷⁵Whately, *A bride-bush*, 108. Whately was “loath to allow a husband the libertie” of treating his wife as he would his slave (ibid., 106-7). He admitted the irrationality of a husband striking the same cheek he kissed and inflicting blows upon the wife who was his own flesh. Nevertheless, just as a man might need to lance a boil on his own body, Whately saw no reason why this reluctant force could not be employed if a wife abased herself with “foolish, childish, slavish behavior” (ibid., 107). See also 108 for his use of this same logic). Thus, the purpose was a corrective action to be done “for the wife’s good,” and Whately counseled physical force only as a last resort after the husband had exhorted, admonished, prayed, and born with his wife for considerable time, with no results (ibid., 108). But when a wife resisted her husband’s “reproofes and persuasion” by railing against him “with most reproachful termes,” insulting him with “bold and impudent resistances,” vowing to pursue her lusts, or striking his face with her fists, then the husband should use forceful correction (ibid.).

²⁷⁶Whately, *A care-cloth*, 44-45.

²⁷⁷Ibid., 48.

²⁷⁸Whately was cautious to point out that marital strife was due to the entrance of sin’s corruption and not because God’s perfect ordinance was flawed (Whately, *A bride-bush*, A3v-A4r; Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 1, 4). Marital strife, he counseled, could be remedied by instructing spouses in the “knowledge and practice” of their biblical duties, so that they would find matrimony to be “a solace to their soules and refreshing to their other griefes” (Whately, *A bride-bush*, fol. A3v).

²⁷⁹For the sicknesses the wife should consider, see Whately, *A care-cloth*, 48-49. For the sicknesses husband should consider, see 49-50. For Whately’s discussion of barrenness, see ibid., 50-51.

a spouse “should languish away in paine and sicknesse,” so that their yokefellow’s life “must be spent in attending a body still dying, and as it were, under-propping a rotten house alwaies falling?”²⁸⁰ Women should also beware the many bodily discomforts that afflicted them in bearing children: “What if breeding be troublesome, so that I scarce enjoy a healthie day from conception to quickning, from quickning to travel?”²⁸¹ Barrenness could afflict the spouses, or in other instances God might grant children and yet they were “blasted with sicknesse, and with speedy death,” leaving parents with more sorrow for their death than joy from their birth.²⁸² Even if children survived to older age, they sometimes proved to be “their parents tormentors and murderers,” rather than comforters, through their lecherous conduct. Such children might grieve their parents’ hearts so deeply that “they would count it an advantage to have been barren” and wish they had had died before they ever learned to speak.²⁸³ Marriages fortunate enough to be spared all these dangers nevertheless faced the eminent truth that death would come sooner or later for one of the spouses “and divorce the husband and wife each from other.” Finally, Whately urged men and women to consider the agony accompanying such loss before they married: “How shall I do to see that breath goe out of that beloved body? How shall I endure to see those eyes closed, and all those lims and ioyns now under the arrest of death?”²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰Whately, *A care-cloth*, 48. Whately spoke this toward women, but the larger context makes clear he meant this for both spouses, for he gave the same warning about invalid wives to husbands (*ibid.*, 49)

²⁸¹Whately counseled women to consider, “What if breeding be troublesome, so that I scarce enjoy a healthie day from conception to quickning, from quickning to travel? What if bringing forth be so tedious and painefull, that I never become a mother, but by going thorow the torment of an hundred deaths in one, besides a long weakenesse after? What if God multiply my sorrows this way, and give me an evill stomacke, pale cheeks, a wan countenance, faint legs, and a feeble body, liker a carcasse, then a living woman? How shall I beare head-ach, heart-ach, back-ach, stomack-ach, retching, casting, longing, loathing, quawmes, pangs, swoundings, and twentie deaths a day?” (*ibid.*, 48-49).

²⁸²*Ibid.*, 50-51.

²⁸³*Ibid.* For more details on the trials of child rearing and child sickness, see *ibid.*, 51-54.

²⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 49-50. For viewing this suffering from the husband’s perspective, see *ibid.*, 50.

Though Whately devoted far more pages than any other English Protestant to describing marital sorrows, this did not seem to derive from prejudice based on his marital experience. Doriani has characterized Whately as “blatantly biased against marriage” and speculated that his tendentious depiction of domesticity might betray the author’s unfortunate marriage circumstances.²⁸⁵ However, Whately himself expressed thanks for having experienced a very joyful marriage to an exceptionally godly wife.²⁸⁶ Furthermore, it should be remembered that Whately repeatedly highlighted God’s sanctifying providence over the misfortunes spouses experienced.²⁸⁷ Instead, the predominant influence shaping his description of marital tribulations seems to have been his exegetical approach to 1 Corinthians 7.²⁸⁸ He refused to limit the application of Paul’s commendation of celibacy to periods of persecution. Consequently, he desired to explicate through numerous examples all the “tribulations of the flesh” Paul may have had in mind when he counseled Christians to forbear marriage.

²⁸⁵Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 135, 136, 139. Doriani ultimately seems to back away from totally affirming this evaluation (ibid., 141).

²⁸⁶Whately provided unambiguous support for his marital happiness in his other marriage treatise: *A bride-bush*. Whately dedicated the work to “his verie loving and much esteemed Father in Law,” George Hunt. Whately showered thanksgiving upon Hunt for bestowing on him “*the greatest of all outward benefits, a good yoke-fellow*” and “*a most excellent and virtuous wife.*” Far from being fraught with strife, his marriage had been “*most contentfull and peacefull*” by his own confession (Whately, *A bride-bush*, fols. A1r). Furthermore, his wife faithfully performed before his own eyes all that “*a good wife should do . . . in as exact copleteness, as mortalitie can affoord, daily and continually . . . in mine own house*” (ibid., A2r). The only scholarly treatment of Whately’s life is included in part of a study of Banbury where he was the pastor (Blankenfield, “Puritans in the Provinces”).

²⁸⁷According to Whately, “. . . he that will bee married, must arm himselfe with patience against the troubles of that kind of life, and resolving, . . . , that hee will behave himselfe, not alone quietly, but even cheerfully, though they come apace about him. Digest in the serious consideration of thy mind, the cause of trouble, sinne, the use of trouble, the healing of sin; the Sender and Moderator of trouble, God; and the end and issue of trouble, glorie; that thine heart may neither faint nor fret, because of trouble” (Whately, *A care-cloth*, fols. A5v-6r). Elsewhere, Whately exhorted his readers to turn their crosses “into medicines as Physicians doe some poysons, causing the sorrow which they will worke in us to become a medicine against our sinnes” (Whately, *Prototypes*, chap. 1, 10).

²⁸⁸Doriani was uncertain as to the happiness of Whately’s marital experience and therefore equivocated on which of two factors proved the root cause of his seemingly cynical view of domesticity: a poor marriage experience or the conviction that Paul’s recommendation of celibacy applied to Christians in all eras: “The reason for Whately’s unique position is at least partly exegetical but whether exegesis preceded observation or the opposite we cannot know” (Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 136).

Whately deviated in a third way from the most English Protestants by dissuading marriage, unless God called one to it, on the basis that its sufferings would always outweigh the benefits. At times, Whately seemed to merely warn that the married would experience “as much sower as sweet; as many bitter morsels as pleasant” in matrimony.²⁸⁹ But he took a dramatic step further by asserting that the comforts of marriage, namely procreation and mutual help, would never requite the myriad of afflictions that accompanied it.

You may, perhaps, imagine, that the comforts of marriage will abundantly requite the troubles. So all things seeme faire afaarre off, which are not so nearer hand: but if you will be well advised before you conclude, you shall find, that indeed the comforts are not worth the troubles. For I pray you, what be the comforts you talke of? A wife, children: these two be all, and yet I have told you before, that often these two bee the greatest cumbers of marriage; so that these are but uncertaine comforts, and may prove otherwise. But say that they proove in the best sort; yet I assure you, that they are farre too light, to over-weigh all the leaden weights of trouble that lye in the other seale.²⁹⁰

Whately cautioned that he was speaking generally rather than categorically; he did not intend to deny that a wife and children could ever prove a source of joyful blessing.²⁹¹ He sought to show how the two greatest blessings of marriage, even when they did prove rewarding, would also always be an unremitting source of sorrow that outweighed all the benefits they could offer. In doing so, he took the exact opposite position of most English Protestants who laid the blame for unhappy marriages solely on poor matchmaking or selfish and sinful spouses.

²⁸⁹Whately, *A care-cloth*, 63.

²⁹⁰Ibid., 65-66. Whately made a similar statement when he said, “If you have the ability of containing, then even the best wife and best children cannot counterweigh the troubles of marriage, for otherwise Paul would not be right. If marriage truly did bring comforts beyond the single state which exceeded the trials it brought than Paul made a feeble and ineffectual reason (ibid., 66-67).

²⁹¹Whately pointed out that Paul was speaking of married couples in general and how they usually fall out, not intending to point at every particular pair of couples. But Whately nevertheless maintained that the state of matrimony “is a sea, that yieldeth more tossing, than the land would doe by farre” (ibid., 67).

Conclusion

Scholars have often depicted English Protestant Marriage Doctrine as nearly monolithic in its praise of marriage over celibacy as well as the liberty of all Christians to marry, but the literature actually reveals considerable tension. There was a heightened emphasis on celibacy as an inherently superior state among the spiritual sects and even among conforming churchmen who advocated the *vita angelica*. However, even though most English Protestants quickly rejected such claims, they still had to square their vigorous support of marriage with the expediency that celibacy afforded for serving God and promoting one's spiritual welfare. The pragmatic advantages of celibacy could not simply be dismissed since they had clear scriptural support. Furthermore, despite rejecting the bifurcation of Scripture into universal commands and evangelical counsels, English Protestants struggled to develop a new moral system that answered whether Christians were obligated to forsake their liberty to marry if celibacy was more expedient. Both Jesus and Paul had counseled Christians to remain single if they were able. English Protestants navigated around Scripture's commendation of celibacy by limiting its application to those with the gift of chastity and periods of persecution. They also asserted that Scripture merely counseled or advised celibacy, rather than commanding it. Yet both solutions depended on tenuous assumptions. The first assumption was hermeneutical and depended on the conviction that Scripture's teaching on marriage in Genesis 1-2 was normative while Paul's was an exception for certain occasions. The second assumption was that Christians were not obligated to choose the state of life in which they could best devote themselves to God. If either of the two assumptions were challenged, as they already had been with Whately, and especially Ames, then the decision to marry or remain single would be approached much differently; it would no longer concern the Christian's liberty to choose what was "good" but the Christian's *obligation* to choose what was "best." As it so happened, Baxter explicitly claimed to have been influenced by both Whately and Ames.

CHAPTER 3

BAXTER'S THEOLOGY OF SOUL CARE IN THE CHURCH AND THE FAMILY

Introduction

Baxter's fourteen-year pastoral tenure at Kidderminster (1647-61) has been widely studied for the spiritual revival which came to a parish that had been largely unaffected by the English Reformation. According to Baxter, at the beginning of his ministry "there was about one Family in a Street that worshipped God and called on his Name," and yet by the time he departed "there were some streets where there was not past one family in the side of a street that did not do so."¹ Many popular treatments have tended to depict Baxter's ministry as the paragon of Puritan diligence and faithfulness in the pastorate.² A number of scholarly works have also analyzed Baxter's Kidderminster ministry as well as the pastoral method for church reform that he developed and promulgated through *The Reformed Pastor*.³ Thus, while the tensions in English

¹Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Mathew Sylvester (London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, J. Dunton, 1696), bk. 1, pt. 1, 84-85 §136.

²J. I. Packer extolled Baxter as "the most outstanding pastor, evangelist and writer on practical and devotional themes that Puritanism produced" (J. I. Packer, introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*, by Richard Baxter, ed. William Brown [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2007], 9). See also Charles F. Kemp, *A Pastoral Triumph: The Story of Richard Baxter and his Ministry at Kidderminster* (New York: Macmillan, 1948). J. William Black offered a thorough listing and evaluation of the many works that tend to view Baxter's ministry as exemplifying Puritan pastoral practice (J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004], 6-8).

³For the most scholarly treatments in print, see Black, *Reformation Pastors*; Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 62 (Boston: Brill, 2004).

For dissertations and theses, see Nathaniel Harrington Mair, "Christian Sanctification and Individual Pastoral Care in Richard Baxter: An Analysis of the Relation between Richard Baxter's Understanding of Christian Sanctification and the Form and Content of his Individual Pastoral Direction" (ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1966); William Ross Shealy Jr., "The Power of the Present: The Pastoral Perspective of Richard Baxter, Puritan Divine: 1615-1691" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1966); Glenn Paul Kinder, "Richard Baxter's Understanding of the Cure of Souls as it Appears in The Reformed

Protestant marriage doctrine molded Baxter, they only formed part of the context for understanding the influences shaping his argument for clerical celibacy. Perhaps just as pertinent was his theology of soul care in the church and the family that developed during his tenure at Kidderminster.

The need to take into account Baxter's particular approach to soul care has been illustrated by J. William Black's recent study. Black challenged the common assumption that Baxter's ministry served as an exemplar of the highest ideals of Puritan pastoral practice.⁴ Baxter's pastoral initiatives, Black contended, actually challenged nearly one hundred years of English Protestant rhetoric regarding the nature of pastoral work and the means by which to complete the ongoing work of the Reformation in England.⁵ Baxter abandoned the inherited model of godly ministry—which focused on preaching, purification of church ceremonies, and parliamentary reform—and instead attempted a comprehensive reformation of pastoral practice. His methods of catechizing,

Pastor (1656): A Study in Historical Theology" (MA thesis, Graduate Theological Union, 1976); Zachary K. McCoy, "Acts 20:28 and the Scriptural Basis of Richard Baxter's The Reformed Pastor" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary 2012); John Sanders Pearsall, "An Investigation of Pastoral Care as Exemplified in the Life and Ministry of Richard Baxter with a Consideration of its Relevance for Today" (ThM thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1953); Kenneth L. Roth, "The Cure of Souls in the Thought of Richard Baxter (1615-1691): A Study in Historical and Practical Theology" (ThM thesis, Reformed theological Seminary, 1995); Barbara Anne Stewart, "Richard Baxter: The Beloved Pastor of Kidderminster" (MCS thesis, Regent College, 1985); Thomas Loren Strong, "An Evaluation of Richard Baxter's Pastoral Ministry" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978).

For articles, see J. William Black, "From Martin Bucer to Richard Baxter: 'Discipline' and Reformation in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England," *The American Society of Church History* 70, no. 4 (December 2001): 644-73; J. William Black, "Richard Baxter's Bucerian 'Reformation,'" *Westminster Theological Journal* 63, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 327-49; Eamon Duffy, "The Reformed Pastor in English Puritanism," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 83, no. 1 (2003): 216-34; David Sceats, "Gildas Silvianus Revivivus: The Reformed Pastor, Richard Baxter," *Anvil* 10 (1993): 135-45; Paul Chang-Ha Lim, "The Reformed Pastor by Richard Baxter 1615-1691," in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 152-66; Packer, introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*; Timothy K. Beougher, "Richard Baxter (1615-1691): A Model of Pastoral Leadership for Evangelism and Church Growth," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 4 (2002): 4-21; Kenneth L. Roth, "The Psychology and Counseling of Richard Baxter" (1615-1691)," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 17 (1998): 321-34; N. H. Keeble, "Richard Baxter's Preaching Ministry: Its History and Texts," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35, no. 4 (October 1984): 539-59.

⁴See Black, *Reformation Pastors*.

⁵For a collection of essays on the long course the Protestant Reformation took in England, see Nicholes Tyacke, ed., *England's Long Reformation*, Neale Colloquium 2 (Bristol, PA: UCL Press, 1998).

discipline, and ministerial associations had been proposed or sporadically performed before, but never in the systematic manner in which he combined them.⁶

Black's study raises significant questions regarding the connection between Baxter's theology of soul care and his argument for clerical celibacy. How does England's ecclesiastical context in the mid-seventeenth century explain the uniqueness of his pastoral program and the fervency with which he advocated it? What longstanding ecclesiastical problems did he believe his initiatives resolved? Was his pastoral program so uniquely burdensome for pastors that he felt only a single pastor could fully implement it? Surprisingly, no scholar has examined whether Baxter's unusual advocacy of clerical celibacy stemmed from the pastoral model he developed at Kidderminster. Finally, did Baxter have a negative view of the family that led him to reject its suitability as an ideal environment for soul care? This chapter contends that Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy arose, not from a rejection of Protestantism's positive view of the family, but from the demanding nature of his threefold pastoral strategy to remedy the deficiencies in the English Church and complete the work of the Reformation.

This chapter will examine Baxter's theology of soul care for pastoral ministry and the family. The primary resource relied upon in this first part of the chapter will be *The Reformed Pastor*, which served as the fullest presentation of his pastoral program.⁷ The chapter begins by sketching his assessment regarding the state of the English Church in the mid-seventeenth century and particularly the longstanding issues he saw hindering

⁶Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 221, 259-60. See also Eamon Duffy, "The Long Reformation: Catholicism, Protestantism and the Multitude," in *England's Long Reformation*, ed. Nicholes Tyacke, Neale Colloquium 2 (Bristol, PA: UCL Press, 1998), 41-48.

⁷I will be using the second edition of *The Reformed Pastor* which was published in 1657, since it contained an appendix with Baxter's responses to the most common objections he received to his pastoral model. These objections help illuminate the divergence of Baxter from existing models of ministerial soul care, the taxing demands of his model on pastors, and the strains clerical marriage placed on the effective implementation of his model (Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor shewing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechizing: with an open confession of our too open sins, prepared for a day of humiliation kept at Worcester, Decemb. 4, 1655 by the ministers of that county, who subscribed the agreement for catechizing and personal instruction, at their entrance upon that work*, 2nd ed. [London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657], Oo1r-Rr6v).

the widespread acceptance of Protestantism. The ecclesial background will provide the context for understanding how Baxter's threefold pastoral strategy—systematic catechizing, effective discipline, and regional ministerial associations—remedied the glaring deficiencies in pastoral soul care and would finally complete England's Reformation. However, his initiatives placed incredibly taxing burdens on ministers and particularly married clergymen. Consequently, while he did not present his pastoral model as incompatible with clerical marriage, he nevertheless recognized that wedlock significantly strained its maximal implementation. The latter half of the chapter will examine Baxter's theology of domestic soul care to demonstrate that, far from denigrating the value of domestic piety, he viewed the family as an integral component of his ministerial program. Family reformation was a precondition for church reformation.

The English Church in the Mid-Seventeenth Century

An Incomplete Reformation

When Baxter implemented his pastoral program for church reform in the 1650s, he confronted a situation created by nearly one hundred years of unsuccessful attempts to complete England's transformation into a fully Protestant nation.⁸ Since the crowning of Elizabeth, an increasingly organized group of fervent Protestants, which would later become the Puritan movement, had been seeking to fully purge the English Church of Roman Catholic vestiges and restore pure biblical worship. However, while the English church espoused Protestant theology, this did not mean the clergy or laity had embraced the message of the Reformation or even knew its elementary tenants.

A key factor contributing to this dilemma was the lack of able and godly clergymen to instruct their parishioners in the Protestant faith. Though Elizabeth had

⁸It is important to remember that this section seeks to provide an overview of how Baxter viewed the state of the Church of England in the mid-seventeenth century. For the most recent scholarly analysis of this period, see Anthony Milton, ed., *Reformation and Identity, c. 1520-1662, The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

restored Protestantism, the prelatical party had come to wield increasing control in the church, especially under Archbishop William Laud (1573-1645), and persecuted those who refused to subscribe to the lawfulness of prelacy and the liturgy.⁹ Such clergymen found it impossible to minister when they received the contemptuous name of Puritan and were accounted schismatics, silenced, and cast out of their livings.¹⁰ The irony of such persecution was exacerbated by the nature of the clergymen who replaced these ecclesiastical outcasts. “Popish priests had been cast out,” nevertheless they were usually replaced by clergymen who were “silly readers” of the Prayer Book and possessed little to no ability or desire to instruct their parishioners.¹¹ Moreover, the lives of these clergymen were routinely marked by scandal, debauchery, drunkenness, and profanity.¹² And yet these were the very men responsible for ministering to the “multitudes of carnal, ignorant, sensual sinners” living in every parish.¹³ Baxter “*was daily forced to admire*” how the vast majority of parishioners remained “deep in popish ignorance” concerning the basic tenets of Christianity, not to mention the “*necessary principles of faith.*”¹⁴ The dire state of the laity impressed the need for immediate action upon Baxter’s heart.¹⁵ Compounding the problem was the gross neglect of church discipline in England. Baxter could not recount ever seeing any individual publicly admonished, brought to repentance, or excommunicated, “though there were never so many obstinate drunkards,

⁹Baxter, *RP*, fols. B1r-v, 150-54. For Baxter’s childhood experience of this ecclesiastical situation in early Stuart England, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 1-3 §1.

¹⁰Baxter, *RP*, fols. B1r-v, 150-54.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 152.

¹²*Ibid.*, fol. B4r.

¹³*Ibid.*, 327-28.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, fols. B6v-r, 152. See also *ibid.*, 356.

¹⁵Baxter lamented, “*Here is a family, and there a family, and there almost a whole street or village of them, and our hearts pity them, and we see their necessities cry aloud for our speed and diligent relief, so that he that hath ears to hear must needs here it*” (*ibid.*, 328).

whoremongers or vilest offenders.”¹⁶ The neglect of enforcement stemmed from the inability of local pastors to directly perform church discipline, which was reserved for the bishops. The vast number of churches falling under each bishop’s jurisdiction, as well as their distance from them, made effective discipline impossible.¹⁷ Baxter saw the dearth of discipline as a crucial impetus for the flourishing of separatist groups who provided more rigorous accountability of their members.¹⁸

Baxter identified the unmanageable size of many parishes as another factor hindering ministers’ ability to provide effective discipline and instruct their parishioners in the basic tenets of Christianity.¹⁹ “I have often said it, and still must say it,” he lamented, “that this is a great part of *Englands* misery, and a great degree of spiritual famine which reigns in most Cities and Great towns.”²⁰ He spoke not only of his own experience, but many others, when he stressed the challenge of implementing reformation when there were only “one or two men to oversee many thousands of souls.”²¹ The cause of the impractical burden stemmed from rulers who did not see a necessity for more than

¹⁶Baxter, *RP*, 155. The growth of antinomianism in England was another threat to morality that Baxter had witnessed while a chaplain in Parliament’s New Model Army. For the best study of Baxter’s intense fear of Antinomianism, see Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001).

¹⁷Baxter, *RP*, 155-56. For other criticisms of the lack of discipline in the Church of England, see *ibid.*, 213-15, 302-6.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, fol. C3v, 217, 304-5. See also Baxter’s remembrances of the correlation between church discipline and the separatist groups in his autobiography (*RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 85-86 §136, 91 §137, 92 §137, 97 §141).

¹⁹See Baxter, *RP*, 51-53, 62, 63, 67, 241-42, 327-32, appendix fol. Pp1r.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 327-28. See also Baxter’s sermon to Parliament where he blamed the spiritual famine on the exceedingly great size of parishes (Richard Baxter, *Humble advice: or The heads of those things which were offered to many Honourable Members of Parliament by Mr Richard Baxter at the end of his sermon, Decemb. 24. at the Abby in Westminster. With some additions as they were delivered by him to a friend that desired them, who thought meet to make them publick* [London: Printed for Thomas Underhill and Francis Tyton, 1655], 7, 10-11).

²¹In Baxter’s judgment, “It is a lamentable impediment to the Reformation of the church and saving of souls, that in most populous congregations, there is but one or two men to oversee many thousands of souls, and so there are not laborers in any measure answerable to perform their work faithfully” (Baxter, *RP*, 327). Baxter’s parish of 800 families consumed all his time as well as that of two assistants (*ibid.*, 328-29).

one or two ministers and so refused additional funds for hiring more.²²

The Commonwealth: Hopes and Failures

Baxter believed the conclusion of the English Civil War (1642-51) had opened the possibility to remedy many of the gross deficiencies in the English Church. With the abolishing of episcopacy, pastors now had far more liberty to preach as well as enforce church discipline without the interference and suppression of bishops.²³ Also, many of the ignorant, scandalous clergymen had been sequestered from their livings and were beginning to be replaced by able, godly ministers.²⁴ Finally, the Westminster Assembly (1643-1653) devoted considerable effort toward reforming England's pulpit ministry.²⁵

After the Civil War, the widespread hopes for a true reformation did not materialize into effective practical measures to accomplish it. Despite all the yearning, fasting, and praying for reform,²⁶ Baxter expressed shock at the lack of pragmatic considerations for bringing England's spiritual goals to fruition, almost as if people

²²Baxter, *RP*, 330. Baxter twice mentioned how pastors should multiply as the church multiplied, as it did in the early church to prevent pastors from being over-burdened in their spiritual oversight (*ibid.*, 51, 62). According to him, such multiplication was originally the practice until the church began to swell and grow too crowded, so that pastors could not manage them as they should (*ibid.*, 62). The theme of restoring the practice of the ancient church permeated *The Reformed Pastor*, and for a study of this theme in Puritanism, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: University of NC Press, 1988).

²³Baxter, *RP*, 378, 347-48, 349. See also Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 86-87 §137. On one occasion, Baxter broke into thanksgiving at the irony of how God gave him fourteen years of mercy under "a usurper" in contrast to the persecution he and many others had experienced under the legitimate king, Charles I (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 84, §135).

²⁴Baxter, *RP*, fol. A6r, fol. B4r, 165-67; Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 96 §139. Baxter stressed the advantageous place of England's ministry quite vividly: "for all the faults that are now among us, I do not believe that ever England had so able and faithful a Ministry since it was a Nation as it hath at this day . . . Sure I am the change is so great within this 12. years that it is one of the greatest joys that ever I had in the world to behold it. O how many Congregations are now plainly and frequently taught, that lived then in great obscurity? How may able faithful men are there now in a country in comparison of what were then?" (Baxter, *RP*, 165). For a similar statement, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 96 §139.

²⁵For a recent study of this effort, see Chad Van Dixhoorn, *God's Ambassadors: The Westminster Assembly and the Reformation of the English Pulpit, 1643-1653*, Studies on the Westminster Assembly (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017).

²⁶Baxter, *RP*, fol. C1r, 341, 343-44, 378, 379, 380.

depended upon God and the Spirit without any human exertion.²⁷ He readily acknowledged that salvation depended on the “effectual grace” of the Spirit but insisted that God normally worked “by means” through the “right endeavors of his servants.”²⁸ When clerical and parliamentary leaders *did* advance practical measures to accomplish reform, they failed to solve the root of the ecclesiastical problem. First, clergymen had mistakenly placed their hope in a top down reform through the imposition of godly authority. They had looked to the “Law of Parliament and the sword of a Magistrate” to convert and constrain the multitude of the ungodly; such “carnal expectations” associated success with the day when devout Christians had “the opposers of godliness under their feet.”²⁹ The outcome of the Civil War seemed to have offered the hope for rule by the saints. Nevertheless, Baxter questioned what fire, sword, armies, commanders, trumpets, and drums could do to “exalt the Lord Jesus in the soul of any sinner.”³⁰ Also, English clergymen had “eagerly contended” that true Reformation consisted in cleansing the church of popish ceremonies, “forms and orders.”³¹ Baxter also remembered his younger days when he placed his hopes in a “Reformation of matters of Ceremony,” but he had

²⁷According to Baxter, “They thought of a Reformation to be given by God, but not of a Reformation to be wrought on and by themselves. They considered the blessing, but never thought of the means of accomplishing. But as if they had expected that all things besides themselves should be mended without them; or that the Holy Ghost should again descend miraculously, or every Sermon should convert its thousands, or that some angel from Angel from heaven, or some *Elias* should be sent to restore all things” (Baxter, *RP*, 342-43). Baxter made a similar critique in another work: “And it is a grieffe to me, that the Ministers of *England*, after fasting prayers, warres and vowes pretended for Reformation, would yet do little or nothing toward it, but preach” (Richard Baxter, *Confirmation and restauration the necessary means of reformation, and reconciliation; for the healing of the corruptions and divisions of the churches: submissively, but earnestly tendered to the consideration of the soveraigne powers, magistrates, ministers, and people, that they may awake, and be up and doing in the execution of so much, as appeareth to be necessary as they are true to Christ, his Church and Gospel, and to their own and others souls, and to the peace and welfare of the nations; and as they will answer the neglect to Christ, at their peril* [London: Printed by A. M. for Nevil Simmons, 1658], 270).

²⁸Baxter, *RP*, 423.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 343-44. See also *ibid.*, 366.

³⁰Baxter lamented, “Alas, they cannot, with all their victories, exalt the Lord Jesus in the soul of any sinner; and therefore they cannot set up his spiritual kingdom for the hearts of men are his house and throne” (*ibid.*, 346-47).

³¹*Ibid.*, 345. See also *ibid.*, 346, 387.

come to understand that conversion of the laity was the primary means by which reformation would be achieved.³² Only the change of heart wrought by conversion could cleanse the inner corruptions of human beings and bring people to affectionately treasure holy things instead.³³

When pastoral means had been employed to bring about reform, these efforts had proven insufficient or halfhearted. For years clergymen had been laboring under a widespread assumption that public preaching of the gospel was *the* means by which their parishioners would be saved.³⁴ Baxter by no means denied the “necessity” and benefit of preaching, for sermons were the most effective means of reaching the most people.³⁵ And yet he had witnessed how many of his parishioners, after nearly a decade of listening to him preach, knew little more about Christianity than they had under the ignorant curate before him.³⁶

For my part I study to speak as painfully and movingly as I can, and yet I frequently

³²Baxter objected, “Alas can we think that the Reformation is wrought when we cast out a few ceremonies, and changed some vestures, and gestures, and forms! Oh no sirs! It is the conversion and saving of souls that is our business. That’s the chief part of the Reformation that doth much good, and tends most to the salvation of the people” (Baxter, *RP*, 387). For the best study of Richard Baxter’s teaching on conversion, see Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan Concept of Becoming a Christian* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007). Beougher argued that the doctrine of conversion was arguably the “essence” of the Puritan movement, and on this subject Baxter was an “Orthodox Puritan” (*ibid.*, 145, 143). For further discussion of Baxter’s emphasis on conversion as the means of accomplishing parish and church reform, see Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 81-106.

³³In Baxter’s view, “It is not Circumcision or uncircumcision, . . . , that availeth anything, but a new creature, and faith that worketh by love. That is the Reformation which best healeth the Ignorance, Infidelity, and Pride, and Hypocrisie, and Worldliness, and other killing sins of the Land, and that most effectually bringeth men to faith and holiness” (Baxter, *RP*, 346).

³⁴Baxter, *RP*, 241-42, 356-57, 357-58, 408, 418. Both John S. Coolidge and Arnold Hunt have documented the pervasiveness of English Protestant belief in the absolute necessity of preaching for salvation (John S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970]; Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010]). See also Lim, *In Pursuit of Unity, Purity, and Liberty*, 24-25; Black *Reformation Pastors*, 17-51; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 352, 355.

³⁵Baxter, *RP*, 78, 81, 357. For a full discussion of the Baxter’s theology of preaching in its various forms (sermonic discourse, the printed sermon, and catechizing), see Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 23-52; Keeble, “Richard Baxter’s Preaching Ministry”; Shealy, “The Power of the Present,” 363-93.

³⁶See Ryrie for an examination of how sermons in England were experienced by parishioners from the English Reformation to 1640 (Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England*, 351-62).

meet with those who have been my hearers these 8. or 10 years, who know not whether Christ be God or man, and whether when I tell him the history of his birth, and life, and death, and sending abroad the Gospel, as if they had never heard it before, and that know not that infants have any original sin.³⁷

Baxter did not believe his example to be unique and challenged other ministers to discover for themselves the inadequacy of their public preaching, regardless of how diligently they labored in it.³⁸ Moreover, he was alarmed that many clergy contented themselves with preaching rather than seeking to give parishioners more consistent and personal attention, which might be precisely what they needed in order to understand and accept their pastor's instruction.³⁹

Baxter criticized existing efforts to exercise church discipline as halfhearted and ineffective. The lapse of auricular confession as a means of lay-clerical accountability and the discontinuance of the episcopal system of church courts left a gaping hole that allowed many disciplinary problems to go un-addressed.⁴⁰ On those rare occasions when pastors had sought to hold laity accountable, they only withheld the Eucharist from them, which nearly always proved futile. Those who had been barred remained stated members of the church, and many thousands of parishioners voluntarily avoided the Lord's Supper without any pastoral prohibition.⁴¹ Nothing was done, as Baxter complained, to publicly admonish "obstinate sinners" with the hope that chastening would bring them to "publike confession, and expression of repentance and

³⁷Baxter, *RP*, 356.

³⁸Baxter wrote, "Let them that have taken pains in preaching examine their people and try whether many of them are still ignorant and careless almost as if they had never heard the gospel" (*ibid.*).

³⁹*Ibid.*, fols. B5v-6r, 241-42, 321-23, 324-25.

⁴⁰See William Perkins' remarks about the pervasiveness of this problem in England (Perkins, *Of the calling of the ministerie two treatises. Describing the duties and dignities of that calling. Delivered publikely in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, by Maister Perkins. Taken then from his mouth, and now dilligently perused and published, by a preacher of the word* [London: Printed by Thomas Creede for VVilliam VVelby, 1606], 21). See also Patrick Collinson, "Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings: The Pastoral Ministry in Post Reformation England," in *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay*, eds. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* 26 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 216-20.

⁴¹Baxter, *RP*, 214.

promise of reformation.”⁴² The inadequacy of current practices of church discipline and the reliance upon preaching alone to convert the multitude stemmed from a common source. Most pastors did not believe it was their responsibility to know the spiritual state of every parishioner and instruct them personally.⁴³ Rather they labored under a false assumption that ministry only involved preaching well, administering the sacraments, and visiting the sick.⁴⁴

Pastoral Sins Hindering Soul Care

As a necessary precursor to implementing his model of pastoral soul care, Baxter insisted that English ministers repent from the chronic sins that had hampered their efforts. Achieving church reform required a reformed ministry,⁴⁵ and so he condemned pastors for the prevalence of fleshly interests, lack of self-denial, and failure to fully devote themselves to the ministry.⁴⁶ By exposing such pastoral sins, he hoped to expound the true nature of pastoral ministry and the rigorous dedication integral to it, for it was just such a model of ministry that he sought to revive and propagate.⁴⁷

Baxter believed that ministers were too often distracted from their spiritual duties by competing “fleshly interests.”⁴⁸ He faulted clergymen for meddling with secular government, taking up a trade in addition to the ministry,⁴⁹ or neglecting duties that could

⁴²Baxter, *RP*, 214.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 321. See also *ibid.*, 324, 398.

⁴⁵This logic constituted the theme of chap. 2 of *The Reformed Pastor* where Baxter argued that ministers must first take heed to their own lives before they could effectively shepherd their people (*ibid.*, 14-47).

⁴⁶These three sins do not represent the totality of the catalogue of vices Baxter listed, but see chap. four of *The Reformed Pastor* for Baxter’s full exposition of these sins (*ibid.*, 137-246).

⁴⁷Chap. three of *The Reformed Pastor* included extensive critique of pastoral sins as Baxter enumerated the manner of the work of the minister (*ibid.*, 117-36).

⁴⁸See for instance *ibid.*, 65-66, 234-42, 416.

⁴⁹Rosemary O’Day has highlighted how, from 1558-1642, clergymen were farmers just like their parishioners (Rosemary O’Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Practice*,

diminish their income, such as church discipline.⁵⁰ But his most extensive criticisms concerned those “fleshly interests” that prevailed “against the interest of Christ and the Church.”⁵¹ Clergy had frequently misused their income to pamper themselves through affluent living, rather than spending only the bare minimum required to meet their basic necessities: food, clothing, and lodging.⁵² In response, he urged pastors to practice austerity in their way of life. This would remove the prejudice of many parishioners to their preaching, which he diagnosed as the root cause for much of their obstinate resistance to the Gospel message.⁵³ In light of such clerical hypocrisy, Baxter reasoned, ministers should not be surprised that the work of reforming their churches had born little fruit.

The hindering effect of fleshly interests impressed upon Baxter the need for clergymen to commit themselves anew to radical measures of self-denial. Indeed, self-denial was a pervasive theme in *The Reformed Pastor* as well as Baxter’s other writings.⁵⁴ Mortifying worldly desires in subordination to God’s interests had a

1558-1642 [Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1979], 178-84). However, as clergymen became increasingly educated at the university, their lifestyles shifted toward spending less time in agricultural work (O’Day, *The English Clergy*, 186-87). For, a fuller discussion of clerical standards of living and lifestyles, see *ibid.*, 172-89.

⁵⁰Baxter, *RP*, 234-36.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 236-37.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 65-66, 236-42, 406 (misprinted as 416), 407. Seventeenth-century evidence seemed to support Baxter’s criticism, for clergymen of larger and wealthier parishes were “beginning to share the more opulent lifestyle of the lesser gentry” (O’Day, *The English Clergy*, 189).

⁵³Baxter, *RP*, 406 (misprinted as 416), 407. In Baxter’s judgment, “A man that preacheth an Immortal Crown of glory, must not seek much after transitory vanity: And he that preacheth the contempt of Riches, must himself condemn them, and shew it by his life; And he that preacheth self-denial and mortification, must practice these in the eyes of them that he preacheth to, if ever he would have his Doctrine prosper” (*ibid.*, 240).

⁵⁴See *ibid.*, 63-65, 65-66, 117-18, 234, 237-42, 283-84, 343, 343, 352, 366, 378-79, 391, 392, 404, 410, 415-16, appendix fols. Pp2v-r. See also three later works on self-denial: Richard Baxter, *A treatise of self-denial* (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1675); Baxter, *The crucifying of the world, by the cross of Christ. With a preface to the nobles, gentlemen, and all the rich, directing them how they may be richer* (London: Printed by R.W for Nevil Simmons, 1658); Baxter, *The one thing necessary: or, Christ's justification of Mary's choice and of his servants wrongfully accused* (London: Printed for J. Salusbury, 1685).

heightened applicability to pastors. “Self-denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian,” he asserted, “but of a double necessity in a Minister, as he hath a double Sanctification or Dedication to God. And without self-denial he cannot do God an hours faithful service.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, he insisted the work of the reformation in England would never succeed if pastors did not renounce the world and their sin so that they could give themselves to holiness and the painful labor of ministry.⁵⁶ Even though the number of able, godly pastors had dramatically increased,⁵⁷ Baxter detected among them a reluctance to cast off all distractions or impediments and commit themselves to the painstaking toil demanded by genuine reform.

The lack of self-denial and prevalence of fleshly interests among clergymen contributed to their failure to devote themselves and all they possessed—time, effort, money, worldly goods, etc.—to pastoral ministry.⁵⁸ Baxter interpreted Paul’s admonition to Timothy (1 Tim 4:15) to mean that a minister was distinguished from the laity by being “separated to the Gospel of Christ” and bound to “give up himself wholly to that work.”⁵⁹ Therefore, while every Christian had an obligation to do all they could for the salvation of others, every pastor was “doubly obliged.”⁶⁰ One way pastors manifested

⁵⁵Baxter, *RP*, 117. Despite the flourishing of so many troubling sects and heresies as well as the dire state of much of the laity, Baxter had no doubt these could be overcome “by an able self-denying Ministry” (*ibid.*, 167).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 342.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 165-67.

⁵⁸See *ibid.*, 234, 236-37, 238, 239-40, 283-84, 355-56. See also *ibid.*, 63-65, 117-18, 208, 210, 392-93, 416.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 355-56. See also Baxter, *CR*, 64, 66.

⁶⁰Baxter, *RP*, 355-56. See also where Baxter asserted that pastors “*are doubly sanctified or devoted to [God], as Christians, and as Pastors*” (*ibid.*, fol. B8v). He also made a similar comment when urging pastors to devote all they had to good works as a means of commending their teaching to prejudiced hearers: “All Christians are sanctified, and therefore themselves and all that they have are consecrated and dedicated to their master’s use; But ministers are doubly sanctified; They are devoted to God both as Christians and as ministers, and therefore they are doubly obliged to honour him with what they have” (*ibid.*, 240). Baxter made a similar statement concerning how the pastor should set an example for his congregation in ordering public duties before private. Since all Christians were obligated to “prefer public duties before private,” the clergy were bound to do so “much more” (*ibid.*, 60)

their lukewarm devotion was through their lack of charity. By failing to adorn their preaching of the gospel with charitable works, their preaching fell on deaf ears due to the persistence of the people's prejudice.⁶¹ "[I]t is prejudice that is a great hindrance of men's conversion," Baxter declared, and doing "good to men's bodies . . . will remove it."⁶² Not only was charity necessary, but the high calling of a pastor demanded they gave "in proportion to their talents" by giving "so far beyond what others normally give."⁶³ Baxter intimated that those godly pastors who lived comfortably upon their ecclesiastical wages were falling into the same worldly sins as the sequestered clergymen they had replaced: "was this the Reformation, that we might live in greater ease and fulness, and succeed the ejected Ministers in their less disgraced sins?"⁶⁴

Baxter's Clerical Audience

Baxter's criticism of ministerial sins raises a key question concerning which clerical group he was addressing in *The Reformed Pastor*. In the introduction, he indicated that he was not writing to rebuke the "*Negligent, Scandalous and Unfit*" clergymen, most of whom had been ejected after the English Civil War.⁶⁵ In part, Baxter's remarks were likely addressed to the "near one half" of England's pre-Civil War ministers that had been allowed to keep their positions. These clergymen were "not

⁶¹See Baxter, *RP*, 234, 236-38, 281-84. See also Richard Baxter, *How to do good to many, or, The publick good is the Christians life directions and motives to it, intended for an auditory of London citizens, and published for them, for want of leave to preach them* (London: Printed for Rob. Gibs, 1682), 15.

⁶²Baxter, *RP*, 237. See also *ibid.*, 283-84.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 284.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 349. See also *ibid.*, fol. A6r.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, A6r. Their expulsion had not translated into as dramatic of a ministerial transformation as David Sceats insinuated: "it must be remembered, this [*The Reformed Pastor*] is Baxter's analysis, not of the ministry of the Church of England as it was before the Civil War, when the spectrum of standpoints within the church was quite wide, but of the ministry of the Commonwealth period, which, though it represented every possible view of theological and ecclesiological questions within the gambit of the Reformed tradition, was quite uniformly 'puritan' in opinions about spirituality, ministry, and what we would call 'churchmanship'" (Sceats, "Gildas Silvianus Revivivus," 138).

good enough to do much [pastoral] Service, nor bad enough to be cast out as utterly intolerable.”⁶⁶ While they did not live scandalously, they were “sleepy” preachers, lacking in pastoral skill, and zeal for godliness.⁶⁷ Baxter probably supposed many of them were not only inexperienced but unconverted.⁶⁸ Therefore, when he explained that *The Reformed Pastor* was intended to rebuke those clergymen “*guilty of a less degree of sin*” than the ejected clergy,⁶⁹ he likely had the interregnum holdovers in mind but not them alone.

Several features of *The Reformed Pastor* indicate that Baxter’s criticism targeted the growing number of able, godly, and faithful pastors that had replaced sequestered clergymen. He seemed to be addressing such ministers when he reminded his readers how long they had prayed and fasted for reform of the churches and yet had been negligent in their execution of the vision.⁷⁰ Indeed, he treated his readers as if they were among those zealous Protestants who had passionately fought for purging the church of popish ceremonies.⁷¹ Furthermore, on several occasions he criticized clergymen, not for negligence or slackness in their duties, but because they could be doing far more to teach

⁶⁶Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 95. O’Day noted, “Large numbers of the pre-civil war clergy were still in their benefices in the late 1640s and early 1650s” (O’Day, *The English Clergy*, 207).

⁶⁷As Baxter reflected, “These were a company of Poor weak Preachers, that had no great Skill in Divinity, nor Zeal for Godliness; but preached weakly that which is True, and lived in no gross notorious Sin: These Men were not cast out, but yet their People greatly needed help; for their dark sleepy preaching did but little Good.” In response to this spiritual need, Baxter collected money to set up lectureships so that of the able clergy would travel to these parishes on occasion and preach” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 95)

⁶⁸Baxter exhorted pastors to, above all, make sure “*that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought on your own souls*” (Baxter, *RP*, 261). He lamented that surely “it is the common danger and calamity of the Church to have unregenerate and inexperienced Pastors; and to have so many men become Preachers before they are Christians” (ibid., 264).

⁶⁹See the full quote from the preface of *The Reformed Pastor*: “*And how can we more effectually further a Reformation, . . . then by endeavoring the Reforming of the Leaders of the Church? Surely, Bretheren, if it be our duty to endeavor to cast out those Ministers that are Negligent, Scandalous and Unfit for the work, and if we think this so necessary to the reformation of the Church (as no doubt it is) it must needs be our Duty to endeavor to heal the sins of others, and to use a much gentler remedy to them that are guilty of a less degree of sin: If other mens sins deserve an ejection, sure ours deserve and require a plain reproof*” (ibid., fol. A6r). For a similar statement, see ibid., 349.

⁷⁰Ibid., C1v-r, 378-79, 379-80.

⁷¹See for instance ibid., 345, 346, 387-88.

their parishioners.⁷² Finally, Black has convincingly argued that Baxter's pastoral model elucidated in *The Reformed Pastor* amounted to a thorough revision of the ministerial expectations for English Protestant clergymen.⁷³ Baxter was not simply chastening lazy or unconverted ministers or calling for a renewal of zeal, but presenting a ministerial model that drastically increased the pastor's responsibilities.

Baxter's Pastoral Model of Soul Care

In response to England's ecclesiastical situation, Baxter proposed a pastoral model in which each parishioner received personal soul care from the minister. Except in cases when necessity prevented it, he insisted that pastors should know the spiritual state of every individual under their charge.⁷⁴ Black noted the striking reorientation required by this new pastoral expectation, since it "necessitated the redirection of the minister's time and energy into the personal oversight of each person's spiritual condition."⁷⁵ It comprised three initiatives: catechizing every parishioner, effective church discipline, and regular ministerial associational meetings.⁷⁶ Black has pointed out how many of Baxter's

⁷²Baxter criticized clergy for only disciplining scandalous ministers by withholding the Eucharist from them and not going through the laborious process of admonishing them privately, then publicly, and finally removing them from the church (Baxter, *RP*, 110-111, 213-14, Qq3v). He also criticized pastors for not devoting themselves to charitable giving that exceeded that of their parishioners (ibid., 236-39, 241-42). Furthermore, he was grieved to observe how little "certain imminent able preachers do" for the salvation of their people apart from their preaching (ibid., 321). Finally, he blamed the obstinacy of most parishioners on the laxness of godly ministers who had not given themselves "to do all the good" they "could, what ever it cost" them or "set light by all worldly things in comparison of their salvation" (ibid., 406 [misprinted as 416]). According to Baxter, if the "ablest and godliest Ministers in the world" had parishioners who were "scornful and untractable," then it might very well be because "even able godly men have some of them been too Lordly and strange, and some of them too uncharitable and worldly, and backward to costly, though necessary works, and some of them have done but little in private, when they have done excellently in publike; and so have hindered the fruit of their labors" (ibid., 406 [misprinted as 416], 407).

⁷³See Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 17-52, 53-80, 81-106.

⁷⁴Baxter, *RP*, 60-61. After all, Baxter observed, shepherds, physicians, schoolmasters, and most importantly Christ had to personally know the persons under their care in order to help them (ibid., 61-62). Baxter began to become convinced of the necessity of performing this pastoral duty around the time he was beginning to promote the ministerial associations (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 179 §40).

⁷⁵Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 131.

⁷⁶Baxter, *RP*, fols. B5r-D3r.

methods had been proposed or performed intermittently by clergymen before, but never according to Baxter's systematic method that was "pastor led, parochial, and evangelistic in intent."⁷⁷ A careful reading of *The Reformed Pastor* reveals that he certainly saw himself exhorting a comprehensive reorientation in ministerial practice that would seem strangely innovative as well as far more arduous than what clergymen had been accustomed to. Nevertheless, Baxter did not relent in urging pastors to implement his initiatives. He was convinced not only of their biblical mandate,⁷⁸ but also that he had discovered the means to accomplishing the widespread church reform clergymen had longed for.⁷⁹ What was at stake was not only fidelity to the scriptural model of ministry but also the triumph of the Reformation in England.

Personal Instruction through Catechizing

The first pillar of Baxter's pastoral program was the systematic catechizing of every parishioner, both children and adults.⁸⁰ Catechizing served as the means to fulfill the scriptural call for pastors to "take heed of all the flock," so that not only the whole could be well-cared for but also every individual member.⁸¹ The loss of auricular confession, Baxter observed, had removed a key tool by which pastors came to know the spiritual ailments of their congregation.⁸² Lest they should appear to favor auricular

⁷⁷Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 221, 259-60.

⁷⁸He frequently insisted that he was simply reviving ministerial practices that had been commanded in the New Testament, and which the early church had obeyed up to the time of Constantine (Baxter, *RP*, fol. B5r-v, fol. C4r, fol. C6v. 98, 112-13, 119-20, 135, 155, 227, 305, 309, 358, 408). Baxter therefore was not merely offering circumstantial suggestions to improve soul care but commanding pastors to no longer neglect those practices which were biblical mandates for them.

⁷⁹For a helpful survey placing Baxter in the context of the desire for further reform in Edwardian, Elizabethan, and early Stuart England, see Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 53-79.

⁸⁰Baxter, *RP*, fol. B5r.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 60, 54.

⁸²While Baxter believed Protestants had rightly rejected Roman Catholic confession due to the doctrines of satisfaction and purgatory accompanying it, they ran "to the contrary extreme" by not seeing the benefits confession afforded pastors, namely in personal instruction and oversight. Baxter had read that the desire of licentious people to escape the strict enquiries of the papists accelerated the acceptance of the

confession, ministers usually abandoned all forms of personal instruction and oversight, so that “few made it a stated part of their work.”⁸³ Such “lazy Ministers” were committing a “gross mistake” by supposing that after completing their public preaching they had performed all their duty to God.⁸⁴ Through catechizing all parishioners, Baxter hoped to bring both the laity and clergy to a new expectation of their relationship, so that parishioners sought out their pastors as “known Counsellors for their souls.”⁸⁵

Baxter decided that catechizing the whole congregation would be the best means of filling the gaping hole in pastoral oversight and personal instruction.⁸⁶ He insisted that the people must be taught it in the most advantageous and edifying way, even though it might be more burdensome to clergymen.⁸⁷ Years of pastoral experience had taught him that private instruction might produce more profitable results for those who failed to absorb anything from years of public preaching.⁸⁸

I have found by experience, that an ignorant sot that hath been an unprofitable hearer so long, hath got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hours close discourse, then they did from ten years pubic preaching. I know that preaching of the Gospel publicly is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once. But otherwise, it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately in an individual manner, as to himself.⁸⁹

Baxter’s stress on catechizing did not seek to diminish or displace the preeminence of public preaching, for he still considered it “the most excellent part of our work” due to its

Reformation in Germany (Baxter, *RP*, 322-23).

⁸³*Ibid.*, 323.

⁸⁴*Ibid.* See also other places where Baxter, in contrast to his contemporaries, insisted that the minister’s duty went beyond preaching, administering the sacraments, and visiting the sick (*ibid.*, 321, 324, 115, 52, 82).

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 82.

⁸⁶For the most complete study of the history of catechizing in early modern England, see Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). For Green’s comments on Baxter’s ministry, see *ibid.*, 222-27.

⁸⁷Baxter, *RP*, fols. B5r-6r, B8r, C3r, 241-42, 321-23, 324-25.

⁸⁸Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 91 §137.

⁸⁹Baxter, *RP*, 356-57. See also *ibid.*, fols. B5v-6r, 83.

capacity for benefiting the most people.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Lim has pointed to its complementary function in Baxter's strategy, for while sermons stressed conversion of the lost and edification of the saints, private catechizing completed the "heart work" begun by public preaching.⁹¹ Still, Baxter concluded that "publike preaching" alone would "not be sufficient."⁹² The impersonal nature of sermons tended to undermine their effectiveness, so that what clergymen preached "to *all* or to *many* doth seem to most of them as spoken by *none*."⁹³

The rudimentary nature of catechism was well-suited to parishioners, most of whom remained in gross theological ignorance.⁹⁴ Like other fervent Protestants, he envisioned the local parish as "mission territory" where the first need of the multitude was learning the most basic and essential doctrines of the Christian faith.⁹⁵

Milk must go before strong meat: The foundation must be first laid before we build upon it. Children must not be dealt with as men The work of Conversion and

⁹⁰Baxter, *RP*, 78. While urging the use of personal instruction, Baxter qualified himself by insisting that he did not mean to displace the preeminence of public preaching: "I know that preaching of the Gospel publicly is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once" (*ibid.*, 357). Baxter also said that since the pastor's first responsibility was caring for the whole church, the first duties to be done should be public duties done to the whole. As all Christians were obligated to "prefer public duties before private," Baxter said, so the clergy are bound to do so "much more. But this is so commonly confessed, that I shall say no more of it" (*ibid.*, 60).

⁹¹Lim, *In Search of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 26-27.

⁹²Baxter, *RP*, 357. According to McCoy, Baxter's insistence that public preaching must be accompanied by private, more personal preaching to individuals was consistent with Paul's teaching on the pastorate as well as the scope of Scripture (McCoy, "Acts 20:28 and the Scriptural Basis of Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*").

⁹³Richard Baxter, *A sermon of repentance preached before the honourable House of Commons, assembled in Parliament at Westminster, at their late solemn fast for the settling of these nations, April 30, 1660*. (London: Printed by R. W. and A. M. for Francis Tyton and Jane Underhil, 1660), 10. In *The Reformed Pastor*, Baxter went into great detail describing why so many of the laity simply could not follow traditional sermons and why the "interlocutory" nature of catechizing would be more beneficial (Baxter, *RP*, 357-58, fols. B8r and C3r-v).

⁹⁴Baxter, *RP*, fols. B5r-v, 119-22, 310-11, 316, 388-89. Though most of the laity remained in theological ignorance, Baxter did go into great detail explaining the variety of spiritual states pastors would find among their people (*ibid.*, 68-77, 453-482).

⁹⁵Duffy, "The Long Reformation," 49.

Repentance from dead works, and faith in Christ must be first, and frequently, and thoroughly taught.⁹⁶

Elsewhere, he compared the work of catechizing to a mother nursing her child: “It is but the more diligent and effectual management of the ministerial work, and the teaching of our principles and the feeding of babes with milk.”⁹⁷ He doubted all parishioners would be willing to submit to catechizing but insisted nonetheless that pastors were obligated to leave no one in ignorance who was willing to receive their personal instruction.⁹⁸ The analogy of pastors as nursing mothers captures the foundational, nurturing aspect of catechizing, yet the imagery also accentuates how it would demand patience, sacrificial love, and assiduous labor, like that of a parents with their children.

Baxter knew from experience the painstaking work demanded by personally catechizing an entire parish. In his view, the task of privately instructing theologically uninformed parishioners was a far more challenging than public preaching.

And again I must say, that I think it is an easier matter by far, to compose and preach a good Sermon, then to deal rightly with an Ignorant man for his instruction in the Necessary Principles of Religion. As much as this work is cotemned by some, I doubt not but it will try the parts and spirits of Ministers, and shew you the difference between one man and another, more than Pulpit-preaching will do.⁹⁹

Private instruction was a far better test of a minister’s mettle than preaching. When one considers the multiplication of the effort required by catechizing every parishioner, the cumulative effect upon pastors would have been mentally, physically, and spiritually exhausting. Baxter recounted how he and his two assistants were stretched to the breaking point by catechizing the eight hundred families of Kidderminster so that every individual received personal instruction at least once a year.¹⁰⁰ The addition of catechesis

⁹⁶Baxter, *RP*, 119.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 309. Baxter also stated, “We are the nurses of Christ’s little ones” (*ibid.*, 274).

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, fols. B5r-7r.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 423.

¹⁰⁰See also Baxter’s account of this ministry and its contribution to his ministerial success at Kidderminster in his autobiography (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 83 §135, 84-85 §136 and bk. 1, pt. 2, 179-80)

to their already crowded work schedules meant sermons could only be hastily prepared, but Baxter saw no remedy for the situation since neither work could be left undone.

I will give you the instance of my own case. We are together two Ministers, and a third at a Chappel, willing to bestow every hour of our time in Christ's work. Before we undertook this work that we are now upon, our hands were full, and now we are engaged to set apart two daies every week from morning to night for private catechizing and instruction; so that any man may see that we must leave undone all that other work that we were wont to do at that time: and we are necessitated to run upon the publike work of preaching with small preparation, and so must deliver the Message of God so rawly and so confusedly, and unanswerable to its dignity, and the needs of men's souls, that it is a great trouble to our minds to consider it, and a greater trouble to us when we are doing it. And yet it *must* be so: there is no remedy, unless we will omit this personal instruction, we must needs run thus unprepared into the Pulpit! And to omit this we dare not, it is so great and necessary work. And when we have incurred all the forementioned inconveniences, and have set two whole daies a week apart for the work that we have now undertaken, it will be as much as we shall be able to do to, to go over the parish but once in a year (being about 800. families) and which is worse then that, we shall be forc't to cut it short, and do it less effectually to those that we do it, having about 15. families a week to deal with.¹⁰¹

Thus, Baxter readily acknowledged the painstaking labors and absolute dedication he was summoning pastors to imitate. Furthermore, he knew the implementation of his plan would prove far more challenging in the numerous parishes which had “ten times, (if not more) the number of parishioners” living in Kidderminster.”¹⁰²

Baxter anticipated a number of objections from clergymen who would judge his system of catechizing to be unfeasible.¹⁰³ He predicted pastors objecting on the basis that they would literally wear themselves out.

But this course will destroy the health of our bodies, by continual spending the Spirits, and allowing us no time for necessary recreations . . . for the relaxation of

§41).

¹⁰¹Baxter, *RP*, 328-29.

¹⁰²Ibid., 330.

¹⁰³This paragraph only describes those objections which Baxter *anticipated* to his pastoral model (see *ibid.*, 391-412). The second edition of *The Reformed Pastor* included an appendix where Baxter responded to the most common objections that had been raised to the first edition of the work (*ibid.*, Oo1r-Rr6v).

our minds . . . so shall we tire ourselves and the bow that is still bent will be in danger of breaking at last."¹⁰⁴

Another protest he foresaw would come from ministers who did not think they were required to “*make drudges of themselves,*” so that their lives became a “*burden and a slavery.*”¹⁰⁵ Finally, he anticipated clergymen crying out that if he made “*such severe Laws for ministers*” the church would be bereft of ministers for none would choose “*such a toilsome life.*”¹⁰⁶ One should not suppose from such anticipated objections that Baxter’s model of systematic catechizing was widely unpopular. Ian Green, Eamon Duffy, and Black have pointed out that it was frequently well received and inspired many ministers to imitate Baxter’s reform efforts.¹⁰⁷ Rather, Baxter’s predicted objections highlight his awareness that he was placing far more strenuous burdens on pastors than the traditional model of pastoral ministry they were accustomed to.

Baxter had a twofold response to the objections he anticipated receiving. On the one hand, such clergymen failed to grasp that renouncing lawful pleasures through self-denial constituted the essence of the Christian life, especially for pastors who did it to save souls.¹⁰⁸ “How can these men be fit for the Ministry,” he wondered, “that are such enemies to self-denial, and so to true Christianity?” In his judgment, the pervasiveness of so many “objections” and “carnal reasonings” against his laborious model of ministry was a chief reason “the Reformation” had been hindered.¹⁰⁹ If ministers ruined their health in the service of God, so be it. “What is a candle made for,” he reasoned, “but to be burnt? Burnt and wasted we must be, and is it not fitter that it should be in lighting

¹⁰⁴Baxter, *RP*, 391.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 398.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 402. See also 65-66 for a similar objection.

¹⁰⁷Green, *The Christian’s ABC*, 223, 225-26; Duffy, “The Long Reformation,” 48-52; Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 135-36, 251.

¹⁰⁸Baxter, *RP*, 392-97, 398-400, 403-4.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 399.

men to heaven?”¹¹⁰ For Baxter, the overwhelming burdens that would inevitably come by providing soul care for each parishioner was nothing more than the essence of true pastoral ministry.

On the other hand, Baxter could be both sensible as well as stern in responding to objections. He recognized that many parish churches simply proved too large for even the most dedicated pastor to catechize every parishioner.¹¹¹ To resolve this dilemma, he stressed that it was the “duty” of all pastors, who were able, to live on a portion of their wages and “allow the rest to a competent assistant, rather than the flock be neglected.”¹¹² Even if monetary sacrifice meant their impoverishment, temporal suffering would be far more endurable than allowing even one soul to perish.

If still you say, that you cannot live so nearly as poor people do; I further ask; Can your Parishoners better endure damnation, then you can endure want and poverty? What, do you call yourselves Ministers of the Gospel, and yet are the souls of men so base in your eyes . . . ? Nay, should you not rather beg your bread, then put such a thing as men’s salvation upon a hazard or disadvantage?¹¹³

The financial situation of most pastors made Baxter’s austerity measures even more severe. O’Day has noted that the increasing number of married clergymen during the seventeenth-century coincided with rising prices. Coincidentally, “a great number of them” remained “impoverished and in real terms” were “more stretched than ever, as families and changing life-styles made their relentless demands.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰Baxter, *RP*, 394.

¹¹¹Ibid., 51-53, 62, 63, 67, 241-42, 327-32, appendix fols. Pp1r-2r.

¹¹²Ibid., 64. Baxter said this in the context of a pastor who had an income of a hundred pounds a year. He also made this point later in the case of pastors who made 150 or more pounds a year but refused to hire an assistant so that personal soul care could be provided for each member. Such men, Baxter asserted, should be considered “cruel soul murderers by Christ” (ibid., 241-42). For pastors who earned less, Baxter did not stress their obligation to hire an assistant quite so severely; in such cases the pastor should “only undertake to *do what he can* do for them,” and not to do all that a pastor ordinarily ought to do” (ibid., 53 [misprinted as 49]).

¹¹³Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁴O’Day, *The English Clergy*, 176.

Baxter hoped that the diligent example of pastors would lead to a more ideal situation that would alleviate both their financial and ministerial challenges. Through their exemplary faithfulness in catechizing, Baxter hoped that ministers would instruct England's rulers concerning the "*nature and burden of the ministry*" and move the government to provide ecclesiastical benefices capable of supporting more ministers in every parish.¹¹⁵ In a sermon delivered to Parliament in 1655, he urged the members to increase ecclesiastical benefices in cities and market towns, so that the minister could at least hire a catechist to assist, even if he could not hire another minister.¹¹⁶ He knew that magistrates remained ignorant concerning the necessity of supplementing public preaching with catechizing. Consequently, they had only allowed enough income for one or two ministers per parish, because they did not see a necessity for any more.¹¹⁷ However, the occasion for their ignorance was the ministers themselves, who largely neglected private instruction. Pastors of smaller parishes, who could catechize every parishioner, largely refused to do it, and pastors of towns and cities, though they could do a portion of such work, instead did "just nothing" or only "what accidentally falls in their way." The result of such poor clerical examples kept magistrates from being "awakened" to consider the necessity of personal instruction.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, even if Magistrates did come to realize the need for personal instruction care, the witness of "careless and lazy" clergymen refusing to perform the duty would convince them against providing extra funds to support to such "idle droans."¹¹⁹ Baxter's solution was for godly ministers to

¹¹⁵Baxter, *RP*, 327.

¹¹⁶Baxter, *HA*, 8-11. See also the similar point being made in Baxter, *CR*, 294.

¹¹⁷Baxter, *RP*, 330. Baxter was careful not to charge "wise and godly rulers" with being motivated by a lack of compassion (*ibid.*).

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 331.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

devote themselves so completely to catechizing that the Magistrates could neither remain in ignorance nor possess a valid excuse for supplying more funds to the ministry.

Whereas if we do but heartily all set ourselves to this work and shew the Magistrate to his face, that it is a most weighty and necessary part of our business, and that we would do it thoroughly if we could, and that if there were hands enough at it, the work might go on They will one way or other raise maintenance in such populous places for labourers proportioned to the number of souls Let them but see us fall to the work, and see it prosper in our hands . . . there is no doubt but it will . . . draw out their hearts out to the promoting of it: and instead of *laying Parishes together to diminish the number of Teachers*, they will either divide them, or allow more Teachers to a Parish.¹²⁰

With larger salaries to support more assistants, pastors of larger parishes could finally provide some private instruction for each parishioner while clergymen of smaller churches could provide even more frequent attention to each individual.¹²¹ However, Baxter's entire plan hinged on the ability of pastors to wholly dedicate all of their time, money, and energies toward systematically catechizing all their parishioners.

Effective Church Discipline

The second initiative of Baxter's pastoral program involved instituting effective church discipline without creating a gathered church.¹²² Striking this balance was essential to maintaining a united, parish-based church while undermining the arguments of separatist groups splitting off from the Church of England for want of stricter accountability.¹²³ He offered Kidderminster as a model. There, he continued to

¹²⁰Baxter, *RP*, 331-32. Baxter asserted, "They must have it before their eyes as well as in their ears to regard it" (*ibid.*, 331).

¹²¹Baxter regretted that he and his three other assistants, despite their tireless labors, were still only able to speak to each family once every year and believed greater fruit would be produced if they could do this more frequently: "Alas, how small a matter is it to speak to a man once only in a year, and that so cursorily as we must be forced to do, in comparison to what their necessities require? yet we are in hope of some fruit of this much, but how much more might it be, if we could but speak to them once a quarter, and do the work more fully and deliberately (as they that are in small parishes may do)" (*ibid.*, 329)

¹²²For more in-depth analysis of Baxter's discipline, see Lim, *In Search of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 103-13 and 84-103; Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 109-36; Shealy, "The Power of the Present," 286-319.

¹²³Baxter, *RP*, C3v, 217, 304-5; Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 85-86 §136, 91-92 §137 and bk. 1, pt.

regard the entire parish as a church yet began to require each parishioner “to own” their membership by accepting him as their pastor and submitting to discipline before they could receive the Eucharist.¹²⁴ In his own parish, the “fear of Discipline” caused the majority of the parish to balk at these conditions, so that only 600 of the 1,600 old enough to be communicants consented to his system of accountability.¹²⁵ He still considered those who excluded themselves to be under his oversight and in communion with the 600 parishioners who had submitted, yet they did not have “access to the fuller and more special communion” belonging to those under his “special charge.”¹²⁶ With a model to present for imitation, Baxter urged clergymen to take up the painstaking but necessary duty of discipline which they had neglected for so long.¹²⁷

2, 146 §24.

¹²⁴Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 91 §137; Baxter, *RP*, appendix fols. Oo4v-r. By doing this, Baxter sought to strike a balance between making a mock show of discipline and creating fears that he sought to “unchurch the parish church and gather a new church out of it” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 91 §137). For a discussion of the Eucharist in Baxter’s ecclesiology, see Lim, *In Search of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 84-103.

¹²⁵Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 85 §136 and 91 §137; Baxter, *RP*, appendix fols. Qq2v-3r. Baxter believed he had avoided the charge of separation and asserted that “we took them for Separatists” who had refused to own their membership (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 91 §137 and 85 §136). See also Baxter, *RP*, appendix fols. Oo4v, Qq3r-v. Though Baxter kept the parish church system in theory, Lim has pointed out he nonetheless formed a “semi-gathered church” out of it (Lim, *In Search of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 107). Baxter noted that some of those who withdrew did so because they were forbidden by a husband, master, or parent. Nevertheless, many of them were grossly ignorant, profane, or scandalous, and a goodly number were kept off by the example and persuasions of some leading persons who were guided by the higher sort of the “prelatical divines” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 91 §137).

¹²⁶See the lengthy explanation Baxter provided for his distinction between those parishioners who did and did not submit to him as pastor (Baxter, *RP*, 100-102). For those who had voluntarily excluded themselves from membership, Baxter argued they still had a limited communion and that he was still responsible for a certain level of discipline and oversight over them on the basis that they were still “our ordinary hearers” (ibid., 100). Baxter pointed out how, since they conversed with church members on a regular basis, they heard the word of God, “not as heathens, but as Christians, and as members of the universal Church into which they are baptized; and since they attended services, they joined with the members in public prayers and praises in the celebration of the Lord’s day” (ibid., 101). Finally, when these ungodly persons were sick, they requested prayers from the pastor and congregation for their recovery, and if, Baxter argued, we should pray for them “against sickness and temporal death, I know no reason but we should much more earnestly pray for them against sin and eternal death” (ibid.). Baxter did not believe he had “so strict a charge over this sort of men,” who renounced his oversight as he did over the rest, but he still believed such persons were still under his care (ibid., 101-2).

¹²⁷Ibid., fols. C3v-D2v.

Baxter's model of pastoral soul care made the implementation of discipline more efficient but also far more laborious. On the one hand, the pastor's responsibility to know the spiritual state of each member made possible a more effective and systematic enforcement of discipline.¹²⁸ On the other hand, overseeing the whole church meant one pastor, perhaps with an assistant or two, bore the responsibility of overseeing and disciplining thousands of souls in each parish. Furthermore, the primary responsibility fell upon the pastor for personally reproving every parishioner in the case of offensive or unrepentant sins, before the matter was even brought before church.¹²⁹ Baxter described the great care and effort necessary to tailor admonishment to the care of each wayward individual.

A great deal of skill is here required, and difference must be made, according to the various tempers of offenders; but with the most it will be necessary to fall on with the great plainness and power, to shake their careless hearts, and to make them see what it is to dally with sin; and to let them know the evil of it, and its sad effects, and the unkindness, unreasonableness, unprofitableness and other aggravations; and what it is that they do against God and themselves.¹³⁰

Only after the pastor had reached out, at least once, but perhaps many more times, should the person's case go before the church to be reprov'd and urged to repent before all.¹³¹

When one considers that other clergymen had usually disciplined by merely withholding the Eucharist,¹³² Baxter's approach undoubtedly demanded far more exertion on the part

¹²⁸Baxter asked, "How can we tell whom to exclude, till we know who are included? Or how can we resel the accusations of the offended, that tell us of the ungodly or defiled members of our Churches, when we know not who be members, and who not?" (Baxter, *RP*, 60-61).

¹²⁹Baxter did encourage Christians to also admonish one another. Baxter related how one of the aids to his success at Kidderminster was the "*Zeal and Diligence*" of the godly in Kidderminster who "thirsted after the salvation of their Neighbors and were in private my Assistants." Since they were spread throughout the town and could be where Baxter was not, they would correct and admonish others in his absence (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 87 §137).

¹³⁰Baxter, *RP*, 94.

¹³¹For Baxter's explanation of this process, see *ibid.*, 95-109.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 214, appendix fols. Qq2v-3r. Duffy has noted that this indeed became a trend after the 1640s as the desire to institute strict reformed discipline grew stronger (Duffy, "The Reformed Pastor in English Puritanism," 227).

of pastors.¹³³ Adding to the burden was his extension of oversight and discipline to non-church members, that is parishioners who had voluntarily excluded themselves from accountability to him. Though he did not feel obligated to devote as much time to their oversight, he still admonished and reproved them, especially in the case of the “notoriously and openly wicked.”¹³⁴ As Duffy pointed out, Baxter viewed himself countering a growing trend he had witnessed among Puritans who excommunicated the unrepentant too hastily and focused their pastoral efforts almost exclusively on their fervent parishioners.¹³⁵ Thus, he urged fellow ministers to not imitate “the lazy Separatists, that gather a few of the best together, and take them only for their charge, leaving the rest to sink or swim . . . it is easier to shut out the ignorant, than bestow our pains night and day in teaching them.”¹³⁶

Baxter’s model of discipline also proved burdensome, because he refused to shift the primary responsibility from the pastor to the magistrate or any other church official.¹³⁷ He anticipated pastors objecting due to the assumption that discipline fell under the magistrate’s jurisdiction, and because they feared magistrates would either refuse to help or would oppose such discipline.¹³⁸ He had no desire to lessen or absolve

¹³³See Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 130-31.

¹³⁴See the discussion in Baxter, *RP*, 100-102. See also *ibid.*, appendix fols. Oo4r, Qq3r.

¹³⁵Duffy, “The Reformed Pastor in English Puritanism,” 218-34. Duffy contended that, over three generations, this tension between the English parish model of an inclusive, mixed church came to increasingly clash with the Reformed emphasis on discipline which was inherently meant to distinguish and exclude the ungodly from the godly (*ibid.*, 218, 219-26). Baxter’s method sought to revive older Puritan attempts to harmonize rather than polarize the concepts of reformed discipline and a mixt church (*ibid.*, 233).

¹³⁶Richard Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest, or, A treatise of the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in glory*, 12th ed. (London: printed for Thomas Parkhurst, Ric. Chiswell, and Dorman Newman, 1688), 512.

¹³⁷According to Baxter, “*The great objection that seemeth to hinder some from this work, is because we are not agreed yet, who is it is that must do it? Whether only a Prelate? or whether a Prebyterie? Or whether a single Pastor? Or the People?*” (Baxter, *RP*, fol. C7r).

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 218, fol. C6v.

magistrates from their proper role in supporting the ministry.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the burden of discipline, he reasoned, ultimately fell on pastors, since they held authority for reproof and admonishing everyone under their soul care.¹⁴⁰ Every pastor should exercise discipline and excommunicate, since he was “a bishop in” his “own parish,” provided he did so with the “assistance and consent” of the congregation.¹⁴¹

Other objections more clearly stemmed from the toil and suffering Baxter’s disciplinary model placed upon clergymen. O’Day has argued that ecclesiastical discipline contributed to a growing anticlericalism both before and after the Civil War, especially toward Puritans.¹⁴² Indeed, one of the more frequent objections Baxter had received was the “*common cry*” that “*Our people be not ready for it: they will not bear it.*”¹⁴³ While not discounting the threat of lay resistance, he discerned the real “meaning” behind pastoral reluctance was their unwillingness to “bear the trouble and hatred which it will occasion.”¹⁴⁴ He urged pastors not to shrink back from the duty of discipline “because of trouble to the flesh that doth attend it,” which was “too sad a sign of

¹³⁹When Baxter condemned ministerial disregard of discipline he often mentioned magistrates in the same breath (Baxter, *RP*, fols. C5v-6v). Baxter provided a lengthy exposition on church state relations regarding the role of the magistrate in discipline (ibid., 218-34). He also defended himself against the accusation that he was encouraging ministers to perform discipline in an unruly manner without the magistrate; along with his rebuttal, he provided a list of the persons attendant at their disciplinary meetings to show they do not seek to wrong the magistrate: “2 or 3 justices of the peace, 2 or 3 presbyters, 3 or 4 deacons, and about 24 delegates of the people of the most wise and pious men” (ibid., appendix fols. Qq3r-v).

¹⁴⁰Ibid., fols. C7r-v. Baxter reasoned that since a pastor did not relinquish his other duties, such as teaching and the sacraments to others, how could they do so in the case of discipline (ibid., 52-53).

¹⁴¹Ibid., fols. C7r-v. Baxter twice insisted that discipline must be done with the “assistance and consent” of the congregation and cited 1 Cor 5:4 for support. In doing this he was departing from the traditional Presbyterian model where discipline was done by the pastors alone, sometimes with the cooperation of the magistrates.

¹⁴²O’Day, *The English Clergy*, 198-202. See also Duffy’s study where he compared the division and disharmony reformed discipline tended to cause with the medieval model where the priest was viewed as a key means of maintaining parish harmony (Duffy, “The Reformed Pastor in English Puritanism,” 216-19).

¹⁴³Baxter, *RP*, fol. C3v. This was a common objection Baxter heard rather than an anticipated objection, since he included it in the appendix of the second edition of *The Reformed Pastor*.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

hypocrisy.” After all, he assured pastors, the “costlyest duties” usually prove “the most comfortable.”¹⁴⁵ Fear of diminishing tithes constituted one area where he connected fear of lay hostility with ministerial negligence of discipline. He had little doubt that many ministers failed to institute strict discipline, for fear that it would offend sinners and thus diminish the dues pastors should receive.¹⁴⁶ Finally, Baxter had heard frequent clerical objections that denying the Eucharist to the laity was sufficient as discipline and so nothing more needed to be done.¹⁴⁷ He rejected this limited form of discipline, first of all, because its effectiveness depended on the individual’s attendance at church.¹⁴⁸ He also considered this measure overly “harsh,” since it punished and excommunicated half the parish “without an orderly trial, or calling them to speak for themselves, or without taking Christ’s course of first admonishing them.”¹⁴⁹ Withholding the Eucharist would be far easier, yet he urged the more laborious course of urgently seeking the repentance of sinners before disciplining them.¹⁵⁰ He was not calling pastors to suffer anything that he had not already experienced in pastoral governance: “I profess unfeignedly,” he declared, “that if God had left it to my choice . . . I had rather preach twice or thrice a week for nothing, and do no more, then to have this . . . duty of judging and governing this one parish.”¹⁵¹ Thus, Baxter summoned clergymen to institute a discipline that would involve far greater levels of care, patience, sacrifice, and grief than what they had known before.

¹⁴⁵Baxter, *RP*, fol. C4r.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 236. This fear amounted to nothing less than the pastor selling “his gifts, his cause, and the souls of men for money” (*ibid.*).

¹⁴⁷Baxter included this common objection in the appendix of the second edition of *The Reformed Pastor* (*ibid.*, appendix fols. Qq2v-3r).

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, appendix fol. Qq3v.

¹⁵⁰See also Duffy’s comment that Baxter thought “conventional Puritan discipline” was “too trigger-happy” (Duffy, “The Reformed Pastor in English Puritanism,” 231).

¹⁵¹Baxter, *CR*, 64-65.

Ministerial Associations

The third component of Baxter's pastoral strategy was the establishment of regional ministerial associations throughout England.¹⁵² He modified existing associational conventions into a more organized regional structure.¹⁵³ Having already established the Worcestershire Association of ministers as a model,¹⁵⁴ he vigorously promoted it by urging all ministers to "without any more delay Unite and Associate for the furtherance of each other in the work of the Lord."¹⁵⁵ While seemingly less consequential and burdensome than catechizing or discipline, Baxter nevertheless believed a great deal was at stake in the successful proliferation of his associations.

Baxter viewed the associations as a key means of fostering greater unity and partnership among England's ministers. The meetings would counter the pride, factions, and contentious attitude he saw in so many English ministers. Numerous theological disputes had divided clergymen for so long and frustrated their efforts to bring about church reform.¹⁵⁶ He also realized that dissension among ministers was a chief obstacle in reaching his objective of hiring multiple pastors for each parish. Magistrates assumed partnership among clergy in the same parish to be unworkable, since they would never be able to agree on anything.¹⁵⁷ Finally, he knew he had to promote greater unity and

¹⁵²For more in-depth analysis of Baxter's efforts to establish ministerial associations, see Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 137-65; Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 117-55.

¹⁵³Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 137.

¹⁵⁴For Baxter's account of the Worcestershire Association's formation, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 146-50 §23-32. For the Spread of the model to other counties, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 167 §35-36. Baxter reflected on how "a great desire of Concord began to possess all the good People in the Land, and our Breaches seem'd ready to heal" (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 167, §36).

¹⁵⁵Baxter, *RP*, fol. D2v. For similar appeals, see *ibid.*, fols. D3r-v, 134-36, 183-207, 285-302, 336, 337.

¹⁵⁶Baxter asked, "What a nation might England have been ere now, if it had not been for the proud and obstinate contentions of godly Ministers?" (*ibid.*, 192). He devoted numerous pages to criticizing the clergy for their contentious spirit (*ibid.*, 134-36, 183-207). He lamented how the period of the Civil Wars and Commonwealth had offered the opportunity and need for ministerial harmony in their mission to save souls, but instead clergymen had preached peace while simultaneously disputing amongst themselves and thus leading their people astray into divisions. Baxter blamed the disputing among ministers for the proliferation of "divisions and sects" (*ibid.*, 188-89).

¹⁵⁷Baxter claimed that he often appealed to magistrates for more ministers in each parish, but

concord among ministers if he hoped to spread his initiatives of systematic catechizing and discipline to other churches and regions.¹⁵⁸

The unity of Baxter's regional meetings furthered the work of church reform and promoted his pastoral model. He was adamant that regional clergymen should gather to discuss and offer advice on pressing ministerial issues, while not allowing "smaller differences of Judgment" to divert attention from the larger goal of mutual edification.¹⁵⁹ The frequency of such meetings should be increased. In light of the difficulties and eternal significance of ministerial work, pastors had an even greater responsibility than the laity to assiduously "teach, exhort, and admonish one another."¹⁶⁰ Thus, the ministerial associations provided edification, accountability, and transparency among clergy, so that weak pastors would be strengthened and the sins of others exposed.¹⁶¹ Baxter saw no valid justification for pastors to live in privacy and seclusion, as some complained was their preference; rather they should exhort one another in the work of

the overwhelming response he received from them was that they would always disagree (Baxter, *RP*, 172). Baxter condemned clergymen of all parties—whether Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents—for undervaluing the unity and peace of the whole church by engaging in so many bitter disputes (*ibid.*, 183). For similar condemnations, see fols. D2v-3r, 134-36, 183-202, 285-97, 336-37).

¹⁵⁸Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 137-39.

¹⁵⁹Baxter, *RP*, 136. Baxter recognized that differences of church government—Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent—most frequently kept ministers at odds. However, he believed even if they could not agree on every point, they could nevertheless easily find out and narrow their differences in order to find "agreement in the main" (*ibid.*, 187).

¹⁶⁰As Baxter reasoned, "If the people of our charge must teach, exhort, and admonish one another, no doubt teachers may do it to one another . . . We have the same sins to kill and the same graces to be quickened and corroborated, as our people have: we have greater works than they do, and greater difficulties to overcome, and no less necessity is laid upon us, and therefore we have need to be warned and wakened, if not to be instructed, as well as they; so that I confess I think such meetings should be more frequent, if we have nothing else to do together but this: And as plainly and closely should we deal with one another as the most serious among us do with our flocks" (*ibid.*, 2). Baxter asserted elsewhere, "Ministers have need of one another, and must improve the gifts of God in one another; and the self-sufficient are the most deficient" (*ibid.*, 286).

¹⁶¹Baxter felt the need for this was ever clearer in light of the reluctance of pastors to join associations. He believed their real purpose was to hide either their weaknesses or immorality: "Somewhat else sure lieth at the bottom. Indeed some of them are empty men, and afraid their weakness should be known, when as they cannot conceal it by their solitariness and might do much to heal it by Communion; some of them are careless or scandalous men: and for them we have no desire of their Communion, nor shall admit it, but upon publike Repentance and Reformation" (*ibid.*, 286).

church reform.¹⁶² Furthermore, the specific blueprint for reform that he hoped to promote in his own association as well as others was his method of systematic catechizing and rigorous church discipline.¹⁶³ As Black has argued, Baxter's tireless efforts to promote the Worcestershire association as a model derived from the crucial role it performed in furthering his pastoral agenda for completing England's Reformation; it enabled the work to go forward by providing the community and accountability to promote it.¹⁶⁴

The Means of Finishing the Reformation

After witness the fruits of his pastoral program at Kidderminster, Baxter was convinced that his three initiatives held the key for completing England's Reformation.¹⁶⁵ Many clergy had long hoped and prayed for the conversion of the populace, yet most of the country remained steeped in theological ignorance and immorality. Advocates of reform who had placed their hopes in Parliamentary measures, the magistrate, or altering ceremonies had failed to understand that reform would only be achieved through drastically increasing the labors of pastors, especially in the area of discipline and personal instruction.¹⁶⁶ Despite the herculean strains Baxter's model placed upon already overburdened pastors, he was convinced he had discovered the "chief means" that would

¹⁶²Baxter did anticipate a clerical objection to his ministerial associations: "*we love to live privately.*" In his view, however, such reluctance to associate stemmed from ministers preferring their "own ease or commodity" rather than spending themselves in helping their coworkers (Baxter, *RP*, 286). See also Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 137.

¹⁶³Baxter, *RP*, fols. D2v-3r.

¹⁶⁴Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 138-39, 253.

¹⁶⁵Baxter, *RP*, 345.

¹⁶⁶Baxter lamented, "Little did they think of a Reformation that must be wrought by their own diligence and unwearied labours, by earnest Preaching, Catechizing, Personal Instruction, and taking heed to all the Flock, whatever pains or reproaches it should cost. They thought not that a thorough Reformation must multiply their own work . . . and had we then known how a Reformation must be attained, perhaps some would have been colder in the prosecution of it" (*ibid.*, 343). If ministers faithfully performed the "business of catechizing and personal instruction" and "Discipline," Baxter declared, they would "do more for the true Reformation" than any governmental and liturgical changes could hope to effect (*ibid.*, 345). Satan gained as much victory in getting pastors to neglect discipline as he would by causing them to abandon preaching (*ibid.*, 122). Baxter confessed that if he neglected discipline he was an "Instrument of hindering the Reformation" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 160).

answer the frustrated longings for “*Church-Reformation*.”¹⁶⁷ Three times in *The Reformed Pastor*, he asserted that “we never took the righteous course to demolish the Kingdom of darkness till now.”¹⁶⁸ Ultimately, he aimed for “*the reforming and saving of all the people in our several parishes*.”¹⁶⁹ And though the salvation of all was unlikely, a universal attempt would “reach over the whole land” and yield more extensive victory than “hitherto we have seen of our other labours.”¹⁷⁰ Nothing less than the triumph of the Reformation was at stake in the success or failure of Baxter’s program. The next question concerns how clerical marriage posed a hindrance to his pastoral model and the reform it would accomplish.

The Strains of Clerical Marriage on Baxter’s Model

In *The Reformed Pastor*, Baxter exhibited a complex attitude toward the impact of clerical marriage on pastoral ministry. On the one hand, he did not name clerical celibacy as a necessary prerequisite for ministers, nor did he consider clerical marriage to be incompatible with pastoral ministry. He seemed to assume many of his readers were married clerics and urged them to set an example for their parishioners in leading and governing their families well.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, he understood that

¹⁶⁷Baxter, *RP*, 341. For other instances where Baxter declared that his pastoral initiatives provided the means of completing the Reformation in England, see *ibid.*, fols. B7r-v, fols. C1v-r, 342-43, 355-56, 413-14. See also Lim, *In Search of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 107.

¹⁶⁸Baxter, *RP*, fol. B7v. See also two instances where he insisted that his pastoral program was the means to strike a great blow to “the kingdom of darkness” (*ibid.*, 313, 414).

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 339, 340. Baxter’s goal reflects consonance with Scott H. Hendrix who argued that what united all reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, was a common “Reformation vision” that hoped for “a more devout Europe” (Scott H. Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004], 8). Paul C. H. Lim has also connected Christianization with the hopes of the Puritan movement more generally (Paul C. H. Lim, “Puritans and the Church of England: Historiography and Ecclesiology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, eds. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 227-28).

¹⁷¹Baxter, *RP*, 281. This exhortation was no small acknowledgement or concession in light of the important role of family heads in furthering Baxter’s catechizing. Since pastors could only meet periodically with families for catechizing, Baxter stressed the necessity of enlisting the help of heads of households to continue and progress their families in the work of catechizing (*ibid.*, 83-87, 334, 420, 447).

wedlock certainly strained the ability of ministers to fully devote themselves to the strenuous model of soul care required by his pastoral program. On a few occasions, he either anticipated or responded to objections from married clerics who would view his model as unreasonable due to the demands it would place upon their families.

Baxter anticipated that married pastors would find it more difficult to support their families and hire assistants so that each parishioner received personal instruction. A key component of his plan required clergymen to live at the subsistence level in order to allocate enough income for an assistant, but this was far easier for unmarried pastors. Baxter anticipated that married clerics would consider such austerity a “hard measure,” since their “Wife and Children cannot so live,” but he countered by pointing out that many poor families lived on far less. He expressed amazement at clergymen who called themselves ministers of the gospel yet refused to endure living on the lowest level of poverty to save souls.¹⁷² It seemed “an unquestionable thing,” that ministers should “pinch” their “own flesh and family” rather than “neglect the souls of so many men.”¹⁷³ He blamed their aversion to self-denial on fleshly interests which caused clergymen to desire more luxurious provision for themselves and their families.

So you have but food and raiment, must you not therewith be content? . . . And it is not purple and fine linen, and faring deliciously everyday, that you must expect as that which must content you . . . So your cloathing be warm, and your food be wholesome, you may as well be supported by it to do God’s service, as if you had the fullest satisfaction onto your flesh . . . He that wanteth not these, hath but a cold excuse to make for hazarding mens souls, that he may live on a fuller dyet in

He even saw the husband functioning as a preacher to his family, since the hierarchy of family relationships obliged him to teach them (Baxter, *RP*, 79). If family rulers neglected this duty, Baxter warned, it would “undo all” the pastor’s efforts to reform his congregation (*ibid.*, 83). Thus, the stress Baxter laid on family piety heightened the potential for pastors to advance the effectiveness of their own ministry through the good government of their own households. Baxter never utilized this link as an apologetic for clerical marriage, but he nevertheless understood the connection.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 64. Baxter also sought to shame such ministers by remind them that many “able ministers” in the days of severe persecution before the Civil War were glad to preach the gospel for less if they were given liberty to do so (*ibid.*).

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 63.

the world.¹⁷⁴

An unmarried pastor found it far easier to deny himself comforts and devote the rest of his income to hiring a much-needed assistant, whereas a married cleric also had to deprive his wife and children, whose disgruntlement was far more difficult to bear.¹⁷⁵

Baxter believed the extra financial burdens of married clerics also hindered their ability to practice charitable giving and thereby win parishioners to their peaching. Collinson has observed that the practice of clerical marriage was “hard to reconcile with the proverb quoted in the Royal Injunctions of 1559: ‘the goods of the Church are called the goods of the poor.’”¹⁷⁶ When parishioners saw that the pastor’s children rather than the parish poor were “the first call on limited clerical incomes,” it may have helped spawn a new anticlericalism.¹⁷⁷ Baxter may have been aware of this problem when he urged pastors and their families to deny themselves a comfortable living, so that they could devote themselves to generous giving. He anticipated, however, that familial demands would prompt pastors to protest such austere measures: “I know the great objection is, *We have wife and children to provide for: a little will not serve them at present and we are not bound to leave them beggars.*” According to Baxter, clergymen routinely appealed to 1 Timothy 5:8 for their support: “*He that provideth not for his own, and specially those of his family, hath denied the faith, and is worse then an infidel.*” He

¹⁷⁴Baxter, *RP*, 65.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 65-66, 240. Baxter made this same observation in another work: “To suffer some hunger and go in vile Apparel is not very difficult: But when there is a Family to provide for, a discontented Wife and Children to satisfy . . . it must be an excellent Christian that can live contentedly and cast all his useless cares on God and keep up the sense of his love and a delight in all his service” (Baxter, *How to do good to many*, 15).

¹⁷⁶Collinson, “Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings,” 214.

¹⁷⁷Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 67-68. See also Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625*, The Ford Lectures 1979 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 106; Collinson, “Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings,” 214. O’day has argued that the strong anticlericalism that came forth during the Civil Wars and interregnum (1642-1660) sprang from seeds of resentment that were nourished in the period from 1558-1642 (O’Day, *The English Clergy*, 190). According to her, three primary sources of growing lay resentment were clergy taking parishioners to court for failure to pay tithes, the clerics disciplinary role of their congregation, and abuse of clerical authority (*ibid.*, 191-206).

countered by asserting that “few texts of Scripture” had been “more abused” than this verse in order to justify lavish spending on one’s household.¹⁷⁸ Any pastor who possessed a “truly charitable self-denying heart” and devoted all he had to God would proportion only what his family required and “devote as much of the Churches means to the Churches service as they can.”¹⁷⁹ However, a far simpler solution existed. Single pastors, being freed of familial obligations, could more freely devote all their income to charitable purposes.¹⁸⁰ Baxter wondered why more pastors seemed incapable of mortifying “the concupiscence of the flesh,” so that they might “live in a single freer condition, and have none of these temptations from wife and children, to hinder them from furthering their Ministerial ends by charitable works.”¹⁸¹ The problem hindering married ministers from charity was not their lack of godliness. The interest of “flesh and blood” made “even good men so partial” that they were tempted to take their duty of family provision, which was “of very great worth and weight,” to excessive “extremes.”¹⁸² Consequently, clergymen felt they and their families had to be richly clothed and dine on the most delicious fare, at the expense of leaving works undone that “may be of greater use.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸Baxter objected, “This is made a pretence for gathering up portions and providing a full estate for posterity” (Baxter, *RP*, 238).

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 239-40. Baxter argued in another place that providing for one’s family should not cause neglect of charitable works: “I know that your charity and care must begin at home but it must not end there. You are bound to do the best you can to educate your children, so as they may be capable of being most serviceable to God, but not to leave them rich or a full estate; Nor to forbear other necessary works of charity, merely for a larger provision for them. There must be some proportion kept between our provision for our families, and for the Church and poor” (*ibid.*, 238-39).

¹⁸⁰Looking at the period of 1570-1640, Collinson cited William Sheppard and Bernard Gilpin as ministerial examples where their single state allowed them to devote larger portions of their income to charitable purposes than would have been possible if they had been married. Sheppard had a modest income and yet he was able to give away a quarter of it; meanwhile, Gilpin had a much larger income but devoted three quarters of it to his school and seminary at Houghton and other charities. In contrast, married clergymen found it nearly impossible to match the generosity of such celibate clergymen renowned for their charitable giving (Collinson, “Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings,” 214.)

¹⁸¹Baxter, *RP*, 239.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, 240. See also *ibid.*, 238.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, 240

The inability of more ministers to deny such “worldly vanities” appeared lamentable to Baxter in light of the “abundance of good works” lying undone by pastors.¹⁸⁴

Baxter’s criticism of the lack of charity among married clerics prompted him to praise the Roman Catholics for the pastoral opportunities their clergy enjoyed due to their unmarried status. In contrast to Protestants, their clergy remained unhindered by family responsibilities, so that they could totally devote themselves, their income, and their time to the church’s public work: “they have no posterity to drain the churches revenues, nor to take up their care: but they make their public cause to be their interest, and they lay out themselves for it while they live, and leave all they have to it when they die.”¹⁸⁵ The single-minded devotion to pastoral ministry that celibacy afforded Roman Catholic clergy was “one of the highest points of the *Romish* policy.”¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Baxter sharply disagreed with any universal rule mandating celibacy for ministers. Roman Catholics “pretend[ed]” that clerical celibacy was “a duty of common necessity” for all their “Bishops, Priests, and other Religious orders.” Though he wished more pastors remained unmarried, he dreaded the aftermath of such universal compulsion and conceded that not all men were capable of living chastely in the single state: “I would not have any men lie too long under endangering strong temptations to incontinency; lest they wound themselves and their profession by their falls.”¹⁸⁷ Some pastors “must marry” and in their case they “should [only] take such [income] as can maintain themselves and their children.”¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, it was a “pitty” that more Protestant ministers did not strive to “imitate [Roman Catholics] in self-denial,” especially since they served “a better

¹⁸⁴Baxter, *RP*, 241.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.* Later, Baxter asserted that he did not desire to put any man “upon extremes” that would lead to such immorality (*ibid.*, 240).

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 239.

cause.”¹⁸⁹ To Baxter, the problem was that pastors seemed to marry far too quickly rather than striving to see if they could remain celibate in light of the freedom it gave for single-minded devotion to the ministry. If Paul (1 Cor 7:38) and Jesus (Matt 19:11-12) had stated celibacy was better than marriage for that reason, then “sure[ly] Ministers should labour to do that which is best.”¹⁹⁰

Finally, clerical marriage undermined Baxter’s hopes that the government would allocate sufficient funds to each parish for hiring multiple ministers or at least catechists. In his 1655 sermon to Parliament and *The Reformed Pastor*, he implored “the Rulers of the Common-wealth” to provide a more proportional ecclesiastical benefice, so that the woefully disproportionate ratio of laity to clergy would be remedied.¹⁹¹ Achieving this goal was vitally necessary for his pastoral strategy to personal provide soul care to every parishioner.¹⁹² However, he was amazed at how that the worldliness of many clergymen, especially those who were married, frequently thwarted his effort to convince the government for larger clerical salaries.¹⁹³ Citing a lack of scriptural support to bind them, a number of clergymen objected to his admonition that their families should live in poverty in order to pay for a ministerial assistant.¹⁹⁴ Such clerical resistance to

¹⁸⁹Baxter, *RP*, 239.

¹⁹⁰Baxter clearly was referencing those biblical texts when he asserted, “If he that marrieth not, doth better than he that doth, sure Ministers should labor to do that which is best. And if he that can *receive this saying*, must receive it, we should endeavor after it” (Ibid., 239). See also Baxter’s interpretation and commentary on these texts in his paraphrase of the New Testament; Baxter intended for this work to not just be a paraphrase but teach also (Richard Baxter, *A paraphrase on the New Testament with notes, doctrinal and practical, by plainness and brevity fitted to the use of religious families, in their daily reading of the Scriptures: and of the younger and poorer sort of scholars and ministers, who want fuller helps: with an advertisement of difficulties in the Revelations* (London: Printed for B. Simmons and Tho. Simmons, 1685), fols. G4v and Hhh3v-Hhh4r.

¹⁹¹Baxter, *HA*, 7; Baxter, *RP*, 67. See also where he made this petition in 1658 to the rulers of England (Baxter, *CR*, 294).

¹⁹²Baxter, *HA*, 7, 8-11.

¹⁹³Baxter was amazed his critics had forgotten Scripture’s teaching that a human soul far exceeded the worth of the world, even the cost of wife and children having to fare harder. Shouldn’t all of the pastor’s possessions and wages, he reasoned, be employed “to the utmost for [God’s] service?” (Baxter, *RP*, appendix fol. Pp1v).

¹⁹⁴Baxter included this objection, along with the other common objections he had received to

sacrifice and self-denial, Baxter reasoned, was precisely why “so many sensual Gentlemen” did so “little good with all their riches.”¹⁹⁵ Since clergymen found no Scripture that bound their families to live austere for the sake of the ministry, they should not be surprised that the gentry found no Scripture obliging them to do the same. The reluctance of the wealthy and powerful to increase “impropriations”—ecclesiastical benefices held by a lay proprietor—was justified by the lack of self-denial they saw in the clergy

No wonder if these Gentleman can find no Scripture that requireth them to buy in impropriations How should Gentleman find any Scripture for self-denial, or preferring God before themselves, yeah their flesh, or children’s superfluities and snares, when some Ministers of the Gospel can find no such Scripture when the case concerns themselves!”¹⁹⁶

When married pastors shunned a Spartan existence in favor of generously spending money on their family, they directly undermined Baxter’s hopes that the nobility would enlarge these ecclesiastical benefices to support more clergymen. Without the additional funds, clergymen would not be able to provide personal soul care to each parishioner.

The deleterious effects Baxter identified with clerical marriage shed considerable light on why he wished for more pastors to remain single. Marriage hindered pastors not only by consuming their precious time but also the portions of their income that should be prioritized toward charitable works and hiring a much-needed assistant or catechist. Furthermore, if pastors failed to practice self-denial by allowing their families to devour all their extra income, Baxter could never expect the rulers to listen to his pleas for larger benefices that could support multiple pastors in each parish.

the first edition of *The Reformed Pastor*, in the appendix to the second edition: “Object. 8: *You have here too confidently determined that it is Ministers duties that have large congregations to procure Assistance, though they leave themselves by it little to live upon, Which you mention. We must not be wise above what is written*” (Baxter, *RP*, appendix fols. Pp1r-Pp2v). Baxter responded by asserting that it constituted an “inhumane cruelty to let many souls go to hell, for fear my wife and children should fare somewhat the harder, or live at lower rates” (ibid., appendix fol. Pp1v).

¹⁹⁵Ibid., appendix fol. Pp2r.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

Therefore, while clerical marriage was not incompatible with Baxter's pastoral model, it certainly hindered its maximal implementation and thus also hindered the work of church reform. The exceedingly great value of celibacy lay in the pragmatic benefits it gave pastors to fully devote all their time, energy, and income to achieving the goal of Baxter's pastoral model: providing personal soul care to each parishioner.¹⁹⁷

Soul Care in Baxter's Theology of the Family

Baxter's pastoral program for church reform cannot be fully examined without exploring the importance of Christian families to its success. English Protestants had long commended the role of the household in cultivating piety and stressed the sanctifying effect of families upon the church and state.¹⁹⁸ Several scholars, however, have

¹⁹⁷According to Shealy, "It cannot be stressed too often that only the pastor is freed from the office of father . . . and from the need to labor for his living," so that he might be "undeterred by conflicts of interest" (Shealy, "The Power of the Present," 179, 193).

¹⁹⁸See the discussion in chap. 2, 47-57. The theological origins of England's heightened focus on the family and family piety in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century has drawn considerable scholarly debate. J. I. Packer, for example, credited the Puritans for pioneering the notion of the family as a locus of both moral and religious instruction as well as being a crucial component for a well-ordered society. The Puritans were so successful in this aspiration that they deserve to be considered the originators of "the English Christian marriage, the English Christian family, and the English Christian home" (J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 259-60). However, focusing nearly all credit on the Puritans is difficult in light of other studies. John Witte rejected Packer's view, and in place of the Puritans credited Thomas Becon, Heinrich Bullinger, and Martin Bucer with pioneering the Reformation views of marriage and family which so influenced England (John Witte, "Anglican Marriage in the Making: Becon, Bullinger and Bucer," in *The Contentious Triangle: Church, State and University Triangle*, eds. Ronald L. Peterson and Calvin Augustine Pater, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 51 [Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999], 256-59). Margo Todd has argued that the English view of the spiritualized household derived from Christian humanists and their dependence on classical authors (Margo Todd, "Humanists, Puritans and the Spiritualized Household," *Church History* 49, no. 1 (March 1980): 18-34; Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). However, J. Stephen Yuille has rightly pointed to Todd's neglect of a fundamental difference; whereas Christian humanists promoted a spiritualized household out of a "civic mindedness," the Puritans were motivated by a desire to promote godliness (J. Stephen Yuille, *Puritan Spirituality: The Fear of God in the Affective Theology of George Swinnock*, *Studies in Christian History and Thought* [Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007], 142). Kathleen M. Davies rejected any significant differentiation between Reformation or Puritan views of the home and attitudes held in the late Middle Ages (Kathleen M. Davies, "The Sacred Condition of Equality: How Original Were Puritan Doctrines of Marriage?" *Social History* 2, no. 5 (May 1977): 563-80; Davies, "Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, 58-80 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982). However, Davies seemed to stress continuity on the major points of similarity to the point of overlooking numerous smaller discontinuities. Finally, Christopher Hill pointed to the political and religious instability of seventeenth-century England—namely the English Civil War and the interregnum—as a key factor in causing the increased focus on the home as a focus of religious structure and pastoral encouragement (Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* [London: Secker & Warburg, 1964], 429).

contended that Baxter harbored a negative view of marriage and the family that departed from the traditional model of the godly home. It is clear, however, that his argument for clerical celibacy did not reflect a departure from the English Protestant conception of the family as a little church.¹⁹⁹ He praised the Christian home as an ideal environment for mutual help, soul care, and sacrificial love and saw it as a central component to his pastoral program for nationwide church reform.²⁰⁰

Critiques of Baxter's Marriage Theology

At first glance, there seems to be some evidence that Baxter diverged from the overwhelmingly positive view of marriage and the family held by most English Protestants. Levin L. Schucking, Richard Schlatter, and Edmund Leites pointed to Baxter's uniqueness as evidenced by his advocacy of celibacy, his negative comments about marriage, his ascetic attitude toward sexuality, and his failure to make much of human love in the marriage relationship.²⁰¹ Other scholars have argued that the ideals of

¹⁹⁹For studies defending the continuity of Baxter's view of the home with English Protestantism and/or the Continental Reformation, see Timothy K. Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage: The Husband/Wife Relationship in Puritan England as Taught and Experienced by a Representative Puritan Pastor, Richard Baxter," *Trinity Journal* 10, no. 2 [Fall 1989], 132, 153-57; J. I. Packer, *A Grief Sanctified: Passing through Grief to Joy and Peace* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1997), 24-32; Michael A. G. Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light': The Marriage of Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton," in *The Reformers and Puritans as Spiritual Mentors: Hope is Kindled* (Kitchener, Canada: Joshua Press, 2012), 144-47; Elisa Jill Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family: Spheres of Soul Care and Sacrifice" (MCS thesis, Regent College, 2010), 111-16. Beougher, Packer, and Haykin interpreted Baxter's provocative statements on matrimonial tribulations as merely reflecting a desire to prevent people, and especially pastors, from rushing hastily into marriage without prudent consideration beforehand (Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 135-37; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 26-28, 30, 31-32; Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light,'" 152).

²⁰⁰The following discussion is not meant to offer a comprehensive evaluation of Baxter's thinking on the family. Beougher's study originally offered the most comprehensive evaluation, both in terms of overarching themes and the minute details of marital duties (Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 134-45, 153-57), but his work has been superseded by Benson (Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 34-107). Rather than offering a comprehensive overview, this section aims to demonstrate how certain overarching themes in Baxter's family theology—mutual help, soul care, and sacrificial love—were ideally suited to provide a soul care that further advanced the work of the pastor.

²⁰¹Levin L. Schucking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from the Literary Sources*, trans. Brian Battershaw, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1970); Richard Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1971). Edmund Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Leites, "The Duty to Desire: Love, Friendship, and Sexuality in Some Puritan Theories of Marriage." *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 383-408. See the discussion and

Puritanism itself hindered the development of a positive family model. Depending upon Baxter as his primary source, Max Weber claimed that Puritanism promoted a uniquely Protestant spirit of asceticism, which “turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer.”²⁰² In essence, the Puritans broke down the walls segregating medieval monasteries from the world, so that their gloomy atmosphere of austerity now pervaded the life of every Christian, even the most intimate enjoyments of marriage.²⁰³ Weber claimed that Baxter endorsed sexual intercourse within marriage only as God’s appointed means “for the increase of his glory according to the commandment, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’”²⁰⁴ Consequently, Baxter advocated for the “sober procreation of children.”²⁰⁵ Ernest Troeltsch and Alan McFarlane came to conclusions very similar to Weber’s.²⁰⁶ Finally, L. Joseph Stone’s highly influential work also criticized Puritan family thought, though with faint praise as well.²⁰⁷ He believed

critique of their views in chap. 1, 11-14.

²⁰²Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), 166, and see also the larger discussion in 155-83 for Weber’s frequent use of Baxter. Weber believed English Puritanism best illustrated his notion of Protestant asceticism, because they provided the “most consistent religious basis for the idea of calling” (ibid., 155). His choice of Baxter as the best representative of Puritan asceticism stemmed from his practical approach and eminence: “Richard Baxter stands out above many other writers on Puritan ethics, both because of his eminently practical and realistic attitude, and, at the same time, because of the universal recognition accorded to his works, which have gone through many editions and translations. . . . His *Christian Directory* is the most complete compendium of Puritan ethics and is continually adjusted to the practical experiences of his own ministerial activity” (ibid., 155-56).

²⁰³Ibid., 154, and see also the larger discussion in 95-154.

²⁰⁴Ibid., 158.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 263.

²⁰⁶Ernest Troeltsch relied upon Weber’s interpretation for his own conclusion that sexual intercourse, according to Protestant asceticism, “is not to be used for enjoyment, but for the deliberate procreation of children” (Ernest Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960], 809, 987). Alan McFarlane contended that the view of marriage as a remedy against sin and a way to manage biological drives was very popular in English society before the Reformation and did not die away afterward; he noted, “Some of the most influential and radical Nonconformists,” such as Richard Baxter, “took exactly the same view” (Alan McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1840* [New York: B. Blackwell, 1986], 151). McFarlane also labeled Baxter as “the late seventeenth century scourge of matrimony” (ibid., 173).

²⁰⁷L. Joseph Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). Since the time of its publishing, Stone’s work has been seen as the “father” of all historical-social studies on the family in early modern England (Christopher Durston, *The Family in the English Revolution* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989], 1-2). I am indebted to Benson’s analysis of Stone’s

Puritanism exerted a beneficial effect on the English family through their emphasis on companionate marriage, of which Baxter was an exemplar.²⁰⁸ However, companionate marriage also contributed to the rise of “affective individualism,” which prized individual autonomy and the separation of the nuclear family unit from society to protect the privacy and needs of its own family members.²⁰⁹ As Benson observed, the implication of Stone’s theory of “affective individualism” was that families, having become increasingly insular, would actually work to hinder their own internal community as well as any beneficial interaction with wider society.²¹⁰

Investigations into Baxter’s theology of marriage and family life have been unsatisfactory, even though Baxter produced an immense amount of material on the subject.²¹¹ Elisa Jill Benson theorized that the negative stigmatization of Baxter, due to

work for my treatment here (Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 21-28).

²⁰⁸Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, 136. Stone painted a controversial picture of the English family during the sixteenth and seventeenth century where households were characterized by selfishness, mistrust, brutality, and low affection between family members (ibid., 99, and see also 99-102 for the reasons he provides to support this conclusion). Stone saw Puritanism simultaneously softening and reinforcing these harsh qualities. On the one hand, their patriarchal teaching created a stifling environment emphasizing moral conformity and hierarchical order (ibid., 7, 173-75, 216-17). On the other hand, Puritanism succeeded in bringing “Christian morality to a majority of homes” which had a moderating effect on the harshness of patriarchy in certain ways (ibid., 123).

²⁰⁹Ibid., 7-8.

²¹⁰Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 27.

²¹¹See Richard Baxter, *The catechizing of families a teacher of housholders how to teach their households: useful also to school-masters and tutors of youth : for those that are past the common small chatechisms, and would grow to a more rooted faith, and to the fuller understanding of all that is commonly needful to a safe, holy comfortable and profitable life* (London: Printed for T. Parkhurst and B. Simmons, 1683); Baxter, *The Mother’s Catechism*, in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, 4:34-64 (London: George Virtue, 1846; repr., Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000); Baxter, *The poor man’s family book in plain familiar conference between a teacher and a learner : with a form of exhortation to the sick, two catechisms, a profession of Christianity, forms of prayer for various uses, and some Psalms and hymns for the Lords day : with a request to landlords and rich men to give to their tenants and poor neighbours either this or some fitter book*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for Benjamin Cox, 1691); Baxter, *A breviat of the life of Margaret, the daughter of Francis Charlton and wife of Richard Baxter: there is also published the character of her mother, truly described in her published funeral sermon, reprinted at her daughters request, called, The last work of a believer, his passing-prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ, to be received by him* (London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681). Baxter also discussed family and marriage as a part of larger works: Baxter, *Compassionate counsel to all young-men especially I. London-apprentices, II. students of divinity, physick, and law, III. The sons of magistrates and rich men* (London: Printed by H. Clark for George Conyers, 1691), 166-69, 169-79; Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience directing Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for

his association with the Weber thesis, lies behind the relative neglect of his domestic writings in the historical-social research on the family. Assuming the reliability of Weber, scholars have largely ignored Baxter and far more often cited other Puritans in their efforts to present a more positive Puritan attitude toward the family.²¹² Another key reason for the scarce examination of Baxter's theology of the family lies in the fact that several key studies do not explore English Protestant marriage doctrine beyond the English Civil War, which necessarily excludes any discussion of him.²¹³ As a result, his teaching on the family has frequently been either neglected or misunderstood.

Baxter and the Purpose of Marriage

Baxter reflected considerable harmony with English Protestants who praised the communal nature of the home as an idyllic environment for intimate soul care.²¹⁴

Benson has argued that Baxter's understanding of soul care ("cure of souls") served as the foundation for his teaching on marriage and family.²¹⁵ For Baxter, living in

Nevil Simmons, 1678), pt. 2, 3-77; Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest*, 529-35; Baxter, *A treatise of self-denial*, 420-27; Baxter, *Methodus theologiae Christianae 1. naturae rerum, 2. Sacrae Scripturae, 3. praxi, congrua, conformis, adaptata: plerumque (corrigenenda tamen & perficienda)* (London: Typis M. White & T. Snowden, & prostant venales apud Nevil Simmons, 1681), 224-28.

²¹²Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 4-5, 18-19.

²¹³Daniel Doriani, "The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640: Ethics, Family, Marriage, Parents, Authority" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986); Robert Victor Schnucker, "Views of Selected Puritans, 1560-1630, on Marriage and Sexuality" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1969); Sylvia Brown, "Godly Household Government from Perkins to Milton: The Rhetoric and Politics of Oeconomia, 1600-1645" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994); Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Joan Larsen Klein, ed., *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Charles H. George and Katherine H. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). This pattern has also been followed in studies of attitudes toward women and marriage during this period: Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982); Katherine U. Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

²¹⁴Packer rightly concluded that Baxter was "creaming off the wisdom of a century of Puritan discussion" (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 26). However, while Baxter was certainly influenced by those Puritans who came before him, he nevertheless would deviate from them when he felt he needed to do so.

²¹⁵Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 3, 35-58. Benson's overarching thesis was that Baxter's teaching on marriage and the family modeled sacrificial love not self-interest; thus, the purpose of the family consisted in serving the church and God by being a symbolic witness to God's love

communion with God and others was vital to one's spiritual life; indeed, the essence of sin was living in isolation which promoted loving the creature and one's selfish desires over the creator.²¹⁶ Therefore, the cure for humanity's sinful predicament lay in the salvation and sanctification of sinners ("cure of souls"), so that their selfish cravings were transformed "into a relationship with God and others characterized by sacrificial love."²¹⁷ An "outward focus" on others—demonstrated through doing good to one's neighbor—was inherent to Baxter's theology of restored humanity.²¹⁸ Furthermore, the intimate relationships of the home served as an ideal training ground for inculcating neighborly love, sacrificial service and soul care, beginning with the husband and wife.²¹⁹

Soul care was the most prominent theme in Baxter's liturgy where he described the purposes of marriage. He concurred with fellow English Protestants and the Prayer Book's order of matrimony by affirming that God instituted matrimony for three reasons: for "mutual help," for "the increase of mankind" as well as the church, and finally to prevent sexual immorality.²²⁰ Yet Baxter devoted less attention to the second and third motives for marriage when compared to mutual help. Apart from listing procreation and prevention of sexual immorality at the beginning of the pastoral prayer,

and kingdom, both in the family and beyond that sphere (Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 3). See also Brent Waters' brief, though insightful remarks on Baxter's understanding of the family. According to Waters, Baxter did not believe the families existed to gratify the self-interests of its individual members but instead households bore "witness to a social order based on mutual and sacrificial love." Spouses, for example, helped each other in charitable works and hospitality, and children were trained, both morally and practically, for useful vocations that would serve the public good of the church and society (Brent Waters, *The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007], 32-33, 35).

²¹⁶Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 35-36, 40-43.

²¹⁷Ibid., 37, 43-44. According to Benson, Baxter identified Christ's model of sacrificially dying for sinners as a "living relational theology" for how this soul care should function in families (ibid., 47).

²¹⁸Ibid., 55-57.

²¹⁹Ibid., 54.

²²⁰Richard Baxter, *A petition for peace with The reformation of the liturgy, as it was presented to the right reverend bishops, by the divines appointed by His Majesties commission to treat with them about the alteration of it* (London: n.p., 1661), 68.

he only mentioned children briefly: “[and if thou bless them with children] let them be devoted unto thee.”²²¹ He devoted far more attention to exhorting spouses to aid each other in subduing their sinful passions and provoking one another to good works.²²² Thus, the primary benefit Baxter commended in marriage was the soul care spouses provided each other through the edification, admonishment, accountability, and help they offered one another. James Turner Johnson has argued that Baxter culminated a growing trend among Puritans by reordering these three purposes to single out mutual help as the chief blessing and purpose of wedlock.²²³

Baxter’s treatment of wedlock in the *Christian Directory* also displayed his emphasis on soul care through the mutual help spouses offered one another. Schucking thought that Baxter viewed marriage as little more than a remedy against lust,²²⁴ but Baxter explicitly subordinated this motivation to the purpose of mutual help.²²⁵ A call to

²²¹Baxter, *A petition for peace with The reformation of the liturgy*, 68-69.

²²²Baxter’s marriage liturgy heavily stressed marrying for the purpose of mutual help: “Most merciful Father . . . Bless thy own ordinance to these persons, that entering this state of Marriage in thy fear, they may there intirely devote themselves unto thee, and be faithful in all conjugall Affections, and duties unto each other . . . Subdue those corruptions that would make their lives unholy or uncomfortable, and deliver them from temptations to impiety, worldliness, unquietness, discontent or disaffection to each other, or to any unfaithfulness to thee or each other; make them meet helps to each other in thy fear, and in the lawful managing of the affairs of this World. Let them not hinder, but provoke one another to love, and to good works, and foreseeing the day of their separation by death, let them spend their daies in a Holy Preparation; and live here together as the Heirs of life, that must rejoyce at the great marriage day of the Lamb, and live for ever with Christ and all the Holy Angels and Saints in the presence of thy glory, Amen” (ibid., 68-69).

²²³Stone first argued that Baxter revised the order of marriage motives, placing mutual help first, before procreation and marriage as a remedy against sexual sin (Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, 136). James Turner Johnson went a step further and argued that the evolution of Puritan marriage doctrine in the seventeenth century, of which Baxter represented a culmination, reflected an effort to rearrange the ends of marriage so that the goal of mutual help became subordinate to procreation (James Turner Johnson, “English Puritan Thought on the Ends of Marriage,” *Church History* 38, no. 4 [December 1969]: 429-36).

²²⁴Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, 24.

²²⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3-4 §4-5. Baxter also doubted that marriage itself could serve as the sole cure for extremely powerful lust (ibid., pt. 2, 15). The numerous pages Baxter devoted to cultivating piety among family members demonstrates that his vision of marriage went far beyond simply curing people of their concupiscence (ibid., pt. 2, 12 §55-58). See also Baxter’s lengthy disputation for the value of family worship in cultivating piety among family members (ibid., pt. 2, 18-31), his general directions for the holy government of families (ibid., pt. 2, 31-33 §1-20), his special motives to persuade men to the holy governing of their families (ibid., pt. 2, 33-36 §1-10), and his special motives for the holy and careful education of children (ibid., pt. 2, 36-40 §1-9).

marry became clearest when marriage seemed to be the most advantageous state for “the service of God, doing good to others, and saving your own souls.”²²⁶ A Christian who believed the mutually shared benefits of marriage would outweigh the hindrances needed no other motivation.²²⁷ Baxter justified placing mutual help as the chief end of marriage on the basis that benefiting the soul constituted the chief purpose of human existence and all relationships in this world:

Consider also that you live not up to the *Ends of Marriage*, nor of *humanity*, if you are not helpers to each others souls. To help each other only for your Bellies is to live together but like beasts. You are appointed to lie together as *heirs of the grace of life*, 1 Pet. 3.7 That which is the end of your very life and being, must be the end of your relations, and your daily converse.²²⁸

Baxter did not mean to disregard marrying for procreation or as a remedy against lust. However, human companionship in marriage was very different from animal coupling, since it also served a sanctifying purpose. Therefore, when spouses failed to benefit the soul of their partner, they had missed that marriage was meant to prepare one for eternity.²²⁹ Leites failed to explain Baxter’s marriage doctrine in the context of his heightened focus on eternity, when he depicted Baxter as failing to make much of the sexual benefits of marriage.²³⁰ Baxter may have exulted less in marital sexuality when

²²⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3-4 §4-5. The other factors that could help one discern a call to marry were concupiscence and the will of parents, but these will be discussed more fully in chap. 5 when examining Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy.

²²⁷Baxter’s response to whether “*the aged*” could marry indicated his elevation of mutual help to a place of equal, if not superior, status with procreation. The problem concerning the elderly was that they were “*frigid, impotent, and incapable of procreation.*” Rather than saying God had forbidden such persons, Baxter pointed out that other lawful ends of marriage existed, namely “mutual help and comfort, &c. which make it lawful” (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 6 §19).

²²⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 44 §13.

²²⁹J. I. Packer noted that one of Baxter’s fundamental perspectives in the *Christian Directory* was the “centrality of heaven” to everything in life. Baxter pleaded with Christians to “take eternity seriously, to think of it often, to live today in the light of eternity, and never forgot what lies ahead at the end of the road” (J. I. Packer, “Introducing *A Christian Directory*,” in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, vol. 1, *A Christian Directory* (London: George Virtue, 1846; repr., Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000), 9. In his compressive analysis of the *Christian Directory*, Brouwer asserted that “Baxter’s preeminent concern and overarching theme was a heavenly perspective” (John F. Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*: Context and Content” [PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2005], 165, and see also 59-60, 68, 121, 165-69, 190, 195).

²³⁰Leites, “The Duty to Desire,” 403-4n50; Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern*

compared to other Puritans, yet his tendency stemmed from his desire to reinforce matrimony's ultimate end, namely helping Christians on the journey to their heavenly rest.

Baxter elaborated at length on the specific benefits of the soul care that should flourish between spouses. On one level, this included support, counsel, and encouragement that extended into every realm of life. He seemed to emphasize that two were stronger than one in a world of such intense trials and sorrows.

It is a mercy to have a faithful friend, that loveth you entirely, and is as true to you as your self, to whom you may open you mind and communicate your Affairs, and who would be ready to strengthen you, and divide the cares of your affairs and family with you, and help you to bear your Burdens, and comfort you in your Sorrows, and be the daily companion of your lives, and partaker of your Joys and Sorrows.²³¹

The companionship of spouses also served a distinct heavenly goal, for he depicted marriage as a school of sanctification.

And it is a mercy to have so near a friend to be a helper to your Soul; to joyn with you in Prayer and other holy Exercises; to watch over you and tell you of your Sins and dangers, and to stir up in you the grace of God, and remember you of the life to come, and cheerfully accompany you in the ways of Holiness . . . Thus it is said, Pro. xviii. 22 "*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.*"²³²

He realized the effectiveness of spousal soul care depended upon trust, vulnerability, and transparency between husband and wife. Consequently, he warned spouses against the temptation to conceal their spiritual state or hide their faults from one another.

Watch over the hearts and lives of one another, and labour to discern the state of one anothers souls, and the strength or weakness of each others sins and graces, and the failings of each others lives, that so you may be able to apply to one another the most suitable help. What you are unacquainted with, you cannot be very helpful in; you cannot cure unknown diseases; you cannot give wise and safe advice about

Sexuality, 88.

²³¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 12 §55. See also Baxter, *BLM* 99.

²³²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 12 §55. See also Baxter, *BLM*, 99.

the state of one another's souls, if you are mistaken in them.²³³

Baxter did concede that in “some few cases” it would be wise for spouses to refrain from mentioning “a fault or secret,” such as when it might “tend to quench affection,” but such occasions were exceptions rather than the norm.²³⁴ The intimacy, transparency, and accountability of spouses was vitally necessary for providing effective soul care.²³⁵ Such a view of the marriage relationship provides a needed corrective to Stone’s contention that the Puritan family promoted insularity and independency among individual family members.²³⁶

Baxter never tired of stressing the duties of soul care as the chief goal of wedlock, yet he did not transform marriage into the joyless, ascetic monastery that Weber thought he did.²³⁷ Quite the opposite, he reflected a consonance with English Protestants by depicting marriage as a duty of delight, with many comforts and blessings accompanying it. First of all, friendship lay at the heart of the marriage relationship, for he drew many similarities between spouses and “bosom friends.”²³⁸ Leites has demonstrated that Puritanism explicitly advocated a “world affirming” ethic,²³⁹ and one area where this ethical impulse was glimpsed occurred in their philosophy of marriage as a friendship.²⁴⁰ Like other Puritans, Baxter rooted the soul care and comfort spouses

²³³Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 45 §18. See also *Ibid.*, pt. 2, 45-46 §23.

²³⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 45-46 §23.

²³⁵Baxter repeatedly reminded spouses that the ultimate goal of their union lay in serving as helpers to each other’s souls (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §32, 11 §46, 12 §55, 42 §8, 43 §10, 43-44 §11-14, 44-46 §15-29, 47 §37). Also, he and he even added fifteen sub-directions to guide couples in exercising soul care over one another (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 44-46 §15-29). For Baxter’s directions on the duties for each set of familial relationships (husbands and wives, children and parents, masters and servants), see *ibid.*, pt. 2, 18-77.

²³⁶Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, 7-8.

²³⁷Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 154, 166.

²³⁸For Baxter’s discussion of bosom friends in his “cases and directions for intimate special friendship,” see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 251-58.

²³⁹Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*, 76.

²⁴⁰Leites, “The Duty to Desire,” 390-93.

offered each other in the friendship-based nature of their bond.²⁴¹ Furthermore, he was careful to highlight how the benefits of matrimony contributed joy to the married life of spouses: “*take notice of the Helps and Comforts*” of wedlock, he counseled, “*that you may cheerfully serve God in it, in the expectation of his blessing.*”²⁴² Indeed, both the friendship and pleasure characterizing his perspective on wedlock can be seen in his exhortation for spouses to “*take delight in the Love, and company, and converse of each other.*”²⁴³ In fact, Benson has theorized that Baxter’s continual stress on love between family members contributed “to the rise of emotional expectations in spouses.”²⁴⁴

Even when Baxter appeared to curtail sexual enjoyment, he was actually endeavoring to promote healthy affections between spouses rather than selfish love. Weber and Schucking concluded that Baxter must have been ascetic, since he instructed moderation of sexual intercourse within marriage.²⁴⁵ “The Remedy [marriage] must not be turned into an increase of the disease,” Baxter cautioned, “but used to extinguish it.”²⁴⁶ However, his counsel for moderate enjoyment of the marital bed found widespread

²⁴¹Baxter wrote, “It is a mercy to have a faithful friend, that loveth you entirely, and is as true to you as your self, to whom you may open you mind and communicate your Affairs, and who would be ready to strengthen you, and divide the cares of your affairs and family with you, and help you to bear your Burdens, and comfort you in your Sorrows, and be the daily companion of your lives, and partaker of your Joys and Sorrows. . . . And it is a mercy to have so near a friend to be a helper to your Soul” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 12 §55). I am indebted to Benson’s insight on the importance of friendship to Baxter’s marriage doctrine (Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 63). According to N. H. Keeble, Baxter possessed “a genius for friendship” throughout his life (N. H. Keeble, *Loving and Free Converse: Richard Baxter in his Letters* [London: Dr. William’s Trust, 1991], 6). However, Keeble’s observations regarding Baxter and friendship will be significantly qualified in the next chap. of this study.

²⁴²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 12. Baxter wrote, “Though man’s corruptions have filled that and every state of life with snares and troubles, yet from the beginning it was not so; God appointed it for mutual help, and as such it may be used. As a married life hath its temptations and affections, so it hath its peculiar benefits” (ibid.).

²⁴³Ibid., pt. 2, 42, §6. See also Ibid., pt. 2, 40 §2, 41 §3, 48 §3, 49 §1. Baxter labored to help couples to live in “quietness and peace” rather than “wrath and discord,” since this would prove to be the greatest threat to their love for each other (ibid., pt. 2, 42-43 §7-9).

²⁴⁴Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 114. For a more detailed discussion of the husband and wife relationship, see ibid., 59-75; Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage,” 134-45

²⁴⁵Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, 24; Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 158, 263.

²⁴⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 41, §4.

sympathy among English Protestants and especially many Puritans.²⁴⁷ Many of them cautioned that the lawful pleasures of the marriage bed should be used temperately in order to quench lust rather than fan it into a flame.²⁴⁸ Baxter was not seeking to prudishly curtail sexual enjoyment but drew a distinction between the normal, God given sex drive and its inordinate, sinful manifestation through lust. The sexual impulse was not a disease to be eliminated, but lust or lustful love was the great danger. “*Lust* must not be cherished in the married,” he warned, but rather “the *mind*” should “be brought to a moderate chaste and sober frame.” If spouses did not exercise restraint, then wedlock, on its own,

²⁴⁷Leites missed Baxter’s strong continuity with Puritan thinking when he characterized Baxter’s plea for sexual moderation as a deviation (Leites, “The Duty to Desire,” 404n50; Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*, 173-74n42).

²⁴⁸For Puritans, see Thomas Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation, glosses and annotations on the Nevv Testament so farre as they containe manifest impieties, heresies, idolatries, superstitions, prophanesse, treasons, slanders, absurdities, falsehoods and other evils. By occasion whereof the true sence, scope, and doctrine of the Scriptures, and humane authors, by them abused, is now given* (Leiden: Printed by W. Brewster, 1618), 557; Robert Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouvernement for the ordering of priuate families, according to the direction of Gods Word . . .* (London: Printed by Felix Kingston for Thomas Man, 1598), 157-58, 183-84; John Corbet, *Matrimonial purity*, in *The remains of the reverend and learned Mr. John Corbet, late of Chichester printed from his own manuscripts*, 225-48. (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, 1684), 230; Richard Greenham, *A Treatise of Contract before marriage*, in *The workes of the reuerend and faithfull seruant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham*, 122-27, 5th ed. (London: Printed by Thomas Snodham and Thomas Creede for VVilliam VVelby, 1612), 126; Samuel Hieron, *The spirituall sonne-ship as jt hath beene collected out of 1. Iohn 3.1. and deliuered in two sermons. Hereunto is annexed, The mariage-blessing, preached at a wedding* (London: Printed by VVilliam Hall for Samuel Macham, 1611), 72; John Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, in *The works of John Robinson, pastor of the pilgrim fathers*, ed. Robert Ashton, vol. 1 (London: J. Snow 1851), 237, 242; William Whately, *A bride-bush. Or, A direction for married persons Plainely describing the duties common to both, and peculiar to each of them. By performing of which, marriage shall prooue a great helpe to such, as now for want of performing them, doe finde it a little hell* (London: Printed by Bernard Alsop for Benjamin Fisher, 1623), 18-20.

For other English authors generally cited as Protestant but not always considered to be “Puritan,” see Richard Allestree, *The whole duty of man laid down in a plaine and familiar way for the use of all, but especially the meanest reader* (London: Printed for Timothy Garthwait, 1661), 168-69; Gabriel Towerson, *An explication of the catechism of the Church of England, containing an explication of the Decalogue or ten commandments* (London: Printed by J. Maddock for Richard Chiswell, Thomas Sawbridge, George Wells and Richard Bently, 1685), 398; James Ussher, *A body of divinitie, or The summe and substance of Christian religion catechistically propounded, and explained, by way of question and answer: methodically and familiarly handled*, 4 ed. (London: Printed for Tho. Downes and Geo. Badger, 1653), 283.

For secondary studies noting this trend of sexual moderation in Puritanism as well as attempts to explain it in light of Early Modern European thinking, see Doriani, “The Godly Household in Puritan Theology, 1560-1640,” 335-41 and 344-54; Daniel Doriani, “The Puritans, Sex, and Pleasure,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 53, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 125-43; Theodore de Welles, “Sex and Sexual Attitudes in Seventeenth Century England: The Evidence from Puritan Diaries,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 12 (1988): 46. Leites also spoke of how the Puritans placed “constancy very much at the center of their moral vision. They saw self-control, sobriety, and the unremitting pursuit of one’s spiritual and moral goals as major and necessary expression of religious seriousness and consciousness of God” (Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*, 1-2); in marriage, the Puritans sought to integrate “moral constancy” with “emotional spontaneity” (ibid., 2-3).

would undoubtedly prove an insufficient outlet for their valid sexual desires.²⁴⁹ Indeed, Baxter suspected that adultery would befall spouses for whom lustful love served as the primary impetus for marrying.²⁵⁰

Soul Care in the Practice of Courtship

Since soul care lay at the heart of the marriage relationship, Baxter stressed internal piety, over outward beauty and amorous passion, as the guiding criterion for seeking a suitable spouse. Lustful love, he declared, constituted one of the chief dangers to avoid in seeking a spouse, since that inordinate craving undermined all human relationships, but especially marriage.²⁵¹ The way to avoid such a pitfall was to remember that soul care was the goal of wedlock. Consequently, he stressed that one's reason should be decisively in control during the process of match making: "I know you must have Love to those that you match with: But that *Love* must be *Rational*, and such as you can justifie in the severest trial, by the evidence of *worth* and *fitness* in the person whom

²⁴⁹According to Baxter's reasoning, "If the mind be left to the power of lust, and *only marriage* trusted to for the cure, with many it will be found an insufficient cure; and *Lust* will rage still as it did before, and will be so much the more desperate and your case the more miserable, as your sin prevaieth against the remedy" (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 41 §4, and see also *ibid.*, pt. 2, 10 §43). Benson observed this same distinction between lust and love in Baxter's thought (Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 61-62).

²⁵⁰Baxter wrote, "When lust is the chieftest cause of marriage, and when married persons live not in the fear of God, but pamper the flesh and live licentiously, no wonder if marriage prove an insufficient remedy to such cherished lust. Such carnal beastly persons are still casting fuel on the fir; by wanton, unbridled *thoughts* and *speeches*, by gluttony, drinking, sports, and idleness, by vain inticing company, and not avoiding occasions, opportunities, and temptations, they burn as much when they are married as they did before. And the Devil that bloweth up this fire in their flesh, doth conduct and accommodate them in the satisfying of their lusts, so that their brutish concupiscence is like a fire burning in the Sea; Water it self will not quench it. One Women will not satisfie their beastiality" (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 41 §5). See also Baxter's comments on being motivated by good sense and wisdom rather than lustful love in the choice of a spouse (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 10 §43).

²⁵¹Baxter declared, "It is the pernicious subversion of all Societies, and so of the World, that selfish ungodly persons enter into all Relations, with a desire to serve themselves there, and fish out all that gratifieth their flesh, but without any sense of the Duty of their Relation" (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 40 §1). Baxter's concern that people only entered marriage to gratify their selfish desires might also explain why, compared to some other Puritans, he did not stress the physical or sexual comforts of marriage. Baxter did not deny these comforts, but he also did not want to encourage people toward lustful gratification which they already tended to be bent towards.

you love.”²⁵² His insistence on reason, however, did not denote an ascetic attitude that undervalued love or sexual desires, as Schlatter and Leites have concluded.²⁵³ Following the pattern of English Protestant marriage manuals and sermons,²⁵⁴ Baxter was advocating the use of wisdom, patience, and prudence in choosing a spouse by prioritizing “Godliness” over “Beauty or Riches.”²⁵⁵ Whereas the ungodly preferred “carnal motives,” he counseled the godly to select a companion who would be “a helper to your Soul and further you in the way to heaven.”²⁵⁶ Furthermore, he believed young

²⁵²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 10 §43.

²⁵³See Leites, “The Duty to Desire,” 403-4n50; Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality*, 88. See also Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688*, 15-16.

²⁵⁴Clever, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*, 144-54; Dod, *A plain and familiar exposition of the Ten commandments*, 183-84; Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed by R. D. for John Williams, 1652), 208-9; Thomas Gataker, “A Wife in Deed,” in *Certaine Sermon, first preached, and after published at severall times, by M. Thomas Gataker B. of D. and pastor at Rotherhith. And now gathered together into one volumes*, 147-80 (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for Fulke Clifton, 1637), 174-76; Thomas Gouge, *Christian directions shewing how to walk with God all the day long* (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, Benjamin Tooke, Samuel Lee, Samuel Crouch, and Thomas Cockeril, 1680), 173; Matthew Griffith, *Bethel, or, A forme for families in which all sorts of both sexes, are soe squarde and framde [sic] by the word, as they may best serue in their seuerall places, for usefull peices in Gods building* (London: Printed for Ro. Allott and Hen. Taunton, 1634), 245; William Perkins, *Christian oeconomie, or, A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a familie according to the Scriptures*, trans. Thomas Pickering (London: Felix Kyngston, 1609), 143; Daniel Rogers, *Matrimoniall honour, or, The mutuall crowne and comfort of godly, loyall, and chaste marriage wherein the right way to preserve the honour of marriage unstained, is at large described, urged, and applied : with resolution of sundry materiall questions concerning this argument* (London: Printed by Th. Harper for Philip Nevel, 1642), 31-45, 60-67; Robinson, *Essays, or Observations*, 1:237-41; William Secker, *A wedding ring fit for the finger. Or, The salve of divinity, on the sore of humanity Laid open in a sermon at a wedding in Edmond* (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, 1658), 49-55; Henry Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage The summe whereof was spoken at a contract, and enlarged after. Whereunto is annexed A Treatise of the Lords supper: and another of vsurie* (London: Printed by R. Field for Thomas Man, 1591), 20-34; William Whately, *A care-cloth: or a treatise of the cumbers and troubles of marriage intended to aduise them that may, to shun them; that may not, well and patiently to beare them* (London: Printed by Felix Kyngston for Thomas Man, 1624), 72-74; John Wing, *The Crowne Coniugall or The Spouse Royall. A Discovery of the true honour and happinesse of Christian matrimony. Published for their consolation who are married, and their encouragement who are not, intending the benefit of both* (Middelburgh: Printed by Iohn Hellenius, 1620), 69-108; Lancelot Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large, or, A learned and pious exposition of the Ten Commandments with an introduction, containing the use and benefit of catechizing, the generall grounds of religion, and the truth of Christian religion in particular, proved against atheists, pagans, Jews, and Turks* (London: Printed by Roger Norton, 1650), 431-2; Edwin Sandys, “Marriage is honourable in all,” in *Sermons made by the most reuerende Father in God, Edwin, Archbishop of Yorke, primate of England and metropolitan*, 277-93 (London: Henrie Middleton for Thomas Charde, 1585), 287-88; Jeremy Taylor, “Sermon XVII: The Marriage Ring or the Mysteriousness and Duties of Marriage,” in *XXV sermons preached at Golden-Grove*, 219-231 (London: Printed by R. Norton for Richard Royston, 1655), 224-26, 227-28.

²⁵⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 10-11 §46.

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 11 §46.

people frequently mistook “*blind love*” as grounds for marrying. Passion caused individuals to see a potential spouse as “excellent and amiable,” even though the “wisest” and “impartial” knew that individual was nothing of the sort. Such affections deserved no better name than “LUST or Fancy.”²⁵⁷ Christians must quench lustful love, Baxter exhorted, since it could lead them into a marriage that hindered their soul far more than benefiting it.²⁵⁸

Soul Care among Children and Servants

The soul care of the spousal relationship served as the foundation and model for the soul care towards children and domestic servants. Baxter reminded parents that their children possessed eternal souls that needed restoration to a right relationship with their creator.²⁵⁹ The blessing and hope of raising godly offspring comprised the third “mercy” he connected with marriage.²⁶⁰ The godly home functioned as a school conducive to cultivating Christian virtue.

In a *Godly family* there are continual provocations to a holy life, to faith, and love, and obedience, and heavenly mindedness; Temptations to sin are fewer there . . . ; The *Authority* of the *Governours*, the *conversation* of the rest, the *examples* of all, are great inducements, to a *holy life*.²⁶¹

Benson and Drew Gentile have pointed out that Baxter believed the spiritual nurturing provided in the home surpassed the education existing in schools and even the church.²⁶²

²⁵⁷Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 10 §43.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 10-11 §44-46.

²⁵⁹Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 78-80.

²⁶⁰Baxter wrote, “It is a *mercy* in order to the propagating of a people of Earth to love and honour their Creator, and to serve God in the world and enjoy him forever. It is no small mercy to be the Parents of a Godly Seed; and this is the end of the institution of Marriage, *Mal. 2.15*. And this Parents may expect, if they be not wanting on their part” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 12, §55). See also *ibid.*, pt. 2, 34-35, §4.

²⁶¹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 34 §2.

²⁶²See Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 76-88; Drew W. Gentile, “Richard Baxter’s Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education” (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), 21-24.

The influence of a bad home upon a child proved more difficult to overcome, because the influence of parents proved far more foundational, formative, and long lasting than the instruction provided by schools or churches.²⁶³ Parents only had a few children to oversee while pastors had many, and since parents lived with their children they were able to instruct and discipline as needs arose while pastors could not. The natural love and care parents had for their offspring should motivate their labors to see them grow in godliness. The reality that parents supplied all the family's basic necessities should make children far more responsive to parental instruction.²⁶⁴ Baxter encouraged parents to make their biblical instruction lively, enjoyable, practically relevant, and rewarding, a fact which contradicts Weber's depiction of the stifling and cheerless environment of the Puritan home.²⁶⁵ The intimacy of domestic relationships provided the perfect environment for a familiar and practical manner of soul care.

Following the pattern of English Protestant domestic manuals, Baxter did not believe familial soul care stopped with parents and children, but included domestic servants and even slaves.²⁶⁶ Rather than using them only as beasts of burden for work, he admonished masters to remember their servants possessed "immortal souls" which they were responsible to watch over.²⁶⁷ Based on the extensive attention Baxter devoted to domestic servants, both Brent Waters and Benson have depicted Baxter's vision of the

²⁶³Gentile, "Richard Baxter's Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education," 21-22. See also Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 78.

²⁶⁴Gentile, "Richard Baxter's Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education," 22-23, 28-30, 34-39. See also Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 84.

²⁶⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 91 §5-7 and 94 §22-24. I am indebted to Gentile for this insight ("Richard Baxter's Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education," 45). Gentile concluded his discussion on Baxter's instructions concerning household education with a positive evaluation: "As one reads these instructions one cannot help but be struck by their balance. There is rigor, yet fun; defined content, yet variety; mental discipline, yet relevancy to life; authoritarian teaching, yet active learning" (*ibid.*, 45). See also Benson who advocated that Baxter always advocated a religion of the heart and affections rather than meaningless ritual, and this was seen not only in his pastoral ministry but also his teaching on the family (Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 96-101, esp. 96-97).

²⁶⁶See Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 15-18, 68-77.

²⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 16 §4. See also, *ibid.*, pt. 2, 70 §12, 70 §2, 71 §5.

family as having a pronounced outward focus on serving strangers rather than turning in upon itself.²⁶⁸ Baxter's inclusion of African slaves under the spiritual responsibility of plantation masters further reinforces Benson and Water's observations.²⁶⁹ Baxter roundly condemned West Indies plantation owners for ruthlessly working their slaves, but, more importantly, for refusing to care for their souls by denying them opportunities to hear the gospel.²⁷⁰ Thus, contrary to the conclusions posited by Stone, Baxter's vision for the family did not promote selfishness, greed, and insularity, but a soul care that extended to all household members, even slaves.²⁷¹

The Family's Place in Society

Baxter did not view family piety as an end in itself, but rather its suitability for soul care and the cultivation of neighborly love served as the first link in a societal chain aiming to serve the public good.²⁷² James McJunkin Phillips has observed this linkage in Baxter's somewhat puzzling inclusion of the poor, the sick, the dying, and spiritual

²⁶⁸Far from serving merely as "auxiliaries" to advance the families economic interests, Waters noted Baxter's belief that family life should be characterized by "fellowship with strangers," since it was not meant to be a "secluded enclave" from the world" (Waters, *The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought*, 36). Similarly, Benson pointed out that the inclusion of servants in the family served as an integral example of Baxter's teaching that the family should resist the temptation to selfishly turn in upon itself (Benson, "Richard Teaching on the Family," 87-88, and see also 113-14).

²⁶⁹For Baxter's extended discussion of slaves and the slave trade as a part of his duties governing the relationship between masters and servants, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 71-74.

²⁷⁰Baxter had little patience for masters who, wrongly assuming the inferiority of their slaves, forgot they were "the Redeemed ones of Christ" and God was "their Reconciled tender Father." Those masters who refused to allow their slaves either to hear God's word or become Christians, for fear of having to set them free, were guilty of open "Rebellion against God and contempt of Christ" (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 71-72). In fact, Baxter was convinced the plagues, fires, shipwrecks, and high death rate among colonists was God's judgment for their cruel treatment of their slaves' "souls and bodies" (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 72).

²⁷¹Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, 7-8.

²⁷²Benson noted that the structure and flow of the *Christian Directory* is foundational to grasping Baxter's understanding of the cure of souls, and how he applied it to the family (Benson, "Richard Teaching on the Family," 38). The *Christian Directory* was laid out so that love for God came in book I, and the remaining portions reflected concentric circles of living where Christians exhibited neighborly love: love for family members (book II), love for fellow Christians in the church (book III), and love for society (book IV) (*ibid.*, 44). James McJunkin Phillips made similar observations (James McJunkin Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law: The Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615-1691)" [PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1959], 197-98).

backsliders in the concluding section of his discussion of the family.²⁷³ Such groups represented the vulnerable members of society, which the strong were obligated to help through families showing compassion to the needy.²⁷⁴ The family functioned as *the* starting point for cultivating neighborly love and soul care that would spread outward to all other relations and spheres in order to achieve the public good of the church, nation, and world.

But as all motion and action is first upon the nearest object, so must ours; and doing good must be in order; First we must begin at home with our own Souls and lives, and then our nearest Relations [family members], and Friends, and acquaintance, and Neighbours, and then to our Societies, Church and Kingdom, and all the world. But mark that the order of execution, and the order of estimation and intention differ. Tho God set up Lights so small as will serve but for one room, and tho we must begin at home, we must far more esteem and desire the good of multitudes, of City and Church and Commonwealth; and must set no bounds to our endeavors, but what God and disability set.²⁷⁵

As Packer noted, Baxter's placement of the family within a larger hierarchy of societal good concurred with the Puritans, Continental Reformers, and Scripture. It also carried an important implication: any Christian who failed to love his neighbor at home was "a hypocrite and a failed disciple, however hard he labors to serve others in church and beyond."²⁷⁶ Therefore, even though other good works, such as pastoral ministry, might have a more widespread influence, Christians should never sacrifice their family responsibilities, no matter how many multitudes they might impact.²⁷⁷ However, there

²⁷³Phillips, "Between Conscience the Law," 248.

²⁷⁴According to Phillips, the analogy that Paul had drawn between members of society and parts of the body was often used in the seventeenth century, with the clear implication that the stronger members of society had obligations to help the weaker members of society. Therefore, no discussion of family duties could exist without discussion of servants, the spiritual backsliders, the poor, the sick, and the dying. All these groups placed special obligations on the Christian conscience which could be dealt with first of all through the family circle (Ibid., 248).

²⁷⁵Baxter, *How to do good to many*, 5.

²⁷⁶Packer, "Introducing *A Christian Directory*," Works, 1:8.

²⁷⁷Baxter warned, "*Be sure to do most, where you have most authority and obligation.* He that will neglect and slight his Family, Relations, Children and Servants, who are under him, and always with him, and yet be zealous for the conversion of strangers, doth discover much Hypocrisie, and sheweth, that it is something else than the love of Souls, or sense of Duty, which carrieth him on" (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 86).

was also a tension in Baxter's insistence that neighborly love must begin at home, for he also placed far greater value on seeking "the good of multitudes, of City and Church and Commonwealth."²⁷⁸ Thus, while doing good to one's family had to come first, otherwise one was a hypocrite, Baxter created a tension by elevating the value of public works above domestic works.

The Family in Baxter's Pastoral Program

Baxter saw the benefits of familial soul care as vitally necessary for the success of his pastoral program to reform England's churches. Like fellow English Protestants, he grasped the link between well-ordered families and the health of the church and society, so that larger social structures rose and fell in relation to the godliness of individual households.²⁷⁹ While Scripture was certainly cited to promote domestic devotion,²⁸⁰ contextual reasons also existed for English Protestants' heightened emphasis on the home. Phillips noted that many of the responsibilities for promotion and supervision of morality were transferred to the family due to the loss of the church confessional and monastic orders.²⁸¹ Also, the decline of ecclesiastical discipline and increasing

²⁷⁸Baxter's treatise *How to do good to many* is a testament to Baxter's desire that Christians order and structure their lives so that they were able to do the greatest good possible to as many as possible. While discussing the rules for judging how to do good, Baxter laid down the principle that "the good of the world, the Church, of Nations, of multitudes is greater than the good of a few" (Baxter, *How to do good to many*, 5). Baxter did not believe that his perspective on the prioritization of public good was unique. In *The Reformed Pastor*, Baxter took it as a given that every Christian and pastor knew they were "bound to prefer publike duties before private." Consequently, he took no time to elaborate on this point but simply said "this is so commonly confessed, that I shall say no more of it" (Baxter, *RP*, 60). In his treatise on the public good, Baxter believed he was promoting a biblical principle that Paul had made clear in Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all Men, especially unto them who are of the household of Faith" (Baxter, *How to do good to many*, 1). His pronounced stress on devotion to the public good was so great that he wished more Protestant ministers imitated celibate Roman Catholic clergymen who could "make their publike cause [the ministry] to be their interest" and "lay out themselves for it while they live" (Baxter, *RP*, 239).

²⁷⁹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 35 §5-6.

²⁸⁰See Baxter's disputation on necessity of family worship: *ibid.*, pt. 2, 18-31.

²⁸¹Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law," 244. See also Walter Edwards Houghton Jr., *The Formation of Thomas Fuller's Holy and Profane States*, Harvard Studies in English 19 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 104-6; Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 446, 453-54, 458, 465-66; William Haller and Malleville Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 5 (1941): 247.

proliferation of religious sects made it vital for heads of households to inculcate true doctrine and discipline in their family members.²⁸² Finally, even if the Christian rulers and clergy of the nation declined or apostatized, families could serve as a bulwark to defend and preserve the faith, as Baxter was confident they would under such circumstances.²⁸³ After all, the family was a church, since all church practices—worship, prayer, preaching, accountability, and discipline—could be practiced there.²⁸⁴ Since Baxter believed the essential doctrines of the Christian faith to be very few, they could easily be taught in the homes of laypeople with the heads of households taking the lead.²⁸⁵ Therefore, he asserted that “*Family-reformation . . . is the easiest and the most likely way to a common Reformation.*” Even if hopes of a “*National-reformation*” failed, the family still exerted significant influence by sending “many souls to Heaven” and training “up multitudes for God.”²⁸⁶

Without masters exercising soul care over their family, Baxter believed his pastoral initiatives of systematic catechizing and disciple were doomed to failure: “If we

²⁸²Houghton, *The Formation of Thomas Fuller’s Holy and Profane States*, 106.

²⁸³Baxter’s own childhood experience of living in a county where the godly were a small persecuted segment likely did much to convince him in this regard. After all, his father, though a layman living in a county with ignorant and immoral pastors, had been able to cultivate his own faith and Baxter’s through the “bare reading of the Scriptures in private” (Baxter, *RB*, pt. 1, pt. 1, 2 §1).

²⁸⁴Baxter insisted that the family could continue to pass on the Christian faith, even if all other societal and ecclesiastical structures failed to do so: “Therefore Christian Families are called *Churches*, because they consist of holy persons, that worship God, and learn, and love, and obey his word. If you live among the *Enemies* of Religion, that forbid Christs Ministers to preach his Gospel, and forbid God’s servants to meet in Church-assemblies for his Worship; the support of Religion and the comfort and education of believers, would then lie almost all upon the right performance of *family-duties*. These Masters might teach the same truth to their households, which Ministers are forbid to preach in the Assemblies; There you might pray together as fervently and spiritually as you can . . . keep up as holy converse and communion, and as strict discipline as you please . . . celebrate the praises of your blessed Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier . . . observe the Lords Day . . . provoke one another to Love and to good works and rebuke every sin, and mind each other to prepare for death, and to live together as passengers to eternal life” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 35 §7).

Scholars have often observed that the Puritans viewed each family as a church. For a study of this theme, see Jody Kent Anderson, “The Church within the Church: An Examination of Family Worship in Puritan Thought” (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009).

²⁸⁵Phillips, “Between Conscience and the Law,” 245.

²⁸⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 36 §10. For similar comments, see also *ibid.*, pt. 2, 35 §5; Baxter, *RP*, 86.

suffer the neglect of this, we undo all. What are we like to do to the Reforming of our Congregation, if all the work be cast on us alone, and Masters of families will let fall that necessary duty of their own, by which they are bound to help us!”²⁸⁷ Consequently, he urged fellow ministers to “get the Rulers of families to do their part where you left it [catechizing, disciplining], and help it on.”²⁸⁸ As Gentile concluded, the home was not uniquely responsible for the success of Baxter’s Kidderminster ministry, yet it proved essential to the functioning of his pastoral method.²⁸⁹ In this way, Baxter took Protestantism’s widely held emphasis on domestic spirituality and wedded it to his pastoral model, so that family heads partnered with the pastor in bringing about reformation in the church.

Tensions in Baxter’s Familial Soul Care

Baxter’s high praise for the family leaves two lingering tensions with his appeal for clerical celibacy. First, if he saw the family as fertile ground for soul care, accountability, and the cultivation of neighborly love, what persuaded him that such a state would be so deleterious to pastors? Second, if pastors should ideally remain

²⁸⁷According to Baxter, “The life of Religion, and the welfare and glory of Church and State, dependeth much on family Government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we undo all. What are we like to do our selves to the Reforming of a Congregation, if all the work be cast on us alone, and Masters of families will let fall that necessary duty of their own, by which they are bound to help us! If any good be begun by the Ministry in any soul in a family a careless, prayerless, worldly family is like to stifle it, or very much hinder it. . . . I beseech you therefore do all that you can to promote this business, as ever you desire the true Reformation and welfare of your Parishes” (Baxter, *RP*, 83-84). For similar comments, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 35 §5.

²⁸⁸Baxter, *RP*, 84. See also *ibid.*, 86.

²⁸⁹Gentile, “Richard Baxter’s Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education,” 6-7. According to Gentile, Baxter’s view of religious education clarifies why the family went hand in hand with parish reform. According to Baxter, education functioned as the means by which God normally conveyed his saving and sanctifying grace to sinners; this process comprised not simply the impartation of biblical knowledge, but rather the conversion of the sinner which produced holy affections and behavior (*ibid.*, 20-21). In Baxter’s pastoral model, therefore, the rulers of families functioned as the immediate subordinates of the pastor, and in this way the pastor bore responsibility for the families from the organizational standpoint. Thus, the principal method of spiritually shepherding each family occurred through the father providing religious instruction to his household members, with the minister’s exhortation and guidance. In this way, the family partnered with the minister’s efforts by serving as the primary unit to facilitate the individual care of the congregation (*ibid.*, 52-53, and see also 23). Benson made similar observations regarding the crucial role families played in Baxter’s efforts to reform the English Church from the bottom up (Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 96-97, 103-7).

celibate, this begs the question of who, if not a wife, watched over the pastor's soul and helped hold him accountable? Perhaps Baxter envisioned regional ministerial associations acting as a source of encouragement and accountability, but such oversight would have been far more occasional when compared to what one would receive through daily living with a godly wife. In light of the rich spiritual benefits of living in the covenant relationship of the family, it seems single ministers would be missing an invaluable means of grace.

Conclusion

Baxter's theology for soul care in the church and the family are both crucial for discerning the basis of his case for clerical celibacy. He did not maintain a view of human love, sexuality, marriage, and family life that resembled an ascetic or Roman Catholic mindset. On the contrary, he praised the immense benefit afforded by familial relationships for biblical instruction, exhortation, discipline, admonishment, and accountability. The soul care exercised by each family head over his "little church" made godly homes a vital partner in his pastoral program to complete the Reformation of England's churches. Rather, the value of clerical celibacy for the clergy lay in the pragmatic advantages it afforded for implementing Baxter's burdensome model of soul care. As Frederick J. Powicke pointed out, "Baxter's conception of a minister's work, we must bear in mind, involved the 'pastoral care' of every soul in his parish. And as things are this demands all his time."²⁹⁰ Unmarried pastors were freed from the greatest conflict of interest they could ever have, that of a family, so that they could devote all their time, energy, and income to Baxter's ideal of exercising personal soul care over each one of their parishioners. Having more clergymen or catechists in each parish could help lessen the extraordinary demands Baxter was laying upon pastors. Yet until ecclesiastical

²⁹⁰Frederick J. Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 4 (1918): 461-62.

benefices were increased, pastors would simply have sacrifice their own income to pay for assistants. However, in Baxter's experience, even this endeavor was often thwarted, because ministers typically refused to reduce their family to poverty in order to save souls.

Surprisingly, the connection between the ministerial ideal Baxter presented in *The Reformed Pastor* and his argument for clerical celibacy has never been explored. For Baxter, the ideal pastor was defined not only by his tireless, herculean efforts to provide soul care for each parishioner, but also by the fact that he had been strategically freed to do so by foregoing marriage. Scholars have missed the crucial link between the stringent demands of Baxter's pastoral model and the need for clerical celibacy to allow for its maximal implementation.²⁹¹ However, Baxter's dedication to the ministry of saving souls would have resonated with many other godly pastors, and yet they believed that marriage posed no real threat to a pastor achieving a faithful, godly ministry. What unique factors were at work in Baxter's life that lead him to diverge from his fellow ministers? That question will be answered in the next chapter.

²⁹¹Black does not even mention Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy in his comprehensive study of Baxter's pastoral method of soul care (Black, *Reformation Pastors*), nor did Lim in his study of Baxter's ecclesiology (Lim, *In Search of Purity, Unity and Liberty*) or in his essay on the *The Reformed Pastor* (Lim, "The Reformed Pastor by Richard Baxter 1615-1691," nor did Mair in his study of Baxter's pastoral method of pastoral soul care (Mair, "Christian Sanctification and Individual Pastoral Care in Richard Baxter"). J. I. Packer, Frederick J. Powicke, and Beougher were well aware of the usefulness Baxter saw in his celibacy but did not recognize his emphasis on the libertation it granted pastors to pursue his stringent model of soul care (Packer, introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 22, 184; Timothy K. Beougher, "Richard Baxter (1615-1691): A Model of Pastoral Leadership for Evangelism and Church Growth," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 9; Frederick J. Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1924; facsimile repr., LaVergne, TN: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 105. Shealy noted the importance of celibacy in allowing pastors to be "undeterred by conflicts of interest," but he did not connect it with Baxter's burdensome pastoral model (Shealy, "The Power of the Present," 179, 193). For other studies failing to note the connection, see Irvonwy Morgan, *The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter* (London: The Epworth Press, 1946); Duffy, "The Reformed Pastor in English Puritanism."

CHAPTER 4
“PARTICULARITIES” OF RICHARD BAXTER

Introduction

The previous chapter examined how Baxter’s theology of soul care was shaped by the problems he saw hindering further reform of the English Church. He presented a model that would remedy the clerical deficiencies and complete the work of the Reformation in England. However, he made clear that it would require the painstaking labor of ministers absolutely committed to self-denial, mortifying their flesh, and sacrificing all their time, energy, and resources for the sake of the ministry. Remarkably, he even advocated forsaking the lawful pleasures of marriage and family to ensure that ministers could be wholeheartedly devoted to their congregations. The striking austerity of Baxter’s theology of soul care prompts consideration of what personal factors may have contributed to his particular emphases as a pastor and theologian?

This chapter argues that Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy was not simply a product of his pioneering model of pastoral soul care, for a number of internal and external factors shaped the “particularities” that would come to define him as theologian and minister of the gospel. The chapter will explore Baxter’s eagerness for and dogmatic approach to theological debate, his special focus on “redeeming the time,” the role that his chronic illness played in shaping his attitudes, and the importance of certain “external” factors (his upbringing, his self-education, his ministerial success) in shaping how he reasoned in theological matters in general and on the matter of clerical celibacy in particular. Since these things serve in some degree to distinguish Baxter from many of his predecessors and contemporaries, they may be thought of as his particularities.

Baxter and Theological Controversy

Most English Protestants acknowledged the practical benefits of remaining unmarried, especially in times of persecution, yet they maintained the need for individuals to decide for themselves which state of life would be the most advantageous. Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy was unusual not only for his claim that pastors were better off unmarried, but also for the supreme confidence with which he presented his perspective as the truth. However, his confidence appears less surprising in light of his attitude toward theological controversy and his approach to debating disputed doctrinal points.

Baxter's Attraction to Controversy

Baxter's complicated attitude toward controversy helps clarify his contentious advocacy for a controversial position like clerical celibacy. Tim Cooper has argued that Baxter abhorred the divisive theological issues of his day, but he invariably found himself drawn time and again into the thick of these disputes.¹ Baxter himself understood his weakness and susceptibility for being entangled in polemics, eagerly preferring peace and unity among Christians instead, and yet "the inherent nature of controversy resonated with his own nature," especially the "more aggressive tendencies in his personality."² The inconsistency marking his personality partially clarifies why he was drawn like a "magnet" to a myriad of controversial topics throughout his life.³ More importantly, the same inconsistency helps explain his refusal to shy away from urging clergymen to remain single. While he might regret the fallout of such a debate, it was not in his nature to shy away from controversy or controversial positions, especially if he was convinced that his judgment was correct.

¹Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 46-51.

²Ibid., 49-51.

³Ibid., 46.

Baxter's Dogmatic Approach to Debate

Baxter's dogmatic manner of asserting his conviction in doctrinal disputes has long been recognized. N. H. Keeble, William Lamont, J. I. Packer, and Cooper have all noted Baxter's severe, combative, and magisterial nature when refuting perceived errors and asserting his judgments.⁴ According to Keeble, "Baxter's disputatious temper, asperity and argumentative tenacity were remarkable even for an age habituated to combative controversy."⁵ Baxter's contemporaries, both friends and foes, found great fault in his approach to theological debate. His opponents were incensed at his imperious attitude. George Morley, who clashed with Baxter again and again, criticized not only the "matter" but also the "manner" of his writing which was "so *Magisterial*." To Morley, Baxter's pattern of engagement with other churchmen betrayed a "contempt, undervaluing and vilifying of those he writes against or that write against him."⁶ Baxter's friends were equally offended by his dogmatic tendencies and sought to caution him against them. John Humfrey, a life-long admirer of Baxter, warned him of the "grating" effect that his writing had, because he came across as "too dogmaticall and confident" in asserting his convictions.⁷ Archbishop John Tillotson deeply admired Baxter and encouraged Matthew Sylvester to write a biography commending his piety. Nonetheless, Tillotson urged Sylvester to draw attention to Baxter's failings, "the chief of which, was

⁴See Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 46-59; William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution*, Croom Helm Social History Series (London: Crook and Helm, 1979), 19-20; N. H. Keeble, *Loving and Free Converse: Richard Baxter in his Letters* (London: Dr. William's Trust, 1991), 10-12; Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 85-86; J. I. Packer, introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*, by Richard Baxter, ed. William Brown (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2007), 9-10.

⁵Keeble, *Loving and Free Converse*, 10.

⁶George Morley, *The Bishop of Winchester's vindication of himself from divers false, scandalous and injurious reflexions made upon him by Mr. Richard Baxter in several of his writings* (London: Printed by M. Flesher for Joanna Brome, 1683), 48.

⁷John Humfrey to Richard Baxter, May 11, 1654, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 1, fol. 193v, D.W.L., London; Keeble and Nuttall, eds., *CCRB*, 1:179). Cooper cited another friend of Baxter, Simon Ashe, who made the same accusation that Baxter was too dogmatic (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 46).

his high & p[e]r[e]mptory censuring those he dissinted from, the famousest writers, Synods &c. with too much magist[e]rialness.”⁸

In addition to being domineering, Baxter asserted his convictions with an absolute certainty of their truthfulness. Thomas Long, a contemporary, criticized Baxter’s professed desire for love, peace, and concord by pointing out that “he will allow no other way of concord but what he himself fancied.”⁹ A vivid example comes from his lengthy correspondence in the summer of 1673 with Edward Eccleston a younger minister and former acquaintance. Eccleston had decided to conform to the Church of England against Baxter’s advice and without notifying him.¹⁰ In 1673, Baxter wrote to him requesting a justification for his sudden reversal on conformity, which constituted “a very heynous sin.”¹¹ Though he hoped “better” reasons lay behind Eccleston’s decision, he insinuated that “selfishnes and carnal Interest” had precipitated it.¹² Slighted by the accusations, Eccleston pointed out that conformity was “a matter of doubtful disputation,” and Baxter’s confident condemnation of his decision revealed an attitude of “mighty self conceit.” Eccleston marveled that Baxter was “as sure that conformity is a sin” as he was

⁸John Tillotson to Matthew Sylvester, February 3, 1691/2, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 2, fol. 76v, D.W.L., London; N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, eds., *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 2:1260. Another friend of Baxter’s, Giles Firmin, criticized his “magisterial spirit” (Giles Firmin to Richard Baxter, September 9, 1671, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 5, fol. 152r, D.W.L., London; Keeble and Nuttall, eds., *CCRB*, 1:850). Thomas Long, in his review of Baxter’s life and writings, faulted Baxter for “his partiality in censuring the Conformists and Non-conformists of all sorts and degrees;” with conformists in particular, Long claimed Baxter was “as impartial as Death, condemning them all as a prophane and persecuting generation” (Thomas Long, *A review of Mr. Richard Baxter's life wherein many mistakes are rectified, some false relations detected, some omissions supplied out of his other books, with remarks on several material passages* [London: Printed by F. C., 1697], 215, 216).

⁹Long, *A review of Mr. Richard Baxter's life*, 218. Long went on to claim that Baxter’s claims to “Charity” had “an Errour in the Foundation” that ran “through the whole Narrative of his Life, and as a root of bitterness, invenometh all that it brings forth” (ibid.).

¹⁰Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 2:910.

¹¹Richard Baxter to Edward Eccleston, July 9, 1673, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 2, fol. 200r, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 2:910.

¹²Richard Baxter to Edward Eccleston, fol. 201r; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 2:910.

“that Christianity is true.”¹³ Cooper’s comments upon their exchange pointed to the key underlying issue: “Baxter’s apparently infallible understanding could never be questioned.”¹⁴ Baxter confessed that he knew all too well his propensity to overly trust his judgments. In a letter to Peter Ince, he defended himself against the accusation of overvaluing the opinions of other theologians and asserted that his error lay in the opposite extreme.

I must tell you, I am more faulty in being too tenacious of my opinions (I thinke) than in being too mutable I am as unapt to yield up my understanding to any mans & to goe upon trust, as most men that ever yet I was acquainted with; & do suspect rather that my fault lies that way.¹⁵

Baxter’s supreme confidence in his judgments did little to deter him from doggedly defending his assertions against those, like Eccleston, who might disagree with him. He rarely took time to pause and reconsider when his thinking failed to gather support but rather led to growing opposition.¹⁶ On the contrary, he readily confessed that his propensity, when “strongly provoked,” was “to blab out any thinge, that I do confidently thinke to be true & weighty.”¹⁷ At times, he optimistically professed to have mellowed with age, namely in the self-review section of his autobiography.¹⁸ Packer and other scholars have cited Baxter’s maturation as evidence of his irenic character, remarkable

¹³Edward Eccleston to Richard Baxter, August 25, 1673, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 2, fol. 206r, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 2:917.

¹⁴Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 48. See also Cooper’s observation that Baxter preferred blaming others for failing to endure his harsh criticisms, since he was “[u]tterly certain of the truth of his own position” (*ibid.*, 49).

¹⁵Richard Baxter to Peter Ince, November 21, 1653, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 1, fol. 11r, v, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:148.

¹⁶See Cooper who noted Baxter’s tendency to blame the opposing party for disagreeing or finding offense in his writings (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 49).

¹⁷Richard Baxter to Abraham Pinchbecke, 12 October 16[5]8, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 4, fol. 56r, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:508.

¹⁸Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter’s Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Mathew Sylvester (London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, J. Dunton, 1696), bk. 1, pt. 1, 125-26 §213.

insight into himself, and superior piety.¹⁹ However, Cooper has used Baxter's interaction with Edward Eccleston and others to assert that "Baxter's self-portrait . . . was foolishly optimistic at best, and dishonest at worst."²⁰

When Baxter ventured into debate he tended to present his judgments as universally binding upon fellow ministers and Christians. Irvonwy Morgan has argued that Baxter deserved the title "The Bishop of Nonconformity" considering his commendable performance as a teacher not only to his parish, but to other ministers in his diocese, and finally the wider church through his vast corpus of printed works.²¹ However, not all of Baxter's contemporaries appreciated his tendency to foist his convictions on others. He received many objections to *The Reformed Pastor*, because he confidently expounded his pastoral model as a universal obligation for all ministers due to its success at Kidderminster: "*You cut us a shoe too narrow for our foot: You judge all our Congregations by your own.*"²² It is little wonder that John Hinckley commented on

¹⁹According to J. I. Packer, "It is surely apparent that these are the words of a great and holy man, naturally gifted and supernaturally sanctified beyond most, humble, patient, realistic and frank to a very unusual degree. The quiet peace and joy that shine through these almost clinical observations on himself are truly impressive" (J. I. Packer, *Puritan Portraits: J. I. Packer on Selected Classic Pastors and Pastoral Classics* [Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012], 166, and see also the larger scope of his comments from 164-67). Albert Grady Harris argued that Baxter's self-review demonstrated that his "capacity for self-analysis was remarkable" (Albert Grady Harris, "Motives for Christian Living as Understood by Richard Baxter" [ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1959], 183). James McJunkin Phillips praised Baxter's gifts as a keen observer, even when it came to himself (James McJunkin Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law: The Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615-1691)" [PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1959], 87). Cooper listed several authors who saw Baxter's self-review reflecting his capacity for moderation in light of self-analysis (*Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 57n29).

²⁰Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 49. See also Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 126.

²¹Irvonwy Morgan, *The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter* (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), 75. See also Florence M. G. Higham who ascribed this title to Baxter (*Faith of our Fathers: The Men and Movements of the Seventeenth Century* [London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1939], 91).

²²The quote comes from the second edition of *The Reformed Pastor* where Baxter included an appendix giving his responses to the most common complaints he heard from readers (Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor shewing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechizing: with an open confession of our too open sins, prepared for a day of humiliation kept at Worcester, Decemb. 4, 1655 by the ministers of that county, who subscribed the agreement for catechizing and personal instruction, at their entrance upon that work*, 2nd ed. [London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657], appendix fol. Oo5r). See the letter where Baxter mentioned the criticism people had made about *The Reformed Pastor* because of his insistence that others should follow his pastoral strategy: "I have cutt them shooes too narrow for their foot" (Richard Baxter to Thomas Wadsworth, January 17, 1656[7], Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 3, fol. 188r, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds.,

the irony of how Baxter refused to “own the Name of a Diocesan Bishop” and yet “fansi[e]d” himself “sitting in [the bishop’s] Chair,” since he never ceased telling other clergymen what they should do and believe.²³ Thus, while Morgan depicted Baxter’s bishop-like endeavors positively, John Hinckley viewed them as mirroring some of the very qualities Baxter so often decried in Episcopalian church government.

Baxter’s Pastoral Concern

Baxter did not seek out controversy and debate for its own sake, but waded into disputes time and again because of his pastoral concern for practical Christian living. Many English pastors shared his concern for practical Christianity, but what distinguished Baxter was the urgency of his pastoral concern.

The Importance of Practical Christianity

Baxter exhibited a lifelong dedication to explicating and defending practical Christian living.²⁴ “The holy practical Preacher therefore is the best preacher,” he declared, “because the holy practical Christian is the best and only true Christian.”²⁵ His frequent use of the term “practical theology” for his writings reflected a desire to direct his efforts to the everyday theological issues faced by Christians.²⁶ Keeble has argued

CCRB, 1:348).

²³John Hinckley, *Fasciculus literarium, or, Letters on several occasions I. Betwixt Mr. Baxter, and the author of the Perswasive to conformity, wherein many things are discussed, which are repeated in Mr. Baxters late plea for the nonconformists, II. A letter to an Oxford friend, concerning the indulgence Anno 1671/2, III. A letter from a minister in a country to a minister in London, IV. An epistle written in Latin to the Triers before the Kings most happy restauration* (London: Printed for Thomas Basset, 1680), 41. In another section, Hinckley expressed astonishment when Baxter responded with “harsh and Passionate Censures” to the “word or two of advice and seasonable counsel” Hinckley offered him (*ibid.*, 66-67).

²⁴I am indebted to Cooper’s chap. on Baxter’s personality for helping me consider the role of Baxter’s pastoral concern (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 46-49).

²⁵Richard Baxter, *A treatise of knowledge and love compared in two parts: I. of falsely pretended knowledge, II. Of true saving knowledge and love* (London; Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, 1689), 261.

²⁶Phillips, “Between Conscience and the Law,” 11.

that Baxter's immersion in so many books and projects, on such a wide range of topics, can be explained through the pastoral purpose uniting and motivating them all.²⁷ Every doctrinal dispute he undertook had a practical aim, because "practice alone was the Christian's real business."²⁸

Baxter's concern for practical Christianity began in his youth and came to function as a governing principle by which he strictly ordered his life. As he neared completion of his schooling, concern for his own soul prompted him to begin reordering the priorities of his life and studies by placing primacy on doing "the One thing needful" which would agree with the "Ultimate End" of the Christian's life. Consequently, the study of not just "*Divinity*" but "*Practical Divinity*," with the aim of saving and sanctifying souls, came to occupy "the first and chieftest place" in his focus.²⁹ His entrance into the ministry a few years later heightened his zeal for nurturing Christian piety, as he recounted in a letter to his friend Robert Boyle.

When god removed my dwelling into a church yard and sett me to study bones & dust, and by a prospect into another world, awakend my soule from the learning of a child, & shewed mee that my studys must not be *play*, but *afective*, *practicall serious worke*, I then began to be conducted by *Necessity*, & to search after Truth but as a meanes to *goodnes*, & to perceiue the difference betwixt a pleasant easie *dreame*, & a waking working knowledge.³⁰

For Baxter, the key benefit of true knowledge was that it became "*afective*" and "working" in the sense that it promoted practical piety or "*goodnes*."³¹ If one halted short

²⁷N. H. Keeble concluded, "Baxter's multifarious activities, the involvement in so many schemes, projects and negotiations and the composition of so many books, were but a means to a pastoral end. His engagement with any issue or cause was never that merely of the writer, scholar or politician. He took up nothing save in terms of its bearing on Christian practice and devotion, and it was with practical consequences that he was always, finally, concerned" (N. H. Keeble, "Richard Baxter's Preaching Ministry: Its History and Texts," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35, no. 4 [October 1984], 540).

²⁸N. H. Keeble, "C. S. Lewis, Richard Baxter, and 'Mere Christianity,'" *Christianity and Literature* 30, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 36.

²⁹Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt.1, 5 §5.

³⁰Richard Baxter to Robert Boyle, June 14, 1665, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 1, fol. 269r, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:720. See also where he describes how his ministry was defined by preaching "things necessary" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 21 §32).

³¹Indeed, Morgan has pointed out that Baxter's standard "criterion" for "every doctrine and

of that goal in learning, the effort had been wasted: “if you stop in Learning and Speculation, and take it as for itself alone, and not as a means to holiness of Heart and Life, it is nothing.”³² Ever the astute critic, he lamented how frequently other Divines contradicted “one of their first Maxims, that [*Theology is a Practical Science*].”³³

Baxter’s Sense of Urgency

Baxter’s rigorous application of the biblical mandate to “redeem the time” was expressed in his pastoral work in an unusually intense, single minded focus on doing only what was necessary. He credited William Whately’s treatise *The redemption of time* for instilling this concern in his thinking during his youth.³⁴ From then on, Baxter’s miserly obsession with time exhibited a particular urgency that demanded strict regimentation and prioritization of his activities.³⁵ Writing at the age of sixty-five, he reflected “I have

form of church order” concerned whether it promoted practical holiness (Morgan, *The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter*, 80). Nathaniel Harrington Mair also noted the insuperability of Baxter’s doctrinal positions from his emphasis on practical theology (“Christian Sanctification and Individual Pastoral Care in Richard Baxter: An Analysis of the Relation between Richard Baxter’s Understanding of Christian Sanctification and the Form and Content of His Individual Pastoral Direction” [ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1966], 2, 263).

³²Baxter, *A treatise of knowledge and love compared in two parts*, 260. Even in his more controversial works that seemed to involve theological hairsplitting, Baxter took pains to point out that his zealous concern for right knowledge of biblical doctrine sprang from his conviction that “all right knowledge” tended to “Practice” (Richard Baxter, *An Answer to Dr. Tullies Angry Letter*, in *A treatise of justifying righteousness in two books ... : all published instead of a fuller answer to the assaults in Dr. Tullies Justificatio Paulina* [London: Printed for Nevil Simons and Jonath. Robinson, 1676], 49). See also William Ross Shealy Jr. who argued that Baxter’s focus on salvation and eternity served as the guiding principle of his life and pastoral mentality (*The Power of the Present: The Pastoral Perspective of Richard Baxter, Puritan Divine: 1615-1691* [PhD diss., Drew University, 1966], 30).

³³Richard Baxter, *Rich. Baxters account given to his reverend brother Mr T. Blake of the reasons of his dissent from the doctrine of his exceptions in his late treatise of the covenants* (London: Printed by A. M. for Thomas Underhill and Francis Tyton, 1654), fol. A2v.

³⁴Baxter reflected, “Among the rest [other books], I well remember that even in my youth (and since much more) the writings of Mr. *Whately* were very savoury to me: especially his *New-Birth*, his *Care-cloth*, and his *Sermon of Redeeming Time*” (Richard Baxter, Preface to *The redemption of time, or, A sermon containing very good remedies for them that have mis-spent their time shewing how they should redeem it comfortably / by William Whately; now published for general good by Richard Baxter* [London: Printed for Francis Tyton, 1673], fol. A2v).

³⁵For Baxter’s fullest discussion of redeeming the time, see Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience directing Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1678), pt. 1, 230-47 §1-70.

these Forty years been sensible of the sin of losing time: I could not spare an hour.”³⁶ Moreover, he felt many English clergymen lacked the urgency to redeem every moment, even though they should have been examples to the laity.³⁷ Instead, they devoted themselves to “unnecessary business,” “trifles,” and “vain recreations” that had nothing to do with their chief goal of saving souls and edifying the saints.³⁸ Baxter granted that some pleasurable recreation was lawful and helpful for refreshment.³⁹ Nevertheless, clergymen who engaged in needless recreation and instead wasted time in “pleasing . . . their voluptuous humor,” needed to “study better the nature of Christianity.”⁴⁰ Baxter exhorted fellow clergymen to always seek “the best way to redeem time, and see that we lose not an hour.” By relentlessly redeeming every moment, pastors were being “the most profitable” to their parishioners.⁴¹

Baxter’s desire to redeem the time was driven by the necessity of the moment, which ensured that he redeemed time for doing the greatest and most necessary good.⁴² “I

³⁶Richard Baxter, *A breviat of the life of Margaret, the daughter of Francis Charlton and wife of Richard Baxter: there is also published the character of her mother, truly described in her published funeral sermon, reprinted at her daughters request, called, The last work of a believer, his passing-prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ, to be received by him* (London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681), 78.

³⁷For Baxter’s exhortation for pastors to redeem the time since their ministry was an opportunity to do a “*special or public good*,” see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 246-47 §68. For Baxter’s criticism of pastors for poorly spending their time in vain recreations, see Baxter, *RP*, 12-13, 281, 334, 390, 391-97.

³⁸Baxter, *RP*, 334, 390, 396-97. Baxter listed wasteful uses of time such as “visits to ale houses, vain discourses, journeys, or recreations” (*ibid.*, 334). But he also condemned time spent resting at home with friends and family when there was so much ministerial work to be done (*ibid.*, 391).

³⁹*Ibid.*, 392-94. Baxter insisted that recreation could only be justified when it functioned “as whetting is with the Mower,” that is to sharpen and prepare a pastor for returning to his labors again (*ibid.*, 393-94)

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 392-93.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 121. For further discussion by Baxter on redeeming the time, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 230-47 §1-70.

⁴²I am indebted to Cooper for his help in seeing necessity as a law governing Baxter’s actions (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 53-54). Baxter seemed to derive this principle from the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 9:16), for he urged clergymen, “*Let Pauls words ring in your ears continually, Necessity is laid upon me, and wo unto me if I preach not the Gospel* (Baxter, *RP*, 118). Keeble supported this connection as well and discussed at length the influence that the principle of necessity exerted on Baxter’s life and thinking (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 3-5).

confess Necessity hath been the Conductor of my studies and life,” he reflected; “It chooseth what book I shall read, and tells me when and how long? It chooseth my Text, and makes my Sermon for matter and manner.”⁴³ He reasoned that thinking in terms of “necessity” would help ministers wisely order their “course of study and labors.” The need for pastors to strictly prioritize their time came from the simple fact that “life is short,” “eternal things are necessary,” and “the souls that depend on our teaching are precious.”⁴⁴ Necessity obligated pastors to give first regard to “public duties” that benefited “the whole” over private goods: “As our people are bound to prefer public duties before private, so are we much more.”⁴⁵ The reason lay in the fact that public duties had the potential to benefit far more people than private deeds. Necessity also helped pastors sift the essential needs of laity from the less needful or superfluous by concentrating clergymen upon teaching the saving doctrines of Christianity. The “peoples necessities” were the “the great and commonly acknowledged Truths” which the people “must live upon,” since they were “the great instruments of raising the heart to God, and destroying mens sins.”⁴⁶ He granted that additional theological knowledge was desirable and helpful, yet in comparison to the essential, faith sustaining needs of the people, they amounted to “gawds, and needless ornaments.” By discerning and prioritizing the “Greatest, most Certain and Necessary things,” ministers could effectively direct their labors toward performing the greatest pastoral good.⁴⁷ Doubtless,” Baxter asserted, “this is the best way to redeem time, and see that we lose not an hour, when we spend it only

⁴³Baxter, *RP*, 120-21.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 49-50, 60. Though Baxter does not mention “necessity” in these passages, the necessity of the moment is certainly in the back of his mind when he spoke of the public good creating exceptions which might cause pastors to forego other commitments (*ibid.*, 49-50).

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 120

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

on Necessary things. And I think it is the way to be most profitable to others.”⁴⁸

Keeble and Cooper have also identified “necessity” as a key motivating factor in Baxter’s burgeoning literary output.⁴⁹ Time and again he felt constrained to respond in writing to numerous theological perils he saw in the wider world. Keeble has noted how “the exigencies of the moment” and Baxter’s pastoral apprehensions provoked him to compose so many books on a wide spectrum of seemingly unrelated topics; each work constituted an “unpremeditated reaction to an immediate situation.”⁵⁰ Consequently, his works were often hastily composed when his conscience was provoked to respond to a grave threat to Christianity.⁵¹ His urgent pleading, “exhorting and persuading” in “the heat of the moment” was “the main source of [his books’] strength.”⁵² “Necessity” then not only ordered and ruled Baxter’s pastoral labors but also drove his career as a theological writer.

Baxter’s dedication to redeeming time according to “necessity” stamped a particular character on his life as well as the Christian lifestyle he promoted in his writings. As Cooper concluded, Baxter “had no time for superfluous endeavors . . . His mind rarely strayed from the task at hand, and his attention was fixed on what was

⁴⁸Baxter, *RP*, 121. See also where he described how his ministry was defined by preaching “things necessary” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 21 §32).

⁴⁹See Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 3-8; Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 53-54.

⁵⁰Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 3, 10.

⁵¹Keeble enumerated many of the deficiencies in Baxter’s works as a result of their hasty composition (*ibid.*, 8-12). Cooper also pointed out that Baxter’s works “passed in and out of relevance,” since “what was needed one year might not be needed the next” (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 54). Baxter himself admitted later in life that he had forgotten the context and purposes that motivated him to write upon many topics and could only remember they “were Works which *then* seemed necessary; . . . ; but now all those Reasons are past and gone” (Baxter, *RB*, bk.1, pt. 1, 124 §212).

⁵²Keeble wrote, “It is precisely by addressing us in the heat of the moment, exhorting and persuading apparently from immediate concern and without premeditation, refusing to pass over difficulties or to spare the reader, eschewing all over-simple solutions, neglecting nothing, it is by these means that Baxter impress on us both the complexity and immensity of the matter in hand, and the seriousness of the case” (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 67).

present and what was necessary.”⁵³ Simply put, he was a “slave to the moment.”⁵⁴ He also wove the mindset which he had found so foundational to his thinking into his practical divinity. According to John F. Brouwer, one of the primary overarching principles in Baxter’s *Christian Directory* was ordering one’s life to do the greatest good possible. Brouwer concluded that his emphasis on the Christian life as a hierarchy of duties was “uniquely Baxterian” and set his casuistry apart from that of William Perkins, William Ames, Robert Sanderson, David Dickson, and Jeremy Taylor.⁵⁵ It is easy to see how his categorization of all activities into the “necessary” and “superfluous” posed problems for lawful pleasures such as marriage, which arguably was unnecessary for pastoral ministry.

Baxter’s Chronic Illness

Baxter’s lifelong struggle with ill health was also a powerful and pervasive influence on his life and thought.⁵⁶ Towards the end of his life, he recounted that for more than forty years he had suffered from “constant Weaknesses, and almost constant Pains.” Chief among his daily complaints “were incredible inflammations of the Stomach,

⁵³Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 53. For similar comments, see Harris, “Motives for Christian Living as Understood by Richard Baxter,” 6-7; Donald George Miller, “A Critical Reappraisal of Richard Baxter’s Views of the Church and their Applicability to Contemporary Church Problems” [PhD diss., New York University, 1935], 54).

⁵⁴Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 54.

⁵⁵John F. Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory: Context and Content” (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2005), 195. See also two other lengthy treatises where Baxter exhorted Christians to prioritize matters that were necessary: Richard Baxter, *A saint or a brute the certain necessity and excellency of holiness, &c.* (London: Printed by R. W. for Francis Tyton and Nevil Simmons, 1662); Baxter, *The one thing necessary: or, Christ's justification of Mary's choice and of his servants wrongfully accused* (London: Printed for J. Salusbury, 1685).

⁵⁶I am indebted to Cooper’s work for helping me understand the relationship between Baxter’s chronic illness and the other aspects of his personality (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 54). For Baxter’s account of his childhood ailments, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 9-11 §9. For his recounting of the ailments he suffered from throughout his life as well the attempts of himself and his physicians to cure them, see *ibid.*, pt. 3, 173-74 §311-12. For more briefer periods of sickness, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 58 §85, 80-81 §130, 82-83 §133-34; pt. 3, 60-61 §133.

Bowels, Back, Side, Head and Thighs as if I had been daily fill'd with Wind.”⁵⁷ In addition, he periodically suffered from “Rheumatick” headaches, kidney stones, nose bleeds, and consumption.⁵⁸ Such claims of recurrent illness are difficult to accept, especially since Baxter lived as long as he did and wrote far more than seemed possible for someone in good health, yet neither should his complaints be wholly dismissed.⁵⁹ Regardless, he certainly felt the effects acutely and not just in terms of physical pain. In a letter written to John Warren in 1649, Baxter lamented the precious time lost for ministry, study, and writing as well as the difficult time constraints he felt as a result.

If I have any ease one day I am sicke another; nay I scarce remember that 2 houres together for this 2 yeares I have bin free from paine in one part or other, except sleeping: My body is able to study but 2 or 3 houres in a day when I am at best So that I dare safely say, that for every houres time I have to bestow, I have 10 if not 20 houres work to doe.⁶⁰

While several scholars have noted the impact of so many chronic illnesses upon Baxter,⁶¹ Cooper has spoken most forcefully in asserting that chronic illness was “the most profound and consistent influence on his life.”⁶²

⁵⁷Baxter, *RB*, pt. 3, 173 §311.

⁵⁸*Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 10 §9.

⁵⁹See Cooper’s analysis and evaluation of Baxter’s health where he argued that Baxter should not be quickly dismissed as a hypochondriac (Tim Cooper, “Richard Baxter and his Physicians,” *Social History of Medicine* 20, no. 1 [April 2007]: 3-4).

⁶⁰Richard Baxter to John Warren, September 11, 1649, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 6, fol. 96r, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:22. I am indebted to Tim Cooper for pointing me toward this letter (Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 129). This statement however appears to somewhat contradict another statements Baxter made later in life: “my pains, though daily and almost continual, did not very much disable me from my Duty; but I could Study, and Preach, and Walk almost as well if I had been free” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 10 §9).

⁶¹Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 11-12; Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, 33-34; Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan Concept of Becoming a Christian* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 22-33; Kathy Ann Knight, “A Study of Richard Baxter’s Claim for the Indispensability of Heavenly Meditation as Presented in The Saints Everlasting Rest” (MCS thesis, Regent College, 1987), 21; Harris, “Motives for Christian Living as Understood by Richard Baxter,” 6-7; Miller, “A Critical Reappraisal of Richard Baxter’s Views of the Church and their Applicability to Contemporary Church Problems,” 54; John R. Knott, “Richard Baxter and the Saints’ Rest,” in *The Sword of the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible*, 62-84 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 74.

⁶²Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 55. See also Cooper, “Richard Baxter and his Physicians,” 1-19; Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 129-30.

Baxter's chronic illness heavily shaped his most crucial spiritual decisions. Indeed, he justified the lengthy exposition of his health problems early in his autobiography by observing that "the Care of my Body had a great Operation upon my Soul, and the History of it is somewhat necessary to the right understanding of the rest."⁶³ While still a youth, he was afflicted by a "violent Cough . . . [and] Spitting of Blood" for two years. Living with the "Calls of approaching Death at one Ear" and a "doubtful conscience at the other" awakened him "to be serious, and solicitous" about the fate of his soul and to prioritize the reading of practical divinity.⁶⁴ Thus, as Harris observed, the felt reminder of his impending death and the "transience of human life" instigated Baxter's obsession with only what was of "eternal significance."⁶⁵ Living in the shadow of death also encouraged Baxter to enter parochial ministry. From the age of twenty-one to twenty-three, his physical weakness became so great that he did not expect to live another year. The felt nearness of his own death, combined with a deep apprehension for "the Matters of another World," led to his zealous desire to "Communicate those Apprehensions to such ignorant, presumptuous, careless Sinners as the World aboundeth with." Despite feeling insufficient for the task, the expectation that he would be "so quickly in another World" as well as his "thirsty desire of men's conversion and salvation" prevailed against his doubts.⁶⁶

Baxter's continuing sickness also influenced his unique pastoral fervency and single-minded dedication to the ministry. Constant pain served as a divinely ordained

⁶³Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 9 §9.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 5 §5.

⁶⁵Harris, "Motives for Christian Living as Understood by Richard Baxter," 6-7. For similar comments, see also Miller, "A Critical Reappraisal of Richard Baxter's Views of the Church and their Applicability to Contemporary Church Problems," 54.

⁶⁶Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 12 §16. Other examples exist when illness affected key decisions made by Baxter. When he was offered his choice of position in Scotland as either a cleric, bishop, or university professor, he declined on the basis that he "could hardly expect to live so long," and if the move did not kill him, then certainly the harsher Scottish weather would keep him bed ridden and thus of no use (*ibid.*, pt. 3, 75 § 171).

reminder of his mortality and impending death and pricked his conscience to be zealous and sober-minded in all his actions, but especially his ministerial duties.⁶⁷ His preaching carried a heightened passion, driven as it was by the reminder that each sermon could be his last.

Still thinking I had little time to live,
My fervent heart to win mens Souls did strive,
I Preach'd, as never sure to Preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men!⁶⁸

Baxter repeated the phrase “a dying man preaching to dying men” throughout his writings to highlight the sobering effect that his disease-racked body had upon his ministry.⁶⁹ The felt nearness of death also spurred him to highly “esteem” time, so that it became “much more precious than gold” to him. Consequently “if any of it past away in idleness or unprofitableness, it was so long a pain and burden to my mind.”⁷⁰

Baxter realized that his chronic illness sharply distinguished him from other ministers. The imminent sense of death drove him to rigidly order his life to focus on what was necessary with the little time he expected to have: “. . . Necessity hath been the Conductor of my studies and life Though I know the constant expectation of death

⁶⁷Baxter, *RB*, pt. 3, 175 §311. See also where Baxter mentioned how he always lived and worked “in some continual expectation of Death” (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 21 §32).

⁶⁸Richard Baxter, *Poetical fragments heart-employment with God and it self, the concordant discord of a broken-healed heart, sorrow-rejoying, fearing-hoping, dying-living, written partly for himself, and partly for near friends in sickness, and other deep affliction*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Dunton, 1689), 30.

⁶⁹In his autobiography, Baxter made this connection between his illness and fervency while mentioning its usefulness to his success at Kidderminster: “Another Advantage was . . . doing all in bodily Weakness, as a dying Man, my Soul was the more easily brought to Seriousness, and to preach as a dying Man to dying Men” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 86 §137, and see also bk. 1, pt.1, 21 §32). In his *dying thoughts*, Baxter recalled, “Great Mercy hath trained me up all my days, since I was nineteen Years of Age, in the School of Affliction, to keep my sluggish Soul awake in the constant expectations of my Change, . . . , and to lead all my studies to the most necessary things, and as a Spur to excite my Soul to seriousness, and especially to save me from the supine neglect and loss of *time* The Face of Death, and nearness of Eternity did much convince me, what books to read, what studies to prefer and prosecute, what Company and Conversation to choose. It drove me early into the Vineyard of the Lord, and taught me to preach as a dying Man to dying Men” (Richard Baxter, *Richard Baxter's dying thoughts upon Phil. I. xxiii written for his own use in the latter times of his corporal pains and weakness* (London: Printed by H. Clark for Benjamin Cox, 1688), 222-23.

⁷⁰Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 21 §32.

hath been a great cause of this.”⁷¹ He recognized his disease racked body had been the single greatest catalyst for the unique pastoral zeal that distinguished him from other clergymen: “O brethren sure if you had all conversed with neighbour-death as oft as I have done, and as often received the sentence in yourselves, you would have an unquiet Conscience, if not a reformed life in your ministerial diligence and fidelity.”⁷² Indeed, on more than one occasion in *The Reformed Pastor*, he expressed astonishment at other clergymen who seemed so lax in devoting all their time and attention to saving souls.⁷³ Baxter’s remarkable ability to maintain his pastoral dedication may have been due to another mercy he saw in his sickness: “It greatly weakened Temptations.”⁷⁴ The allure of temptation, whether to sin or to enjoy lawful pleasures that might distract him, did not have so strong a hold on him due to the incessant discomfort of illness. Finally, Baxter thanked God for using sickness as a “School” where he learned “the *Cross of Christ*” far more quickly than other Christians. God had wisely purposed to make him a “*Theologus Crucis*” and “a *Cross-bearer*,” like Martin Luther, rather than a “*Theologus Gloriae*.”⁷⁵ Chronic illness impressed deeply upon him the centrality of service, suffering, and self-denial to the Christian life.

Baxter worked and wrote in a hectic manner, feeling he had no time to spare either for niceties, deliberation, or consulting the judgments of others. One episode from his marriage illustrates how he connected his feverish activity with the unremitting

⁷¹Baxter, *RP*, 121. See also Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 21 §32. Cooper has argued that Baxter’s sickly debilitations greatly “intensified” both the “urgency” of his pastoral concern as well as his “compulsion” to redeem the time by focusing on what was necessary (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 55).

⁷²Baxter, *RP*, 371.

⁷³For example, Baxter could not understand ministers who spent any of their time on “trifles” while their people were dying (ibid., 396-97). In another instance, he could not comprehend ministers who were unwilling to take up the additional labors of instructing and catechizing each of their parishioners; he saw such neglect as sending souls to hell without offering the help they needed (ibid., 398-402).

⁷⁴Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 21 §32.

⁷⁵Ibid.

impression that his sickly body could give out at any moment:⁷⁶ “I thought still I had but a little time to live; I thought some considerable work still called for haste; I have these Forty years been sensible of the sin of losing time: I could not spare an hour.”⁷⁷ When his wife Margaret sought to moderate his habit through advising the value of “calmness, deliberation and doing nothing rashly, and in haste,” he recognized her counsel “was good for one that could stay” but “not for one that must ride Post.”⁷⁸ Baxter simply did not have time for leisurely consideration, for he had to accomplish as much work as possible before his imminent death. Moreover, he did not believe this was problematic, since he was confident in his ability “to understand the matters in question as well at a few thoughts as in many days.”⁷⁹ He responded in a similar way to objections that he should “*take more leisure*” and consult with other clergymen about his views before he “*thrust them out so hastily*. “I have but a little while to live,” he replied, “and therefore must work while it is day. Time *will* not stay.”⁸⁰ The influence exerted by Baxter’s transitory outlook reveals two insights into his argument for clerical celibacy. First, his frantic work ethic leaves little wonder as to why he thought pastors had no time to spare for a family. Second, his feeling that he had no time to consult the opinions of others sheds light on why he would argue for clerical celibacy without first listening to and considering contrary viewpoints.

Margaret’s failed attempt to moderate Baxter’s frantic pace of life reveals a downside to his chronic illness, namely his inability to think and plan for a life that could

⁷⁶Keeble discussed at length this literary aspect of Baxter’s writing (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 8-12).

⁷⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 78.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Baxter, *CD*, advertisement to the reader fol. A4r. This was an objection that Baxter expected “to be assaulted with” by critics (*ibid.*).

last many years. This feature of his thinking may very well have developed from the lifetime he had spent living and working with impending death fixed in his mind.⁸¹ While being a slave to the moment proved useful in undergirding his pastoral fervency, it also hindered him from thinking with the future in mind. He may have gradually conditioned himself to a point that it seemed nearly impossible to think of a life that would last several years, perhaps even decades. Consequently, one can see why a lifelong endeavor such as marrying and raising a family could have become increasingly alien to his thinking. Not only was involvement in such a responsibility superfluous considering his primary obligation as a minister, but the thought of living so long would seem outlandish to him. Consequently, clerical celibacy would have seemed a perfectly sensible choice to him, whereas for other ministers it may not have been, since they did not consistently live with the same sense of approaching death.

Baxter's Emphasis on Heavenly Meditation

One especially close brush with death shaped Baxter's heavy emphasis on the contemplative life, which would factor into his argument for clerical celibacy. In 1647, his chaplaincy work in the parliamentary army was suddenly interrupted when his already fragile health rapidly broke down and he nearly died.⁸² He lay "languishing" for five months in "continual expectation of death."⁸³ Nevertheless, having "one foot in the

⁸¹Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 5 §5.

⁸²During the winter, his nose began to bleed so that he lost "a quart or two" of blood. After opening four veins and giving himself a purge, the bleeding finally stopped, yet the episode so weakened Baxter and altered his complexion that friends could scarce recognize him (Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 58 §85). Cooper has noted that Baxter presented two divergent explanations for his chronic health problems. During the interregnum of the 1650s, Baxter would say that his service as a chaplain in the parliamentary army had ruined his health as a means to demonstrate his loyalty to the parliamentary cause. However, after the restoration of the monarchy, when touting his military service against the King would have been extremely unwise, Baxter laid the blame on his childhood habit of eating ripened fruit (Cooper, "Richard Baxter and his Physicians," 5-7).

⁸³Richard Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest, or, A treatise of the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in glory*, 12th ed. (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, Ric. Chiswell, and Dorman Newman, 1688), dedicatory epistle (unnumbered).

grave” prompted him to comfort himself through journaling his meditations upon the hope of heaven awaiting him.⁸⁴ Looking back on the experience, he heartily thanked God for this “sweet” work of providence that forced “my thoughts to feed on this Heavenly Subject, which hath more benefited me than all the studies of my life.”⁸⁵ Baxter gleaned from the experience a newfound conviction of the extraordinary benefits heavenly meditation yielded for cultivating holiness. Therefore, though he originally intended his short meditations solely for private edification, by 1650 he had expanded them into *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, a sprawling work urging the practice of heavenly meditation. The dearth of this spiritual discipline, Baxter felt, derived from Protestants’ effort to distance themselves so much from the Roman Catholic “*solitude of Superstition*” that they had forsaken the “*solitude of Contemplative devotion*.”⁸⁶ According to Packer, while John

⁸⁴Baxter recalled how “having no acquaintance about me, nor any Book but my Bible, and living in continual expectation of death, I bent my thoughts on my Everlasting Rest: And because my memory, through extreme weakness, was imperfect, I took my Pen and began to draw up my own Funeral Sermon, or some helps for my own Meditations of Heaven, to sweeten both the rest of my life, and my death” (Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest*, dedicatory epistle [unnumbered]).

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., 673. There has been some dispute over the nature and sources of influence for Baxter’s emphasis on heavenly meditation. Louis L. Martz asserted that Baxter borrowed his method of meditation from the Jesuits, thus syncretizing Puritanism with the sort of imaginative techniques already in use in Roman Catholic meditation (Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954], 169, 171, 174-75). A. R. Ladell depicted Baxter as mixing Puritanism with mysticism (A. R. Ladell, *Richard Baxter: Puritan and Mystic*, Studies in Church History [London: S.P.C.K., 1925]). More recent studies however have heavily critiqued such evaluations. Logan Craft argued that Baxter’s method of meditation was not mystical in the monastic sense of seeking to achieve union with God, nor was he seeking to inculcate a mentality of withdrawing from the physical world (Logan Craft, “The Place and Power of the Hope of Heaven in the Teaching of Richard Baxter’s *The Saints Everlasting Rest*” [ThM thesis, Regent College, 2001], 20). Craft traced Baxter’s contemplative and meditative spirit back to a religious ideal of otherworldliness, which was reminiscent of early Christianity and medieval monasticism. Thus, Baxter had continuity with these earlier Christians in recognizing and yearning for the superiority of a supernatural realm, even though he sought to purge their ideas of medieval superstition to bring them in line with Protestantism (ibid., 15-18). Similarly, Knight refuted the notion that Baxter attempted to introduce into Puritanism the imaginative techniques of Roman Catholic meditation. Baxter drew upon the churches tradition, beginning with Augustine, that the goal of affective meditation was increasing the believer’s desire for God and a corresponding decrease of fleshly passions (Knight, “A Study of Richard Baxter’s Claim for the Indispensability of Heavenly Meditation as Presented in *The Saints Everlasting Rest*,” 79-86). Keith Graham Condie has written the most comprehensive investigation into Baxter’s practice of mediation (Keith Graham Condie, “The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter” [Ph. D. diss., University of Sydney, 2010], 32-101). He concluded that Baxter’s theory and practice of meditation built upon two theological sources. The first was an indigenous strain of meditation that developed within English Protestant practical divinity in the later sixteenth century. Consequently, Baxter shunned certain topics and practices common to Roman Catholics and advocated only what had scriptural confirmation or could be justified in light of a scripturally grounded theological system (ibid., 382-83). The other stream of influence

Calvin and earlier Puritans had commended heavenly meditation, “the *Saint’s Rest* was the first Puritan attempt to treat the subject on a large scale.”⁸⁷

Baxter felt compelled to expand and publish his method of heavenly meditation by his “apprehensions of the exceeding necessity of it.”⁸⁸ Concern for the spiritual malaise characterizing the Church of England drove him to commend what he had found so beneficial to his own piety through experience.⁸⁹ Gross spiritual hypocrisy

upon Baxter was a devotional tradition within western Christendom, predating the Reformation, which taught that true knowledge of God must change a person’s affections and behavior. Therefore, love for God and dedication to his service were the marks of true Christians as they journeyed to the end point when these realities would dominate all existence (Condie, “The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter,” 383-84). The drawback to Condie’s contribution, however, is that several of his conclusions were already arrived at earlier by Craft and Knight, whose work he never investigated.

For additional works describing Baxter’s emphasis on heavenly meditation, see Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 94-113; Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 375-389; J. I. Packer, “Richard Baxter on Heaven, Hope, and Holiness,” in *Alive to God: Studies in Spirituality Presented to James Houston*, ed. J. I. Packer and Loren Wilkinson, 161-75 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992); Knott, “Richard Baxter and the Saints’ Rest,” 62-84.

⁸⁷Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 387. Packer also noted that Baxter’s work was also the last, since Puritans immediately recognized that his exhaustive treatment of the topic “did not need doing again” (ibid.). Isaac Ambrose was another Puritan who stressed the contemplative life, and for a full-length study of his teaching on meditation, as well as its place in Puritanism, see Tom Schwanda, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012). For John Calvin’s emphasis on heavenly mediation, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.1.3 and 2.10.10.

⁸⁸Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest*, b2r.

⁸⁹The following quote from *The duty of heavenly meditation reviewed* reveals just how essential Baxter had come to see heavenly meditation for his own piety and holiness and therefore believed it was essential for all Christians: “And I find that whatsoever else I think of, of Christ, of Scripture, of Promises, of Threatnings, of Sin, of Grace, &c. if I leave out *Heaven* and make it not the chief part of my Meditation, I leave out the sense and Life of all. Thence must I fetch my Light, or I must be in Darkness; Thence must I fetch my Life, or I must be Dead, and my *Motives* or I must be Dull, or not sincere . . . My Hearing, and Reading, and Studies grow to Common things, if Heaven be not the principal part: My life growth toward a common and carnal life, when I begin to leave out Heaven: Death growth terrible to my thoughts, and Eternity strange and dreadful to me, if I live not in such frequent and serious thoughts of the Heavenly Glory, as may render it familiar and grateful to my soul. . . . And I find myself unfit to Live or to Die, and that my soul is void of the true Consolation, that is needed both in Life and Death, when I grow a stranger to Heavenly Thoughts, and consequently to Heavenly Affections: And that as nothing will serve turn instead of Heaven to be my Happiness; so nothing will serve turn instead of heaven to make up the end of my Religion, and forme my Heart and Life to Holiness. And therefore by experience I counsel all Christians that are able to perform it, especially Ministers, and Learned men, to be much in the serious fore-thoughts of Heaven” (Richard Baxter, *The duty of heavenly meditation reviewed by Richard Baxter at the invitation of Mr. Giles Firmin’s exceptions in his book entituled, The real Christian* [London: Printed for Nevil Simmons, 1671], 31-32). Baxter wrote *The duty of heavenly meditation* in response to Giles Firmin’s criticism’s (Giles Firmin, *The real Christian, or, A treatise of effectual calling wherein the work of God is drawing the soul to Christ: to which is added, in the epistle to the reader, a few words concerning Socinianisme* [London: Printed for Dorman Newman, 1670], 311-26).

was the damning sin of countless church members. They gave God superficial honor through professing their assent to the doctrines of the church, yet inwardly they revealed hearts ruled by desires for worldly things.⁹⁰ Such nominal participants had failed to embrace God himself as their “*end and happiness*” which was “the very first stone in the Foundation of Religion.”⁹¹ This fatal error meant their damnation, unless they rectified their mistake by taking “God in Christ for thy only Rest, and set thy heart upon him above all.”⁹² Daily meditation upon heaven facilitated sanctification—meaning the increase of the soul’s passion and devotion to God increased and the decrease of lesser cravings—by making heaven, that is God himself in heaven, the priority and focus of one’s life.⁹³ In addition, the English Civil War (1642-51) had produced considerable

⁹⁰Baxter reasoned, “Most Souls that perish in the Christian World, do perish for want of being sincere in this point [true inward devotion to God]. Men have learned in Books, that God is the chief good, and only the enjoyment of him in Heaven will make us happy: but their hearts do not unfeignedly take him to be so. Most men take the present contentments of the flesh (consisting in Pleasures, Profits and Honours) to be their Happiness indeed. This hath their very Hearts, while God hath the Tongue and Knee. This is seriously sought after, while God is hypocritically complemented with. Heaven is heartily commended, while the World is eagerly pursued. Christ is called Master, while this Flesh bears all the sway. . . . And they look for heaven as a reserve, when they can keep their worldly happiness no longer. This is the self-deluding Religion of thousands. . . . O how many Professors of zeal in Religion, of much knowledge, and excellent Tongues, and blameless Conversations in other things, do yet so eagerly mind the World and the Flesh! . . . it is most evident they never *Cordially took God for their Portion and Happiness*. When men lay not this Foundation in sincerity, they may build all their lives to little purpose, and the fall will be great when this sand deceives them. When they take this first Principle as but a notion into the brain, and never lay it deep and close to the heart, all their lives are spent in Hypocrisy” (Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest*, b2v).

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., b3v.

⁹³Craft, “The Place and Power of the Hope of Heaven in the Teaching of Richard Baxter’s *The Saints Everlasting Rest*,” 158-59. According to Condie, Baxter did urge believers to meditate, but by this he meant careful reflection upon God’s revealed truth which would spur to sanctification through changing the mind and will (Condie, “The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter,” 382-83). The Roman Catholic Church emphasized meditation as a means of “purgation, illumination and then union with the divine,” but Baxter’s approach displayed consistency with the principle that justification occurred through faith as a gift of grace at the outset of each Christian’s life, rather than a goal one had to work to achieve (ibid., 383). Baxter viewed meditation as a means of sanctification by spurring Christians in their love and service for God; thus even when his method echoed “the sequences or language of some of the Roman Catholic models, it was cast in a different light by the Protestant principles underpinning it” (ibid., 383). Baxter agreed with most English Protestants that sanctification occurred gradually over the course of the Christian life as the soul’s passion and devotion to God increased and lesser cravings decreased (Knight, “A Study of Richard Baxter’s Claim for the Indispensability of Heavenly Meditation as Presented in *The Saints Everlasting Rest*,” 32; Condie, “The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter,” 382-83).

political, social, and ecclesiological turmoil and gave rise to fears of popery, sectarianism, and antinomianism. According to Keith Graham Condie, these post-war concerns heightened Baxter's felt need for further reform to complete the work of the Reformation.⁹⁴ The practice of heavenly meditation could serve as a vital means to remedy theological errors, unite the church, and fulfill the aspiration for transforming England into a godly nation.⁹⁵ Thus, far more was at stake than comfort in contemplating heaven, for the essence of saving faith as well as its perseverance depended on the practice.

Yet the Ends which I intend are of far greater weight. Tho I have heard many pious men say, [*Let us study how to come to heaven, and let other study how great the joys are;*] yet have I found (by Reason and Experience, as well as Scripture) that it is not our comfort only, but our stability, our liveliness in all our Duties, our enduring tribulation, our honouring of God, the vigour of our Love, Thankfulness, and all of our Graces, yea the very being of our Religion and Christianity it self, that dependeth on the *Believing serious thoughts of our Rest*.⁹⁶

Thus, meditation upon heaven was key to the Christian's perseverance, piety, and joy in a world of tempting, distracting pleasures.⁹⁷ Focus on the next life was a chief motivator for Christians' obedience during their earthly life.

The uniqueness, as well as the potential problems, of Baxter's teaching on heavenly mediation derived from his claim that heavenly mediation was "indispensable"

⁹⁴Condie, "The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter," 384. Knight noted that it is important to remember that Baxter wrote *The Saints Rest* during a period of disillusionment over the aftermath of the Civil War (Knight, "A Study of Richard Baxter's Claim for the Indispensability of Heavenly Meditation as Presented in *The Saints Everlasting Rest*," 25-26).

⁹⁵Condie, "The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter," 136-39, 316-21, 387.

⁹⁶Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest*, b2v-b3r. See also similar statements on b3v. Baxter's statement encapsulates what Craft called Baxter's "appropriate and necessary union between eschatology and moral theology." Baxter viewed assiduous contemplation on the hope of heaven – "both as an objective reality and a subjective experience" – as the "locus point" for integrating Christians' eternal destiny with their individual sanctification (Craft, "The Place and Power of the Hope of Heaven in the Teaching of Richard Baxter's *The Saints Everlasting Rest*," xi, and see also 149-50, 156-57). See also Brouwer's comment on the relationship between focus on the next life as a means of Christian obedience in this life (Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's Christian Directory," 166-67).

⁹⁷Knight, "A Study of Richard Baxter's Claim for the Indispensability of Heavenly Meditation as Presented in *The Saints Everlasting Rest*," 130-68. See also Craft, "The Place and Power of the Hope of Heaven in the Teaching of Richard Baxter's *The Saints Everlasting Rest*," 20, 153.

to mature Christian living.⁹⁸ His urging of the practice was not limited to *The Saints Rest* but became a pervasive, distinguishing theme in his other works, especially the *Christian Directory*. According to Brouwer, Baxter's teaching that the Christian life required a constant fixation upon eternity was "uniquely Baxterian" and set the *Christian Directory* apart from other famous works of English casuistry by Ames, Perkins, Dickson, Taylor, and Sanderson.⁹⁹ However, the centrality of this emphasis to Baxter's vision of the Christian life created problems for the married, who were burdened with so many cares that they had far less time to devote to the practice. Giles Firmin (1614-1697), an English minister Baxter respected, claimed that Baxter held everyone to a standard for meditation that was "only fit for ministers, that have nothing else to do but sit in their Studies, mind their Books, and contemplate."¹⁰⁰ Firmin objected that many "sincere hearted Christians" were ordinary and weak, not to mention perplexed by the burdensome cares of their family, debts, and vocation.¹⁰¹ Baxter responded by affirming Firmin's argument and cited the Apostle Paul to argue that it was better to "*be free*" from "*worldly necessities*," so that one had more "*spare time*" to spend contemplating heaven.¹⁰² Thus, he recognized that married Christians had far more worldly cares and far less liberty to give themselves

⁹⁸I am indebted to Knight for this insight (Knight, "A Study of Richard Baxter's Claim for the Indispensability of Heavenly Meditation as Presented in *The Saints Everlasting Rest*," 3-4, 130-68, 169-70). Craft, "The Place and Power of the Hope of Heaven in the Teaching of Richard Baxter's *The Saints Everlasting Rest*," 20, 153-55.

⁹⁹Brouwer referred to this practice as maintaining a "heavenly perspective" (Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory*," 195).

¹⁰⁰Firmin, *The real Christian*, 324. Firmin criticized "all those rules" for meditation which Baxter had "charged upon Christians" (ibid., 325)

¹⁰¹Ibid., 324-25. Condie has also examined how many ordinary Christians encountered vexation with the demands of Baxter's contemplative habit (Condie, "The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter," 324-81). To be fair, Baxter did counsel Christians to avoid meditation if they struggled with "melancholy" or a "weak mind," since it would do more harm than good (Baxter, *The duty of heavenly meditation reviewed*, 5-6). I am indebted to Packer for alerting me to Baxter's qualification (Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 383n39).

¹⁰²Baxter wrote, "Yet I say, as Paul in another case, *If thou canst be free use it rather. Those that have more spare time from worldly necessities, and are Masters to dispose of themselves and their time, &c*" (Baxter, *The duty of heavenly meditation reviewed*, 4-5).

to the essential practice of heavenly meditation. That ministers had a special obligation to regularly contemplate heaven,¹⁰³ added yet another support to his argument for clerical celibacy.

Baxter's Life Experiences

Baxter's thinking on the benefit of an unmarried clergy would have been shaped by certain life experiences. Cooper has rightly argued that Baxter's self-confident, dogmatic, and independent approach to theological controversy arose from key circumstantial factors in his upbringing.¹⁰⁴ This section will review several of Cooper's conclusions, but also expand upon them through examining additional experiences and influences that contributed to shaping Baxter's uniqueness and his argument for clerical celibacy.

Baxter's Solitary Childhood

Cooper highlighted Baxter's upbringing as a significant influence on the manner of his interactions with others as an adult. Since he grew up as an only child, he was relatively free to "have his own way" and never experienced the typical "rough trading" that forced siblings to learn the practical skills of "compromise," "negotiation or empathy."¹⁰⁵ Relational skills could have been learned through interacting with his childhood playmates, but such interactions seemed to have done little to moderate him. Baxter's father reportedly said that when he was "a little Boy in Coats," he was known for rebuking his playmates who spoke "profane words," to "the Wonder of those that

¹⁰³Baxter, *The duty of heavenly meditation reviewed*, 32.

¹⁰⁴Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 126-31. According to Cooper, "Several forces in Baxter's external environment . . . combined to cultivate a certain isolation from others, that did nothing to help his lack of tact, that undermined his capacity for compromise, and that circumvented those means by which he might have been shaped in a more tractable fashion" (ibid., 126).

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 126.

heard him.”¹⁰⁶ That Baxter also remained unmarried until he was forty-six, meant he lost another occasion for domestic life “to rub the rough edges off his character.”¹⁰⁷

The one meaningful relationship Baxter did experience as a youth likely exerted a lasting effect upon his attitude towards friendship. Based upon an examination of Baxter’s correspondence, Keeble argued that Baxter demonstrated “a genius for friendship.”¹⁰⁸ However, Baxter surprisingly provided numerous discouragements against intimate friendships (“bosom friends”) in the *Christian Directory*.¹⁰⁹ One of his justifications was the inevitability of “*disappointments*” and “excess of sorrows” when bosom friends failed to meet the high expectations placed upon each other.¹¹⁰ He appealed to the common experience of “the best of God’s servants” who professed how the excessive love of their friends had caused suffering “ten times greater than from all the enemies that ever they had in the world.”¹¹¹ Based on his own experience, he concluded that it was “more desirable” to have “a common friendship with all men” than

¹⁰⁶William Bates, *A funeral-sermon for the reverend, holy and excellent divine, Mr. Richard Baxter who deceased Decemb. 8, 1691: with an account of his life* (London: Printed for Brab. Aylmer, 1692), 87. For similar comments, see the anonymous work called *The life & death of that pious, reverend, learned, and laborious minister of the Gospel Mr. Richard Baxter Who departed this life Decemb. 8, 1691. and of his age 77* (London: Printed for Randal Taylor, 1692), 5.

¹⁰⁷Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 126-27.

¹⁰⁸N. H. Keeble, *Loving and Free Converse: Richard Baxter in his Letters* (London: Dr. William's Trust, 1991), 6.

¹⁰⁹For Baxter’s discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of intimate friendships, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 242-58. His conflicted attitude toward close friendships will be discussed in greater detail in chap. 5.

¹¹⁰Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 255, directives 1-3.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9.

a “bosom intimacy.”¹¹² Baxter expected his judgment to draw “censures,”¹¹³ yet it may very well have been shaped by the devastating loss of a friend that had been very dear to him. In his late teens, Baxter had “one intimate companion, who was the greatest help to my seriousness in Religion, that ever I had before, and was a daily Watchman over my Soul!”¹¹⁴ Baxter described in considerable detail how God used this friend’s piety and zeal as “a great means of my good.”¹¹⁵ Tragically, this friend fell into habitual drunkenness before Baxter had known him for two years, and eventually came to “speak reproachfully” against “Nonconformists.”¹¹⁶ While Baxter never attributed any long-term impact to this event, the grief and disappointment he no doubt felt likely influenced his dissuasion of intimate friendships. To be sure, Baxter did not become a recluse, yet his cautious attitude toward close friendships likely contributed to “a certain isolation from

¹¹²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 253-54, answer to question 9. See the full quote: “And to those that are wavering about this case, Whether only a common friendship with all men according to their various worth, or a bosom intimacy, with some one man, be more desirable, I shall premise a free confession of my own case, whatever censures for it I incur. When I was first awakened to the regard of things spiritual and eternal, I was exceedingly inclined to a vehement Love to those that I thought the most serious Saints, and especially to that intimacy with some one, which is called *Friendship*. By which I found extraordinary benefit, and it became a special mercy to my soul. But it was by more than one or two of the fore-mentioned wayes, that the strict bond of extraordinary Friendship hath been relaxed, and my own excessive esteem of my most intimate friends confuted. And since then I have learned, to love all men according to their real worth, and to let out my love more extensively and without respect of persons, acknowledging all that is good in all; But with a double love and honour to the excellently wise and good; and to value men more for their public usefulness, than for their private suitableness to me; and yet to value the ordinary converse of one or a few suitable friends, before a more public and tumultuary life, except when God is publicly Worshipped, or when public service inviteth me to deny the quiet of a private life: and though I more difference between man and man than ever, I do it not upon so slight and insufficient grounds as in the time of my unexperienced credulity: nor do I expect to find any without the defects, and blots, and failings of infirm, imperfect, mutable man” (ibid.).

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 4 §4.

¹¹⁵Baxter wrote, “We walk’d together, we read together, we prayed together, and when we could we lay together: . . . and his Affections being fervent, though his Knowledge not great, he would be always stirring me up to Zeal and Diligence, and even in the night would rise up to prayer and Thanksgiving to God, and wonder that I could sleep so, that the thoughts of God’s mercy did not make me also to do as he did! He was unwearied in reading all serious Practical Books of Divinity; . . . And his Charity and Liberality was equal to his Zeal; so that God made him a great means of my good, who had more knowledge than he, but a colder heart” (ibid.).

¹¹⁶Ibid., pt. 1, 4 §4.

others” which Cooper has noticed in Baxter’s life.¹¹⁷

Baxter’s Education in Isolation

Cooper has also argued that the absence of a university education deprived Baxter of a significant communal environment for learning the skills of compromise, negotiation, and flexibility.¹¹⁸ University life, according to Francis Bremer, provided a young man with the opportunity to learn through a collegial experience.¹¹⁹ Classrooms frequently employed the disputation method of learning which required students to defend a given proposition while another student objected to it and the tutor served as the moderator. The topics most often concerned issues of practical divinity common to pastoral ministry, thus “giving aspiring clergymen the opportunity to practice advising each other in cases of conscience.”¹²⁰ As Cooper observed, it was in such a give and take classroom environment that students formulated many of their lifelong convictions through learning to moderate, qualify, or change their views under challenges from tutors or fellow students.¹²¹ Furthermore, university tutors could exert great influence over their students, not only intellectually but also spiritually, which allowed for opportunities to “mould a student within an existing tradition.”¹²² John Morgan noted that tutors

¹¹⁷Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 126.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 127.

¹¹⁹Francis J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610-1692*, New England Studies (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 23-24, 25-27, 29-30, 38, 40. See also John Coffey’s Study of university life for the student (John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Boydell Press, 2006), 15-30. I am indebted to Cooper for pointing me toward these sources (Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 126). Tom Webster also provided an excellent overview of the importance of university education for ministers (Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15-36.

¹²⁰Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 25.

¹²¹Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 127. See also Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 26; Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution*, 19.

¹²²Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 127. See also John Morgan who wrote that “in the age of declining Calvinism and renewed efforts at uniformity (especially under the Laudian regime), and corresponding lessening of Puritan weight in the university

practically functioned “*in loco parentis*” during the student’s several years at the university and became “crucial to the perpetuation of godliness at Oxford and Cambridge.”¹²³ As tutors cultivated similar piety and convictions among their pupils, students also developed close friendships with one another and came to see themselves as belonging to a distinct communion of likeminded saints.¹²⁴ Finally, the collegial atmosphere of university life—whether it be classroom disputations, systems of prophesying, or the simple act of students dining together in hall—instilled an appreciation among students for the “value of a communal search for truth.”¹²⁵ Thus, Baxter’s lack of formal education meant he belonged to no school of thought, had far less experience on how to tactfully debate with equals, and had not experienced learning as a communal journey to be shared with others. Geoffrey F. Nuttall has observed the tendency to view Baxter “as an individual figure . . . who agreed with most men about some things but could never agree with any of them about everything.”¹²⁶ Similarly, Cooper remarked, “While he was alive, Baxter was only ever comfortable when he stood in a party of one.”¹²⁷

In contrast to most clergymen of his day, Cooper noted that Baxter was almost

governing bodies, Puritans found that the office of tutor became crucial to the perpetuation of godliness at Oxford and Cambridge” (John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Living and Education, 1560-1640* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986], 292).

¹²³Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 282, 292. Therefore, a vital concern for devout parents was finding a godly tutor who would “encourage godly knowledge and practice in his charges” (ibid., 286). For more detailed examples of the influence tutors exerted over their students, see Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 25-26, 29-31, 38. Bremer noted that the student’s assigned tutor functioned not only as their teacher but guardian as well, watching over the student’s personal life, holding nightly prayer gatherings, and functioning as a father figure to him (ibid., 25-26).

¹²⁴Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 17, 40.

¹²⁵Ibid., 25-27.

¹²⁶Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in a Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 1-2.

¹²⁷Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 127.

entirely self-taught.¹²⁸ His childhood schoolmaster persuaded him that a private tutor would serve him better than university studies. The schoolmaster's advice, combined with his parent's desire for him to remain close to home, convinced him to study with an allegedly reputable scholar named Mr. Richard Wickstead. However, Baxter soon discovered Wickstead to be not only thirsty for worldly preferment but a "superficial scholar" and incompetent tutor.¹²⁹ Despite being disappointed by his tutor's abilities, Baxter was grateful for the numerous books and considerable time allowed for independent study. After a year and a half, he returned home and briefly taught as a schoolmaster before eventually becoming a minister at Bridgnorth and then at Kidderminster.¹³⁰ As Cooper noted, this was a very uncommon path to the ministry.¹³¹ Baxter made up for his absence of university training by becoming a brilliant autodidact, being able to read and digest the contents of countless books which became his "Teachers and Comforters." Indeed, the spiritual benefits he gleaned from books—which he confessed far exceeded anything he learned from pastors—made him "somewhat excessively in love with good Books."¹³²

Books came to exert a more heightened influence on Baxter's spiritual and theological formation.¹³³ Rather than learning from a few comprehensive tomes of

¹²⁸Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 127.

¹²⁹Baxter lamented, "When I tried him I found myself deceived; his business was to please the Great Ones, and seek Preferment in the World; and to that cruel end found it necessary sometimes to give the Puritans a flirt, and call them unlearned, and speak much for Learning, being but a Superficial Scholar of himself. He never read to me, nor used any savoury Discourse of Godliness; only he loved me, and allowed me *Books and Time* enough; So that as I had no considerable help from him in my Studies, so had I no considerable hindrance" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 4 §4).

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 5 §5. For his invitation to pastor at Bridgnorth, see *ibid.*, bk.1, pt. 1, 14 §21. For the beginning of his period pastoring at Kidderminster, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 20 §29.

¹³¹Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 127.

¹³²Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 5 §5. Consequently, he became a bibliophile who never believed he possessed enough of them (*ibid.*).

¹³³Condie also pointed to the importance of reading in Baxter's intellectual development (Condie, "The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter," 32-36).

theology, he read numerous, smaller works by English authors addressing various topics of practical Christian living. Those treatises, which he devoured in his early years, provided his elementary tutoring in divinity: “. . . I had read a multitude of our English Practical Treatises, before I had ever read any other Bodies of Divinity, than *Ursine* and *Amesius* [William Ames], or two or three more.”¹³⁴ In one of his poems, he underscored how English practical works functioned as “private tutors” in his instruction and spiritual formation.¹³⁵

The many precious Books of holy men,
Thy Spirit used on me as his Pen:
Perkins, Sibbes, Bolton, Whately, holy Dod,
Hildersham, Preston, other men of God.
How pertinately spake they to my case?
They open'd Heav'n and Hell before my face.¹³⁶

According to Packer, English practical divinity exerted “a decisive influence” on Baxter by providing him with his “first lessons in theology” and determining “his approach to theological questions by teaching him to regard theology as a practical science.”¹³⁷ Since books functioned as a substitute for a university education, the works Baxter cited for impacting his life and thought—such as William Whately and William Ames—take on an even greater significance.¹³⁸

There were disadvantages to Baxter’s relatively isolated manner of learning and developing his convictions. As Cooper noted, regardless of the benefits reading

¹³⁴Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 5 §5.

¹³⁵I am indebted to Linda Jo Samuels Banks for this wording (Linda Jo Samuels Banks, “The Poems of Richard Baxter: A Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary” [PhD diss., Emory University, 1967], vii).

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 27-28, lines 401-6.

¹³⁷Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 184. See also Condie’s discussion of the priority of English Practical Divinity to Baxter (Condie, “The Theory, Practice, and Reception of Meditation in the Thought of Richard Baxter,” 36-39).

¹³⁸See the discussion of the influence these two authors had on Baxter and the formulation of his views on marriage and celibacy in chap. 2, 81-106.

might yield, “books do not argue back.”¹³⁹ Baxter was far from an uncritical, naïve reader, yet he lacked the helpful interaction he would have received through shaping his views in a community of fellow students and under the guidance of tutors. Godly pastors could have partially made up for the deficiency, but Baxter readily admitted the benefits he gleaned from them paled in comparison to books.¹⁴⁰ During the years of his theological maturation, he seemed to lack consistent pastoral mentors who might probe and question the convictions he was forming through his books and meditations upon Scripture.¹⁴¹ Some of his most important theological development occurred in isolation. Cooper pointed to the crucial day of Baxter’s “soteriological realignment” in 1647 as an example.¹⁴² In recollecting that moment, Baxter stressed the solitary environment which

¹³⁹Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 127.

¹⁴⁰Baxter recalled, “Many other excellent Books, were made my Teachers and Comforters; and the use that God made of Books, above Ministers, to the benefit of my Soul, made me somewhat excessively in love with good Books” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 5 §5).

¹⁴¹After his private tutoring ended, a godly minister named Mr. Francis Garbett tutored Baxter in logic for a month and provoked him “to a closer Course of Study.” However, this was “greatly interrupted” when Baxter fell gravely ill of consumption for two years and began to worry about the fate of his soul (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 5 §5). At age twenty, Baxter became acquainted with two “very zealous godly Nonconformists”—Mr. Simmons and Mr. Craddock—whose “fervent prayers and savoury Conference and holy Lives” profited Baxter much (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 13 §17). But this period was also interrupted by another intense period of weakness and sickness from age twenty-one to twenty-three (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 12 §16). Baxter’s acquaintance with pastors such as Garbett, George Baxter of Little Wenlock, and Samuel Smith helped comfort and settle his conscience during this period, and Baxter considered Smith “one of my most familiar friends, in whose converse I took much delight” (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 9 §8). However, beyond this there seems to be no evidence of these men providing consistent mentoring of Baxter.

¹⁴²Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 130. For the best modern scholarly overview of Baxter’s highly contentious soteriology, see Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*. See also the studies by Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion*; Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter’s Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1993); Thomas Eugene Hicks, “An Analysis of the Doctrine of Justification in the Theologies of Richard Baxter and Benjamin Keach” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009); Gavin John McGrath, “Puritans and the Human Will: Voluntarism within Mid-Seventeenth Century Puritanism as Seen in the Works of Richard Baxter and John Owen” (PhD diss., University of Durham, 1989); How Chuang Chua, “Christ, Atonement, and Evangelism in the Theology of Richard Baxter: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Puritan Soteriology” (ThM thesis, Regent College, 1997); Jonathan David Lindell, “John Owen and Richard Baxter: A Conflict Concerning the Nature of Divine Satisfaction” (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010); David J. Richards, “Richard Baxter’s Theory of the Atonement” (MA thesis, Wheaton College, 1982); Masaru Nagashima, “Owen and Baxter on Justification: An Exposition and Theological Examination of the Thought of John Owen and Richard Baxter on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith” (MCS thesis, Regent College, 1995).

gave birth to his immensely controversial *Aphorisms of Justification*.¹⁴³ This event, Cooper observed, proved to be “the most significant theological alteration” in Baxter’s life, and yet it occurred when he was “far from home, removed from his books, and entirely alone.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, in recounting his composition of *The Saints Rest*, Baxter also played up his total isolation from books and people.¹⁴⁵ Thus, despite his skill for independent learning, the disadvantage was a tendency to formulate his convictions in relative isolation, through his own meditations upon Scripture and the multitude of English treatises he had read.

Baxter’s Success in Ministry

The many years of pastoral experience Baxter gained through his tenure at Kidderminster contributed to the supreme confidence he placed in his own convictions and the imperious manner in which he presented them.¹⁴⁶ J. William Black, Brouwer, and William Ross Shealy Jr. have pointed out that Baxter had acquired tremendous prestige and authority among English clergymen by the end of the 1650s. His reputation was built not only upon his successful reform of Kidderminster but also the widespread publication and promotion of his pastoral model in *The Reformed Pastor*.¹⁴⁷ The influence that his

¹⁴³Baxter wrote, “I did not to the utmost of my remembrance receive it from any Book or Person in the world; but only upon former study of the Scriptures, some undigested conceptions stuck in my minde, and at the time of my conceiving and entertaining those Notions (about the Nature and Necessity of a twofold Righteousness, and many the like) I was in a strange place, where I had no book but my Bible” (Richard Baxter, *An Unsavoury Volume of Mr. Jo Crandon’s Anatomized: Or a Nosegay of the Choiceest Flowers in that Garden, Presented to Mr. Joseph Caryl by Rich. Baxter* [London: Printed by A. M. for Thomas Underhill, 1654], 5).

¹⁴⁴Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 130. Cooper noted that it is not surprising that “Owen would criticize Baxter’s views, condemning the ‘unscriptural method of these mysteries which he hath framed in his mind.’ Owen would never have offered up anything so idiosyncratic as the *Aphorismes of Justification*” (ibid., 130-31).

¹⁴⁵Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest*, fol. b1v.

¹⁴⁶For the role of Baxter’s pastoral experience, see Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 80-86; Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 52, 59, 67, 69, 71, 80-81, 83-84, 103-6, 194. See also Geoffrey F. Nuttall’s book which demonstrates the influence of Baxter’s pastoral experience throughout his life (Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965]).

¹⁴⁷Shealy attributed Baxter’s esteem to his successful church reform at Kidderminster, which “has remained virtually a monument to the Baxter pastorate” (Shealy, “The Power of the Present,” 2, 3). J.

Kidderminster success exerted upon his thinking was considerable. Writing in the early twentieth century, Bishop Herbert Dunelm depicted Baxter as being “in a sense hypnotized by his great achievement, so that it became in his mind the standard by which religious policies must be judged.”¹⁴⁸ While Dunelm’s evaluation may border on exaggeration, more recent scholars have verified the substance of his argument. Keeble noted the considerable trust Baxter placed in human experience as a teacher and witness to the truth, especially when it came to what he had learned as a pastor.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, both Keeble and Brouwer have drawn attention to how the pastoral wisdom Baxter gleaned from Kidderminster permeated his writings but were particularly evident in his composition of the *Christian Directory*.¹⁵⁰ Since the *Christian Directory* contained the fullest exposition of Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy, it is vital to examine what lessons from Kidderminster may have contributed to his confidence in arguing for clerical celibacy.

In his autobiography, Baxter recounted his successful pastorate at Kidderminster and enumerated the “Advantages” by which the accomplishment “was effected.” At the beginning of the list, he made clear that his goal was to commend to

William Black argued that Baxter’s place as “the most influential pastor in sixteenth and seventeenth century England” sprang through the publication and widespread acceptance of *The Reformed Pastor*, which “became the most influential treatise on pastoral ministry Protestant England had heretofore seen” (J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004], 104, 105). See also Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 69.

¹⁴⁸Herbert Dunelm, “Richard Baxter,” *The Contemporary Review* 127 (1925): 51-53, 56-57. Quoted in Shealy, “The Power of the Present,” 6-7. I have made every endeavor to acquire the original article but have been unable to do so.

¹⁴⁹See Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 56, 70-72, 77-78, 83, 85, 80, 92, 137-39. Baxter, according to Keeble, “would hold no doctrine that was contradicted by experience” (ibid., 70). See also John Brouwer’s comments regarding the influence Baxter’s Kidderminster experience exerted on his thinking (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 52, 53, 67, 69, 84).

¹⁵⁰Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 83, 85, 80. Similarly, in his definitive study of the *Christian Directory*, Brouwer argued that Baxter meant for this work to serve as an exhaustive record and template of his pastoral instruction at Kidderminster (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 194).

other clergymen what he had “by Experience found to be effectual”:¹⁵¹ “I do [this] for their sakes that would have the means of other Men’s Experiments, in managing ignorant and sinful parishes.”¹⁵² He identified two significant lessons he had gleaned from his Kidderminster ministry. First, he stressed that a key help to his successful labors was the “small relief which my low Estate enabled me to afford the Poor.” Even though the ecclesiastical benefice for Kidderminster had been estimated at £200 per year, usually only £90 came in through tithes and sometimes as little as £80. He supplemented his meager income with £60-80 a year from his books, and his ability to liberally disperse his income among the people for charitable purposes “much reconciled them to the doctrine which I taught.” He gave to “every poor Body that askt” him but also singled out the “aptest of their Children from the Schools” and sent them to the university where he funded their education with the help of several others.¹⁵³ While Baxter did not explicitly credit his single state as a root cause of his extreme generosity, the lack of financial burdens required by a family nevertheless goes a long way toward explaining why he could live in a “low Estate” with few expenses to compete with charitable giving. He certainly knew the root cause of why he could be so radically generous with his income, for he made the connection between celibacy and the ability of clergy to be financially generous in the *Christian Directory*.¹⁵⁴

The second lesson Baxter gleaned from his pastorate at Kidderminster explicitly referenced the freedom celibate pastors had to be utterly devoted to soul care.

¹⁵¹Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 96 §137.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 86 §137.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 89 §137. Baxter noted that some of these students became “honest able Ministers” who were cast out of their churches later through the 1662 *Act of Uniformity*, while two or three having no other way to live, became “great Conformists, and are Preachers now” (*ibid.*).

¹⁵⁴See where Baxter noted how he has seen this proven by the “abundance of success” he had witnessed in “the labours of those Ministers who give all they have in works of Charity” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41). However, the striking similarities between this passage from the *Christian Directory* and the one just cited from Baxter’s autobiography indicate that Baxter was likely referring to his own pastoral ministry experience.

He believed that the minister's "first responsibility" was serving as a "Spiritual Father" in order to "beget children unto God" from the unbelieving world and then nurture them to maturity as a father.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, he recognized how his unmarried state while at Kidderminster freed him to give undivided devotion to his ministerial duties, since he could far more easily take his parishioners as his family members.

And I found that my *single life* afforded me much advantage: For I could the easilier take my People for my Children, and think all that I had too little for them, in that I had no Children of my own to tempt me to another way of using it. And being discharged from the most of Family Cares (keeping but one Servant) I had the greater vacancy and liberty for the Labours of my Calling.¹⁵⁶

The benefit of not having a family to distract him from shepherding his congregation left a deep impression upon Baxter. However, his use of familial imagery reveals another insight into his rationale against clerical marriage. Since he saw himself as the spiritual father of his parishioners, he already had a familial sphere of responsibility in which he was responsible to provide soul care. The language he employed sounds strikingly similar to the Roman Catholic argument that celibacy afforded pastors the freedom they needed to fully devote themselves to their church. He did not explicitly cite a consonance of his convictions with Roman Catholics in his autobiography. However, in the *The Reformed Pastor* he did commend how their clergy were freed from the cares of families to fully devote "their interest" to the good of the church.¹⁵⁷ Whether Baxter was drawing from Roman Catholics or not, his experience at Kidderminster had led him to concur with their conviction that celibacy granted pastors a far greater level of freedom to be utterly devoted to their parishioners.

The resounding success of Baxter's Kidderminster ministry greatly reinforced the lessons he had learned concerning the benefits of clerical celibacy. A frequently

¹⁵⁵Richard Baxter, *Five disputations of church-government and worship by Richard Baxter* (London: Printed by R. W. for Nevil Simmons, 1659), 135.

¹⁵⁶Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 89 §137.

¹⁵⁷Baxter, *RP*, 239.

quoted passage from his autobiography contrasted the striking alteration he had witnessed in the town's piety since his pastoral tenure began.

The Congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build five Galleries after my coming thither Our private Meetings also were full. On the Lord's Days there was no disorder to be seen in the Streets, but you might hear a hundred Families singing Psalms and repeating Sermons, as you passed through the Streets. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one Family in a Street that worshipped god and called on his Name, and when I came away there were some Streets where there was not past one Family in the side that did not so; and that did not by professing serious Godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity.¹⁵⁸

Baxter's summation of the dramatic spiritual transformation at Kidderminster can certainly be interpreted as a vindication of his pastoral strategy for church reform. However, since he felt his single state had been a key factor in his ministerial success, the fact that he had been celibate throughout his ministry imbued his reflection with an additional lesson. Baxter's pastoral success at Kidderminster also vindicated his argument for clerical celibacy. Kidderminster was a testament of just how much a single pastor could do to if he was unhindered by the burden of a family. If celibacy had greatly benefited him at Kidderminster, then it would do the same for other pastors. Surprisingly, scholars have either underappreciated or entirely missed the credit Baxter gave to his single state for his ministerial success.¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy was not merely a result of his

¹⁵⁸Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 84-85 §136.

¹⁵⁹For those scholars who fail to note the connection Baxter made between his single state and successful pastorate at Kidderminster, see Paul C. H. Lim, "The Reformed Pastor by Richard Baxter 1615-1691," in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 159-64; Paul C. H. Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 62 (Boston: Brill, 2004); Black, *Reformation Pastors*; Charles F. Kemp, *A Pastoral Triumph: The Story of Richard Baxter and his Ministry at Kidderminster* (New York: Macmillan, 1948); Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 80-93. The only scholars who very briefly note the credit Baxter ascribed to his celibate state for his ministerial success are Packer (*Puritan Portraits*, 170) and Geoffrey F. Nuttall ("The Personality of Richard Baxter," in *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* [London: Epworth Press, 1967], 108). However, they do not elaborate on the deep impression his success as a celibate pastor would have left upon him and especially how it would have influenced his argument for clerical celibacy.

pioneering pastoral model but a number of internal and external factors shaped the particularities that would come to define him as a pastor and theologian. If he was the paragon of Puritan pastoral zeal, the explanation for his success should not be laid solely on his exceptional godliness but must include the very human factors at work throughout his life. In a way, this chapter has humanized Baxter by describing the circumstances that shaped the unique aspects of his theology, pastoral urgency, temperament, character, and especially his argument for clerical celibacy. In sum, the reason he displayed so many peculiarities as a theologian and pastor derived, in part, from the fact that so much of his life experience was unique. This chapter does not claim to represent the totality of internal and external factors significant for Baxter's theological formulation. Nevertheless, it does greatly clarify why he was a far more likely candidate than other English Protestant clergymen to advocate so confidently for clerical celibacy.

CHAPTER 5
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CLERICAL CELIBACY

Introduction

Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory* has long been recognized as a towering achievement of English practical divinity (casuistry). According to Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones: "No Puritan work on applied theology has surpassed this treatise."¹ Drew W. Gentile declared that Puritan casuistry reached its "zenith" with the *Christian Directory*.² Norman Keith Clifford considered it to be the "high water mark of English Protestant Casuistry,"³ and "the culmination of Puritan casuistry" in terms of "method, form and content."⁴ Other scholars have argued more specifically that Baxter, and the *Christian Directory* in particular, served as an ideal representative of English Puritanism. According to W. Lawrence Highfill, Baxter was "the most representative English Puritan of the seventeenth century."⁵ James McJunkin Phillips insisted that Baxter's practical divinity best embodied the commendable "qualities of the puritan movement."⁶ The *Christian Directory*, J. I. Packer asserted, "sums up two generations" of Puritan practical

¹Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 938.

²Drew W. Gentile, "Richard Baxter's Concept of the Centrality of the Home in Religious Education," (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), 69

³Norman Keith Clifford, "Richard Baxter: A Study of Puritan Casuistical Divinity" (BD thesis, United College, 1955), 15.

⁴Norman Keith Clifford, "Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century: Its Origins, Development and Significance" (PhD diss., University of London, 1957), vi.

⁵W. Lawrence Highfill, "Faith and Works in the Ethical Theory of Richard Baxter" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1955), ii.

⁶James McJunkin Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law: The Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615-1691)" (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1959), v.

divinity.⁷ Max Weber judged the *Christian Directory* to be “the most complete compendium of Puritan ethics.”⁸ Such sweeping conclusion extended to the portion of the *Christian Directory* treating marriage and the family. Packer concluded that Baxter was “creaming off the wisdom of a century of Puritan discussion,” and Timothy K. Beougher presented Baxter as a representative of the Puritan’s teaching on marriage.⁹ However, Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy, which found its most systematic presentation in the *Christian Directory*, presents a striking challenge to the assumption that his casuistry represented the broader views of English Puritanism.

The last three chapters have explored Baxter’s argument for clerical celibacy in light of English Protestant influences, his burdensome model of pastoral soul care, and his personal particularities. The present chapter will connect those topics with his argument for clerical celibacy in the *Christian Directory*.¹⁰ The overarching ethical principles of the *Christian Directory* shed additional light on the relationship between Baxter’s argument against clerical marriage and his practical divinity. The chapter will

⁷J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 41. See also Packer’s description of the *Christian Directory* as “a *summa* of casuistry” or sum of “practical theology” (J. I. Packer, “Introducing *A Christian Directory*,” in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, vol. 1, *A Christian Directory* [London: George Virtue, 1846; repr., Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000], 3, 7).

⁸Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, 2nd ed. [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976], 156).

⁹J. I. Packer, *A Grief Sanctified: Passing through Grief to Joy and Peace* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1997), 26; Timothy K. Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage: The Husband/Wife Relationship in Puritan England as Taught and Experienced by a Representative Puritan Pastor, Richard Baxter,” *Trinity Journal* 10, no. 2 [Fall 1989]: 153-57.

¹⁰I will be using the second edition of the *Christian Directory*: Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience directing Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1678).

Though scholars have made broad sweeping judgments concerning the nature of the *Christian Directory* (such as those cited above), there have actually been few focused studies of it, and none have been published: John F. Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*: Context and Content” [PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2005]; Clifford, “Richard Baxter”; Clifford, “Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism during the Seventeenth Century”; Phillips, “Between Conscience and the Law”; Packer, “Introducing *A Christian Directory*,” Works 1:1-9; Ruth Morrison, “A Summary and Evaluation of Richard Baxter’s *A Christian Directory*” (MA thesis, Andover Newton Theological School, 1975).

begin by examining how the tumultuous political and ecclesiastical events of 1660-62 shaped Baxter's purpose in writing the work. The next section of the chapter will explore three overarching principles in the *Christian Directory* which Baxter claimed were essential for successful Christian living. The last section will examine Baxter's discussion of marriage, celibacy, and pastoral ministry in light of those three guiding principles; it will show how his argument for clerical celibacy derived from the hindering effect of wedlock on the ethical principles that were so vital for Christians.

The Context and Purpose of the *Christian Directory*

Baxter's goal in writing the *Christian Directory* is best understood in light of the historical circumstances surrounding its composition in 1664-65.¹¹ The Restoration of the English Monarchy in 1660, followed shortly thereafter by the reestablishment of episcopal church government and strict religious uniformity of worship, brought about a decisive change in Baxter's fortunes.¹² In the wake of those events, he not only lost his position at Kidderminster but also any hope of having a parish ministry by refusing to conform to the terms of the 1662 *Act of Uniformity*.¹³ Nearly two thousand other pastors had also been ejected from their ministerial positions since the return of Charles II to the

¹¹Although the first edition was not published until 1673, he wrote nearly all of the massive tome between 1664 and 1665. He could not publish it at the time of its completion because printing laws had become extremely strict after 1662 (Baxter, CD, advertisement to the reader fol. A2r).

¹²For studies of the English Restoration in general, see Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658-1667* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); N. H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s*, History of Early Modern England (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002); Paul Seward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime, 1661-1667*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Annabel Patterson, *The Long Parliament of Charles II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). For studies focusing on the ecclesiastical aspect of the Restoration, see Robert S. Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement: The Influence of the Laudians, 1649-1662* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951); N. H. Keeble, ed., *'Settling the Peace of the Church': 1662 Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); Owen Chadwick and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, eds., *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962* (London: S.P.C.K., 1962).

¹³*Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Mathew Sylvester (London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, J. Dunton, 1696), bk. 1, pt. 2, 384-85 §277-79.

throne.¹⁴ He was increasingly slandered by the governing authorities, ecclesiastical leaders, and others who accused him of preaching false doctrine, sedition, and schism.¹⁵ Furthermore, the pastoral model and ministerial network he had promoted and considered the key to bringing church reform had now been banned.¹⁶ In short, the Puritan cause was failing as the government and general populace hurried to restore piety and worship according to the *Book of Common Prayer*. Baxter's involvement in the details of the Restoration will be examined more closely in the next chapter, since they factored into his decision to marry Margaret Charlton. However, the pressing question concerns how Baxter responded to the events that seemed to crush the high hopes he had in the 1650s for seeing reform of the clergy and the Church of England.

The *Christian Directory* was Baxter's renewed attempt to continue ministering to Christians but especially to pass on his considerable pastoral wisdom to other clergymen. Several Baxter scholars have noted his determination after 1662 to continue his calling to influence and train ministers, in whatever form he could.¹⁷ In a context where he could not pastor, nor lead ministerial associations, and only rarely publish, Baxter was re-presenting, in written form, the pastoral instruction and spiritual counsel taught to his Kidderminster parishioners and published in his books.¹⁸ Indeed, one of the

¹⁴N. H. Keeble, "Introduction: Attempting Uniformity," in *'Settling the Peace of the Church': 1662 Revisited*, ed. N. H. Keeble (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 18.

¹⁵For Baxter's description of the slanders and accusations he faced during the period from 1660-1662, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 301 §160, 302 §162, 373 §242, 375-76 §251, 377 §258, 380-81 §268, 383 §273.

¹⁶See J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 138-39, 190-91; Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's Christian Directory," 115-16.

¹⁷See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965], 98-113; Frederick J. Powicke, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross (1662-1691)* [London: Jonathan Cape, 1927], 15-59, 66-108, 128-82; Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 252, 253-54; Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's Christian Directory," 128, 131-139.

¹⁸In the advertisement to the reader, Baxter declared that he wrote the *Christian Directory* with two ends in mind. First, "That when I could not Preach the Gospel as I would, I might do it as I could." Second, that three sorts of people might be able to benefit from it: "the Younger and more unfurnished, and unexperienced sort of Ministers," fathers who could read "parcels to their families," and as a "Universal . . . Directory and Resolution of Doubts" (Baxter, *CD*, advertisement to the reader A3r). Brouwer may be

chief reasons Baxter wrote the *Christian Directory* was so that “the Younger and more unfurnished, and unexperienced sort of Ministers, might have a promptuary at hand, for Practical Resolutions and Directions on the subjects that they have need to deal with.”¹⁹ That Baxter was drawing almost exclusively on his pastoral experience to write the book is clear from his advertisement to the reader. There he stated that he was almost entirely drawing upon what “bare memory brought to hand,” which meant he had to depend almost entirely on what his “*experience*” had taught him.²⁰ Reflecting on this admission, N. H. Keeble argued, “There can be no clearer testimony than this to the indebtedness” of the *Christian Directory* and all of Baxter’s practical writings to his “pastoral experience” at Kidderminster.²¹ John F. Brouwer concurred with Keeble but went further by asserting that “the *Directory* was not merely indebted to Baxter’s pastoral experience, it was a record of it.”²² In light of the considerable prestige Baxter had gained through *The Reformed Pastor*, his aspirations for influencing ministers through the Christian

overstating his case by claiming that Baxter’s goal for the *Christian Directory* was the “renationalization” of his Kidderminster model of ministry (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 137). According to Brouwer, the *Christian Directory* was a record of Baxter’s pastoral success that would function as “seminary syllabus and curriculum, and ministry manual” for younger, less experienced ministers (*ibid.*, 88-89, and see also *ibid.*, 129-30, 202). Brouwer argued that the *Christian Directory* “took the form of an exhaustive encyclopedia of pastoral care,” since “Baxter was committing everything he knew to print” (*ibid.*, 130). However, one should also remember the great usefulness Baxter saw in mentoring pastors through personal relationships and not solely books (see Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 225-54).

¹⁹Baxter, *CD*, advertisement to the reader fol. A4r.

²⁰Baxter wrote, “It [the *Christian Directory*] hath no Cases of Conscience but what bare memory brought to hand: And Cases are so innumerable, that it is far harder, methinks, to remember them, than to answer them: . . . For I had no one Casuist but *Amesius* with me. . . . And it may be some little advantage to [to the reader], that he hath no transcript of any man’s Books, which he had before, but the product of some *experience*, with a naked unbyassed perception of the Matter or Things themselves” (*ibid.*, advertisement to the reader fol. A2v).

²¹N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 80. Keeble also said that the achievement of Baxter’s Kidderminster ministry “infuses his books. He Himself believed experience to be the best qualification for the cure of souls” (*ibid.*, 83).

²²Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 82-83, 84. Brouwer also concluded that Baxter intended for the work to function as “a topical index for his corpus,” since he “drew from his own writings, especially the longer ones” while addressing various doctrinal and practical issues (*ibid.*, 85, 88-89). For Brouwer’s analysis of the various means by which Baxter incorporated his writings into the *Christian Directory*, see *ibid.*, 96-103).

Directory did not seem unrealistic, even with the demise of the Puritan cause.²³

Baxter's heavy dependence on his Kidderminster experience in writing the *Christian Directory* explains why he could reflect so many aspects of Puritanism and yet also deviate so frequently. Baxter was separated from almost his library while writing and only had Ames's book on casuistry for consultation.²⁴ Consequently, though he inserted a some marginal notes out of the "few trivial Books at hand," he judged these to be "so mean" that he was "well content" for the reader to "pass them by as not worthy of his notice."²⁵ Rather than writing a summa of Puritan practical divinity, he was recording the doctrinal and practical instruction he taught at Kidderminster and the personal lessons he had gleaned from his experience there.²⁶ As a consequence, though Baxter's teaching reflected many themes of Puritanism, "to the extent that his Kidderminster ministry was unique, his advice was unique also."²⁷ As argued in the last chapter, Baxter placed

²³Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 135-36, 253-54, 261, 262; Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory*," 139.

²⁴Baxter explained, "I must do myself the right as to notifie to the Reader, that this Treatise was written when...I had long been separated from my Library and from all Books, saving an inconsiderable parcel which wandered with me, where I went" (Baxter, *CD*, advertisement to the reader, fol. A3v). The only book of casuistry Baxter had was Ames' *Conscience with the power and cases thereof*: "I had no one Casuist but *Amesius* with me" (ibid., advertisement to the reader fol. A2v).

²⁵Ibid., advertisement to the reader fol. A3v. The insignificance of the marginal notes in the *Christian Directory* is important to remember because the person referenced most frequently in Baxter's discussion of marriage and the single state is actually Francis Bacon (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3 §4, 6 §19, 9 §41 [three references on pg. 9]). Indeed, Baxter cited Bacon's work *The essayes or counsels* three times in the margins while explaining his reasons for urging clerical celibacy. However, the problem that this poses for the argument of chap. 2 – that Baxter's thinking on marriage and celibacy was influenced primarily by William Ames and William Whately – loses its force in light of how Baxter wanted his readers to interpret his use of marginal citations in the *Christian Directory*. Thus, the marginal references to Francis Bacon were not meant to show Baxter's dependence on his thought.

²⁶Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory*," 77, 79-82. According to Brouwer, many scholars have erroneously used the *Christian Directory* to "mine quotes" they thought to be reflective of "godly Protestantism," based on the assumption that Baxter's beliefs represented "broader Puritan views" (ibid., 84).

²⁷Ibid., 67. Brouwer argued this point at length when explaining how, in the *Christian Directory*, Baxter could operate within the godly tradition and yet so often "transcend standard godly practice." The lessons he gleaned from Kidderminster, combined with his eminence, granted him the latitude to strike out on his own both in terms of his content and methodological approach to cases of conscience (ibid., 69). "Baxter was Baxter," Brouwer contended, and was perfectly "willing to modify . . . or omit standard godly practice" based on his own experience" (ibid., 84). For example, rather than relying primarily or exclusively on Scripture, Baxter tended to state his own judgment as fact by citing his pastoral experience and relying on the credibility of his own clerical expertise to justify his assertions (ibid., 52, 53,

considerable stress on experience as a teacher of truth,²⁸ and this insight helps clarify why he gave extensive treatment to such a controversial position as clerical celibacy in the *Christian Directory*. He had remained celibate throughout his Kidderminster ministry, had witnessed the freedom it provided him to pursue his burdensome model of soul care, and credited it as a key factor in his successful reform of the parish.²⁹ Moreover, Baxter's incredible accomplishment at Kidderminster exerted a powerful influence on his mind. It convinced him that his pastoral methods as well as his own practice of clerical celibacy worked and led him to believe they would probably be successful for many other pastors.³⁰ Therefore, in arguing for clerical celibacy, Baxter was defending and propagating, for the benefit of all unmarried ministers reading the *Christian Directory*, what he had discovered to be so tremendously beneficial for his own pastorate.

Baxter's Principles for the Christian Life

Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy occurred in the second part of the *Christian Directory*, yet it was rooted in the ethical principles woven throughout the book.³¹ Understanding the logic of his argument requires its placement within the context of the surrounding material. N. H. Keeble has argued that Baxter's casuistry differed

57).

²⁸See the discussion in chap. 4, 204-5.

²⁹See the discussion in chap. 4, 205-8.

³⁰See the discussion in chap. 3, 141-42 and chap. 4, 177-78, 204-8.

³¹Elisa Jill Benson noted that the structure and flow of the *Christian Directory* was foundational to grasping the family section, which contained the core of Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy (Elisa Jill Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family: Spheres of Soul Care and Sacrifice" [MCS thesis, Regent College, 2010], 38). According to Benson, the *Christian Directory* was laid out so that love for God came in part 1, and the remaining parts traced the practice of neighborly love through ever widening societal spheres of influence: the family (part 2), the church (part 3), and society (part 4) (ibid., 44). As Brouwer noted, Baxter began with familial duties, since it was the "most intimate" and foundational of human relationships; then, he progressed outward to examine the Christian's responsibilities in the comparatively less intimate spheres of church and the state/society ("Richard Baxter's Christian Directory," 149). See also similar observations made by Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law," 195-201; Packer, "Introducing *A Christian Directory*," Works, 1:4-6, 8-9.

significantly from his predecessors by excluding any “discussion of general principles.”³² However, though Baxter omitted *direct* discussion of overarching principles, a number of them nevertheless become quite clear through a careful reading of the *Christian Directory*. Three overarching and interconnected principles were at the center of Baxter’s theology of the Christian life.³³ First, Christianity preeminently concerned the heart and affections, and so inward love for God and holy things was absolutely foundational for both beginning and persevering in the Christian life. Second, Christianity required a constant focus on the future life. A mind fixed upon heaven served as the primary means of nurturing a supreme love for God as well as a guiding force for living one’s earthly life.³⁴ Third, Christianity demanded a life rigidly ordered and prioritized toward doing the greatest good. While the first principle would have found agreement with many Puritanism, it could be argued that the second and third principle were unique to Baxter.³⁵

³²Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 79. The other casuists Keeble compared Baxter to were Jeremy Taylor, William Perkins, William Ames, and Robert Sanderson.

³³I am indebted to the work of Packer, Keeble, and Brouwer for their work pointing me toward these overarching principles in Baxter’s thought and especially the *Christian Directory*. Brouwer primarily described them as themes or motifs, but I will simply be referring to them as principles and my exposition of them will be based upon my own close reading and exposition of the *Christian Directory* (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 151-62, 165-75, 183-85). J. I. Packer also examined some of the principles I will be discussing and argued that they pointed to a theology of the Christian life which he described as “the law of Christ” (J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought [Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003], 291-315, 375-389; see also Packer, “Introducing A Christian Directory, 1:1-9.” Keeble gave considerable attention to Baxter’s focus on the next life (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 94-113).

³⁴I am indebted to Packer and Brouwer for their insight into Baxter’s conviction that Christians’ concern for eternity decisively shaped how they prioritized their life on earth (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 165; Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 375-89; Packer, “Introducing A Christian Directory,” 1:9.

³⁵For the centrality of the heart, or experiencing the one’s faith internally, to Puritans, see Jerald C. Brauer, “The Nature of English Puritanism: Reflections on the Nature of English Puritanism.” *Church History* 23, no. 2 [June 1954]: 101-2). However, Brouwer argued that Baxter’s emphasis on heavenly contemplation and a life rigidly ordered toward the greatest good were “uniquely Baxterian” and distinguished his casuistry from the work of William Perkins, William Ames, John Dickson, and Jeremy Taylor (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 195). Packer also argued that contemplation of heaven and a rigidly ordered life of works had a unique emphasis in Baxter’s thought, but Packer’s treatment does not stress them as setting Baxter apart from others to quite the same extent as Brouwer (Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 291-315, 375-89). Keeble believed Baxter’s focus on heaven was largely consistent with Puritanism (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 110-11).

Each of Baxter's principles helped Christians order, direct, and discipline their daily life towards fulfilling the supreme goal of the Christian life: to know, enjoy, please, and thereby to glorify, God.³⁶ He used a number of terms throughout the *Christian Directory* to describe the supreme goal, including "ultimate end," "main end," "chief end," or "great ends."³⁷ Regardless of the term used, the point he sought to emphasize was that all moral actions and practices, including the three principles for Christian living, aimed at achieving this supreme goal: "The ultimate end of all worship and all moral actions is the same, even the pleasing and glorifying God."³⁸

Centrality of the Heart and Affections

The foundational principle for all of Baxter's practical instructions in the *Christian Directory* was that true Christianity must be rooted in a heartfelt relationship with God.³⁹ The method employed to achieve this effect has been called "Head to Heart" or converting head knowledge into earnest affections for God and good works that glorified him.⁴⁰ Baxter had long trumpeted that the work of God's grace upon the heart

³⁶I am indebted to Packer for his insight into insight into how Baxter thought of man's supreme end (Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 298).

³⁷For Baxter's use of the "ultimate end," see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 40 §1, 56 §1, 58 §2, 100 §70, 199 §10, 144 §6, 154 (reason 40), 155 (reason 66), 156 (reason 72), 156 (reason 74), 156 (reason 75), 156 (reason 80), 194 §112, 224 §5, 225 §5, 240 §42, 250 §1, 268 §8, 272 §45, 276 §3, 295 §17, 302 §5, 305 §18, 340 §3, pt. 2, 4 §5, 4 §6, 4 §6, 4 §6, 4 §7, 12 §57, 18, 20, 78 §7, 97, 99 §7, pt. 3, 4 §21, 12 §25, 14 §7, 40 §14, 40 §20, 51 §8, 173 §3, pt. 4., 37 §4, 40 §1, 222 §3, 252 (question 5). For his use of the "main end," see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 225 §5, pt. 2, 3 §3, pt. 4, 18 §53, answer to question 5. For his use of the "chief end," see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 156, reason 72, 378 §24, pt. 2, 11 §46, pt. 4, 252, answer to question 5. For his use of "great end," see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 240 §43, pt. 2, 4 §4.

³⁸Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 4 §21. "Do no work which you cannot entitle God to, and truly say he set you about; and do nothing in the World for any other ultimate end, than to please, and glorify, and enjoy him" (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 78 §7).

³⁹Baxter did not dichotomize duty and affections but saw duty as a means of facilitating the initial work of grace and love for God that was wrought upon the soul in conversion; this was true of all duties but especially the "great internal duties," since they contained "the very Life of all Religion," since they facilitated "that *Exercise of Grace* which is common to all *Christians*" (*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 57).

⁴⁰Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's Christian Directory," 151-52, 155-56. For Brouwer's entire discussion of the theme of internalizing faith in the heart, see *ibid.*, 151-62. See also Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 375-389; Packer, "Introducing A *Christian Directory*," 1:4-5.

(“heart-work”) constituted the chief labor of Christianity.⁴¹ Hence, he deliberately devoted far more space in the *Christian Directory* to the inward disposition of the heart toward God, since it was the decisive factor both in beginning the Christian life at conversion and leading a godly life afterward.⁴²

Love is the commander of the soul; and therefore God knoweth that if he have our hearts he hath all, for all the rest are at his command; for it is, as it were, the nature of the will, which is the commanding faculty, and its object is the ultimate end which is the commanding object.⁴³

Cultivating love for God and holiness required Christians to play an active role.⁴⁴ The world, the flesh, and the Devil all labored to choke out those affections.⁴⁵ Therefore, Baxter pleaded the need to “*Diligently labour that God and Holiness may be thy chief DELIGHT.*”⁴⁶ Elsewhere, he exhorted Christians to ruminare upon God’s benevolent attributes in order to stoke their longing for him as the “*Everlasting Rest and happiness of thy soul.*”⁴⁷ Baxter’s first key principle, therefore, was that the Christian life must be

⁴¹Packer and Brouwer both observed Baxter’s emphasis on “heart-work” (Packer, “Introducing *A Christian Directory*,” Works, 1:4; Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 375-389; Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*,” 129, 151-62). For Baxter’s correlation of “heaven-work” with the essence of Christianity in the *Christian Directory*, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 79 §10, 82 §2, pt. 3, 6 §25, 13 §31. Baxter also identified “heart-work” as an essential component of mature Christianity (Richard Baxter, *The character of a sound confirmed Christian as also 2. of a weak Christian, and 3. of a seeming Christian / written to imprint upon mens minds the true idea or (conception) of Godliness and Christianity by Richard Baxter; the second part of the Directions for weak Christians* [London: Printed by R. White for Nevill Simmons, 1669], 92).

⁴²Baxter justified the lengthiness of the first part of the *Christian Directory* by asserting how vital the condition of the heart was to Christianity: “The first Part is largest, because I thought that the heart must be kept with greatest diligence, and that if the Tree be good the fruit will be good; and I remember Paul’s counsel, 1 Tim. 4. 16. Take heed to thy self and unto thy Doctrine: continue in them: for in this thou shalt save thy self and them that hear thee. Nothing is well done by him that beginnith not at home: As the man is, so is his strength, and work” (Baxter, *CD*, advertisement to the reader fol. A2r).

⁴³*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 199 §10.

⁴⁴“Grace is given you not only that you may *have* it, but also that you may *Use* it” (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 57).

⁴⁵Baxter’s ninth “Grand Directive” in the first part of the *Christian Directory* directed Christians to engage in vigilant spiritual warfare: “*Spend all your days in a skillful, vigilant, resolute and valiant war against the Flesh, the World, and the Devil, as those who have covenanted to follow Christ, the Captain of your Salvation* (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 86). He also referred the reader to his larger *Treatise of Self-Denial* (1659) and *The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ* (1658).

⁴⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 135 §1. Grand twelfth directive was an extended exposition on finding one’s delight in God and holy things (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 135-39).

⁴⁷Baxter urged Christians, “*Let it be most deeply graven on thy heart, that God is infinitely*

rooted in and driven by a supreme love for God, the “ultimate end” and “proper object” of the affections.⁴⁸ Halfhearted devotion or mere outward conformity were deadly enemies to sustaining these holy affections, and so Christians had to vigilantly guard against anything that might threaten them.⁴⁹

Focus on the Future Life

The need to maintain a continual focus on the future life was Baxter’s second principle for guiding and motivating Christian living.⁵⁰ He used the term “heaven-work” to describe his second principle in action and frequently coupled it with the first principle, “heart-work,” to sum up the genuine Christian life: “It is heart-work and heaven-work that the sincere believer comes about.”⁵¹ This connection derived from his conviction that contemplation of heaven was the chief means by which Christians revived and maintained their delight in God: “Especially let faith frequently go to heaven for renewed matter of delight, and frequently think what God will be to you there forever,

good, and amiable: thy grand Benefactor and Father in Christ; the end of all that though art and hast; and the Everlasting Rest and happiness of thy soul: See therefore that thy enflamed Heart be entirely and absolutely offered up unto Him, by the Mediation of his Son, to Love him, to Trust him, to Delight in him, to be thankful to him, to Glorifie him, and through faith to long for the Heavenly Glory” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 117 §1). For similar quotations, see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 148 §2, 149 §6.

⁴⁸Baxter wrote, “The *Admiration, Love, and Praise of God our ultimate End, hath no end beside their proper object: For it is itself the final act, even man’s Perfection”* (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 194 §112).

⁴⁹The tedious listing of rules in the *Christian Directory* could be taken for legalism if one failed to grasp Baxter’s emphasis on the centrality of the heart to all moral actions. Scholars have agreed upon this as well. Packer concluded that Baxter’s exposition of Christian ethics, was simply the “pure Puritan concept of the Christian life,” namely that “the life of grace” was “a habit of the heart” (Packer, “Introducing *A Christian Directory*,” *Works*, 1:5). Similarly, Brouwer connected Baxter’s concern for “internalizing faith” with “his belief that ‘being’ determined ‘doing’” (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*,” 156, and see also 162).

⁵⁰For the biographical roots of Baxter’s emphasis on heavenly, see the discussion in chap. 4, 190-96.

⁵¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 13 §31. See also *ibid.*, pt. 2, 79 §10. Baxter linked “heart-work” and “heaven-work” together as an essential quality of the mature Christian (Baxter, *The character of a sound confirmed Christian*, 92). See also Packer’s chap. titled “Heart-Work and Heaven-Work” which demonstrated the link between the internalization of faith and a heavenly mindset (Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 375-89).

and with what full everlasting delight he will satiate your soul.”⁵² The “heaven-work” he exhorted Christians to embrace was a “*life on earth*” that was a constant “*conversation in heaven*,” so that the future, unseen world always lay before the Christian’s eyes.⁵³ “*Let Heaven be ever in thine eye*,” he exhorted, “*and still think of the endless joy which thou shalt have in Christ*.”⁵⁴ Daily meditation upon heaven—with God as the chief focal point, delight, and reward—served as the essential practical discipline for channeling the Christians contemplation.⁵⁵

*When you are alone in your labours, improve the time in practical fruitful (not speculative and barren) meditations: especially in Heart-work and Heaven-work: let your chieftest meditations be on the Infinite Goodness and perfections of God, and the life of Glory, which in the Love and praise of him, you must live for ever.*⁵⁶

If such methodical meditation proved too problematic, as it often did for the melancholy, he counseled “*short and easie [mediations], like ejaculatory prayers*.”⁵⁷ Regardless of any challenges, every Christian was bound to “use so much contemplation as is

⁵²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 138 §13.

⁵³*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 150. Baxter did not elaborate on this point any further but simply referred the reader to the fourth part of *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650) and *The Life of Faith* (1660). However, he did exhort Christians to the practice of meditating on God elsewhere in the *Christian Directory*: “*Exercise yourselves therefore in believing contemplation of the things unseen. It must not be now and then a glance of the eye of the soul towards God, or a seldom salutation which would give a stranger; but a walking with him and a frequent, and frequent addresses of the soul unto him*” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 138 §12).

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 141 §13. Brouwer argued that Baxter’s use of two elements—“proximity” and “imagination”—help us understand why he promoted heavenly meditation as a means to maintaining a heavenly meditation; proximity was vital because it caused the ethereal to become more tangible and real, while imagination was the means to make God and heaven more proximate (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 166-67).

⁵⁵Baxter did believe that extraordinary circumstances could call for the foregoing of heavenly meditation, though only temporarily and on rare occasions. “*Public necessities or service*” for example, could be so important that a Christian would need to “dispense with all secret duty both of *prayer* and *contemplation* (except short mental ejaculations) for some days together” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 261 §9). He supported this with analogies drawn from the necessities of war calling for soldiers to go without holy service for many days or physicians tending to many very sick patients; even a “Preacher may be so taken up in preaching, and exhorting, and resolving people’s weighty doubts, that they shall scarce have time for secret duties, for some days together. While “such happy impediments are rare,” he nevertheless insisted that in “these cases to do the *lesser* is a sin, when the *greater* is neglected (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 259 [misprinted as 295] §1).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 79 §10.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 267 §7.

necessary” in order to live a life fully consecrated to God.⁵⁸ Consequently, Baxter listed “heaven-work” as one of the chief qualities of a “sound, confirmed Christian.”⁵⁹ Thus, a continual fixation upon eternity functioned as a “benchmark” for assessing the maturity of one’s faith.⁶⁰ Christians who endeavored to live holy lives in the midst of a carnal world had to possess a fundamentally different, eternal focus that motivated and guided their earthly existence.

Baxter’s heavenly focus did not lead him to advocate an ascetic, world-despising withdrawal. He warned that without a “*special necessity or call*” from God, no person should “*cast off all worldly and external labours*” in order to retire to a contemplative life.⁶¹ Not all love for the creature, the world, or wealth was sinful, since God intended them not only for physical sustenance but also spiritual edification. As N. H. Keeble noted, Baxter concurred with Puritans that the joys of God’s creation were a helpful means for realizing the joys of heaven; hence, physical and sensible analogies could be employed to warm the heart toward heavenly realities.⁶² He exhorted Christians to behold God’s glory “*in the glory of his works of Nature and of Grace and see him in*

⁵⁸Baxter insisted, “Every Christian must use so much *contemplation*, as is necessary to the Loving of God above all, and to the worshipping of him in Spirit and in truth, and to a heavenly mind and conversation, and to his due preparation for death and judgment, and to the referring all his common works to the glory and pleasing of God, that ‘Holiness to the Lord’ may be written upon all, and all that he hath may be sanctified, or devoted with himself to God” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 260 §5). See also *ibid.*, pt. 1, 259 (misprinted as 295) §1.

⁵⁹Baxter, *The character of a sound confirmed Christian*, 92.

⁶⁰See Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 59, 167-68.

⁶¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 260 §2. Baxter justified this judgment by pointing to several general precepts that all people were bound to obey, such as living to benefit others, preferring the common good, and loving one’s neighbor (*ibid.*). Only under certain circumstances and with certain people could an entirely contemplative life be lawful: persons disabled from work by age or sickness, imprisonment, when persecution forces people to retreat to the deserts, students preparing themselves for the ministry, when poverty, wars, or the rage of enemies drives a man to solitude, when a person (particularly suited to this life) had enough people working for him (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 260 §3). See also his negative response to the question of whether religion could excuse Christians from all other labors (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 376 §3).

⁶²Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 105, and see also 94, 95, 100, 102, 103, 108-11. See also Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 375-89.

all as the soul, the Glory, the All of the whole creation.”⁶³ Earthly blessings helped point Christians to the fact that eternal life spent with God was the supreme gift and the “ultimate end of all the actions” of their lives.⁶⁴ Since God had imprinted his divine attributes on his creation, it served as a “Glass” through which Christians tasted “his Goodness and Love” and experienced the kindling of love for God in their “breasts.”⁶⁵

Despite the inherent goodness and spiritual benefit of the physical world, Baxter recognized it could nonetheless hinder the Christian’s focus upon the next life. Cherishing the blessings of God’s creation and the fulfillment of lawful desires could become inordinate and distorted.⁶⁶ One manifestation of sin was preferring pleasures of a transitory nature over eternal rewards that would last forever.⁶⁷ The tragedy of those who fell prey to inordinate love for the material world was that they had traded the only necessary concern they should have, the salvation of their souls, for the unnecessary burden of worldly cares.

Remember how dear it costeth men, thus to hinder their salvation, and greaten their danger and accounts. What a deal of precious Time is lost upon the world by the Lovers of it, which might have been improved to the getting of Wisdom and Grace . . . and preparing for your endless life. How many unnecessary Thoughts have you cast upon the world, which might better have been laid out on your greater concernments? How many cares, and vexations, and passions doth it cost men to overload themselves with worldly provisions You have all the while God’s work to do, your souls to mind, and judgment to prepare for, and you are tiring and

⁶³Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 143 §4, 144 §6.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 141-42 §14.

⁶⁵Baxter urged, “*Look on all earthly and present Mercies in connexion with Heaven which is their End, and as sweetened by our interest in God that giveth them. . . . You mortifie your mercies when you separate them from God and Heaven, and then their beauty, and sweetness, and excellency is gone Take every bit as from thy Father’s hands: Nothing can be little which is a token of the love of God and leadeth to Eternal Glory. The Relation to Heaven is the life and glory of every mercy*” (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 141-42 §14).

⁶⁶See Baxter’s directions against the sinful/inordinate love of creatures (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 214-30 §1-28, 276-77 §1-22), sinful desires and discontents (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 278-80 §1-22), and the holy government of the senses by a life of faith (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 302-42).

⁶⁷Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 166; Packer, “Introducing *A Christian Directory*,” Works, 1:9. For Baxter’s discussion of this principle, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 83 §16, 278 §2.

vexing your selves for unnecessary things; as if it were the top of your ambition to be able to say in Hell, that you dyed rich.⁶⁸

Furthermore, he warned that if Christians became consumed with satisfying their physical desires, they would have no spare time for the “*the daily contemplation of the Glory of God*,” because they would have no inward desire to do so.⁶⁹ Their belly had effectively become their God. This idolatrous love for the world threatened both the “heart-work” and “heaven-work” he believed was so essential to the Christian life. Christians whose hearts had grown cold and no longer gazed heavenward to the next life were a product of affections bent on satisfying their fleshly pleasures. Such a lifestyle was the “grand enemy to God and godliness in the world.”⁷⁰

The soul that wished to be “*carried up to God, and devoted to him*” had to be simultaneously delivered from the sin of “*flesh-pleasing*” through self-denial.⁷¹ Flesh-pleasing occurred when people excessively gratified their “sensitive appetite,” or natural desires of the body, with lawful things of the physical world.⁷² Delighting one’s “Flesh or Senses” was a “*Natural Good*,” Baxter carefully pointed out, and the desire to please the flesh, on its own, contained “neither vice nor virtue.”⁷³ Nevertheless, it was imperative for Christians to avoid the errors of “the Libertines” (Antinomians). They believed a person’s “*flesh or sensitive part*” was incapable of “moral good or evil” and therefore

⁶⁸Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 219 §29.

⁶⁹“If your *belly* becomes *your God*, and you *mind earthly things*, and are set upon the honours, or profits or pleasures of the world, when your *conversation should be in Heaven*, . . . you will have so much to do *on earth*, that you will find no leisure (because you have no hearts) to look up seriously to God” (ibid., pt. 1, 144 §12).

⁷⁰Ibid., pt. 1, 151. Baxter defined this behavior as “flesh-pleasing” which will be discussed in the next paragraph. For more extensive discussion on the threat of “flesh-pleasing,” Baxter referred the reader to his *Treatise of Self-Denial* (1659) and *The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ* (1658).

⁷¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 151.

⁷²Ibid., pt. 1, 222-23 §2. Baxter referred to this “*Master sin*” by a number of other names: carnal selfishness, sensuality, and voluptuousness (ibid., pt. 1, 151 and 222 §1). At the start of his discussion on flesh-pleasing, Baxter referred the reader to his larger *Treatise of Self-Denial* (1659) and *The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ* (1658).

⁷³Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 224 §5, 223 §5.

considered all its actions a matter of “indifference,” subject to Christian liberty.⁷⁴ For Baxter, such unqualified indulgence was perilous to Christian piety, for it threatened one of the chief benefits of salvation. The sensitive appetite had been corrupted through the fall, so that “unsanctified” human beings were dominated by sinful passions and lived like beasts rather than humans. Yet redemption through Christ restored the original power of the rational faculties over the senses, enabling Christians to mortify their flesh through self-denial and thereby overcome any sin.⁷⁵ For Christians, then, the body no longer ruled the soul, but the soul now ruled the body.⁷⁶

Baxter provided key indicators to help Christians discern when denial of fleshly desires was required.⁷⁷ First, it was a sin to “*overvalue*” pleasing the flesh, especially when this took priority over “*pleasing God*” and the “holy preparation for Heaven.”⁷⁸ God’s glory—or the greater spiritual, moral, or eternal good—had to be one’s

⁷⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 223 §4. One of Baxter’s greatest fears was Antinomianism, and for the best study of his concerns, see Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001). See also Packer who treated antinomianism as a key contextual factor influencing Baxter’s soteriology (Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 347-70). I am indebted to Packer for his insight into the threat Antinomianism posed to Baxter’s theology of humanity fallen and restored (*ibid.*, 151-52, 296-98).

⁷⁵For Baxter’s description of the corruption of humanity through the fall and the benefits brought by his restoration and redemption in Christ, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 302 §1. See also Packer’s work which traced this theme in Baxter’s soteriology (Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*). Baxter insisted in several places in the *Christian Directory* that sin could nearly always be conquered: “Men can do much against *Passion* if they will. Nature has set the *will* in the *Throne* of the soul; it is the sinful connivance and negligence of the will which is the guilty cause of all the rebellion.” Sin would only occur through the “*will’s compliance*, or *omission and neglect*. Therefore let most of your labour be to waken and confirm the *will*; and then it will *command* down passion” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 275 §10). He also rejected any who said their thoughts were uncontrollable: “Say not, *you cannot rule your Thoughts*. You can do *much* if you will and more than you do: . . . you may see that your thoughts are much in your power (but of this I wrote before)” (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 338 §16).

⁷⁶Baxter wrote this while describing how fornication was a sin not only against Scripture but also “humane nature” and the “ends” of humanity’s creation: “If the *Body* rules the *Soul* you are brutish, and shall be destroyed: If the *Soul* rule the *Body* than you live according to true humane nature and the ends of your creation. If the *Pleasures* of the *Body* are the predominant pleasures which you are most addicted to, then the *Body* ruleth the *Soul* and you shall perish as Traytors to God, that debase his Image, and turn man into *Beast*” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 332 §11). For similar comments, see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 274 §2, 275 §12.

⁷⁷For the complete list of seven qualifications which made pleasing of the senses or flesh lawful, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 225. Baxter also covered similar ground when he provided directions to help guard against the sinful (inordinate) love of creatures (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 276-77 §1-22), sinful desires/discontents (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 278-80 §1-22), and the holy government of the senses (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 302-42).

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 1 223-24 §5. Baxter made a similar qualification during his discussion of how to guard against covetousness, worldly cares, and excessive love of the creature (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 214 §3, 217 §2,

“ultimate end” in satiating the sensitive appetite, because “the sin of carnal minds” was preferring the “little natural Good” more than eternal goods.⁷⁹ Second, pleasing the flesh could not hinder obedience to a clear duty, otherwise it was no longer “lawful” but “forbidden.”⁸⁰ Finally, pleasing the flesh could not be justified when it came at too dear a price, in terms of time lost or “care and trouble above its worth.”⁸¹ Living as true Christians meant denying fleshly pleasures through a faith that showed “the *Soul* those *higher Pleasures* in God and everlasting Glory.”⁸²

Baxter’s concern for delivering Christians’ from idolatrous love of the material world influenced the caution he exhibited toward intimate friendships or “bosom friends.”⁸³ Indeed, there seems to be a measure of truth in Weber’s statement that “even the amiable Baxter counsels deep distrust of even one’s closest friend.”⁸⁴ Baxter gave a very paradoxical answer to the question of whether it was “lawful, meet or desirable” to have “an endeared, intimate friend,” who was loved “far above all others?”⁸⁵ On the one hand, employing language that echoed the benefits of marriage, he asserted both the

218 §24).

⁷⁹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 224 §5 and 225 (qualification 1). According to Baxter, a person sinned on every occasion where he or she was capable of referring the pleasing of the flesh to a higher end and yet failed to do so. However, the sin lay not in pleasing the flesh but in failing to desire to glorify God in partaking of the creature (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 224 §5). While discussing how to guard against sinful love of the creature, Baxter admonished, “Remember to what ends all worldly things were made and given you, and what a happy advantage you may make of them by renouncing them as they would be provision for your lusts, and by devoting yourselves and them to God” (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 220 §32).

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 225.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 224 §5. When people persisted in gratifying themselves in spite of this they were guilty of overvaluing their sensitive appetite and such “sin [was] forbidden” (*ibid.*).

⁸²*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 332 §11.

⁸³For Baxter’s discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of intimate friendships, see *ibid.*, pt. 4, 242-58.

⁸⁴Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 106. Weber gave no citation from the *Christian Directory* to support his observation. Benson used her study of Baxter’s teaching on the family to discount Weber’s conclusion (Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 112-13). Yet she failed to see the paradoxical aspect of Baxter’s thinking on the family and intimate relationships; while he praised the value of such community he also saw great dangers in them.

⁸⁵Baxter, *CD*, 251, question 2. See also *ibid.*, pt. 4, 251, answer to question 1.

lawfulness and great advantages of focusing one's love upon a particular bosom friend.⁸⁶ Indeed, nature itself proclaimed the need for intimate friends well-suited to be the "chieftest counsellor," "comforter," and "companion of our lives."⁸⁷ On the other hand, he contended that it was "rare to choose and use this friendship rightly" due to the "many evils" which had to be "carefully avoided."⁸⁸ The difficulty, first of all, lay in finding two godly persons, both of whom would be suitable for each other. Indeed, he seemed to think this nearly impossible.⁸⁹ Therefore, Christians should not be "too forward in this friendship," nor view it as an "ordinary way of duty or benefit, but a very unusual case." Rather, Christians' "ordinary way of duty" consisted in devoting their love more broadly among all people rather than narrowly confining themselves to pleasing one person. Such a choice would make the best use of "every one's grace and gifts" and avoid the "partiality of such extraordinary affection to any one above the rest."⁹⁰

For those who found a bosom friend, Baxter urged the need to "restrain" their love, since their affections often tended to venture beyond the lawful bounds of "regular

⁸⁶See the discussion of the benefits of marriage in chap. 3, 155-63.

⁸⁷Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 251, answer to question 2. The follow reasons are a summary of Baxter's rationale for bosom friends. First, "Nature" itself taught everyone that "no man is sufficient for himself," and therefore the desire for a "helper" close at hand—who provided accountability, admonishment, support, and counsel—was instinctive to humanity (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 251-52, answer to question 2; *ibid.*, pt. 4, 255-56, directive 5, 14, 15). Second, nature also bore witness to the fact that people too often proved blind to their own sins and could "not easily see without help"; thus, they required the assistance of faithful friends to understand "the true knowledge of ourselves" (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 251-52, answer to question 2). Finally, the world was so full of evil, "unprofitable company" that man could be tempted to believe the best life involved the least amount of contact with others; yet the worth of a bosom friend demonstrated the value of having chosen friends that did not carry such "common incumbrances and snares" (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 252, answer to question 2).

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 252, answer to question 2. In speaking of the earnest desire to be loved by others, Baxter also claimed that the type of love that manifested itself "much more" frequently was the "unlawful desire of others' love." This desire for love, which was a "deeper malignity than is commonly observed," became sinful when it grew to be inordinate, selfish, idolatrous, carnal, or lustful (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 251, answer to question 1).

⁸⁹Baxter believed it was "a hard thing to meet with one among many thousands, that hath all these qualifications: And when that is done, if you have not all the same qualifications to him, you will be unmeet for his friendship, whatever he be for yours. And where in *an age* will there be two that will be suited in all those respects?" (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 255, directive 1).

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

love.”⁹¹ The deleterious effects of excessive love for friends affected both emotional and spiritual health. It so consumed Christians’ thoughts that it hindered the ability to fix their minds and hearts upon God, which should have the priority; even redeemed human beings were often too weak to successfully balance these two potent passions.

It very often taketh up men’s minds, so as to hinder their Love to God, and their desires and delights in holy things: While Satan (perhaps upon Religious pretenses) turneth our affections too violently to some persons, it diverteth them from higher and better things: For the weak mind of man can hardly think earnestly of one thing, without being alienated in his thoughts from others; nor can hardly love two things or persons fervently at once, that stand not in pure subordination one to the other: And we seldom Love any fervently in a pure subordination to God; For then we should Love God still more fervently.⁹²

Furthermore, such inordinate love almost inexorably led to “*disappointments*” and “*excess of sorrows*” when bosom friends failed to meet the high expectations placed upon each other or experienced suffering, absence from each other, and death.⁹³ Finally, excessive love for friends was the most grievous pain of all. He appealed to the common experience of “the best of God’s servants” who professed how the excessive love of their friends had caused suffering “ten times greater than from all the enemies that ever they had in the world.”⁹⁴

The tendency of bosom friends toward inordinate and harmful love was a problem that extended to familial relationships. While reminding Christians how much

⁹¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9. Baxter claimed that loving a bosom friend too much was “an error of judgment and of will,” “an irrational act, and therefore not fit for a rational creature,” and “usually a fruit of sinful selfishness” (*ibid.*).

⁹²*Ibid.*

⁹³Baxter cautioned, “If your Love continue as hot as ever, its excess is like to be your excessive sorrow. For 1. You will be the more grieved at every suffering of your friend, as sicknesses, losses, crosses, &c. whereof so many attend mankind, as is like to make your burden great. 2. Upon every removal, his absence will be the more troublesome to you. 3. All incong[r]uities and fallings out will be the more painful to you, especially his jealousies, discontents and passions, which you cannot command. 4. His death, if he die before you, will be the more grievous, and your own the more unwelcome, because you must part with him” (*ibid.*). Finally, Christians should “judge it possible” that their bosom friend would turn against them and so moderate the amount of trust bosom friends placed in each other, since they might turn against them and “open all your secrets, and betray you, yea, and turn your enemies” (*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 255, directives 1-3).

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9.

“*carnal Desires*” contributed to the feebleness of “*spiritual desires*,” Baxter depicted the longing for a spouse and family as a common way this sin manifested itself.

Are you so *eager* for a husband, a wife, a child, for wealth, for preferment or such things, while you are so cold and indifferent in your desires after *God*, and *grace*, and *glory*? Your *desires* after *these* are not so *earnest*! . . . They take not up your *thoughts* day and night . . . You can as quietly without *more grace* or *assurance* of salvation or *communion with God* as if you were indifferent in the business. But you *must needs* have that which you desire in the world, or there is no quiet with you.⁹⁵

Indeed, one of Satan’s tactic was pleading the right of Christian liberty or “Necessity” to lure people into using God’s creation in a manner that stole their hearts away from God.⁹⁶ The inordinate desire for a spouse or children also caused people to foolishly rush into matrimony, without seeking God’s wisdom in choosing their condition, which often proved to be their misery.⁹⁷ If Christians took God as their father, then he was certainly “*wise and good enough*” to determine which state of life would be best for them.⁹⁸ Baxter was not indicating that marriage inexorably led to idolatrous flesh-pleasing and fading attentiveness to God and the next life. He quoted Paul (1 Cor. 7:29-31) to argue that Christians could be cured of their idolatrous “thirst after the creature” by remembering

⁹⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 278 §4.

⁹⁶Baxter warned that Satan “*pleadeth Christian Liberty to entice to sin: especially to sensuality: Hath not Christ purchased you Liberty to use the Creatures? all things are yours. No men but the godly have just title to them*” (ibid., pt. 1, 101 §75). In response, Baxter asserted that Christ “never purchased us *Liberty to abuse* the Creature, as poison to hurt our selves; to hinder mortification, and strengthen our enemy and our snare, and to steal away our hearts from God; It’s a *Liberty* from sin, and not a *Liberty to sin* that Christ hath purchased us (ibid., pt. 1, 101 §76). Another strategy employed by the Devil was rationalizing the lawfulness of “*Wife, Children, Estate, Life, &c*” based upon the “*Necessity*” of having them (ibid., pt. 1, 101 §77). Baxter responded by asserting that there was “no *Necessity* of sinning. He cannot be Christ’s disciple, that thinks it more necessary to save his life, or provide for wife and Children than to obey his Lord, *Luke* 14. 26, 33. God must be *Trusted* with these” (ibid., pt. 1, 101 §78).

⁹⁷Baxter wrote, “*Bethink you how unmeet you are to be the choosers of your own condition. You foresee not what that person or thing or place will prove to you, which you so eagerly desire: For ought you know it may be your undoing, or the greatest misery that ever befell you: Many a one hath cried with Rachel; Give me Children or else I dye, that hath dyed by the wickedness and unkindness of their Children. Many a one hath been violent in their desires of a Husband or a Wife, that afterwards had broken their hearts, or proved a greater affliction to them, than any enemy they had in the world*” (ibid., pt. 1, 279 §10).

⁹⁸Ibid., pt. 1, 279 §10. Baxter reminded Christians that God’s “*will . . . must govern and dispose of all, and your wills must conform to his; yea that you must take pleasure and rest in the will of God*” (ibid., pt. 1, 279 §7).

the shortness of life and nearness of eternity.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, his comments do indicate a conviction that the desire to marry—which was like the affection of bosom friends except even more intense—frequently threatened the struggle to maintain one’s love for God and focus upon heaven.

Doing the Greatest Good

Baxter’s third principle was that Christianity produced a life rigidly ordered and prioritized toward doing the greatest good.¹⁰⁰ This third principle was a natural extension of the other two principles. A Christian possessing a fervent love for God and motivated by a focus on heaven would devote themselves to good works that accomplished as much good as possible. The correct ordering of a Christian’s various duties was necessarily extended to a wide array of moral issues,¹⁰¹ because it greatly facilitated holy living: “a holy life [is] more easie to us, when we know the ordinary course and method of our duties, and every thing falleth into its proper place.”¹⁰²

Baxter’s instructions on redeeming the time serves as an ideal lens for understanding his motivation and method for a correctly ordered life.¹⁰³ His urgent

⁹⁹Baxter’s advised: “*Promise not your selves long life, but live as dying men, with your grave and winding sheet always in your eye; and it will cure your thirst after the creature when you are sensible how short a time you must enjoy it; and especially how near you are unto eternity; This is the apostles method, I Cor. 7: 29, 30, 31, ‘But this I say, brethren, the time is short: It remaineth that both they that have Wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world, as not abusing it (or as if they used it not): for the fashion of this world passeth away.’ So you will desire as if you desired not, when you perceive well how quickly the thing desired will pass away*” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 280 §15). Baxter was seeking to highlight the vanity of seeking lasting satisfaction in the physical world, since only God could provide that (See especially *ibid.*, pt. 1 278-79 §6).

¹⁰⁰Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 166. Brouwer reasoned that if Baxter’s “overarching goal and strategy” was to cultivate a heavenly outlook, then proper ordering constituted “his chief organizing principle” (*ibid.*, 169).

¹⁰¹Baxter’s emphasis on correct ordering ranged from crucial spiritual questions down to the routine aspects of life such as apparel or keeping secrets (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 169, 17).

¹⁰²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 77.

¹⁰³See chap. 5 of the *Christian Directory* for Baxter’s lengthy discussion of redeeming the time (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 230-47 §1-70). As Brouwer concluded, Baxter’s concern for redeeming the time demonstrated “the all-encompassing nature of proper ordering throughout the *Christian Directory*” (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 169, 173). See Brouwer’s discussion of proper ordering

pleading to redeem every moment was driven by the shortness and preciousness of time, the abundance of good works needing to be performed, and the need to prepare for eternity: “Remember still that the Time of this short uncertain life is all that ever you shall have, for your preparation for your endless life. . . . What good you will do, must Now be done.”¹⁰⁴ Equally important was his conviction that duties should be ranked according to a clear hierarchy: “All works tend not alike to [God’s] glory; but some more immediately and directly, and others remotely.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, it was not enough to redeem time for good works, but one had to prioritize that time towards performing the greatest good.¹⁰⁶ As Packer stressed, “at all times and in all relationships . . . one should always aim to do the maximum that time and ability afford.”¹⁰⁷ For example, in Baxter’s

as a whole to see the pervasiveness of redeeming the time (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 169-75). Baxter also gave extended discussion to a well-ordered life in “Grand Directive 10”: “Your lives must be laid out in doing God service, and doing all the good you can, in works of piety, justice, and charity” (ibid., pt. 1, 106 §1). However, nearly all of these principles appeared in Baxter’s teaching on redeeming time, and so reference to them will only be made in the footnotes.

¹⁰⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 236 §21. Baxter cited in a marginal note for the reader to look to see his work *Now or Never* (1662). Baxter’s urgency to redeem the time in light of the shortness of life pervaded the *Christian Directory* as illustrated by several examples. He urged them to keep eternity in their eye as a means of helping them to redeem the time for laboring to obtain the one thing necessary: the eternal life of themselves and others (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 232-37 §8-27). He advised, “Do not promise long life to yourselves, but live as those that are always uncertain of another day, and certain to be shortly gone from hence. The groundless expectation of a long life, is a very great hindrance to the Redeeming of our Time” (ibid., pt. 1, 241 §8). His “soul” was “frequently amazed with admiration, that the sluggish world can so insensibly and impenitently go on in wasting precious *time*, so near Eternity, and in so needy and dangerous a case” (ibid., pt. 1, 247 §70); “If you will give an account for every idle word,” he reasoned, “than surely will give an account for every idle hour” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 234 §13).

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pt. 1, 108 §6.

¹⁰⁶Brouwer considered Baxter’s teaching on doing “the greatest good” to be one of the crucial minor themes in the *Christian Directory* (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 177, 183-85). Here I am discussing “the greatest good” as a component of Baxter’s larger theme of a rightly ordered life. For a discussion of the minor themes in the *Christian Directory*, see ibid., 169-94).

The role of the greatest good in Baxter’s moral theology helps clarify his method of casuistry. Brouwer concluded that Baxter did not support the use of probabilism (an approach to moral theology used by many Jesuits), where a course of action could be followed if at least one authority approved it. Baxter did occasionally use probabiliorism, but he far more often employed tutorism (preferring the safest course) and his own system of choosing the greater good (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 183). See also Thomas Wood who thought that Baxter used tutorism (along with William Ames, Jeremy Taylor, and Robert Sanderson) but did not adhere to the strict tutorist position, for there was ambiguity in the word “safer” (Thomas Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century* [London: S.P.C.K., 1952], 74-76). H. R. McAdoo argued that Anglican moral theology defended probabiliorism as the right method for solving most cases of doubt (H. R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology* [London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1949], 64, 97).

¹⁰⁷Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 308.

discussion of which acts of charity should be done and in what order, he stressed prioritizing those that contributed to the “*the greatest good*” and “*our chiefest ends*.”¹⁰⁸ It was so necessary to pay “chief respect” in all good works to the greatest good that an “extraordinary case” could compel Christians to neglect obedience to other scriptural duties.¹⁰⁹ In such cases, “to do the *lesser* is a sin, when the *greater* is neglected.”¹¹⁰ When Christians learned to order their lives to redeeming time in the best possible manner, they had achieved the essence of a godly life.¹¹¹

The “ends and uses” Baxter listed for redeeming time reveals the hierarchy of priorities that helped Christians discern the greatest good. All time should be redeemed for God’s purposes, yet he exhorted readers to redeem time, above all, for work that yielded a distinctly spiritual and public profit: “*Time must be Redeemed especially for works of Public benefit: For the Church and State: for the souls of many.*”¹¹² Consequently, he singled out magistrates and ministers for their “special opportunity and charge” to “*spend and be spent for the people’s sakes.*”¹¹³ Next, he instructed Christians to redeem every moment to benefit the salvation and sanctification of their own soul and

¹⁰⁸Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 262. A clear hierarchy existed for Christians to follow. The “public good” should “be valued above private,” the souls of men before their bodies, the church before the commonwealth, the good of the many before the good of a few, and finally a “*continued good*” before a transitory good (*ibid.*). See also this principle in Baxter’s discussion of good works, *ibid.*, pt. 1, 109 §15.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 262. Baxter wrote that the “public necessities or service” may be of so great a concern for a period of time that a Christian may need to “dispense with all secret duty both of prayer and contemplation for some days together, except for short mental prayers” (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 261 §9). It is important to remember that Baxter did not encourage “any real duty” to be permanently neglected, but rather that a duty should only be considered an obligation when it was performed in its “season” (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 109 §11.)

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 261 §9.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, advertisement to the reader fol. A2v. Similarly, Packer noted Baxter’s constant insistence that redeeming the time was “the duty that sums up all duties” (Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 310).

¹¹²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 231 §6. See also this principle in Baxter’s discussion of good works, *ibid.*, pt. 1, 109 §14.

¹¹³*Ibid.* For similar comments about the special imperative of ministers and magistrates to do good, due to their public role, see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 246 §68. For Baxter’s full list of persons “*on whom*” the “*duty of Redeeming Time, is principally incumbent,*” see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 246-47 §62-69.

afterward to do the same good for the souls of every person that opportunity afforded, “especially for children and servants and others whom God hath committed to our trust.”¹¹⁴ It was only after prioritizing spiritual concerns that Christians should focus on redeeming time for their own bodily welfare and afterward that of others.¹¹⁵ “[T]his is the order in which those works lye,” Baxter concluded, “*for* which and *in* which our *Time* must be *Redeemed*.”¹¹⁶ The order explicitly prioritized good works which had a lasting, eternal benefit and extended to as many people as possible.¹¹⁷

Once Christians began to redeem and allocate their time according to Baxter’s hierarchy of priorities, their duties would function smoothly and efficiently “like a clock or engine.”¹¹⁸ He referred to this acquired skill as “the art of Redeeming Time.”¹¹⁹ The first step in developing this skill was to devote the highest concern and diligence to “*the greatest works of absolute necessity*”: The work of salvation “*must [first] be done, or else we are undone for ever*.”¹²⁰ Second, it was imperative to discern the “*degrees of duties, which is the greater and which is the less*,” so that when two duties seemed to demand one’s attention simultaneously, the Christian would know which to prefer according to the prevailing circumstances.¹²¹ Smaller/lesser duties, though required in their proper

¹¹⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 231 §6. See also this principle in Baxter’s discussion of good works, *ibid.*, pt. 1, 109 §13.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 231 §6.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷In certain ways, Baxter’s emphasis on doing what led to the greatest good for the most number of people reflected certain aspects of what would later come to be called utilitarianism in the nineteenth century. For an introduction to utilitarianism, see Lazari-Radek, Katarzyna de, and Peter Singer, *Utilitarianism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹¹⁸Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 239 §40.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 239 §38.

¹²⁰*Ibid.* See also his counsel to spend time on nothing that did not have some tendency toward one’s ultimate end, the pleasing of God, and enjoying him forever (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 240 §42). See also this principle in Baxter’s discussion of good works, *ibid.*, pt. 1, 109 §13.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 239 §39. See also this principle in Baxter’s discussion of good works (*ibid.*, pt. 1, 108 §11). Brouwer concluded that Baxter’s spiritual and moral advice depended on making a “voracious

“*season*,” had to be neglected when they prevented a “*Greater duty*.” In such cases the “*smaller Duties*” were reckoned “as being no duties.”¹²² For example, redeeming the time required denying oneself pleasures considered “*indifferent and lawful*” when more necessary matters required attention.¹²³ Consequently, people wasted time whenever they preferred the body before the soul, humans before God, indifferent things before necessary things, private duties before public ones, or less edifying acts before the more edifying.¹²⁴ Third, he exhorted Christians to ease the performance of their duties by acquainting themselves with “*the season of every duty and the duty of ever season*.” By doing this, every duty would be ordered and joined like links on a chain, whereas “misplacing . . . and disordering them” would create the confusion and conflict between duties.¹²⁵ Finally, cultivating a tender conscience was vital, so that Christians would fall under immediate conviction when they “lost but a minute of Time.”¹²⁶ For Baxter, “the art of Redeeming Time” produced a strictly ordered life where necessity often demanded

assessment” of one’s circumstances (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 176)

¹²²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 232 §6. Baxter incorporated this principle into his discussion of good works: “*formally* indeed it is no *duty* at all, when it cannot be done without the omission of a greater” (ibid., pt. 1, 109 §11).

¹²³Baxter declared, “He that should save men’s lives, or quench a fire in his house, or provide for his family, or do his Master’s work, will not be excused if he neglect it, by saying that he was about an *indifferent* or *lawful* business. Natural rest and sleep must be parted with for *Time* when necessary things require it” (ibid., pt. 1, 231 §6).

¹²⁴Ibid., pt. 1, 239 §39. Baxter asserted that Christians should not merely be concerned with doing good, but should also strive to discern and do “the best and greatest good,” if it fell within their ability and call to perform it (ibid., pt. 1, 231 §5). See also his counsel to spend time on nothing that is a small good when a greater good should be done (ibid., pt. 1, 240 §42). Usually, the greatest good was public good and Baxter’s passion for promoting the public good led him to compose a treatise on the topic Richard Baxter, *How to do good to many, or, The publick good is the Christians life directions and motives to it, intended for an auditory of London citizens, and published for them, for want of leave to preach them* (London: Printed for Rob. Gibs, 1682).

However, he would qualify the overall rule to prioritize the greater over lesser by pointing to how “present necessity” could cause a lesser work to become the more important duty, when the greater duty could better bear delay (ibid., pt. 1, 110 §21). For example, you should save a man’s life in sickness or danger, since afterward you may have the time to seek the salvation of his soul (ibid.)

¹²⁵Ibid., pt. 1, 239-40 §40. See also this principle in Baxter’s discussion of good works, ibid., pt. 1, 109 §12.

¹²⁶Ibid., pt. 1, 240 §41. Baxter insisted that Christians should “always be ready to render an account to God and Conscience of what you do” (ibid.).

the sacrifice of lesser duties and lawful pleasures in order to do the greatest good. As Packer also observed, Christian living demanded “a *disciplined* life, rigidly and ruthlessly organized as a hierarchy of means to man’s great end.”¹²⁷

Baxter singled out certain practices that especially impeded redeeming time for the greatest good.¹²⁸ Christians must be ready and willing to “part with all that is to be parted with” in order to devote their time solely to duty.¹²⁹ Chief among these was the spiritual threat posed by an “*excess of worldly cares and business.*”¹³⁰ While not as disgraceful as other sins, the burden of worldly cares nevertheless proved deleterious through “[polluting] the soul with deep stains in a little time” and could so dominate the mind that they “kept out good.”¹³¹ They prevented Christians from maintaining their focus on eternity and thus thwarted Christians from devoting themselves to the greatest duties.

The world is on their thoughts from morning to night, and will not give them leave to entertain any sober fixed thoughts on the world to come nor to do the work which all works should give place to. The world devours all the time almost that God and their souls should have to pray, read, meditate, or discourse on holy things.¹³²

Baxter was fond of citing the contrast between Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) to illustrate how time should be redeemed from obsession with “*worldly business and commodity*” when weightier concerns demanded it.¹³³ Martha was so obsessed with the

¹²⁷Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, 310-11.

¹²⁸Baxter referred to these as “Thieves or Time-wasters.” For the full list, see Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 242-45 §50-61. Baxter said that redeeming the time called for anticipating and preventing “impediments” or “clogs” (ibid., pt.1, 231 §5, 240 §44).

¹²⁹Ibid., pt. 1, 231 §5. Baxter pleaded that “every minute” of time should be considered a “most precious thing” and spent “wholly on duty” (ibid., pt. 1, 231 §5). His intent was not to declare recreation lawful, but to allow it only for the purpose of fitting people to return to their labors again (ibid., pt. 1, 232 §8). “Needless inordinate sports and games,” he remarked, was one of the chief “Thieves or Time-wasters to be watchfully avoided” (ibid., pt. 1, 244 §57).

¹³⁰Ibid., pt. 1, 245 §58. See also ibid., pt. 1, 231 §6, 111 §27.

¹³¹Ibid., pt. 1, 245 §58.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³See for example Baxter’s contrast between Mary and Martha’s use of time: Richard Baxter, *The one thing necessary: or, Christ’s justification of Mary’s choice and of his servants wrongfully accused*

worldly cares of hosting and feeding Jesus that she failed to realize that her greatest need was to follow Mary's examples and feed her soul on the teachings of Christ.¹³⁴ While all Christians needed to heed the perilous distraction of worldly cares, it had a special pertinence to ministers and magistrates: "if you be not very *wise* and *watchful*," Baxter warned, Satan would draw you "into such a multitude of diverting cares or business that all seem to be your *duties*. . . . but our *Greatest duties* have the *Greatest necessity*, all things must give place to them."¹³⁵

The temptation to satisfy the expectations of others could also steal away time that needed to be devoted to greater tasks. The Devil enticed Christians with "the pretences" of civility, as well as the desire to avoid offence and censure, so that they frittered away their time in hosting and providing familiar discourse with friends.¹³⁶ Indeed, one of the great disadvantages of bosom friends lay in the amount of time and attention they would expect.¹³⁷ The family presented an even greater host of human expectations to satisfy. The abundance of unforeseen, incidental responsibilities would "steal away all" of a Christian's time unless he was "thrifty and resolute."

We shall have this servant to talk to, and the other to hear, and our Relations to respect, and abundance of little things to mind, so little as not to be named by themselves, about meat and drink, and cloaths and dressing, and house, and goods, and servants, and work, and tradesmen and messengers, and marketing, and payments, and cattle, and a hundred things not to be reckoned up, that will everyone take up a *little* of your Time and those *littles* set together will be all.¹³⁸

(London: Printed for J. Salusbury, 1685).

¹³⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 231 §6.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 111 §27.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 240 §45. See also *ibid.*, pt. 1, 111 §27.

¹³⁷Baxter cautioned, "There is some *special duty* followeth all special acquaintance; but a bosom friend will expect a *great deal*. You must allow him much of your *Time* in conference, upon all occasions; and he looketh that you should be many ways friendly and useful to him, as he is or would be to you" (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9).

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 241 §45.

Baxter was firm on how Christians should respond when tempted to divert their time toward pleasing humans. After endeavoring to reasonably satisfy the expectations of others, a “conscionable man *must* neglect them, and cast them off, and break away,” no matter the cost.¹³⁹ “God must be pleased,” Baxter declared, “who ever be displeased,” and the “the *Great things* must be done whatever become of the less.”¹⁴⁰ Especially ministers, with their host of pressing pastoral tasks, should “resolutely cast out of [their] way” the hosting of friends, when necessity demanded it, even at the danger of appearing “uncivil and morose.”¹⁴¹ But a far better path was to avoid such commitments entirely. The abundance of needs in a family that would require one’s attention prompted Baxter to comment on why celibacy was a far better state for pastors who could refrain from marrying: “This is the grand Reason why *Marriage* and *House-keeping* are so greatly inconvenient to a Pastor of the church, that can avoid them, because they bring upon him such abundance of these *little diversions* which cannot be foreseen.”¹⁴²

The great weakness Baxter saw in all intimate relationships was their tendency to restrict Christians’ concern to a select few, rather than allowing their attention to be spread broadly among many, who might be in greater need. He warned bosom friends to

¹³⁹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 241 §45. Baxter was well aware that such a man might lose his estate, his reputation, or his peace itself as well as being censured as “imprudent, uncivil, morose, or neglective of his friends” (ibid.).

¹⁴⁰Ibid. However, Baxter qualified his sweeping declaration by noting that “where *both* may be done, and the lesser hinder not the greater, and rob us not of Time from necessary things, there we must have a care of *both*” (Ibid., pt. 1, 241 §45).

¹⁴¹Baxter reasoned, “if you be Ministers of Christ whose Time must be spent in your studies and pulpits, and in conference with your people, and visiting them and watching over them, and it is your daily groans that *Time* is *short* and *work* is *long*, and that you are forced to omit so many needful studies, and pass by so many needful souls, for want of Time; yet if you look not well about you, and will not bear some censure and offence, you shall lose even the rest of the Time, which now you do improve. Your friends about you will be tempting and telling you, O this friend must needs be visited, and the other friend must be civilly treated; you must not shake them off so quickly: They look for more of your time and company: you are much obliged to them: they will say you are uncivil and morose: such a scholar comes to be acquainted with you; and he will take it ill; and misrepresent you to others, if you allow him not some *Time* for some familiar discourse” (ibid., pt. 1, 240-41 §45).

¹⁴²Ibid., pt. 1, 241 §45. Brouwer commented on this passage that it is easy to read Baxter’s decision to remain celibate into his warning about the distractions of domestic life (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 170).

resist letting their love lead to a “narrow-hearted” charity confined to one, but to instead practice “as large a charity and benignity as” possible, especially toward “those to whom much more is due.”¹⁴³ Likewise, families had to take care against the same disordering of priorities due to their love for one another. A man’s material provision for his household had to be subordinated to the lives of the poor, “the good of the church or commonwealth,” and “the souls of many.”¹⁴⁴ An even worse offense that Baxter saw all too frequently was children becoming “the inordinate objects” of their parent’s love and wealth.¹⁴⁵ Fueled by a gross misinterpretation of the command to provide for family members (1 Tim 5:8), “[t]his pernicious vice” was “as destructive to good works as almost any in all the world.”¹⁴⁶ In a revealing passage, he asserted that the love binding together bosom friends or family members possessed the same dangerous tendency to restrict the Christian’s love to a few rather than allowing it to spread liberally to all.

It [bosom friends] oft maketh men ill members of the church and commonwealth. For it contracteth that love to our overvalued person [bosom friend], which should be diffused abroad among many; and the common good which should be loved above any single person is by this means neglected (as God himself): which maketh wives, and children, and bosom friends become those gulfs that swallow up the estates of most rich men; so that they do little good with them to the public state, which should be preferred.¹⁴⁷

While Baxter’s rebuke seemed to only target the wealthy, strikingly similar comments in *The Reformed Pastor* indicate that he judged ministers to be just as susceptible to this vice.¹⁴⁸ Another drawback to bosom friends and family were the numerous duties

¹⁴³Baxter urged Christians to not let “friendship make you narrow-hearted, and confine your charity to one: But give all their due, in your valuation and your conversation, and exercise as large a charity and benignity as possibly you can: Especially to Societies, Churches and Commonwealth, and to all the world. It is a sinful friendship, which robs others of your charity; Especially those to whom much more is due than to your friend” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 255, directive 13).

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 262. Baxter condemned those who failed to realize what the greatest good was in such cases (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 224 §15 and 267).

¹⁴⁵See *ibid.*, pt. 1, 101 §78, 108 §10, pt. 2, 7 §23-26, 9 §41, and pt. 4, 224 §15.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 267.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9.

¹⁴⁸Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor shewing the nature of the pastoral*

accompanying those relationships. “Overmuch friendship” typically involved Christians in more responsibilities than time could afford. While any friendship had accompanying responsibilities, he warned that “a bosom friend will expect a great deal,” especially “time in conference, upon all occasions.” Unless such friendships were moderated, precious time would be “taken from God and the public good, to which it is first owed.” Ministers and others “of public usefulness” had to be wary of the dangerous diversions that close friendships could lead to.¹⁴⁹ Baxter did not think that bosom friends or wedlock inexorably led Christians to neglect the public welfare. One could select a bosom friend who demonstrated “a public spirit” and would only request “your vacant hours, and rather help you in your public service.”¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, both types of intimate relationship, especially wedlock, placed Christians in relationships that made far more likely the diversion of one’s time, resources, and love from seeking the greater public good.

In sum, Baxter’s principle that Christians should seek to do the greatest good possible was incredibly influential for his moral decision making. It meant not being satisfied with merely doing good works but striving to do the best works which had the most lasting benefit on the greatest number of people. The priority of greater works did not mean lesser works should be neglected, but in cases of necessity when both could not be done, the greater had to give way to the lesser.

work, especially in private instruction and catechizing: with an open confession of our too open sins, prepared for a day of humiliation kept at Worcester, Decemb. 4, 1655 by the ministers of that county, who subscribed the agreement for catechizing and personal instruction, at their entrance upon that work. 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657), 64-65, 238-40, appendix Pp2v-r. See also the discussion in chap. three, 122-25, 134-34, 148-53.

¹⁴⁹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 4, 254, answer to question 10. If a bosom friend was a “lover of good works,” then Baxter reasoned that he would put “you on to well-doing, and not countenance you in an idle self-pleasing and unprofitable life” (*ibid.*)

Baxter's Ethical Principles and Clerical Celibacy

Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy in the second part of the *Christian Directory* arose from the three principles for Christian living that pervaded the book as a whole. Already, this chapter has explored several of the connections he drew between those principles and marriage. Those connections became even more explicit in the "Family Directory" portion of the work. He opened this section with an extended treatment of the "right *contracting of Marriage*," since the first foundation of a holy family was marrying according to Scripture's model.¹⁵¹ He discussed marriage as a calling, the necessity of a call to marriage, the inconveniences marriage placed upon Christians generally, and finally the special inconveniences of wedlock for pastors. For Baxter, such issues were vital to consider before marrying, because of the impact, both positive and negative, that wedlock exerted on a person's life. Christians should not choose to marry simply because it was a good estate, but only on the condition that it was the "best" state of life for them individually. This alone indicated God's call to marry, apart from which a person should remain single, since the benefits celibacy afforded ordinarily made it the more advantageous state of life.

Calling and Marriage

Since Baxter believed marriage was a calling, his directions for choosing a calling or vocation shed light on how he approached the decision to marry. He counseled Christians to strive, as best they could, to "*accommodate*" their "*habitation, condition, and employments*," so that they had the most advantages and fewest impediments in fulfilling the "*great ends*" of the Christian life.¹⁵² The first and most fundamental concern in selecting a trade or calling was "*the service of God and the public good*." Christians should prefer the calling that would benefit the most people possible, since it was "a great

¹⁵¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3 §1.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 240 §43. See also *ibid.*, pt. 1, 111 §27.

satisfaction to an honest mind, to spend his life in doing the greatest *good* he can.”¹⁵³ Next to the public good, he counseled Christians to base their decision on which calling afforded the most advantages to their own soul. These two directives helped when deciding between vocations that equally contributed to the public welfare. In such a case, Christians should choose the calling that warmed their hearts to God rather than cooling them through the “frequent and long diversions of . . . worldly business.”¹⁵⁴ Finally, he counseled Christians against choosing a vocation that would overwhelm them with “*cares and labour, and deprive you of all leisure for the holy and noble employment of the mind.*” A calling that allowed Christians no opportunity or intermissions to meditate upon “God and heaven” would prove a “constant snare and prison to the soul,” since it would plunge them into far more “business” than they could manage.¹⁵⁵ Taken as a whole, Baxter’s directives for selecting the most suitable calling reflected the three principles that should govern the lives of Christians: cultivating a love for God in the soul, maintaining a meditative focus upon eternity, and seeking to do the greatest good possible. If at all possible, one should avoid a calling or vocation that had so many impediments to the practice of these three principles. Or, as in the case of marriage, one needed a clear call from God that the benefits would outweigh the negatives.

The Call to Marry

Baxter’s first “grand directive” in the Family Directory was that Christians should only marry if they could see “*such Reasons*” that assured them of the “call and

¹⁵³Baxter, *CD*, pt. 1, 378 §21. See also *ibid.*, pt. 1, 110 §23.

¹⁵⁴Baxter counseled, “It is an exceeding great help, to be engaged by our Callings to have the Word and Doctrine of Christ still before us, and in our minds and mouths; when others must be glad to be now and then exercised in it, when their hearts are cooled by the frequent and long diversions of their worldly business: So that our *Calling* and *work* is to an honest heart a continual recreation, and preserving, and edifying help to Grace” (*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 378 §22).

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 378 §23

approval of God.”¹⁵⁶ Consequently, it was imperative for Christians to be able to discern who was and was not called to marriage.¹⁵⁷ Too many people allowed “lust” or “*rashness*” to lead them into hasty marriages.¹⁵⁸ Instead, he urged the need to trust God’s wisdom in the decision to marry, over their own desires, since God knew which would be the most advantageous state of life for his people: “It is *God* that you must *serve* in your Married state, and therefore it is meet that you take his Counsel before you rush upon it: For He knoweth *best* Himself, what belongeth to his service.”¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, the marital state itself did not bring happiness. but spouses depended upon God to provide the “*blessing and comforts*” which marriage could afford.¹⁶⁰ In contrast to the dominant English Protestant view, he did not believe that wedlock was a blessed state for all Christians to enjoy simply because it had been ordained by God in paradise.¹⁶¹ Matrimony was only a “sanctified condition” when Christians married with the conviction that it was the state in which they would be “most serviceable” to God.¹⁶² If parental consent was necessary to marry, Baxter reasoned, then it was absolutely essential to marry only upon receiving God’s call to it, since he knew the best state of life for his people.

Baxter had to respond to a major objection in order to assert that God’s call was a necessary prerequisite for marrying. Many assumed that God had left people at

¹⁵⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3 §2.

¹⁵⁷See *ibid.*, pt. 2, 3-6 §2-19.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 3 §2. Baxter expressed this fear several times: *ibid.*, pt. 2, 4 §4, 9 §40, 10 §43, 12 §57, 31 §1, 41 §5, 53, answer to question 3.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 3 §2. Christians should not marry unless they could “*see such Reasons to invite you to it*” (*ibid.*).

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁶¹See the discussion in chap. 2, 47-57.

¹⁶²Baxter warned, “Be sure that God be the ultimate end of your marriage, and that you principally choose that state of life, that in it you may be most serviceable to him; and that you heartily devote yourselves, and your families unto God; that so it may be to you a sanctified condition” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 12 §57).

liberty to marry, just as he had in all other matters of indifference.¹⁶³ He readily agreed that God had left marriage indifferent in the sense that God had not made any “*Universal Law* commanding or forbidding” it.¹⁶⁴ To have such a “common *Law*” would require that marriage be either a suitable or unsuitable state of life for all people, which simply was not the case.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, he echoed Paul’s condemnation that forbidding all Christians from marrying constituted a “doctrine of devils” (1 Tim 4:3).¹⁶⁶ He also denounced those who aspired to chastity as an evangelical counsel of perfection, since the attractiveness of marriage or celibacy did not stem from any inherent value in either state.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the lack of any common rule mandating or forbidding marriage only meant that the decision was best settled according to “the various Cases of individual persons,” rather than a universal law.¹⁶⁸ If an indifferent matter, such as the

¹⁶³Baxter presented this as a question that no doubt had come up often before: “Quest. *But how shall a man know whether God call him to Marriage, or consent unto it? Hath he not here left all men to their liberties, as in a thing indifferent?*” (Baxter, *CD*, 2, 3 §3).

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, pt. 3, 21 §12.

¹⁶⁵Baxter wrote, “. . . in respect to the Church in general, the Apostle determineth that there is no Law binding them *to marry, or not to marry*: For a law that is made for many must be suited to what is common to those many. Now Marriage being good for one and not for another, is not made the matter of a common *Law*, nor is it fit to be so, and so far is left indifferent: . . . Now God maketh not a *distinct Law* for every individual person in the Church; but one *Universal Law* for all: and this being a thing variable according to the various Cases of individual persons, was unfit to be particularly determined by an *Universal Law*” (*ibid.*, 3, 21 §12).

¹⁶⁶Richard Baxter, *A treatise of self-denial*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1675), 333; Baxter, *A paraphrase on the New Testament with notes, doctrinal and practical, by plainness and brevity fitted to the use of religious families, in their daily reading of the Scriptures: and of the younger and poorer sort of scholars and ministers, who want fuller helps: with an advertisement of difficulties in the Revelations* (London: Printed for B. Simmons and Tho. Simmons, 1685), fol. Yyy2v.

¹⁶⁷Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 20 §8-9. See also Baxter, *A treatise of self-denial*, 334, 335; Baxter, *The crucifying of the world, by the cross of Christ. With a preface to the nobles, gentlemen, and all the rich, directing them how they may be richer* (London: Printed by R. W for Nevil Simmons, 1658), 7-8; Baxter, *The life of faith in three parts, the first is a sermon on Heb. 11, 1, formerly preached before His Majesty, and published by his command, with another added for the fuller application: the second is instructions for confirming believers in the Christian faith: the third is directions how to live by faith, or how to exercise it upon all occasions* (London: Printed by R. W. for Nevil Simmons, 1670), pt. 3, 369; Baxter, *The unreasonableness of infidelity; manifested in four discourses, the subject of which is expressed in the next pages. Written for the strengthening of the weak, the establishing of the tempted, the staying of the present course of apostasie, and the recovery of those that have not sinned unto death* (London: Printed by R. W. for Thomas Underhill, 1655), pt. 3, 156.

¹⁶⁸Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 21 §12.

state of marriage or celibacy, was “*good for anything*,” then it could never be “*wholly indifferent*,” since “[t]here are no such things as are *morally Good* and not *commanded*.”¹⁶⁹ Baxter was pointing out that moral theology still applied to matters of indifference like marriage and celibacy, since they possessed the ability to be morally beneficial or morally deleterious. Yet what rules helped Christians determine a call to marriage in the absence of a universal injunction commanding or forbidding it?

The decision to marry, like all moral choices and actions, should be guided by the obligation of Christians to order and arrange their lives toward not only doing what was *good* but what was *best*. Baxter had already asserted that it was a sin to perform a lesser good when the opportunity for doing a greater good presented itself, which he now applied to the question of marriage. God had prescribed “other General Laws or Rules” to help Christians discern “in what cases [marriage] is lawful, and in what cases it is a sin.”¹⁷⁰ All Christians were “bound” to choose the state of life which would be most expedient for their service to God and “spiritual welfare, and increase in Holiness.”¹⁷¹ Marriage, in itself, contained nothing that disqualified it from being the most beneficial state of life. For this reason, Paul had declared that those who married did “well” (1 Cor 7:38), meaning they chose a lawful state of life which was the most suitable for “some” people. However, Paul had also commended those who refrained from marrying for choosing the “better” state (1 Cor 7:38). According to Baxter, Paul meant that celibacy “more usually” was “the most advantageous state of life,” especially for pastors and persecuted Christians.¹⁷² Thus, while Paul’s teaching on the benefits of celibacy did have

¹⁶⁹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 20 §8-9.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 3 §3. Since God had not allowed “*all to marry*,” Baxter reasoned, “undoubtedly to *some* it is unlawful” (*ibid.*).

¹⁷¹According to Baxter, “Every man is bound to choose that condition in which he may serve God with the best advantages, and which tendeth most to his spiritual welfare, and increase in Holiness” (*ibid.*). See also a similar list of priorities Baxter made that included “*personal Holiness*,” “*public usefulness*,” and “the good of others” (*ibid.*)

¹⁷²Baxter concluded, “. . . there is something in a single life which maketh it, especially to

a special pertinence to the context of persecution in Corinth, his instructions were still applicable to the church throughout time, especially in the case of ministers.¹⁷³ Marriage must be “either a *duty* or a *sin*” based on whether it proved a benefit or impediment to a Christian’s spiritual welfare and ability to serve God: “For [matrimony] is a thing of so great moment to the ordering of our hearts and lives, that it is hard to imagine that it should ever be *indifferent as a means* to our main end, but must either be a very great help or a hindrance.”¹⁷⁴ He did acknowledge the possibility that some people might find either state of life equally beneficial or equally detrimental but thought such cases were quite rare.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, he considered it absurd when Christians used Paul’s saying—“*He that marrieth doth well, and he that marrieth not doth better*” (1 Cor. 3:8)—to justify choosing a state of life that was anything less than optimal for doing the greatest good.¹⁷⁶ Paul’s declaration did not imply, as some commentators supposed, that “all is not sin, which is not best.”¹⁷⁷ Since wedlock almost inevitably proved to be either “helpful” or

Preachers and persecuted Christians, to be more usually the most advantageous state of life, to these *Ends* of Christianity; and therefore it is said, that *He that marrieth not, doth better*” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3 §3). See also where he claimed this was the point of application Paul sought to make for the Corinthian Church (1 Cor 7): “because that to *most* [marriage] was rather a hindrance to good in those times of the Church, than a help, therefore for the present *necessity*, the apostle calleth *marrying doing well*, because it was not against any Universal Law, and it was a state that was suitable to some; but he calls not *marrying doing better*, because it was then more ordinarily suited to the ends of Christianity” (ibid., pt. 3, 21 §12).

¹⁷³See Baxter’s paraphrase of the New Testament for his interpretation and commentary on 1 Corinthians 7 (Baxter, *PNT*, fols. Hhh2r-Hhh4r). Baxter intended for this work to serve as far more than just a paraphrase but to teach doctrine as well.

¹⁷⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3 §3.

¹⁷⁵Baxter acknowledged that “. . . if there be any persons whose case may be so equally poised with accidents on both sides, that to the most judicious man it is not discernible, whether a *single* or *married* state of life, is like to conduce more to their *personal holiness* or *public usefulness*, or the good of others, to such persons *marriage* in the *individual circumstantiated act* is a thing indifferent” (ibid.). See also ibid., pt. 3, 21 §12.

¹⁷⁶Baxter rejected the notion of some that the evangelical counsels—chastity, poverty and absolute obedience—were indifferent and therefore optional (ibid., pt. 3, 20 §9). He supported this reasoning with a series of rhetorical questions. Did not the “moral goodness” of a creature or subject, Baxter asked, imply a “*conformity to his Ruler’s will* expressed in his law?” Did not the Scripture command all Christians to love and accordingly serve God with all their heart, soul, and strength? “Doth not the *Law of Nature* oblige us to serve God to the utmost of our Power?” (ibid.).

¹⁷⁷Ibid., pt. 3, 21 §12.

“hurtful” towards Christian living, the decision to marry could not be subject to people’s whims. “God hath not left it indifferent to men to *hinder* themselves or to *help* themselves as to Moral Ends,” Baxter reasoned, otherwise the prayer “Lead us not into temptation” would make little sense.¹⁷⁸ Ultimately, he wanted his readers to consider the decision to marry in the same manner as Paul, who prized doing not what was good but what was best. Consequently, in contrast to the majority of English Protestants, Baxter made hardly any reference to the institution of marriage (Gen. 1-2) while discussing the need for a call to marry.¹⁷⁹ No matter how many weighty scriptures could be summoned to defend the inherent goodness of marriage as a state of life ordained by God in paradise, it was nevertheless a sin for whomever celibacy was better.

Baxter’s three indicators for a call to marry displayed the priority he placed upon the Christians’ obligation to choose the state where they could best serve God and promote their spiritual welfare. Christians had a call to marry if it was the “*peremptory will*” of their parents, since the command of parents usually signified the command of God. However, this authority could be negated if there was a “*greater matter* on the contrary to hinder it.”¹⁸⁰ For instance, parental authority was annulled when marriage

¹⁷⁸Ibid. Marriage therefore was a “duty” to those Christians who could discern that it would be a great benefit, while marrying would be a “sin” for those Christians who determined that it would be a considerable hindrance. Baxter did concede that some people could not discern whether marriage would be a great help or a great hindrance as to “Moral Ends”; for such people marriage was indeed indifferent, “as being neither duty nor sin; for it is not a thing of *Moral choice* or *nature* at all” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 21 §12). Nevertheless, he thought that such persons were very rare (ibid., pt. 2, 3, §3).

¹⁷⁹Ibid., pt. 2, 3-6 §2-19. See also his lack of reference to Genesis in his paraphrase of the New Testament (Baxter, *PNT*, fols. Hhh2r-Hhh4r). Baxter also made hardly any reference to God’s institution of marriage as he discussed the inconveniences of wedlock (Baxter, *CD*, 6-9 §20-42). In stark contrast, English Protestants displayed some of their most eloquent language while using the creation account to extol and commend matrimony to all people (see the discussion in chap. 2, 47-57).

¹⁸⁰Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 3 §4. Baxter also granted the negation of parental authority “if parents do but *perswade* and not *command*, though their *desires* must not be causelessly refused.” In such a case, “a smaller impediment may preponderate than in case of a peremptory command” (ibid.). In various cases of conscience, Baxter addressed how the will of parents should be factored into the decision to marry: ibid., pt. 2, 4-6 §7-16.

hindered children from their “ultimate end,” which was to obey God and save their soul.¹⁸¹

Lacking the gift of chastity could indicate a call to marriage, and yet this reason alone was insufficient if celibacy was the better state of life for a Christian. Marrying on the basis of concupiscence had to meet two preconditions: a failure to attain the gift “by lawful means” and having no “impediment” that would make marriage unlawful.¹⁸² The reason for those qualifications, Baxter insisted, was because the “divers *degrees* of the *urgent* and the *hindering* causes” had to be evaluated and “the weightiest must prevail.” Even for Christians battling strong lusts, a “*stronger impediment*” meant they must refrain from marrying.¹⁸³ The stronger impediment he had in mind was the danger that wedlock would be a more hindrersome than helpful state of life.¹⁸⁴ In such instances, a person should strive to restrain their lust by other physical and spiritual methods.¹⁸⁵ Since Baxter had insisted that no Christian should claim their sin was unconquerable, he argued that lust could be overcome by lawful means of self-denial or the help of a doctor, without resorting to marriage.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 4 §6, answer to question 1.

¹⁸²Baxter’s reference to obtaining the gift of chastity might seem like a reversion to the Roman Catholic belief that it could be acquired through effort. However, this seems to derive more from his unyielding view of salvation and sanctification that led him to believe no sin was unconquerable for Christians who had been truly converted (see the discussion earlier in this chap., 224-25). He never discounted that certain people, and indeed some pastors, would need to marry for the sake of preserving their purity (see the discussion in chap. 3, 146-47). Baxter’s advice seemed very similar to that given by several English Protestants who taught Christians to first strive to fight lust through self-denial in order to show that they did not have the gift of chastity (see the discussion in chap. 2, 65-68).

¹⁸³Baxter reasoned that even “though they cannot keep that chastity in their *Thoughts* as they desire, yet in such a case they must abstain” (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 3 §4). See also *ibid.*, pt. 2, 4 §6, answer to question 2.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 4 §6, answer to question 2.

¹⁸⁵According to Baxter, “But if the hindrances in a married state are like to be greater, than the hindrances of your concupiscence, then you must set yourself to the curbing and curing of that concupiscence; and in the use of God’s means expect his blessing” (*ibid.*).

¹⁸⁶For Baxter’s position that lust could be conquered through the practice of self-denial, see *ibid.*, pt. 1, 334-35 §18-25, 335-38 §1-16, pt. 2, 3 §4, 5 §10-11, 6 §17.

You must understand that no *corporal necessity* is *absolute*: for there is no man so lustful but may possibly bridle his lust by other lawful means: by diet, labour, sober company, diverting business, solitude, watching the thoughts and senses, or at least by the physician's help; so that the *necessity* is but '*secundum quid*,' or an *urgency* rather than simple necessity.¹⁸⁷

Baxter seemed to believe such claims came from people who had lost their focus upon eternity and the need to prepare their souls for the next life. Thus, he recommended that, by diligent meditation upon heaven, a Christian's love for God would become so enflamed that "lustful love" would be quenched.¹⁸⁸ Concupiscence only indicated a call to marriage once all spiritual and physical methods failed to mortify lust and the impediments of that sin were a greater threat to one's "ultimate end" than all the inconveniences of marriage.¹⁸⁹ Only in such a case, Baxter reasoned, could Paul's counsel be followed: "*It is better to marry than to burn.*"¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, if a person expected the hindrances of wedlock to exceed those of concupiscence, than he must resolve to mortify his lust with the expectation of God's help in the endeavor.¹⁹¹

Baxter's third indicator for a call to marry was the most decisive, since it concurred with the supreme goal of every Christian's life. People could be confident of a call to marriage after foreseeing that wedlock would present "greater helps and few hindrances to the great *ends* of our lives; the glorifying of God, and the saving of

¹⁸⁷Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 4 §6 answer to question 2. Baxter made a similar statement elsewhere: "And there is no man but may keep *his body in chastity* if he will do his part: yea, and *Thoughts* themselves may be commonly, and for the most part kept pure, and wanton imaginations quickly checked, if men be godly, and will do what they can" (ibid., pt. 2, 3 §4). For other places where Baxter mentioned the lawful means to subdue lust, see ibid., pt. 1, 334-35 §18-25, 335-38 §1-16, pt. 2, 6 §17, 10 §44.

¹⁸⁸Baxter warned, ". . . forget not the concernments of your souls: remember how near you are to eternity, and what work you have to do for your salvation: forget not the presence of God, nor the approach of death. Look off by faith into heaven and hell, and keep conscience tender; and then I warrant you, you will find something else to mind than lust; and greater matters than a silly carcase to take up your thoughts, and you will feel that heavenly love within you, which will extinguish earthly, carnal love" (ibid., pt. 2, 10 §44).

¹⁸⁹Ibid., pt. 2, 4 §6, answer to question 2.

¹⁹⁰Ibid. See also a similar statement Baxter made: "There are some that have a more tameable measure of concupiscence, and yet have no considerable *hindrance*, whose *duty* it may be to Marry, as the most certain and successful means against that small degree, as long as there is nothing to forbid it" (ibid., pt. 2, 3-4 §4).

¹⁹¹Ibid., pt. 2, 4 §6, answer to question 2.

ourselves and others.”¹⁹² Discerning this required great skill due to the danger of being seduced by “fantasy, lust or passion.” Another difficulty he admitted was that any condition of life presented both benefits and hindrances to the Christian. One condition could be more conducive to a “*contemplative* life” while another could offer better opportunities for an “*Active serviceable* life.”¹⁹³ Nevertheless, Baxter insisted that it was possible to ascertain which side of the scales had “the greatest weight” through carefully considering wedlock’s advantages and disadvantages.¹⁹⁴ Discerning the third indicator was not only possible but also necessary. The will of parents and extreme concupiscence, while significant, only factored into the decision to marry if “*the final* [third] *cause*” was also present.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, only the third indicator, by itself, provided full justification to marry, since it agreed with the Christian obligation to seek the supreme goal of their lives.

If it be clear that in a married state you have better advantages for the service of God, and doing good to others, and saving your own souls, than you can have in a single state of life, then it is undoubtedly your *duty* to marry: For our obligation to seek our *ultimate end* is the most constant, indispensable obligation: Though parents command it not, *though* you have no corporal necessity, yet it is a *duty* if it certainly make *most* for your ultimate end.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 4 §4. Baxter also explained this more briefly as being “most serviceable to God and the publick good” (ibid.)

¹⁹³In the introduction, Baxter stated that his “intended method” for the *Christian Directory* was “1. To *Direct Ungodly Carnal* minds, how to *attain* to a state of Grace. 2. To *Direct* those that *have saving Grace*, how to Use it; both in the *Contemplative* and *Active* parts of their lives” (ibid., pt. 1, 2 §2).

¹⁹⁴Ibid., pt. 2, 4 §4.

¹⁹⁵Baxter explained, “. . . if the question be only which state of life it is (married or single) which best conduceth to *this ultimate end*, then *any one* of the subordinate *Reasons* will prove that we have a *call*, if there be not greater *Reasons* on the contrary side. As in case you have no *corporal necessity*, the *will of Parents alone* may oblige you; if there be no greater thing against it: or if *Parents* oblige you not, yet *corporal necessity alone* may do it: or if neither of these invite you, yet a clear probability of the attaining of such an estate or opportunity, as may make you more fit to relieve many others, or be serviceable to the Church, or the blessing of Children who may be devoted to God, may warrant your Marriage, if no greater reasons lie against it: For when the Scales are equal, any one of these may turn them” (Ibid., pt. 2, 4 §5.)

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

By uniting the chief reason for marrying with the supreme end of the Christian life, Baxter had shown that the decision could not be a matter of indifference but must be either a duty.

Baxter asserted that certain people were not called to marry due to the obligation of Christians to order their lives according to the supreme goal of their existence. Three groups of people were forbidden to marry: those for whom celibacy was the best state of life, children whose parents had forbidden them to marry, and those who had absolutely vowed not to marry. First, he insisted that “no man” possessed a call to marry if he foresaw that the handicaps of wedlock, to “his salvation, or to his serving or honouring God in the world,” would outweigh any benefits it could offer. To marry in light of such conditions would “disadvantage him” in fulfilling the “ultimate end” of the Christian life and therefore was a sin.¹⁹⁷

The second group of people that was “ordinarily” not called to marry comprised children who had been forbidden by their parents.¹⁹⁸ Here, Baxter adopted an approach that differed somewhat from his instructions to children whose parents had ordered them to marry. Though a parental command could never make marriage a duty when it would hinder “the interest of God our ultimate end,” their prohibition could make marrying a sin, even if there was a strong likelihood that it would be more suitable for achieving the Christian’s “ultimate end.” He reasoned that transgressing the will of parents would frustrate or thwart all the benefits of marriage and so “do more against our ultimate end, than all the advantages.”¹⁹⁹ He may also have been driven by a conviction that parents, being more mature and wise, knew which state of life would be best for their children and should restrain rash decisions to marry based solely upon concupiscence. He

¹⁹⁷Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 4 §6.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 4 §7.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 4, §7.

doubted the truthfulness of children who claimed a need to disobey their parent's on the basis that their lust was unconquerable.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, if one's sexual desires were truly so strong, then it surely was "inordinate and sinful" rather than a love based on someone's godliness.²⁰¹ However, he did concede that if all attempts failed to restrain their lust than they should rather violate their parent's will, a lesser evil, then live in the greater evil of impurity.²⁰²

Christians who had "*absolutely vowed*" to remain single were not called to marry so long as celibacy remained the ideal condition for accomplishing the supreme goal of the Christian life.²⁰³ Baxter was more cautious and nuanced in his treatment of vows than the "many great Divines" who had "easily absolved those" who vowed chastity under popery.²⁰⁴ He did declare unlawful any absolute vows that allowed no alteration due to "difficulties that may arise" as well as any similar oaths or vows parents imposed upon their children.²⁰⁵ Yet vows were lawful and could be very helpful, even

²⁰⁰According to Baxter, "Children that pretend to unconquerable Lust or Love, must do all they can to subdue such inordinate affections, and bring their lusts to stoop to *reason* and their *Parents' wills*. And if they do their best, there are either *none*, or not one of many hundreds, but may maintain their *chastity* together with their *obedience*. 2. And if any say, *I have done my best, and yet am under a necessity of marriage; and am I not then bound to marry though my parents forbid me?* I answer it is not to be believed: Either you have not done your best, or else you are not under a necessity. And your *urgency* being your own fault (seeing you should subdue it), God still obligeth you both to subdue your *Vice*, and to obey your parents" (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 5 §10). Richard Schlatter pointed out that Baxter thought the strength of sexual desire was all too often "only a poor excuse by ungodly children who wish to marry without the consent of parents" (*Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1940; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1971], 11).

²⁰¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 5, §11.

²⁰²In cases, where someone "hath such an (incredible) necessity of marriage," Baxter advised him ". . . to procure some others to solicit his Parents for their consent, and if he cannot obtain it, some say, it is his duty to marry without it: I should rather say that it is *minus malum*, the *lesser evil*: and that having cast himself into some *necessity* of sinning, it is still *his duty* to avoid both, and to choose neither; but it is the *smaller sin* to choose to disobey his Parents, rather than to live in the flames of lust and the filth of unchastity" (ibid.).

²⁰³Ibid., pt. 2, 6 §17. See also ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7.

²⁰⁴Ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7.

²⁰⁵Ibid. See also Baxter's discussion of vows where he said Christians should not "*bind*" themselves "*for futurity*," without any exceptions, on a matter which was only presently their duty, since an alteration in their condition could also change their duty. Consequently, if a person did make a vow, he or she should qualify it so as to limit its force to "*no longer than it shall remain your duty*" (ibid., pt. 3, 22 §19-20).

vows of chastity, based on the additional motivation they provided Christians in obeying duties and abstaining from sin.²⁰⁶ If a Christian knew that the single state would offer the most advantages and least hindrances, then a vow could help them obey their duty to remain celibate by abstaining from marriage.²⁰⁷ Therefore, so long as the “*the thing Vowed be a Lawful thing*,” the vow was still binding, even if it was rashly or improperly performed, and it would be “perfidiousness to break it.”²⁰⁸ If people chose to vow chastity because the single state was the best of life for them, then they were bound to remain celibate as long as those conditions continued.

Votaries could be freed from their obligations, but only when God disobliged them by making clear that marriage, not celibacy, had become their “indispensable duty.”²⁰⁹ A vow of celibacy only became unlawful when it could not be kept without committing a “*greater sin*” or omitting a “*greater duty*” or “*greater good*.”²¹⁰ The first circumstance occurred when a person’s lust was so strong that no other lawful means of

²⁰⁶To make a vow lawful, besides the goodness of thing vowed, there must be a rational discernable probability that the act of vowing will do more harm than good (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 21 §6). Whereas resolutions allowed a person to change his or her mind, vows constituted a “*Promise made to God*” for “the more *certain* and *effectual* performance of our duties” (ibid., pt. 3, 19 §1, 3). Vows laid a “*double Divine obligation*” upon those who took them, for whereas before taking the vow they were obliged to perform their duty “by God only,” they now had an additional obligation, namely to “keep their vow” (ibid., pt. 3, 19 §4). Vows, therefore, did not make new laws or responsibilities for Christians, but their “true Reason and Use” lay in driving on the “backward lingering soul to” to holiness (ibid., pt. 3, 19 §3). Indeed, Baxter identified the spurring effect of vows as a great benefit when “ordinary Resolutions and others helps” failed to motivate Christians to perform “*a known duty*” or forbear “*a known sin*” (ibid., pt. 3, 22 §18). However, he was careful to limit this practice to scriptural duties and therefore opposed using vows in the case of matters deemed wholly “indifferent and unnecessary.” Even though “some” individuals considered *adiaphora* to be “the fittest matter . . . for Vows,” Baxter thought they spoke “*improperly or untruly*” (ibid., pt. 3, 20 §8).

²⁰⁷Such a vow needed to have certain qualifications to be lawful: “A Vow of Celebate or Chastity during life, which hath this condition or exception expressed or implied in the true intent of the Votary [*Unless any thing fall out which shall make it a sin to me not to marry*], may in some cases be a lawful Vow: as to one that foreseeeth great inconveniences in marriage, and would by firm resolution fortify himself against temptations and mutability” (ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7).

²⁰⁸Ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7.

²⁰⁹Ibid., pt. 2, 6 §17. Baxter does not seem to be referring to an absolute vow in the sense that it had no stipulation for being broken in case of difficulties. He had clearly stated elsewhere that absolute vows lacking such an explicit qualification were unlawful (ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7).

²¹⁰Ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7.

mortification except marriage was sufficient to ensure the preservation of chastity. Though Baxter believed far too many people hastily used concupiscence to justify marrying,²¹¹ he nevertheless conceded that “necessity” could make it a duty to break one’s vow and marry. Christians were absolved of their vows if lust put them in danger (“necessity”) of committing fornication, or if the lust was so persistent that they became unfit “for prayer and a holy life.”²¹² The second circumstance that validated a release from vows occurred when a person’s marriage become an “*apparent necessity* to the public safety.” He could only foresee one instance where this principle might apply. A king who vowed chastity might be obliged to break his vow, marry, and produce an heir, if the next in line was a known enemy of Christianity; in such a case, the “Religion, safety, and happiness of the whole Nation” would seem in danger of being overthrown.²¹³ Thus, the decisive factor in breaking a vow of chastity was a necessity that made keeping

²¹¹Baxter reflected, “I suppose it is possible there may be such: But I believe it is not one of a hundred” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 6 §17). Rather, Baxter insisted that lawful means of self-denial should be sufficient to restrain lust (ibid. and ibid., pt. 2, 15, answer to question 7). If these means failed, Baxter actually went so far as to actually recommend “the help of a surgeon” (castration) to keep a vow: “some think the help of a Surgeon may be lawful, to keep a *Vow*, in case it be not an apparent hazard of life. For Christ seemeth to allow of it, in mentioning it without reproof, *Matt. 19:12*. if that text be to be understood of castration: But most expositors think it is meant only of a *confirmed resolution* of chastity: And ordinarily other means may make this needless: And if it be either *needless* or *perilous* it is unlawful without doubt” (ibid., pt. 2, 6 §17). Baxter also cautioned that not all lust justified breaking a vow through marrying: “It is not every degree of sin which marriage would cure, that will warrant the breach of a vow of chastity. As if I had some more lustful thoughts or instigations and irritations in a single life than I should have if I married. The reason is, because, 1. No man liveth without some sin, and it is supposed that there are greater sins of another kind, which by a life of chastity I avoid. And the breach of the vow itself is a greater matter than a lustful thought” (ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7).

²¹²Baxter wrote, “A man should rather break his Vow of Celebate, than *once commit fornication*, if there were a necessity that he must do the one. Because fornication is a sin which no vow will warrant any man to commit.” And in the next paragraph, Baxter commanded marriage to those who were so disturbed by lust that it totally undermined one’s piety: “A man should rather break his Vow of celebrate, than *live in such constant or ordinary lust, as unfitteth him for Prayer, and a holy life*, and keepeth him in *ordinary danger of Fornication*, if *there were a necessity* that he *must* do the one. The reason is also because now the *Matter Vowed* is become unlawful, and no Vow can warrant a man to live in so great sin, (unless there were some greater sin on the other side which could not be avoided in a married life, which is hardly to be supposed, however Popish Priests think *disobedience* to the Pope, and the incommodity and disgrace of a married life, &c. to be a greater sin than fornication itself)” (Ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7).

²¹³Ibid., pt. 2, 6 §18. See also ibid., pt. 2, 14, answer to question 7. See also the unpublished treatise where Baxter makes a similar point regarding rulers (Richard Baxter, Baxter’s opinions on vows of celibacy, Baxter MSS Collection, *Treatises*, vol. 5, item 159, fol. 166r, D.W.L., London).

the vow a far greater hindrance than a help to that person's spiritual welfare or the public good.

Baxter's conviction that Christians' circumstances, and thus their duty, could change was precisely why he preferred the use of resolutions in place of vows, especially on the issue of chastity. "Deliberate resolutions" served as the normative means by which Christians governed and ordered their lives in accordance with the "ultimate end" of their existence. Therefore, resolutions to avoid a particular sin or obey a duty should be utilized first whereas vows constituted a last resort.²¹⁴ His reasoning was especially vindicated by the unreasonableness of perpetual vows of celibacy. He appealed to three instances of how God could alter the circumstances of a Christian who was previously not called to marry, so that it now became a duty to marry. First, a person who previously felt they possessed the ability to remain chaste in the single life might come under such temptation that it became "*necessary*" to marry in order to guard against sexual immorality. Second, a Christian's "*estate*" or external circumstances could be so drastically altered that marriage became a far better condition in which to serve God. Finally, even if a single person remained content in their condition, someone of the opposite sex could be so overwhelmed with "violent affections" for him or her that it would be better for the two to marry.²¹⁵ The need for flexibility, so that Christians could

²¹⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 3, 22 §17. The only situation in which he counseled a vow occurred when the usual resolutions and other helpful means failed in the face of exceedingly strong temptations. In such a case, vow-taking might help "engage the will to a forbearance of a known sin, or the performance of a known duty" (*ibid.*, pt. 3, 22 §18). Yet even then Baxter cautioned that "in such a case of necessity" Christians should first "deliberate on the benefits and need," foresee and prepare for all the ways in which they will be tempted to break their vow, and use all the other normal means to keep their vow (*ibid.*).

²¹⁵Baxter wrote, "It may be your *Duty* at the *present* to live a *single life*; But if you will *Vow* therefore that you will never marry, you may bind yourselves to that which may prove your sin: you know not what alteration may befall you in your *body* or *estate*, that may invite you to it. Are you sure that no change shall make it *necessary* to you? Or will you presume to bind God himself by your Vows, that he shall make no such alteration? Or if you were never so confident of your *own* unchangeableness, you know not what fond and violent affections *another* may be possessed with, which may make an alteration in your duty" (*ibid.*, pt. 3, 22 §20).

order their lives toward doing the greatest good—for God, themselves, and others—was precisely why resolutions to remain celibate were preferable to vows.

In sum, Baxter insisted that a call from God was necessary to marry, since celibacy was more usually the most advantageous state of life, especially for pastors and persecuted Christians. Marriage was a duty for those who possessed a clear call from God inviting them to that state, but for those who lacked such a call, it was their duty to remain single. In either case, he was intransigent that to contravene one's duty was a sin. Beougher, Packer, and Clifford have overlooked the fact that Baxter thought of marriage, and especially clerical marriage, through the dichotomy of duty or sin. They concluded that Baxter never asserted marriage to be a sin, either for pastors or laypeople, since he agreed that God had made no universal law forbidding marriage.²¹⁶ However, while he never declared marriage sinful for all people or all pastors, he did make quite clear that it was a sin for those who foresaw that wedlock would bring more hindrances than helps to their spiritual welfare and capacity to serve God.

The Inconveniences of Marriage

The many inconveniences of marriage demonstrated that celibacy usually was the best state for Christians, and so only those with a call from God should marry.²¹⁷ Baxter composed a long, frank, and contentious list of the difficulties faced in marriage, which has prompted some scholars to believe he had an inherently negative attitude

²¹⁶According to Packer, “Baxter went on record that clerical marriage, while not sinful, should be eschewed whenever possible” (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 184); Clifford noted how “many have felt that Baxter’s statements in the Directory and elsewhere on the subject of ministerial marriage, indicated that he was entirely against it”; but, Clifford asserted, Baxter “merely felt that if ordinary individuals should make extensive preparations, then those who had entered such a high calling as the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should consider the matter even more seriously” (Clifford, “Richard Baxter,” 144-45). According to Timothy K. Beougher, “Baxter maintains that ministers of the gospel should think twice before marrying. He clearly states that it is not unlawful for a minister to marry (as in the Kingdom of Rome)” (Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage,” 137).

²¹⁷Baxter’s discussion of the inconveniences of marriage was the second grand directive in the “Family Directory” portion of the *Christian Directory* (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 6-9 §20-42). It followed, the first grand directive which concerned who was and who was not called to marry (ibid., pt. 2, 3-6 §2-19).

toward wedlock.²¹⁸ Yet Baxter's purpose was more nuanced than simply seeking to discourage all people from marrying. By detailing wedlock's "*ordinary inconveniences*," he hoped to "*restrain*" the "*inordinate forwardness to marriage*" that people so typically exhibited.²¹⁹ People needed to be cautioned that the inconveniences were "no fictions but realities," before they plunged into marriage simply due to a "a pang of lust."²²⁰ Baxter had already declared that people were either called or not called to marriage, with only a few rare exceptions, so he was not seeking to dissuade people from marrying if God had indeed called them to that state.²²¹ Rather, the list of marital inconveniences accomplished a dual purpose. For those with a call to marriage, an informed knowledge of the difficulties was essential to their preparation for the married life, so that they would be able to faithfully endure "*each Temptation, Cross and Duty*."²²² On the other hand, for those with "no call" to marry, "the knowledge [was] necessary enough to keep you off."²²³ In other words, since those without a call to marry should refrain from doing so, the list would help fortify their resolve to remain celibate by detailing why celibacy ordinarily offered so more spiritual advantages.²²⁴

Baxter divided his list of marital inconveniences into two sections. The first section concerned the "inconveniences common to all" Christians, while the second was expressly directed to pastors who had "a greater reason to avoid a married life than other

²¹⁸See the discussion of these scholars' views in chap. 3, 152-55.

²¹⁹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 6 §20

²²⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 9 §40.

²²¹Beougher is correct in the qualification he provided for Baxter's list of marital inconveniences: "At the risk of overstatement, we would to emphasize again that Baxter is not telling persons *not* to get married, only to be certain first that it is God's will for their lives" (Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 136).

²²²I am combining two statements which Baxter used to start and conclude his list of marriage's inconveniences (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 6 §20; *Ibid.*, pt. 2, 9 §42).

²²³*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 6 §20.

²²⁴See also Beougher, who offered a similar interpretation of Baxter's purpose in listing the inconveniences of marriage (Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 135-36).

men have.”²²⁵ In both lists, he pointed out the inconvenient aspects of marriage because of the hindering effect they had on the three principles he had prescribed for Christian living. The inconveniences of wedlock did not make marriage incompatible with a godly life or pastoral ministry, but they would place great strains on the principles Baxter thought were essential for Christian living.

The common inconveniences of marriage. Baxter pointed out that marriage “ordinarily” plunged people into an “excess of worldly cares,” and responsibilities.²²⁶ He had warned that worldly cares polluted the soul by diverting one’s attention from God and the next life, but marriage presented a particularly acute form of this temptation. It was far more challenging to provide for the “wants” (physical needs) of a family than only oneself, due to the enormous weight of additional responsibilities that required careful attention. Christians should expect to frequently encounter frustration and disappointments in the management of household affairs, and no person’s nature was “so strong, content and patient, as to bear all these without molestation.”²²⁷ Echoing Jesus’ warning against the distracting nature of worldly cares (Matt 6:25-33), Baxter predicted that spouses would “often” be at their “wit’s end” fretting about the future and how their family would eat, drink, and be clothed.²²⁸ Furthermore, in contrast to a single person, the married encountered far more emotional vexation in bearing with any physical privations family members experienced. “Affection will make their sufferings pinch you,” Baxter warned, and the inability to placate “the discontent and impatience” of wife, children and

²²⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2 6-7 §20.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 7 §21.

²²⁷*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 7 §21.

²²⁸Baxter warned, “You will want so many things which before you never wanted, and have so many to provide for and content; that all will seem little enough, if you had never so much” (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 7 §22). See also Baxter’s treatment of this passages in his paraphrase of the New Testament (Baxter, *PNT*, fols. D1r-v).

servants brought far more “heart-cutting” grief than single people endured providing for themselves.²²⁹ Indeed, the burden of pleasing family members was a greatly amplified version of the struggle to satisfy the demanding expectations of bosom friends.

The excess of worldly cares accompanying marriage brought “far more temptations to *worldliness* or *covetousness*” which hindered families from greater, more necessary works.²³⁰ Greater wealth would never solve fretting over physical provision, Baxter observed, as evidenced by the rich whose discontentment increased the more wealth they acquired.²³¹ Part of the problem lay in the unique enticements that accompanied having a family. Since marriage tended to intensify anxiety over physical provision, it had a correlating effect on people’s insatiability for accumulating money and possessions: “For when you think you *need* more, you will *desire* more: and when you find all too little to satisfie those that you provide for, you will measure your Estate by *their desires*, and be apt to think that you have never enough.”²³² The other part of the problem concerned the intensity of familial affections. Baxter had noted that the excessive love shared by bosom friends caused them to neglect greater works of charity. Similarly, parental love meant that “most men are as Covetous for their posterity, as if it were for themselves,” and laid up not only for themselves but also for their children²³³ As a result, “*Wife and Children*” became a “devouring gulf” which consumed all the money that was better spent on “pious or charitable” works. Whereas a single person

²²⁹Baxter reasoned, “You cannot help your wife, and children, and servants to contented minds. O what a heart-cutting trial is it, to hear them repining, murmuring, and complaining! To hear them call for that which you have not for them; and grieve at their condition, and exclaim of you, or of the providence of God, because they have it not!” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 7 §23).

²³⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 7 §24.

²³¹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 7 §23. As Baxter observed, “How few in all the world that have families, are content with their estates!” (*ibid.*).

²³²Baxter observed, “Birds and Beasts that have young ones to provide for, are most hungry and rapacious. You have so many now to scrape for, that you will think you are still in want” (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 7 §24).

²³³*Ibid.*

could deny himself “unnecessary things” and devote the rest to charity, a married man had to satisfy all the “importunate desires” of family members till there was nothing left, a fact which “Lamentable experience” proclaimed.²³⁴ It was better to be without the burden and temptation of pleasing others, which was inherent to a family, than to compromise one’s obligation to devote money to the greater causes of charity.

By diverting resources from greater works, marriage “ordinarily” hindered Christians from “honouring” their profession of faith.²³⁵ Repeating a point made in *The Reformed Pastor*,²³⁶ Baxter pointed to the celibate state of Roman Catholic clergy as the factor motivating “so many works of public charity” which allowed them to “advance their names” and “the honour of their Sect.” Doing good to the poor was a far greater work, both in the eyes of God and the world, than even the most pious intentions in raising children.

If it should prove as good a work and as acceptable to God, to educate your own children piously for his service, as to relieve the children of the poor, yet is it not so much regarded in the world, nor bringeth so much honour to religion. One hundred pounds given to the poor shall more advance the reputation of your liberality and virtue, than a thousand pounds given to your own children, though it be with as pious an end, to train them up for the service of the church.²³⁷

Baxter urged Christians to think not in terms of what was good but what best served the “honour of religion and the good of souls.”²³⁸ Not every work contributed to God’s glory in the same measure, “but some more immediately and directly, and others remotely.”²³⁹ In his view, the world looked with far greater admiration upon good deeds performed

²³⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 7 §25.

²³⁵*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 7 §26.

²³⁶See the discussion in chap. 3, 146-47.

²³⁷Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 7 §26.

²³⁸*Ibid.*

²³⁹*Ibid.*, pt. 1, 108 §6. This point was crucial to Baxter.

outside the home, for the public, than good deeds done within the home for family members.

Marriage frequently interfered with the inward elements of piety that Baxter considered so vital to a genuine faith. A heart enflamed with passionate love for God was essential to Christianity. Continual meditation upon heaven nurtured love for God and served as a motivation and guiding force for one's earthly life. Yet the inconveniences of matrimony undermined internal devotion in two ways. First, domestic life, especially the worldly nature of its concerns, was an incredibly distracting environment that made it difficult "to *pray or meditate*, with any serious fervency." The result was a mind constantly drifting toward earthly worries rather than remaining fixed upon God and the salvation of souls: "The *business, care, and trouble* of a married life, is a great temptation to *call down our thoughts from God*, and to divert them from the *one thing necessary . . . and to distract the mind*." Christians with preoccupied minds became "indisposed to holy duty" and served "God with a divided heart, as if we served him not."²⁴⁰ He supported his practical observations with a lengthy series of quotations from 1 Corinthians 7 that accentuated the freedom celibacy offered for single-minded devotion to God.²⁴¹ Yet he also appeared to draw upon a point he had previously made about the danger of intimate friendships: human beings in their frailty could rarely love any person ardently while keeping that affection strictly subordinate to God. Second, the business of married life "commonly" consumed nearly all of one's precious time in lesser duties while the greater ones went neglected. Few moments remained for prayer, reading Scripture, and "holy contemplations, or serious thoughts" of heaven. "All God's service is contracted and thrust into a corner," Baxter lamented, "and done as it were on the bye." The example of

²⁴⁰Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 7-8 §29.

²⁴¹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §29. See also Baxter's treatment of these passages in his paraphrase of the New Testament (Baxter, *PNT*, fols. Hhh2r-Hhh4r).

Martha (Luke 10:42) illustrated how spouses usually viewed their worldly cares as so necessary that they prioritized it over “sitting at Christ’s feed to hear his Word.”²⁴² Women especially bore the brunt of the family’s worldly cares, which “forced [them] to consume their lives in a multitude of low and troublesome business.”²⁴³ In light of such burdens, Baxter urged single people to comprehend “the preciousness of their leisure, and how free they are to attend the service of God, and learn his Word, in comparison [t]o the married!”²⁴⁴ Finally, a less common, though still significant, danger that marriage posed to internal piety was the possibility of a spouse proving to be ungodly. Love for that spouse would place a Christian’s soul in continual danger: “they would be the most powerful instruments in the world to pervert your judgments, to deaden your hearts, to take you off from a holy life, to kill your prayers, to corrupt your lives, and to damn your souls.”²⁴⁵

Baxter warned that marriage burdened people with a seemingly unmanageable number of spiritual responsibilities to family members.²⁴⁶ Part of the reason for his caution was the lack of careful consideration people showed concerning how exhausting, exasperating, and grievous the duties of wedlock would be.²⁴⁷ The marriage covenant obligated spouses to watch over each other’s soul through instruction, admonishment, prayer, accountability, and patiently bearing infirmities. To “the *weak* and backward heart

²⁴²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 8 §30. In another work, Baxter urged his readers to gaze “into most families, and see whether they be not with *Martha, troubling themselves with many things*, when the *Good part* is almost cast aside” (Richard Baxter, *A saint or a brute the certain necessity and excellency of holiness, &c.* [London: Printed by R. W. for Francis Tyton and Nevil Simmons, 1662], pt. 2, 102). See also Baxter’s treatment of this passage in his paraphrase of the New Testament (Baxter, *PNT*, fols. c4v-d1r).

²⁴³Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 8 §35.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §30.

²⁴⁵*Ibid.* pt. 2, 8 §34.

²⁴⁶This paragraph is a synthesis of several inconveniences (*Ibid.*, 2, 8 §32, 8 §36, 9 §38).

²⁴⁷Baxter explicitly warned that people should first consider how wearying the many spiritual duties of marriage would be before marrying (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §32, 8 §36).

of man,” the weight of so many vital duties contributed even more to the “*weariness*” of life.²⁴⁸ Furthermore, seeking the salvation of children demanded relentless, careful and “incessant labour” on the part of the parents.²⁴⁹ Unfortunately, even godly and diligent parental shepherding was often to no avail, so that parents instead faced an “abundance of affliction” through the “miscarriages” of their children. When children proved foolish, obstinate, unthankful, or enemies of God and the church, their vices would pierce the hearts of parents with grief made even more bitter by the dearness of their children.²⁵⁰ Domestic servants required extensive instruction and admonishment in “matters of their salvation.” The substantial “care and trouble” of disciplining servants was made even more challenging by the displeasure they had in their domestic labors, so that “most families are houses of Correction or Affliction.”²⁵¹ However, the drawbacks Baxter saw to bosom friends indicate that he saw a deeper problem with the numerous spiritual duties of matrimony. He warned that both types of relationships “contracteth” Christians to “more *duty* than we are able to perform without neglecting our duty to God, the Commonwealth and our own souls.” Such love and devotion “should be diffused abroad among many,” where it was “first owed.”²⁵² Even though families and bosom friends were bound by noble obligations to spiritually benefit one another, they tended to distract Christians from greater and more public works by concentrating so much spiritual care on a select few.

²⁴⁸Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 8 §32.

²⁴⁹Baxter used a series of rhetorical questions to stress how much work parenting involved: “What uncessant labour is necessary in Teaching them the Doctrine of Salvation? . . . What abundance of obstinate, rooted corruptions are in the hearts of Children, which Parents must by all possible diligence root up? O how great and hard a work is it; to speak to them of their sins and Saviour, of their God, their souls, and the life to come, with that reverence, gravity, seriousness, and unwearied constancy as the weight of the matter doth require? and to suit all their actions and carriage to the same ends?” (ibid., pt. 2, 8 §36).

²⁵⁰Ibid., pt. 2, 8-9 §37.

²⁵¹Ibid., pt. 2, 9 §38.

²⁵²Ibid., pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9.

The nature of women made it particularly challenging for husbands to live a life prioritized toward doing the greatest good and pleasing God above anyone else. Baxter took care to point out that both husband and wife possessed “*faults and imperfections*.”²⁵³ He also expressed amazement and admiration at women’s natural ability to patiently endure so much affliction in their roles as wives and mothers.²⁵⁴ At the same time, however, he exhibited the same views of women that largely characterized his historical era, and even English Protestant marriage literature.²⁵⁵ The “*natural imbecility of the Female sex*,” Baxter warned, required “no small patience.”²⁵⁶ While his word choice may seem shocking, his intention was to stress the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual weakness of women in comparison to men.

Except it be very few that are patient and man-like, women are commonly of *potent Fantasies*, and tender, *passionate*, impatient spirits, easily cast into anger, or jealousy, or discontent: and of weak understandings, and therefore unable to reform themselves. They are betwixt a *man* and a *child*: Some few have *more* of the *man*, and many have more of the *child*; but most are but in a middle state. Weakness naturally inclineth persons to be *froward* and *hard to please*; as we see in children, old people, and sick persons.²⁵⁷

²⁵³Baxter reasoned, “*If one party only were froward and impatient, the stedfastness of the other might make it the more tolerable: But we are all sick in some measure, of the same disease: And when weakness meeteth with weakness, and pride with pride, and passion with passion, it exasperateth the disease and doubleth the suffering. And our corruption is such, that though our intent be to help one another in our duties, yet we are apter far to stir up one another’s distempers*” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 8 §28). Also, he acknowledged, “Men are *frail* and apt to fail in such *difficult duties* as well as Women” (ibid., pt. 2, 49).

²⁵⁴Baxter wrote, “*Women especially must expect so much suffering in a married life, that if God had not put into them a natural inclination to it, and so strong a love to their children, as maketh them patient under the most annoying troubles, the world would ere this have been at an end, through their refusal of so calamitous a life. Their sickness in breeding, their pain in bringing forth, with the danger of their lives, the tedious trouble night and day; which they have with their children in their nursing and their childhood; besides their subjection to their Husbands, and continual care of family affairs: being forced to consume their lives in a multitude of low and troublesome businesses: all this, and much more would have utterly deterred that Sex from marriage, if Nature it self had not inclined them to it*” (ibid., pt. 2, 8 §35).

²⁵⁵See Benson, “Richard Baxter’s Teaching on the Family,” 71-76. For discussion of English Protestant attitudes toward women, see the discussion in chap. 2, 77-80.

²⁵⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 7 §27. “Imbecility” comes from the Latin word *imbecilitas* which means “weakness” or “feebleness” (Leo F. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin with an Appendix of Latin Expressions Defined and Clarified* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995], 121). See also Schlatter who interprets Baxter’s use of the word “imbecility” as denoting the weakness of women (Schlatter, *Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660-1688*, 11n1).

²⁵⁷Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 7 §27.

Thus, the physiological and spiritual frailty of women meant they were often unstable and driven to polar extremes, which meant pleasing them would prove to be no easy task for a husband untrained in the “art of *pleasing*.”²⁵⁸ The difficulty was exacerbated by what Baxter believed pleasing a wife usually cost. Women were less patient than men to suffer for the sake of righteousness, which often forced their husband to compromise their faith to indulge them.

Many a man that could easily have suffered the loss of his estate, or banishment, or imprisonment for Christ, hath betrayed his Conscience, and yielded to sin, because his *Wife* hath grieved him with impatency, and could not bear what he could bear.²⁵⁹

The pride of women, which often lead to their envy of those who exceeded them, exacerbated the challenge of husbands to please them.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, women wanted to have nice things. They suffered from “*childish*” obsessions over trivial matters such as fine apparel, fashions, lavish entertainment, and the neatness or cleanliness of their dwellings. “It dishonoreth your Sex, and selves,” Baxter rebuked, “to be so childish, as to over-mind such toyish things.” The tragic cost of such frivolity, he bemoaned, was the loss of “precious time” when people had so many “greater matters” to devote their attention to.²⁶¹ Hence, a man desiring to live frugally on bare essentials and dedicate

²⁵⁸In Baxter’s judgment, “They [women] are like a sore, distempered body: You can scarce touch them but you hurt them. With too many you can scarce tell how to *speak* or *look* but you displease them. If you should be very well versed in the art of *pleasing*, and set yourselves to it with all your care, as if you made it your very business and had little else to do, yet it would put you hard to it, to please some weak, impatient persons, if not quite surpass your ability and skill. And the more you love them, the more grievous it will be, to see them still in discontents, weary of their condition, and to hear the clamorous expressions of their disquiet minds (stated elsewhere). Nay the very multitude of words that very many are addicted to, doth make some men’s lives a continual burden to them. Mark what the Scripture saith, Prov. 21. 9. *It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.* Ver. 19. *It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.* So 25. Vers. 24. And Prov. 27. 15. *A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are alike.* Eccles. 7.28. *One man among a thousand have I found: but a woman among all those have I not found*” (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 7 §27).

²⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 50 §6.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 50 §8.

²⁶¹*Ibid.*

himself to the greatest good would often be hindered by the need to please his wife and her childish desires.

Baxter's criticism of women's weakness also extended to their more intimate role as spiritual helpers and the Christian education of children. Though he had praised the marital relationship as an ideal environment for soul care,²⁶² in his discussion of bosom friends he discouraged Christians who hoped to find an intimate spiritual companion in their wife. A wife ideally would be the best candidate, due to "nearness and united interests," if she possessed "the understanding, and virtue and fidelity" necessary for the role. Unfortunately, wives seldom possessed the required "fitness." In such a case, it was both lawful and appropriate to find another close friend truly fit to be a bosom friend and commit those secrets to him "which we commit not to a Wife." As Baxter reasoned, "secrets are not to be committed to the untrusty, nor wise counsel to be expected from the unwise, no matter how near they might be."²⁶³ Baxter may have sensed that his position echoed the demeaning of women by classical pagan authors, which Protestants had roundly condemned. He refrained from endorsing the "great writers about this special friendship" who contended that no woman was fit for the role of a bosom friend, since that conclusion was "too injurious to that Sex."²⁶⁴ In reality, however, by stating that wise, virtuous, and faithful wives were a rare exception to the norm, he had hardly distanced himself from the negative attitudes of classical authors. Such a pessimistic evaluation of women as spiritual companions obviously created tensions with

²⁶²See the discussion in chap. 3, 153-67.

²⁶³Baxter, *CD*, pt. 4, 252, answer to question 4.

²⁶⁴Ibid. Baxter's reference to the "Great writers" probably hearkens back to Cicero, Scipio, and Lælius who had written extensively on friendship; Baxter frequently used them as a foil against which to contrast his own views on friendship: "*Intimate, special friendship* is a thing that hath been so much pleaded for by all sorts of men, and so much of the felicity of man's life hath been placed in it, that it besemeth not me to speak against it. But yet I think it meet to tell you with what *Cautions* and limits it must be received, and how far it is good, and how far sinful; (for there are perils here to be avoided, which neither *Cicero*, nor his *Scipio* and *Lælius* were acquainted with) (Ibid., pt. 4, 251, answer to question 2). See also *ibid.*, pt. 4, 253, answer to question 9. Elsewhere, Baxter referenced what "Cicero and the old doctors say of friendship" (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 252, answer to question 6).

his ideals of matrimonial companionship and soul care. How could a man find a godly woman suitable to be a helper to his soul when so many were unfit? Women's weakness also extended to their vital role in the spiritual upbringing of children: "Many women by their passion and indiscretion" became "unfit to help their Husbands in the Government . . . of their Children," even though this nurturing role constituted their great service to Christ and the church.²⁶⁵ For Baxter, husbands often met disappointment in their wives as spiritual companions and nurturers, which made marriage all the less attractive. Indeed, Geoffrey F. Nuttall has suggested that Baxter's passing negative remarks on women may be connected with his preference for celibacy.²⁶⁶

The nature of marriage meant spouses would have to endure far more suffering than any intimate friendship.²⁶⁷ Baxter had warned that inordinate love shared by bosom friends lead to "*disappointments*" and an "excess of sorrows," yet these heartaches were greatly multiplied in matrimony. One of the spouses would frequently experience some form of suffering, and being yoked together, the other would have to help bear the sorrow. Their love only heightened the shared experience of grief: "the more they Love each other, the more they *participate* in each others *griefs*."²⁶⁸ Love also made the inevitable parting at death even "more *grievous*," since one spouse would have to "see

²⁶⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 47 §35. According to Baxter, "This is the greatest service that most Women can do for God in the World: Many a Church that hath been blessed with a good Minister, may thank the pious education of Mothers; and many a thousand Souls in Heaven may thank the holy care and diligence of Mothers, as the first effectual means. Good Women this way (by the good education of their Children) are ordinarily great blessings both to Church and State" (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 64 §21).

²⁶⁶Nuttall wrote, "Baxter has several *obiter dicta* on women, as that 'it is Style and not Reason which doth most with them', and 'Women are usually less patient of Suffering than Men.'" According to Nuttall, "These suggest, perhaps, the detachment of a naturally celibate mind" (Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "The Personality of Richard Baxter," in *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* [London: Epworth Press, 1967], 107).

²⁶⁷This paragraph is a synthesis of several inconveniences (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 8 §28, 31, 33, 35 and 9 §39, 40).

²⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §33. "Therefore before you undertake to bear all the burdens of another, and suffer in all another's hurts, it concerneth you to observe your *strength*, how much more you have than your *own burdens* do require" (*ibid.*).

the body” of their “Beloved, turned into a cold and ghastly clod.”²⁶⁹ Husbands and wives often proved to be their own enemy in bearing each other’s burdens. There was “so great a diversity of temperaments and degrees of understanding” among people that it was impossible to find two without “some *unsuitableness* between them.” Whether spouses clashed as a result of their “*opinion or disposition, or interest, or will, by nature, or by custom and education,*” all such quarrels would frequently stir up displeasures.²⁷⁰ The shared sin nature of both spouses so exacerbated the difficulty of providing mutual help and support that usually more harm was done than good: “our corruption is such, that though our intent be to *help* one another in our *duties*, yet we are apter far to stir up one another’s distempers.”²⁷¹ Women especially had to patiently endure a “multitude” of sicknesses, “the most annoying troubles,” and danger to their very life through the bearing of children and management of the home.²⁷² The ordinary suffering spouses had to endure, indeed all the “marriage crosses” discussed thus far, lacked any “hope of relief,” since they were inescapable apart from death.²⁷³

The inconveniences of clerical marriage. The inconveniences of marriage had an even more deleterious effect on the pastor’s ability to practice the principles that were essential to Baxter’s vision of the Christian life. Yet this did not necessitate clerical celibacy for all.²⁷⁴ Thought he exhorted pastors to “think what they do, and think again”

²⁶⁹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §40.

²⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §31.

²⁷¹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §28.

²⁷²*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 8 §35.

²⁷³*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 9 §39.

²⁷⁴Baxter’s list of the inconveniences of clerical marriage had a similar dual purpose to the common inconveniences of marriage. He did not want to dissuade pastors from marrying if they were called to it, but rather to warn and prepare them for the specific temptations marriage would bring to their ministerial vocation. Likewise, for pastors who were not called to marry, he desired to elucidate the exceedingly great benefits they would find in being single ministers, so that they would be prepared to resist the temptation to marry.

before marrying, he nevertheless asserted that matrimony was not “*simply unlawful for them*” or that they were forbidden from wedlock “by a law,” as in the Roman Catholic Church.²⁷⁵ Ministers were obligated to choose the state of life that would offer the most advantages and fewest impediments to their vocational calling: “But so great a hindrance ordinarily is this troublesome state of life to the Sacred Ministration which they undertake, that a very clear call should be expected for their satisfaction.”²⁷⁶ The key word to underscore is the word “ordinarily.” For the majority of pastors, wedlock would obstruct their labors so severely that it would be a sin for them to marry. He did not doubt that some ministers would better serve God in married state and were thus called to it.²⁷⁷ However, since this was the exception rather than the norm, “a very clear call” from God was required to justify their decision to marry.²⁷⁸ Baxter’s demand for a manifest call derived from two concerns. First, in *The Reformed Pastor* he had asserted that clergymen, like most Christians, were too quick to marry after only briefly struggling with sexual temptation. Instead, they should exhaust all efforts to mortify their flesh through lawful means, for a call to marriage was clear only when a pastor was in a necessity of either marrying or committing fornication.²⁷⁹ Second, he was convinced that wedlock usually brought far more hindrances than benefits to a pastor, which meant a call from God was

²⁷⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41. Baxter went on to say that the Roman Catholic Church’s law against clerical celibacy had been instituted “for *carnal ends* and with *odious effects*” (ibid.). The comment regarding “*carnal ends*” may have been a hint at the church’s desire to keep clerical salaries low and to ensure that church property could not pass to their children. The comment regarding “*odious effects*” concerned the problem of unchaste clergy who wounded both themselves and their ministry through sexual incontinence (see Baxter, *RP*, 239).

²⁷⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41. See also Baxter, *A treatise of self-denial*, 333-34.

²⁷⁷In *The Reformed Pastor* he had already stated that there were pastors who should indeed marry since the negative consequences of their concupiscence were a greater danger than losing the advantages of the single state (Baxter, *RP*, 239). See the discussion in chap. 3, 146-47.

²⁷⁸While Baxter did not elaborate on how this call would become clear, the absence of an explanation would seem to indicate such a call could appear through one of the three indicators mentioned previously: the will of parents, incontinence, and greater advantages to serving God and promoting one’s spiritual welfare.

²⁷⁹Baxter, *RP*, 236-39.

extremely rare.²⁸⁰ Baxter supported this assertion with four considerations that underscored how the common inconveniences of marriage had an even more detrimental effect upon pastors in light of their weighty and unique responsibilities.²⁸¹

Baxter argued that marriage required pastors to devote themselves to a comparatively lesser good when they had little time to spare for the greater and more necessary work of the ministry. Time was too precious for that! Employing a rhetorical question, he asked “Do you not know what you have to do in public and private?” He prompted them to consider the immense burdens pastors carried by enumerating the time spent in “reading, meditating, praying, preaching, instructing personally, and from house to house.” Furthermore, he urged pastors to consider that the ministry was a “greater work,” since its sole concern was the salvation of souls, the most vitally necessary and eternally significant work there was: “do you know of how great importance it is? Even for the saving of men’s souls.” In light of such considerations, Baxter asked pastors to seriously consider whether ministers should embark on a way of life that involved them in “so much worldly cares and business?” He employed an illustration from Paul (2 Tim 2:4) to illustrate the strict prioritization required by the greater work of the ministry: “*No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him that hath chosen him to be a soldier.*”²⁸² To Baxter, it was quite obvious that soldiers did not concern themselves with “Farms and Servants,” since they had been freed from such

²⁸⁰Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41.

²⁸¹Baxter would provide a similar list in 1681 in the conclusion of his wife’s memoir, which he wrote after her death (Richard Baxter, *A breviat of the life of Margaret, the daughter of Francis Charlton and wife of Richard Baxter: there is also published the character of her mother, truly described in her published funeral sermon, reprinted at her daughters request, called, The last work of a believer, his passing-prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ, to be received by him* [London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681], 102-4).

²⁸²Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9, §41. Baxter quoted 1 Tim 4:15 to make a similar point: “Are you not charged, 1 Tim.4. 15. *Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them*” (ibid.). He also quoted this scripture in *The Reformed Pastor* to argue that every minister was “doubly obliged,” to do all he could for the salvation of others, because he had been separated to preach the Gospel and “give himself wholly to that work” (Baxter, *RP*, 355-56). See also Baxter’s treatment of these passages in his paraphrase of the New Testament (Baxter, *PNT*, fols. Yyy1v, Zzz2r).

civilian duties in order to be dedicated to warfare.²⁸³ If so, how much greater was it necessary for ministers to be freed of the familial worldly cares in order to devote themselves wholly to the spiritual conflict over eternal souls. Even the spiritual responsibilities of familial soul care could not compete in importance with the work of the ministry. Truly, pastors should be the most qualified out of all Christians for leading godly homes, yet saving and shepherding souls was simply too great a responsibility to allow any competing interests.

Though none should have so great fitness for the holy education of Children and Government of Families as Ministers, yet so great is the work of Overseeing the flock, requiring more time and parts than all that we have, and so great are the matters of our studies and labours, requiring our total and most serious thoughts that I earnestly advise all that can possibly, to live single and without a Family, lest they mar their work by a divided mind.²⁸⁴

While leading a godly family was a good work, it was not the greatest work incumbent upon pastors. Thus, Baxter argued that clerical celibacy, ordinarily, was simply the logical outcome of rigidly ordering one's life to doing the greatest good possible and shirking any lesser duties. Nothing less was called for considering the shortness of pastors' time, the quantity of their labors, and their greater worth in light of eternity.

The endless interruption of worldly cares in marriage had a detrimental effect on the inward aspects of the pastor's piety and thus also his ministerial labors.²⁸⁵ Baxter had warned all Christians that the daily provisioning and maintenance of the family threatened to divert one's thoughts from daily mediation upon God, holy things, and the next life. For pastors, however, the constant "*diversions, avocations, and distractions*" of domesticity were ill suited for a "Mind devoted to God." They should always be "free and ready" for God's service, for the essentially spiritual nature of ministerial work called

²⁸³Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9, §41.

²⁸⁴*Ibid.*, pt. 3, 199, note 8.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 9 §41.

for freedom from any diverting duties. Since the minister's studies and pastoral labors concerned "such great and mysterious subjects," the vocation required the "*whole mind*" rather than a "*divided or distracted mind*."²⁸⁶ The problem was not only that families brought never-ending interruptions, but the worldly nature of these distractions made them particularly bothersome: "The talking of Women, and the crying of Children, and the cares and business of the world, are ill preparations or attendants on these studies." Since Baxter had stressed the polluting effect that worldly cares produced in the souls of Christians, how much more were they dangerous for pastors in light of the sacred nature of their work?

The worldly distractions accompanying marriage hindered the pastor's affections for God which was so essential to his ministry.²⁸⁷ For all Christians, the worldly cares of marriage threatened to displace the supremacy God should have in their hearts; such disorder was a grave threat to piety since only a passionate affection for God could lead to a life of godliness. If heart-work was essential for Christians, then it was indispensable to ministers, since the sacred nature of their work could only be performed with whole-hearted devotion. Baxter questioned whether pastors could keep their "Affections warm and vigorous for God" while distracted by the worldly responsibilities accompanying a family. Pastors had to consider just how unsuitable the constant intrusions of domesticity would be to their labors.

Consider well whether a life of so great *disturbance* be agreeable to one whose *Affections* should be taken up for God: and whose work must be all done, not formally and affectedly with the lips alone, but seriously with all the heart. If your *Heart* and warm *Affections* be at any time left behind, the life and power, the beauty

²⁸⁶Baxter wrote, "Your studies are on such great and mysterious subjects, that they require the *whole mind*, and all too little. To resolve the many difficulties that are before you, to prepare those suitable, convincing words, which may pierce and persuade the hearers hearts, to get within the bosom of an Hypocrite, to follow on the Word till it attain its effect, and to deal with poor souls according to their great necessity, and handle God's word according to its Holiness and Majesty, these are things that require a whole man" (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41).

²⁸⁷*Ibid.*

and glory of your work are lost. How dead will your studies, and praying, and preaching, and conference be!²⁸⁸

While other vocations could be performed to some degree with mere outward conformity, pastoral ministry would never succeed through lip-service. Furthermore, a cold heart toward God hindered the pastor's need for continual contemplation of eternity. Baxter questioned whether a pastor could maintain his focus upon "Heaven and Heavenly things" while constantly vexed by "the cares and crosses of the world, and taken up with carnal matters."²⁸⁹

Marriage usually impeded clergymen from devoting their income to greater, more public acts of charity, which was essential for the success of their ministry.²⁹⁰ Baxter had noted that marriage ordinarily prevented Christians from commending their profession of faith through good works, but for pastors the need to avoid such hypocrisy was even greater. Since they were responsible for winning souls, pastors by necessity had to adorn their preaching with good deeds, done publicly for all to see, if they hoped to have a receptive audience for their message.²⁹¹ He relied upon his own experience to assert a direct connection between the dearth of charity among pastors and the hardheartedness of so many of the laity to the gospel.

If you feed not the bodies of the poor, they will less relish the food of the soul: Nay, if you abound not above others in good works, the blind, malicious world will see nothing that is good in you; but will say, *You have good words, but where are your good works?* What *abundance* have I known hardened against the Gospel and Religion, by a common fame, that *these Preachers are as covetous, and worldly, and uncharitable as any others*: and it must be something *extraordinary* that must confute such fame. And what abundance of success have I seen of the labours of those Ministers, who give all they have in works of Charity!²⁹²

²⁸⁸Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41.

²⁸⁹*Ibid.*

²⁹⁰*Ibid.* For similar comments, see Baxter, *BLM*, 102; Baxter, *RP*, 237-41.

²⁹¹Baxter urged ministers to ". . . consider also how well that *indigent* [poor, needy] *life* will agree to one that by charity and good works should second his Doctrine, and win men's souls to the love of Holiness" (Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41)

²⁹²*Ibid.*

Baxter refrained from naming who “those Ministers” were that had experienced tremendous “success” on account of the financial generosity their celibacy afforded. Nevertheless, most likely he was thinking of himself, especially since his Kidderminster achievement exerted such a powerful influence on his mind and that he clearly viewed his celibate state as enabling it.²⁹³ Few pastors realized, as he did, the boon their ministries would experience, if they could devote to the poor the income which otherwise would have gone toward a family. In contrast, providing for “wife, and children, and family necessities” would “devour all” the money that should be spent on public charity and works. Moreover, ecclesiastical benefices were usually insufficient for merely provisioning a family, let alone doing “any eminent works of Charity besides!” Baxter did concede that a “*rich and resolved man*” might be able to do “*some good*” as a married cleric, yet it was “*next to nothing*” compared to the results a single pastor could achieve. For this reason, pastors should “never reckon upon the doing of much good to the poor, if you have wives and children of your own! Such instances are rarities and wonders.”²⁹⁴ Thus, the dearth of charitable works ordinarily caused by marriage was especially deleterious to pastors, since the essence of their ministry—preaching the gospel—would never receive a warm reception without them.

Wives of pastors would also encounter unique marital inconveniences, since their husbands would always be obligated to prioritize their ministry over the family. In his treatment of cases regarding divorce and separation, he addressed whether pastors could leave their wives and families to go abroad preaching the gospel.²⁹⁵ He cautioned ministers against leaving either their family or congregation “without necessity, or a clear

²⁹³See the discussion in chap. 4, 205-8.

²⁹⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 9 §41.

²⁹⁵Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 53, answer to question 3. Baxter used similar principles when he discussed whether an ambassador could leave his wife to go abroad (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 212-13, answer to question 2).

call from God.”²⁹⁶ Pastors could not leave if their departure put either of the spouses in danger of “mental or corporal incontinency,” caused “any other hurt which will be better than the benefits of their absence,” or caused the neglect of “any real duty.”²⁹⁷ In the absence of such impediments, the pastor’s departure could indeed be necessitated by several conditions: persecution at home, “an open door for the Conversion of Infidels, Hereticks, or Idolaters,” the lack of anyone else fit or willing to do the work, and the inability of wife and children to accompany him.²⁹⁸ Then, pastors “may and must leave their Wives” to perform their ministerial work, since “the interest of the church, and of the souls of many, must over-rule the interest of wife and family.”²⁹⁹ Even though cohabitation and sexual relations were mutual duties, the Christian’s greatest obligations were to the universal church and the public welfare, which, as greater goods, had to be preferred before the lesser good of one’s family.³⁰⁰ Consequently, a wise woman would

²⁹⁶Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 53, answer to question 3.

²⁹⁷*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 53, answer to question 1. However, when Baxter answered whether an ambassador could leave his wife, to live abroad, he asserted that public necessity might require it, regardless of any harm it might cause to the wife: “The command of the King, or public necessities, may make it lawful, except in a case so rare as is not to be supposed (which therefore I shall not stand to describe.) For though it be a very tender business to determine a difference between the public authority or interest, and family relations and interest, when they are contradictory and unreconcilable, yet here it seemeth to me, that the Prince and public interest may dispose of a man contrary to the will and interest of his Wife: Yea, though it would occasion the loss, 1. Of her Chastity, 2. Or her Understanding, 3. Or her life: and though the Conjugal Bond do make Man and Wife to be as one flesh. For, 1. The King and public interest may oblige a man to hazard his own life, and therefore his Wives. In case of War, he may be sent to Sea, or beyond Sea, and so both leave his Wife (as Uriah did) and venture himself. Who ever thought that no Married Man might go to foreign wars without his Wife’s consent? 2. Because as the whole is more noble than the part, so he that marrieth obligeth himself to his wife, but on supposition that he is a member of the Common-wealth, to which he is still more obliged than to her” (*ibid.*, pt. 4, 212-13, answer to question 2).

²⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 53, answer to question 3.

²⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 53, answer to question 3.

³⁰⁰Baxter stressed that, while cohabitation and regular sexual relations were mutual duties of husband and wife, necessity and the public good could supersede those obligations (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 41, §4). “In any such case,” Baxter reasoned, “when the cause of God in any part of the world *consideratis considerandis* doth require his help, a Minister must leave Wife and Family, yea, and a particular flock to do it. For our obligations are greatest to the Catholic Church, and public good; and the greatest good must be preferred” (*ibid.*, pt. 2, 53, answer to question 3). He used an illustration to support his assertion. If a king required his ambassador to leave his wife and family behind and go to the remotest part of the world, so “must a Consecrated minister of Christ refuse all entanglements” that would hinder his work more than the benefits that would accompany (*ibid.*).

not marry a minister, until she had first considered the very real possibility of being separated from him for lengthy periods of time.³⁰¹

Conclusion

Despite what contemporaries may have thought, Baxter did not view his argument for clerical celibacy as strange or unreasonable but rather as the logical outcome of practicing the principles he believed were so vital to Christian piety. Marriage was not inherently incompatible with Baxter's vision for the godly life in the *Christian Directory*. Normally, however, it was not the most advantageous state of life for a Christian's spiritual welfare and capacity to serve God. Since the indispensable obligation of Christians was to perform the greatest good, it was logical that only a very clear call from God to marry could override the inconveniences of wedlock that ordinarily made celibacy the better condition. Against the view of most English Protestants, Baxter asserted that celibacy was the default state for God's people, whereas marriage required a clear call from God. Marriage was indeed a sin for those Christians, whether clergy or laity, for whom celibacy would be more advantageous to their holiness and service to God. The necessity of choosing the best state of life applied even more to pastors who were charged with forsaking all impediments and pouring their lives out to save the souls under their care.

The challenge marriage posed to Christian piety, and especially the pastor's piety, grew out of Baxter's larger reservations about the drawbacks shared by all intimate relationships. His paradoxical view of intimate friendships mirrored his paradoxical views of marriage. He did not declare bosom friends to be unlawful and realized the great benefits they afforded. Nevertheless, he felt that they almost inevitably led to excessive love, attention, and responsibility being wrongly prioritized toward a select few. A better

³⁰¹Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 53, answer to question 3.

use of a Christian's time and affections would be pouring one's life out for God and the public good, where it was first owed. It was a very rare thing for a Christian to be able to love another deeply while keeping those affections in clear subordination to God and greater works. Consequently, Christians should not be forward in seeking out intimate friendships, despite the benefits they yielded. The same disadvantages characterized his exposition of wedlock's inconveniences, except that the danger of excessive love, attention, and responsibility were greatly multiplied. The strength of familial affections as well as the burdensome obligations of domesticity made marriage even more likely to draw Christians away from their love for God, their focus upon their future life in heaven, and their efforts to perform the greatest good possible. Finally, Baxter's paradoxical view of women was connected with his paradoxical attitude toward bosom friends and marriage. Since women seldom possessed the wisdom, virtue, and fidelity required of a bosom friend, then they would usually prove more of a hindrance than a help to their husbands. Yet if Baxter was convinced that celibacy was the most advantageous way of life for him as a pastor, how can one make sense of his marriage to Margaret Charlton?

CHAPTER 6

BAXTER'S CONSISTENCY WITH HIS ARGUMENT FOR CLERICAL CELIBACY

Introduction

Richard Baxter's decision to marry Margaret Charlton (1636-81) in 1662 seemed to be a startling and blatant contradiction of his argument for clerical celibacy.¹ When word of their marriage spread, it was the subject of "much publick talk and wonder"² as well as being "every where rung about, partly as a Wonder, and partly as a

¹For the first hand account of Margaret's life and how she eventually married Baxter, see the account he wrote shortly after her death: Richard Baxter, *A breviat of the life of Margaret, the daughter of Francis Charlton and wife of Richard Baxter: there is also published the character of her mother, truly described in her published funeral sermon, reprinted at her daughters request, called, The last work of a believer, his passing-prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ, to be received by him* (London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681). For secondary studies, see Timothy K. Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage: The Husband/Wife Relationship in Puritan England as Taught and Experienced by a Representative Puritan Pastor, Richard Baxter," *Trinity Journal* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 131-60; J. I. Packer, *A Grief Sanctified: Passing through Grief to Joy and Peace* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1997), 19-49, 161-86; Frederick J. Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 4 [1918]: 434-64; Richard Baxter, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross (1662-1691)* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), 100-108; J. T. Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton: A Puritan Love Story*, by Richard Baxter (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928), 17-57; Michael A. G. Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light': The Marriage of Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton," in *The Reformers and Puritans as Spiritual Mentors: Hope is Kindled* (Kitchener, Canada: Joshua Press, 2012), 143-61; Haykin, "Richard Baxter's Testimony about Margaret Baxter," in *8 Women of Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 37-52; Hugh Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 177-82; J. William Black, "Richard and Margaret," *Christian History and Biography* 89 (Winter 2006): 35-37; J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," in *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, abridged by J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, ed. N. H. Keeble (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1931; repr., NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), 267-77; Allison Searle, "Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent," in *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660-1760*, eds. Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014; repr., New York: Routledge, 2016), 27-31; N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 127-31.

There is another anonymous primary source that narrates Margaret's life and the course of events that led her to marry Baxter: *The life & death of that pious, reverend, learned, and laborious minister of the Gospel Mr. Richard Baxter Who departed this life Decemb. 8, 1691. and of his age 77.* (London: Printed for Randal Taylor, 1692), 10-13. The author seems to have used the *Breviate* to construct his narrative of events but also detailed events that did not occur at all in that work. However, since tract was anonymous and the source of his information cannot be verified, it should be treated as hearsay. Regardless, none of the evidence from this tract contradicts the conclusions of this chap.

²Baxter, *BLM*, 46.

Crime.”³ Even after his wife’s death nineteen years later, he noted “the wonder” that both their friends still expressed at the course their relationship took.⁴ However, not all the astonishment came from friends, for after his marriage Baxter had to defend himself against certain “great men” who considered him “mutable” for marrying.⁵

Modern scholarship has similarly puzzled over Baxter’s decision to marry, though some progress has been made in understanding his reasoning. Levin L. Schucking, Alan MacFarlane, and Geoffrey F. Nuttall believed Baxter had contradicted himself.⁶ Frederick J. Powicke speculated that “love took possession of” Baxter, and so the “necessity” of his love for Margaret “swept away all the obstacles erected by his scrupulous conscience.”⁷ Timothy K. Beougher, in an early article, largely concurred with Powicke that Baxter’s love for Margaret justified the necessity of their marrying.⁸ Beougher later revised his interpretation and joined with J. I. Packer and J. M. Lloyd-Thomas in pointing to Baxter’s expulsion from parish ministry as the decisive factor which granted him liberty to marry without violating his strong reservations against

³Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter’s Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, J. Dunton, 1696), bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 §275.

⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 46.

⁵Ibid., 101. Baxter does not name these men, even though “they know their own names,” yet he did say he possessed knowledge of their opinions through the “most credible information” (ibid.). Apparently, these accusers never mentioned their comments to Baxter directly but only behind his back.

⁶Levin L. Schucking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from the Literary Sources*, trans. Brian Battershaw, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 24; Alan McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1840* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1986), 173. In his biography of Baxter, Geoffrey F. Nuttall did note how Baxter justified marrying, in spite of his stance on clerical celibacy, by pointing to his expulsion from pastoral ministry (Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965], 95). However, it seems Nuttall remained unconvinced by this explanation, since he later reflected on the irony represented by Baxter’s ability to provide his “objective judgment” in advocating clerical celibacy and yet simultaneously live inconsistently with his conviction (Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “The Personality of Richard Baxter,” in *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* [London: Epworth Press, 1967], 108).

⁷Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 436-37. Powicke later mentioned, “Love stept in and decreed the necessity. Love is always stepping in and experience bears witness that the Reasons of Love are wiser than all the reasons of abstract logic, even when they emanate from so great a divine as St. Paul” (ibid., 463.)

⁸Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage,” 152.

clerical marriage.⁹ Packer, Lloyd-Thomas, and Beougher's later work have come nearest to the truth, yet their treatments have been very brief. Nor have they adequately addressed other key questions. Even if Baxter now felt at liberty to wed, why did the avowed bachelor marry at all? And what led him to choose Margaret? Furthermore, what prompted Margaret to marry a man old enough to be her father and who was substantially beneath her in social rank?¹⁰ Such questions likely cast doubt on the suitability of the match and prompted misgivings over Baxter's consistency with not just his advocacy for clerical celibacy but also his teaching on why one should marry. Therefore, Margaret's story—including her upbringing, conversion, character qualities, and piety—must be examined in conjunction with Baxter's decision to marry her.

This chapter will explore the tensions surrounding not only why Baxter suddenly felt free to marry, but why he chose Margaret as his wife and likewise why she chose him as her husband. I will argue that Baxter's decision to marry did not constitute a rejection of his argument for clerical celibacy or his teaching on why a person should marry. He married because a series of political and ecclesiastical developments destroyed any hope of continuing as a parish minister, thus freeing him from the burdensome model of soul care that motivated his decision to remain celibate. Furthermore, the reason he and Margaret chose to marry one another lay in the fact that each of them had found in the other a fit companion and helper. I will begin by tracing Margaret's life up to the time of her conversion under Baxter's preaching, noting the growth of her piety and relationship with him. Then I will examine Richard and Margaret's developing relationship through two stages. The first period will analyze the nature of her growing

⁹Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan Concept of Becoming a Christian* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 29; Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 273; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 22-23.

¹⁰Baxter noted the controversy surrounding the "unsuitableness of our age" (Baxter, *BLM*, 46) and also that some of Margaret's relations thought "she debased her self in marrying" him (*ibid.*, 48). Margaret came from a higher rank of the gentry while Baxter's father came from the lower gentry.

affections for Baxter and how his simultaneous efforts to discourage her feelings indicate his continued dedication to clerical celibacy at the time. The second stage covers Baxter's involvement in the events surrounding the Restoration of the English Monarchy in 1660, as well as his subsequent labors from 1660-62 to achieve a religious settlement that would enable him to continue pastoral ministry in the Church of England. During this discouraging period, he became increasingly aware of Margaret's invaluable support, friendship, and companionship. Nevertheless, he refrained from marrying until the 1662 *Act of Uniformity* finally deprived him of any hopes of having a parish ministry. The principal source used in this chapter will be Baxter's account of his wife's life which he titled *A breviat of the life of Margaret* (1681), hereafter referred to as the *Breviate*.¹¹ A second major source will be Baxter's autobiography,¹² since it provides his personal account and perspective on the events surrounding the Restoration from 1660-62.

Margaret Charlton's Early Life

The space Baxter devoted to his wife's early years is relatively brief, yet he nevertheless provided adequate details to trace several formational elements of her personality and character. Margaret was born in 1636,¹³ no more than three and a half miles from Baxter's birthplace in Shropshire. However, she came from a different level of England's social strata. While Baxter came from the lower landed gentry, her lineage derived from one of the "chief Families in the county." Baxter said her father, Francis Charlton Esquire, "was one of the best Justices of the Peace" in Shropshire, while his

¹¹See footnote 1 for full bibliographic information. Composed shortly after his wife's death, the *Breviate* provides the only known account of Margaret's early life, her coming to Kidderminster, her conversion, and finally her marriage to Baxter. In addition, Baxter transcribed numerous portions from Margaret's personal papers that provide insight into her character, personality, and piety

¹²See footnote 3 for full bibliographic information.

¹³Baxter gives no date in the *breviate* for Margaret's birth, but Wilkinson has found her baptismal entry in the registry of the Wellington Parish Church, dated September 18, 1636 (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 20)

own father was only “a mean Freeholder.”¹⁴ Baxter later attributed to his wife’s elevated family background what he perceived to be a wasteful concern for “washing Stairs and Rooms” in their home.¹⁵ Baxter and Margaret did not come from entirely different estates, for they were both members of England’s landowning gentry.¹⁶ Yet even within their group, considerable stratification occurred among its members,¹⁷ and such was the case with them.

Margaret’s early childhood experience with her family left an indelible mark on her. Her father, Francis, did not marry till he was quite old. When he died on November 22, 1642 his three children—Margaret (6), her older sister (?), and younger brother Francis (1639-98)—were still quite young.¹⁸ Much of Margaret’s childhood was therefore spent without her biological father, though she seemed to remember enough of him as an adult to recall his godly character.¹⁹ Her mother, Mary, shared her husband’s deep religious convictions and devoted herself to the spiritual development of her children. She lived far longer than her husband, dying in 1661, and it is from Baxter’s funeral sermon for her that one gains the fullest impression of the Puritan character of her

¹⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 1. See also Wilkinson’s additional research into the Charlton family pedigree and lineage (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 20, 170-71).

¹⁵Baxter, *BLM*, 80. According to Baxter, “Her household-affairs she ordered with so . . . great skill and decency, as that others much praised that which I was no fit judg of: I had been bred among plain mean people, and I thought that so much ado about cleanliness and trifles, was a sinful curiosity, and expence of servants time, who might that while have been reading some good book. But she that was otherwise bred, had somewhat other thoughts” (Baxter, *BLM*, 80)

¹⁶See Packer who corrected this misunderstanding by pointing to the fact that both Richard and Margaret were members of the gentry (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 19).

¹⁷See Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 25.

¹⁸I am following Wilkinson’s dating for Francis Charlton’s life (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 21). For the dates of the children, I am following Keeble and Nuttall’s dating (N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, eds, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1:464).

¹⁹Margaret counted it a mercy of God and a reason for thanks that she had been the child of godly parents (Baxter, *BLM*, 11).

piety.²⁰ In the *Breviate*, Baxter also transcribed some of her letters of spiritual counsel, exhortation, and admonishment to Margaret, so that readers might “perceive her plain and honest Care of her Children’s Souls.”²¹ Underscoring her letters was the preeminence she placed on her daughter’s “Eternal Good,” above all other earthly concerns.²² After Margaret’s conversion, one of the many “very great mercies” the daughter thanked God for was being “the child of godly Parents, and a child of many prayers.”²³ Moreover, it was Margaret’s resolve to not “forsake the Mother who deserved her dearest love” which eventually led her to Kidderminster and under the influence of Baxter’s pastoral care.²⁴

Margaret was deeply impacted by her experiences during the English Civil War (1642-51). After the death of her father, his brother Robert sought to seize the guardianship of Mary’s only son, Francis, who at nearly four years old was heir to the estate.²⁵ Mary resisted Robert’s efforts, and since he threw his support behind the Parliamentary forces opposed to King Charles I, Mary was compelled to seek refuge with

²⁰Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 28-29. Concerning the Puritanism of Margaret’s mother, see also Lloyd-Thomas, “Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 267; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 19-24. No copies of the original funeral sermon are known to exist but only the reprints which Baxter republished after this wife’s death by her dying request (Richard Baxter, *The last work of a believer his passing prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ to be received by Him / prepared for the funerals of Mary the widow first of Francis Charlton Esq. and after of Thomas Hanmer, Esq., and partly preached at St. Mary Magdalens Church in Milk-Street, London, and now, at the desire of her daughter, reprinted by Richard Baxter* (London: Printed by B. Griffin for B. Simmons, 1682). Baxter summarized his impression of her as a woman who showed unique “patience in her great tryals” as well as “prudence and piety, and justice and impartiality, and other Virtues” (Baxter, *BLM*, 3)

²¹Baxter, *BLM*, 82. For the letters, see *ibid.*, 82-85. See also Baxter’s letter to Mary’s son, Francis, where Baxter recounted Mary’s “passionate love” for her son expressed through “her teares” and “her words” (Richard Baxter to Francis Charlton,” July 6, 1658, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 4, fol. 130, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:464).

²²Baxter, *BLM*, 83. See also similar letters in *ibid.*, 82, 84-85.

²³*Ibid.*, 10, 11. Wilkinson has stressed that Mary’s decidedly Puritan piety, and her sense of duty and desire to see her children follow this life, constituted a significant influence on Margaret’s spiritual development and eventual conversion (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 29)

²⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 3. I am indebted to Wilkinson for this insight (introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 3).

²⁵The age of Francis Charlton at this time is not given by Baxter but supplied by Wilkinson (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 21).

the monarch to protect her interest. Eventually she married Thomas Hanmer, a supporter of the King's cause, but in 1644 their Apley castle, being a royal garrison, was besieged, captured, plundered, and partially burned by Robert, who was in command of a parliamentary force. Margaret was only eight at the time, and she, along the rest of her family, was forced to witness the terrifying assault.²⁶ After the Castle was taken, Margaret beheld the men who "lay killed before her face," and the whole family was "threatened, and stript of their cloathing, so that they were fain to borrow clothes."²⁷ Robert took possession of the children but only temporarily, for "by great wisdom and diligence" Mary succeeded in rescuing her children and "secretly conveyed them" to a residence in Essex.²⁸ In several places throughout the *Breviate*, Baxter noted the deep impression left on Margaret by the storming of Apley Castle, particularly in creating the "diseased fearfulness" she suffered from all her life.²⁹ Baxter's wording was not meant to indicate a morbid nature to her fear, so much as to stress how this terrifying event, along with many others experienced throughout her life, greatly exacerbated her "weak physical constitution," which was already "fragile and highly strung."³⁰ Margaret's struggle with anxiety and fear as well as her Puritan upbringing, would be crucial factors in the intense spiritual crisis she would undergo after arriving in Kidderminster.³¹

²⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 2. For supplemental details on the siege not included in the *Breviate*, see Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 21-22.

²⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 44. See also *ibid.*, 2, 76 for this account.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 2. Wilkinson has pointed out that Robert's siege of the castle seemed to have been partially motivated by "surreptitious means," meaning the desire to gain possession of the heir to the estate (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 22-23).

²⁹Baxter, *BLM*, 44, 76. For other instances where Baxter mentions her diseased fearfulness, see *ibid.*, 55, 73, 76-77, 90.

³⁰Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 29.

³¹*Ibid.*, 30. Wilkinson argued that her Puritan upbringing "made the struggle inevitable," while her weak physical constitution "increased the intensity of it" (*ibid.*).

After the death of her second husband and conclusion of the Civil War, Mary Hamner took up the guardianship of her son's estate until he married around 1655.³² Shortly afterward, she visited Baxter to express her desire to move to Kidderminster and live by herself there.³³ Baxter steadfastly refused to encourage the separation of a mother from her only son who needed her "counsel, conduct and comfort" while still "in his youth."³⁴ Mary went home, yet she soon returned and took up residence in Kidderminster without his knowledge. Margaret, who had apparently had been living with her brother at Apley, devotedly followed her mother to Kidderminster in late 1655.³⁵ However, whereas her pious and humble mother was content to live "as a blessing among the honest poor Weavers of *Kidderminster*," Margaret bore a strong "aversion to the POVERTY and STRICTNESS" of religion found among Baxter's parishioners.³⁶ At nineteen years old,³⁷

³²The precise date of Francis Charlton's marriage to Dorothy, the daughter of Oliver St. John cannot be ascertained, but since their first son was baptized in 1656, he must have married at an early age in 1655 when he was about sixteen (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 23n1). Powicke also placed these events as occurring just before the time of Mary's move to Kidderminster "towards the end of 1656" (Frederick J. Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691* [London: Jonathan Cape, 1924; facsimile repr., LaVergne, TN: Kessinger Publishing, 2010], 159).

³³Wilkinson pointed to evidence indicating a considerable conflict between Francis Charlton and his mother, which may have played a role in her move to Kidderminster (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 23-26, 29). Francis' decision to take up the management of the estate at such a young age seemed to be due to his dissatisfaction with his mother's alleged mismanagement of it. Wilkinson based this on a letter Baxter wrote to Francis on July 6, 1658, exonerating himself from any involvement in the controversy surrounding the estate (Richard Baxter to Francis Charlton," July 6, 1658, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 4, fol. 130, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:464). See also Powicke's brief discussion of this issue (Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story," 9n4).

³⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 3.

³⁵This date is based on Wilkinson's dating of her mother's arrival (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 26-29); Keeble and Nuttall indicate that Mary and Margaret moved to Kidderminster at the same time, in 1655/1656 (Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:568). Martin dated her arrival at 1657 (Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter*, 177), but this is inconsistent with the age Baxter gave for her when she arrived (Baxter, *BLM*, 3). Perhaps Martin gave the date for when she returned to Kidderminster after having spent time with her sister at Oxford.

³⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 3, 4. Baxter explained that part of this aversion to strict religion was due to an "imprudent *rigid* Governess" that her mother had watch over her when she was absent (ibid. 4)

³⁷Baxter said Margaret came to Kidderminster when she was "about seventeen or eighteen years of age," but he was writing many years later in 1681 and was off by one or two years (ibid., 3). Her date of birth according to her baptismal entry was September 18, 1636 (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 20), and based on Wilkinson's dating of her mother's arrival, she must have been around nineteen (ibid., 26-29).

she was a vain, proud, and worldly youth, “glittering her self in costly Apparel, and delighting in her Romances.”³⁸ Nevertheless, she was about to undergo a profound transformation.

Baxter’s preaching and pastoral counsel served as the primary catalyst of Margaret’s spiritual awakening, though he was not the first to influence her. While staying with her sister at Oxford in 1657, a sermon by Mr. Hickman had “much moved her.”³⁹ The letters Mary wrote to her during this period hinted that the young woman’s inclinations were already moving away from worldly vanities to spiritual concerns.⁴⁰ She returned to Kidderminster in late 1657 or early 1658, soon after Baxter had preached the series of sermons he later published as *A treatise of conversion*.⁴¹ His teaching “was received on her heart as the seal on the wax.”⁴² Her warm reception to his message was more likely the result of the growing spiritual concern she had already been experiencing, not an incipient romantic ardor for Baxter.⁴³ A powerful conviction of sin prompted her

³⁸Baxter, *BLM*, 4. See also Margaret’s own evaluation of her former life before her conversion (*ibid.*, 10-11). Based upon modern psychology, Lloyd-Thomas has speculated that Margaret’s “gaiety” was nothing less than an attempt “to flee from reality, to suppress the memory of the storming of Apley Castle and to silence an awakening conscience” (Lloyd-Thomas, “Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 268).

³⁹The sermon was by Mr. Hickman on Isaiah 27:11 (Baxter, *BLM*, 5). The date of 1657 for her time at Oxford is indicated by three letters her mother wrote to her during this time which Baxter transcribed for inclusion in the *breviate* (*ibid.*, 82-84).

⁴⁰*ibid.*, 82-84. Wilkinson and Powicke also make this observation (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 30; Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 439).

⁴¹I am following Wilkinson’s dating (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 27). A fellow minister named Mr. Baldwin, who had learned Baxter’s shorthand, transcribed the sermons in full for Baxter and published them without any additions (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 114, §173). Baxter published *A treatise of conversion* sometime after June 1, 1657 when he penned the dedicatory epistle to his Kidderminster parishioners, so the sermons were from earlier that year (Richard Baxter, *A treatise of conversion. Preached, and now published for the use of those that are strangers to a true conversion, especially the grosly ignorant and ungodly* (London: Printed by R. White, for Nevil Simmons, 1657), fol. a1v. For the best study of Baxter’s theology of conversion, see Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion*.

⁴²Baxter, *BLM*, 4.

⁴³Lloyd-Thomas speculated that Margaret was “predisposed” to warmly receive Baxter’s preaching, despite its “grim and searching” character, because of her already existing “ardor” for him (“Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 268, 269). However, this is questionable, since the evidence Lloyd-Thomas cited from Margaret’s personal papers to support his assertion was not dated from this period of Margaret’s life. Rather, Baxter placed all these papers in chap. three of the *breviate*, which is titled “*The workings of her souls in and after this Sickness*” (Baxter, *BLM*, 9). Thus, the date of

to go through a protracted period of intense introspection, frequent and fervent prayer, bible reading, and meditating on her current spiritual state as well as her salvation.⁴⁴ The first inclinations of change were noticed by a “religious Maid that waited on her,” since her “frequent Closet-prayers” were apparently so fervent and so loud that they could occasionally be overheard.⁴⁵ Other individuals who later overheard her praying exclaimed “they never heard so fervent prayers from any person.”⁴⁶ She began to strive with great effort to correct her “backwardness to secret duties” and forsook “some vanities.”⁴⁷ An intimate window into her growing conviction of sin can be found in one of the “self-judging Papers” she wrote during her soul searching, which Baxter later transcribed for the *Breviate*. She rigorously examined her actions in the light of Scripture and came to the grave conclusion that she was a “graceless person” and “heir of everlasting woe.”⁴⁸ Nevertheless, she sought to keep all her internal struggles to herself which worked to exacerbate her already intense spiritual struggle.⁴⁹ As Baxter frequently observed, throughout her life Margaret was often reticent to share her thoughts or spiritual struggles with others.⁵⁰ Eventually, her “changed course of life” became so evident that it could not remain hidden, and was welcomed by all her godly friends and

these papers, as well as the life events they described, should be dated after December 30, 1659, which Margaret recorded as the point at which she began to recover her health (Baxter, *BLM*, 27).

⁴⁴Ibid., 4. Later Baxter mentioned that those who overheard her praying exclaimed “they never heard so fervent prayers from any person” (ibid., 45).

⁴⁵Ibid., 4-5.

⁴⁶Ibid., 45.

⁴⁷Ibid., 8. These vanities are probably a reference to the “*Pride, and Romances, and Company*” which she so loved in “her vain youth” (ibid., 4).

⁴⁸Ibid., 5-7.

⁴⁹According to Baxter, “she kept all her matters so secret to her self, as was her great hurt all her life” (ibid., 5).

⁵⁰For other instances where Baxter mentions this fault, see ibid., 9, 22-23, 26, 33-34, 41, 43-44, 45.

neighbors, especially her mother.⁵¹ Baxter observed that she now became her mother's "Darling," whereas before she had been the least loved of her three children.⁵² Margaret's growing conviction of sin could have died or spiraled into despair, as Baxter pointed out, but instead it matured into "serious conversion" sometime in mid to late 1659.⁵³

Margaret's newfound devotion appeared short lived, for while everyone was rejoicing in her remarkable change, she fell ill of a life-threatening cough and consumption late in 1659. Her susceptibility to illness may have been exacerbated by her acute spiritual crisis as well as the fearfulness she already suffered from as a consequence of her experience in the English Civil War.⁵⁴ All the remedies prescribed by doctors seemed to fail and by December 30, 1659 there seemed little hope of recovery.⁵⁵ Baxter, however, possessed "an almost illimitable belief in the power of prayer."⁵⁶ He and his "praying neighbors"⁵⁷ fervently fasted and petitioned God for her recovery, since they were grieved that "such a changed person should presently be taken away before she had

⁵¹Baxter, *BLM*, 5.

⁵²Ibid. See also *ibid.*, 85.

⁵³Ibid., 8. The time of Margaret's conversion is uncertain, and even Baxter seemed to give only a general timeframe. He remarked that some of her journal entries, written in early April 1660, reflected extraordinary spiritual growth for "a Convert of a year, or few months standing," and so whether Baxter thought her conversion was a year earlier or just a few months earlier is hard to tell (*ibid.*, 22). Elsewhere, Baxter indicated more clearly that Margaret's sickness, which began in late 1659, followed shortly after her conversion (*Ibid.*, 8). Thus, it seems that a date around mid to late 1659 seems appropriate.

⁵⁴I am indebted to Wilkinson for his insight into this link, though I think his word "doubtless" to describe it is too strong (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 30). There is little evidence to support Lloyd-Thomas's speculation that a growing love for Baxter constituted one of the chief causes of her "nervous malady" and "physical breakdown" (Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 269). Baxter frequently noted that Margaret have a weak physical constitution and struggled with fearfulness.

⁵⁵Baxter, *BLM*, 27. In one of Margaret's personal papers transcribed by Baxter for the *breviate*, she described December 30, 1659 as "my worst day: I did not then think to be alive this day; I ought not to forget it. On Jan. 1. *New-years-day*, I first bled at the nose largely, and after mended. The fourth day kept in humiliation for me. *April 10.* was a day of Thanksgiving" (*ibid.*).

⁵⁶Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 269.

⁵⁷These praying neighbors had been enheartened in their efforts on behalf of Margaret by several previous answers to prayers they had experienced, which Baxter enumerated for the reader (Baxter, *BLM*, 8-9).

time to manifest her sincerity, and do God any service in the world.”⁵⁸ Thereafter, she speedily recovered after drinking an herbal remedy, called “syrup of Violets.”⁵⁹

Margaret’s near fatal illness exerted a profound effect on the spiritual struggle she was already experiencing as well as her relationship with Baxter. Wilkinson has detailed that her sickness had a threefold effect upon her. First, it intensified her impression of the mercies of God upon her life.⁶⁰ To give thanks for her conversion and physical recovery from illness, she composed a list detailing seven ways in which her life had “been a life of very great mercies.”⁶¹ Second, coupled with her awareness of God’s mercy was her deepening “sense of unworthiness”; her “beautiful self-effacement” would become an indelible mark of her character throughout her life.⁶² Finally, her illness deeply intensified her dedication to God, which exerted a powerful influence on all her actions for the remainder of her life.⁶³ These three spiritual qualities—profound thankfulness, deep abasement, and absolute devotion to God—were abundantly evident in two papers she composed: her prayer of thanksgiving for deliverance from death and the secret renewal of her covenant with God.⁶⁴ The occasion prompting her to write the two works was the day of thanksgiving her mother, Baxter, and friends held for her recovery on April 10, 1660.⁶⁵ But though there was much rejoicing at her physical recovery and changed life, her spiritual struggle had not entirely abated. Baxter noted that her near-

⁵⁸Baxter, *BLM*, 8-9.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁰Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 32.

⁶¹Baxter, *BLM*, 10. For Margaret’s reciting of seven great mercies she was thankful for, see *ibid.*, 10-11.

⁶²Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 32.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 10-12 and 12-15.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 10, and for the date of this event see *ibid.*, 21.

death experience—combined with her “timorous and tender nature” and the “sharp work of her Repentance” still “upon her spirit”—worked to greatly increase her fearfulness.⁶⁶ She was about to undergo a new period of internal turmoil that, on a cursory reading, appeared to simply be a struggle for assurance of salvation. Yet on closer examination, one finds her struggle was also occasioned by the new admiration and affection she felt developing for her pastor.

Richard and Margaret’s Relationship

Tracing the causes and gradual growth of Richard and Margaret’s relationship is vital for answering two key questions. First, was Baxter’s decision to marry and the actions leading up to it consistent with what he had so strongly preached and advocated about clerical celibacy? Second, what led Richard and Margaret to marry one another? The *Breviate* confronts the historian with a problem, since the book is silent regarding the second question. Nevertheless, with the aid of historical reconstruction and occasional hints from the *Breviate* and Baxter’s *Poetical Fragments*, the picture becomes clearer.⁶⁷ These insights, combined with the impact of the Restoration upon Baxter’s clerical future, demonstrate the consistency of his actions not only with his argument for clerical celibacy but also his teaching on why Christians should marry.

Baxter’s Purpose for the *Breviate*

The advice of friends and Baxter’s own goal in writing the *Breviate* prompted him to remove the details of their growing romance.⁶⁸ He originally included the

⁶⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 9.

⁶⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 46. I am indebted to Packer for pointing out this aspect of Baxter’s design in composing the *breviate* (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 34).

⁶⁸It seems that Baxter destroyed the portions he removed from the *breviate*, for there are no traces of them in Baxter’s unpublished manuscripts according to Roger Thomas’ comprehensive catalogue (Roger Thomas, *The Baxter Treatises: A catalogue of the Richard Baxter Papers (Other than the Letters) in Dr. Williams’s Library* [Dr. Williams’s Library. London: Dr. Williams’s Trust, 1959]).

“occasions and inducements” that led to their union in the original draft of the *Breviate*, but the counsel of “wise Friends” persuaded him to omit them. As his friends reasoned, strangers would see such details as far less interesting “as Love and Nearness” led him to view them.⁶⁹ Though reluctant to do so, Baxter agreed.⁷⁰ He also realized this exclusion would help accomplish his pedagogical aim for the *Breviate*: to concentrate on Margaret’s life testimony in order to commend the virtues that would profitably instruct readers. Baxter believed that lives taught people as effectively as doctrine, and he wanted to commend his wife’s exemplary piety to the world for imitation, and remove anything personal that might distract.⁷¹ Therefore, he yielded to the counsel of his friends that “public things are fittest for public notice.”⁷² Though the “many strange occurrences” of their love story would explain to astonished friends how their union came to pass, he concluded that “it doth not much concern the world to be acquainted with” this aspect of their relationship.⁷³

⁶⁹Baxter, *BLM*, fols. A2r, A3v. Baxter later said, “Affection makes us think our own or our friends affairs to be such, as the world should be affected with” (ibid., fol. A3v). See also ibid., 46. In the process of composing his wife’s history, Baxter had also intended to publish biographies of three other individuals he highly esteemed (ibid., fols. A1v-2r). These individuals were Mary Baxter (Baxter’s step-mother and daughter of Thomas Hunks, though referred to her as his “Mother-in-Law”), Mary Hanmer (Margaret’s mother who remarried after Francis Charlton’s death), and Jane Matthews (his old friend and housekeeper) (ibid.). Baxter never published these because his friends advised against it.

⁷⁰Baxter was also “loath” to cast aside his step-mother’s biography and that of his mother in law (Baxter, *BLM*, fols. A3r-v).

⁷¹See Baxter’s commendation of Margaret to her relatives (ibid., fol. A4r). For Baxter’s general commendation of Margaret’s life for all people to imitate, see ibid., 22, 99. Baxter explained his didactic motivation for writing his wife’s biography in the preface to the *breviate*. Seeing that “young people” were naturally inclined to reading history, Baxter had long believed that providing them with “true and useful history” would profit them greatly, as opposed to “Tale-books, Romances, Play-books, and false or hurtful History” (ibid. fols. A2r-3r). Such enriching history was to be found first in scriptural history and secondly in the biographies of eminent Christians (ibid., fol. A2v). But, since God’s sanctifying work remained largely consistent in the case of every Christian, as Baxter reasoned, one did not need to read every life but only the most exemplary: “God’s Image is the same thing on all his children; and when you have described one, you have described all, as to the Essentials. But (as in Faces and bodily Strength) they so much differ in Integrals, Degrees and Accidents and Accidents, that the Lives of some are far more Exemplary and Honorable to Christ their Lord, and their Christian Profession, than others are (ibid., fol. A2r).

⁷²Ibid., fol. A3v.

⁷³Ibid., 46.

By sharing the intimate details of Margaret's life, Baxter believed he was honoring God and spiritually benefiting readers. He made this precise point while responding to an anticipated objection of why he was divulging so many details.⁷⁴ Rather than distracting readers from their heavenly focus, he thought God would be glorified and Christians would be edified through recounting the intimate details of his wife's piety.⁷⁵ Consequently, considerable portions of the *Breviate* were composed of Margaret's personal papers that Baxter discovered after her death, edited, and transcribed for inclusion.⁷⁶ However, the testimony of Margaret's devotion to God in these papers also hinted at some of the causes that drew Margaret to Baxter as well as how he responded to her growing attachment to him. The papers depict her fervent, growing devotion to God as well as her struggle with assurance and self-condemnation during and after her near fatal illness.⁷⁷ Her self-doubt was occasioned by her felt need for greater holy affections and a lessening of her attachment to "creatures" (human beings). Baxter also transcribed several letters of spiritual counsel she had received from an anonymous individual. The unnamed person, who was the only friend she was willing to share her inner conflict

⁷⁴Baxter provided three justifications in response to objections against his inclusion of so many details regarding Margaret's conversion and piety: "If you ask, why I recite all this, which is but matter well known to ordinary Christians? I answer, 1. It is not a matter of *knowledge* but of *soul workings* toward God. 2. Is not this extraordinary in a Convert of a year, or few months standing? 3. The love of God, and her makes me think it worth the publishing; They that think otherwise may pass it by; but there are souls to whom it will be savoury and profitable" (Baxter, *BLM*, 22).

⁷⁵Baxter's commitment to keeping God at the center qualifies Keeble's explanation for Baxter's frankness and openness in the *Breviate* to share so many intimate details concerning Margaret and himself. According to Keeble, Baxter was ahead of his time in adopting a far more "modern" approach towards the aim and content of biography while his friends reflected a "medieval sensibility" (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 127-28, 130). Therefore, Baxter valued "the details, the intimacies, the personal touches" and "individuality" that the story of his unfolding romance would reveal; whereas to Baxter's friends, such "personal particularities" were unsuitable, since they still understood the sole purpose of biography as inspiring communal imitation through stressing the person's exemplary life (*ibid.*, 128, 125). Citing Keeble for support, Packer also argued that Baxter's literary uniqueness was a key motivating factor in his decision to hint at the details of their romance through Margaret's private papers (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 33-34). However, Keeble may have overstated the extent to which Baxter represented a forerunner of modern biography, and also why he desired to include the particulars of their love story. Like biographers of the middle ages, Baxter too was concerned with keeping God and eternity as the ultimate focus in biography (I am indebted to Tim Cooper for this insight).

⁷⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 9-33 (chap. 3), 33-43 (chap. 4).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 22, and see also 10-12, 12-15, 16-21, 26-27, 27-29, 29-30, 30-31, 43.

with, sought to help her internal struggle with assurance and particularly its chief cause, namely her excessive love and over dependence on humans.⁷⁸ Margaret frequently struggled with “excessive love”⁷⁹ for her mother and was prone to “*over-love* her *Relations*” as well as godly friends.⁸⁰ However, every scholar who has examined Margaret’s personal papers has concluded that the creaturely love she struggled with was a growing affection for Baxter and that he was the anonymous author of the letters urging her to look to God alone as the source of her joy and peace.⁸¹

There are good reasons for identifying Baxter as the author of the letters providing Margaret with spiritual counsel. First, the pastoral tone points to his authorship. She had been deeply impacted by his preaching and pastoral care,⁸² so he would be the obvious candidate for the person she was willing to trust with an internal struggle she had refused to share with anyone else, even her mother.⁸³ Lloyd-Thomas and Packer have pointed to the severe and demanding tone of the letters as indicators that Baxter was not

⁷⁸Baxter, *BLM*, 22-26, 34-35, 35-36, 36, 36-37, 37, 37-40, 40-42 (printed as 24).

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 75. Baxter went on to note that her “love was good, but the degree was too passionate” (*ibid.*). She also “impatiently bore unkindnesses” from those friends who were “most dear to her” (*ibid.*, 76 and see also 74).

⁸¹These scholars are Powicke, Nuttall, Packer, Black, Wilkinson, and Lloyd-Thomas. For the most thorough attempts to argue this theory, see Lloyd-Thomas, “Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 268-73; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 27-39; Black, “Richard and Margaret,” 36. Packer endorsed these author’s reconstruction and uses them as the basis for his own analysis (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 32-39, 42-43). See also the briefer treatments by Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 442-43; Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 94; Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 128, 129-30, 203n30). Nuttall and Keeble are slightly more cautious in their support of this theory, but they nevertheless accepted it. Nuttall asserted that it is not easy to disentangle how their relationship developed from the personal papers Baxter published, yet there is sufficient clarity in these writings to trace her growing affection for Baxter as someone she could not bear to be separated from (*Richard Baxter*, 94). Keeble asserted that “it is true that hitherto it has been possible, though not easy, to see their growing affection in the course of Margaret’s “conversion” (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 129, and see also 128); nor does Keeble criticize the efforts of Lloyd-Thomas and Wilkinson to reconstruct this tale (*ibid.*, 203n30), even though he does point out that one must read between the lines to come to this conclusion (*ibid.*, 129-30). Despite these precautions, however, both these authors include the letters allegedly written by Baxter in their comprehensive documentation of his correspondence (Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:568).

⁸²Baxter, *BLM*, 4, 10-11.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 22-23, 26, 34.

only the object of her creaturely affections but also the author of the letters urging her to fight against them.⁸⁴ But it should also be observed that there was still a warm, pastoral care evidencing an experienced physician of the soul. Despite the increasing complexity of their relationship, Baxter never ceased being a pastor to her, and the shepherding tone of his letters has sometimes been overlooked in scholarly analysis.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the letters bear many thematic continuities with Baxter's instructions for guarding against inordinate love of the creature in the *Christian Directory*.⁸⁶ Finally, including the letters of spiritual counsel would help Baxter counter the accusation that he had violated his well-known scruples about clerical marriage.⁸⁷ By shedding light on how he counseled Margaret, at a time when he was still a parish minister and committed to celibacy, he could demonstrate that he was not plotting to violate his long-held convictions and gave her no encouragement to think he would.⁸⁸

The personal papers elucidating Margaret's piety also served an apologetic purpose in dispelling the allegations surrounding their motivations for marrying. The *Breviate* affords several instances where Baxter defended both himself and Margaret against accusers,⁸⁹ and so it would not be surprising for him to use her personal papers to

⁸⁴Lloyd-Thomas pointed to "an almost cruel insistency" and an "unnecessarily implacable note of severity" in his pastoral counsel, which seemed unusual for even Baxter to use unless there was more to the situation (Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 269-70). He concluded that the letters exceeded the "natural language which even a Puritan would use who is merely trying to keep the daughter of a parishioner from being over-fondly attached to her mother or too concerned about her brother's attitude" (ibid., 271-72). See also Packer who agreed with Lloyd-Thomas' assessment (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 37-38). Wilkinson did not highlight the severity of Baxter's tone as much as Lloyd-Thomas and Packer, but still believed the contents of the letter indicated that Margaret's mother could not have been the object of Margaret's affections (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 37).

⁸⁵See Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 269-72; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 37-38. Wilkinson's treatment of these letters noted the shepherding tone of the letters in spite of the sternness (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 36-37).

⁸⁶See the discussion in chap. 5, 224-26.

⁸⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 46.

⁸⁸See also Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 42.

⁸⁹For Baxter's defense of himself against accusation, see Baxter, *BLM*, fol. A4r, 1, 46-47, 66-

show that such charges were baseless. If readers assumed Richard and Margaret's relationship developed under morally dubious circumstances, they would have little reason to heed his commendation of their married life, which formed the primary focus of the *Breviate*.⁹⁰ Powicke has noted that their inequality of age and rank could have produced malicious gossip. The disparity in their ages—he being forty-six and she twenty-five when they married—smacked of an “amorous fancy on Baxter’s part,” while the fact that he had been her pastor suggested “misused pastoral influence over a guileless girl.”⁹¹ Cynical observers may have assumed she was simply a naïve maiden who had succumbed to youthful infatuation. In addition, Margaret’s substantial inheritance, combined with the fact that Baxter married her less than a month after his ejection from the clergy, drew the accusation of “covetousness.”⁹² Naturally, he would have desired to exonerate himself from the charge of marrying her for her money.⁹³ Also, the dubious circumstances surrounding their marriage prompted charges of “covetousness” against her also, namely that she had married him for fame, honor, and financial reasons.⁹⁴

In sum, there is considerable warrant for examining Margaret’s personal papers and letters—written between late 1659 and the summer of 1660⁹⁵—to demonstrate not only

67, 101. For Baxter’s defense of Margaret, see Baxter, *BLM*, 47-49, 49-50, 64-65, 66-67, 94-95.

⁹⁰Apart from Packer, scholars have devoted little attention to Baxter’s defensive motives for writing the *Breviate* or its apologetic overtones but have seemed more concerned with tracing the growth of Richard and Margaret’s love story through these papers. As Packer pointed out, covering Margaret’s conversion and spiritual growth under his pastoral care was an important point for Baxter to elucidate through these letters, since it served as a necessary and apologetic precursor to commending their exemplary marriage (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 34-35). Baxter “evidently saw that to deflect satirical sniping and mockery regarding the marriage he must show that the couple were persons totally committed to seeking the wisdom, will, and glory of God in their lives” (ibid., 35).

⁹¹Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 444. For Baxter’s comment on the controversy that these circumstances provoked, see Baxter, *BLM*, 47-49.

⁹²Baxter, *BLM*, 47-49, 101.

⁹³Indeed, Baxter defended himself against the accusation of covetousness twice in the *Breviate*, so it certainly was not foreign to his thinking as he wrote (ibid.).

⁹⁴Baxter launched a long rebuttal against this accusation: ibid., 47-49.

⁹⁵There is good reason for dating Margaret’s personal papers and the letters of counsel from Baxter as occurring during this period. First, internal evidence provided either exact or rough dates for

what caused her growing attachment to Baxter, but also his consistency with his advocacy of clerical celibacy.

Margaret's Growing Affection for Baxter

The origin of Margaret's affection for Baxter lay in the spiritual crisis surrounding her conversion, her tendency to dependence on human relationships, and the significant role Baxter played in her conversion and spiritual maturation. Taken together, one sees that her feelings for Baxter developed out of the influential shepherding role he had played in her conversion and growth as a young Christian.

A starting question that should be considered is whether a certain incident initially sparked Margaret's affections for Baxter. Packer proposed a theory based upon his reading of Baxter's *Poetical fragments*, which were published less than two weeks after completing the *Breviate*.⁹⁶ According to Packer, Baxter's poems, some of which were written for Margaret's benefit, allow scholars to reconstruct a tentative scenario for how his unusual pastoral care and sympathy toward her may have prompted a change in her thinking toward him.⁹⁷ He was very involved in the intense spiritual struggle

several of these papers and letters. The first of Margaret's personal papers (Baxter, *BLM*, 10-12), the second (*ibid.*, 12-15), and the third (*ibid.*, 16-21) are all dated on the day of her thanksgiving which was April 10, 1660 (*ibid.*, 21); another letter is dated April 2, 1660 (*ibid.*, 26). Whereas the others cannot be dated exactly, they can be placed during the time after her recovery based on the content (*ibid.*, 27-29, 29-30). Baxter's letters of spiritual counsel cannot be dated exactly but his introduction to the first letter indicates its composition was after her recovery from illness (*ibid.*, 22 and 22-26 for the full letter). Another letter was clearly written after Baxter's departure for London and before Margaret's arrival there (*ibid.*, 42 but printed as 24). Second, Baxter's headings for chap. three—"The workings of her soul in and after this Sickness"—indicated that he meant Margaret's Personal Papers as well as Baxter's letter of spiritual counsel included among them, to correspond to this period of her life (*ibid.* 9). And in the introduction to chap. four, Baxter made a similar indication that he composed his letters to her between the time of her sickness in December 1659 and her recovery up to late April 1660, for they were written "While in her languishing, and after it" and that her mother and friends were concerned that her spiritual struggles "would encrease her sickness" (*ibid.*, 33-34).

⁹⁶The preface to the *breviate* is dated July 23, 1681 (*Ibid.*, fol. A5v) and the preface to *Poetical fragments* is dated August 7, 1681 (Richard Baxter, *Poetical fragments heart-employment with God and it self, the concordant discord of a broken-healed heart, sorrow-rejoying, fearing-hoping, dying-living, written partly for himself, and partly for near friends in sickness, and other deep affliction*, 2nd ed. [London: for J. Dunton, 1689], fol. A5v). For the best study of Baxter's poetry, see Linda Jo Samuels Banks, "The Poems of Richard Baxter: A Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1967).

⁹⁷Packer believed that the following poems concerned Margaret (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 40-41): "Self- denial," "The Prayer of the Sick, in a case like *Hezekiah's*," "The Covenant and Confidence

surrounding her conversion and her subsequent near fatal illness. In an era when poetry was a “gentleman’s hobby,” Packer argues for the possibility that Baxter put her afflictions to verse, shared them with her, and instructed her on how “they express and resolve precisely her own inner conflict and uncertainties, pointing out to her the path of peace.”⁹⁸ However, by setting Margaret’s trials to verse, he was also edging quite close to the “time honored practice of wooers writing love poems to their ladies.” The result of his special attention likely gave her the impression that she was very special to Baxter, even if his goal was “professedly pastoral and evangelistic rather than amorous and adoring.”⁹⁹ Packer conceded the “tentative” nature of his conclusions, yet Baxter did state in the preface to *Poetical fragments* that his wife’s “*Sorrows and Sufferings long ago gave Being to some of these Poems.*”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the poems themselves either explicitly state or hint at the occasions of suffering in her life which prompted him to compose several verses for her benefit.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, there is no other evidence from which to

of Faith,” and “The Lamentation” (Baxter, *PF*, 48-56, 56-60, 60-62, 76-89). Packer also speculated that two other poems may also have originated in Baxter’s pastoral care for Margaret’s spiritual afflictions (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 200n49): “The Complaint–The Answer–The Submission” and “The Return” (Baxter, *PF*, 66-72 and 72-76).

⁹⁸Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 41, and see also 39.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 39. One might wonder why Baxter took the risk of writing these poems to Margaret in the first place. Packer believed that Baxter’s interest in and care for Margaret’s spiritual growth had been “more than ordinary from the start” but not because of an amorous fancy on his part. Baxter’s special attention toward Margaret was partly due to her mother’s support for his ministry, but also because he recognized “what influence her intelligence, intensity, and social standing would give her in the parish once she was joyfully anchored in Christ.” His gamble, therefore, was one that many pastors were obliged to take in seeking to shepherd those with deeply troubled souls (*ibid.*, 38-39).

¹⁰⁰Baxter, *PF*, fol. A2r. However, Baxter deliberately refrained from elucidating the precise sufferings Margaret was experiencing, since he believed “*the World was not concerned to know*” this information (*ibid.*).

¹⁰¹Baxter composed “The Covenant and Confidence of Faith” for Margaret during “her former sickness” and its contents described the Christian’s wholehearted repentance and dedication of their life to God. After showing this covenant to Margaret, she “subscribed” to it with “a cheerful will” as an expression of her thoughts (*ibid.*, 62). Another poem, “Self-denial,” was written as a dialogue between the temptations of the flesh and the reassuring promises of the Holy Spirit to Christians. Though Baxter did not mention the poem’s occasion, he dated it October 29, 1659 which would place it close to the height of her spiritual crisis and dreadful illness (*ibid.*, 56). Following right after this poem is another one titled “The Prayer of the Sick, in a Case like *Hezekiah’s*,” which was composed to encourage the dying Christians to not fear death but welcome it (*ibid.*, 56-60). Though undated, its location suggests it originated from around the same time of the previous poem (around late 1659), and thus Baxter likely wrote it to comfort Margaret when she was ill and appeared she might die (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 41). Finally, Baxter composed “The Lamentation” as a dialogue between the lamenter, who is grieved by the intense sufferings of a friend,

evaluate Packer's theory, though the explanation seems plausible. Even if the scenario proved true, Margaret already had a deep appreciation for Baxter's spiritual role in her conversion and spiritual growth.

Margaret's spiritual crisis had indeed resulted in a genuine conversion that resulted in a dramatically altered life. The personal papers which she wrote on the day of thanksgiving for her recovery (April 10, 1660) aptly depict the remarkable transformation from a worldly maiden to a young woman zealously committed to God.¹⁰² Margaret's profound piety certainly constituted part of what Baxter wanted readers to glean from the newfound piety so evident in her personal writings.

Is not here in all these Papers . . . a great deal of work for one day If I should give you an account of all her following Twenty One years, what a Volume would it amount to? It is not a matter of *knowledge* but of *soul workings* toward God. . . . Is not this extraordinary in a Convert of a year, or few months standing?¹⁰³

Margaret's spiritual transformation and dire illness combined to help her begin to experience a certain triumph over the excessive love she was prone to have for her family members and friends. In one paper, she elaborated on her "Considerations of the vanity of the creature, and of all false hopes."¹⁰⁴ The near brush with death had allowed her to taste the incomparable comfort and hope only God could provide, and she consequently came to realize the insufficiency "of the creature to be our peace."¹⁰⁵ While not denying the goodness and blessing of human relationships, she nevertheless stressed their finite

and Jesus who offers comforting reassurance of his redeeming love and the lamenter's salvation (Baxter, *PF*, 76-89). The date of the poem—written between the 18 and 26 of January, 1661—indicated that Baxter wrote the poem the same month as the death of Margaret's mother, Mary, and was thus intended to console her during this period of significant grief (*ibid.*, 76, 89).

¹⁰²See Baxter, *BLM*, 10-12, 12-15, 16-21. As Wilkinson aptly put it, Margaret's "overwhelming religious experience is again and again affirmed in these pages of the *Breviate*. . . . The affections of this Puritan soul are toward God" (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 32).

¹⁰³Baxter, *BLM*, 22.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 14-15. This paper was Margaret's secret renewal of her covenant with God.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 14. For another paper where she comes to this realization, see *ibid.*, 27-28.

nature, which always left one disappointed and wounded: “Hath not experience yet taught thee, that creature-comforts, though they may be Roses, have their pricks?”¹⁰⁶ In response, she urged her soul to God’s all eternal, satisfying sufficiency: “Awake then, O my carnal heart; retire to God, the only satisfying object. There mayest thou love without all danger of excess. Let thy love to God be fixed and transcendent. *Amen.*”¹⁰⁷ Her lengthy discourse demonstrates her desire and resolve to maintain the “sublime supremacy” of God in her heart rather than allowing herself to be swayed to and fro by inordinate creaturely affections as she had in the past.¹⁰⁸

Despite the sincerity of Margaret’s resolutions, her spiritual struggle did not end immediately or quickly. At first glance, the renewed conflict seemed to be a return of her excessive love for relations friends and family, but in fact the situation was an outflow of her newfound devotion to God which seemed to conflict with a growing affection for Baxter. On the same day of thanksgiving when Margaret praised God’s work upon her soul, she also composed a “midnight meditation” which struck a less triumphant note.¹⁰⁹ She remained troubled over the weakness of her flesh, her sluggishness toward change, and a lack of thankfulness for God’s mercies and salvific work: “No, no,” she exclaimed at one point, “my hearth hath not stirred, and been drawn out towards my God! The thoughts of his love have not ravished my Soul.”¹¹⁰ An excessive affection for creatures still appeared to afflict her soul, prompting her to end a lengthy discourse on her deficient holy affections with the following refrain: “Let him be the chief in all my thoughts, my heart and life. . . . and let me strive to keep such a

¹⁰⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 15.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁸Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 33, 34.

¹⁰⁹For this paper, dated April 10, 1660, see Baxter, *BLM*, 16-21.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 16. For Margaret’s larger discourse on the inner turmoil she felt, see *ibid.*, 16-19.

moderate sense of sorrow on my soul, as occasion requireth.”¹¹¹ The source of her bereavement, as she explained in the following sentence, was Baxter’s sudden departure for London.¹¹²

I have now cause of sorrow for parting with my dear friends, my Father, my Pastor. He is by providence called away, and going a long journey: what the Lord will do with him, I cannot foresee; it may be he is preparing some great mercy for us, and for his praise . . . The will of the Lord be done, for he is wise and good; we are his own, let him do with us what he pleaseth; all shall be for good to them that love God.¹¹³

Despite the confusing reference to “dear friends,” which is undoubtedly a printing error,¹¹⁴ the person whose absence grieved Margaret so clearly was Baxter. The titles she ascribes to him indicate the nature of her affections for him and why his sudden departure brought her great sorrow. According to Packer, her reference to him as her “dear friend[.]” indicates he had come to fulfill her need for a “bosom-friend”; Puritans frequently used this term for a very intimate companion with whom one could share the burdens of the heart and receive counsel in return.¹¹⁵ Even more striking is her reference to him as “my Father,” which indicates she had come to view him as a substitute Father figure in her life.¹¹⁶ Having suffered the loss of her biological father at the age of six and then her step father shortly afterward, she had lacked a consistent father figure, and so it is not surprising that she gravitated toward viewing Baxter as a surrogate father. Finally, she

¹¹¹Baxter, *BLM*, 19.

¹¹²Baxter “came to London, April the 13th, 1660” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 215 §69). It is unknown whether Baxter had told Margaret of his travel plans, but surely he would have notified many individuals in Kidderminster of his departure since he was their pastor.

¹¹³Baxter, *BLM*, 19.

¹¹⁴The following authors concurred with this explanation: Lloyd-Thomas, “Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 270n1; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 33n1; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 203n13. Packer believed this misprint was likely occasioned by the phrase “dear friends” which appears just three lines above in the text (*ibid.*)

¹¹⁵Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 203n13. Such a conclusion lands close to the truth, for even if they were not “bosom-friends,” Margaret did refer to Baxter as a “mercy” and “means” by which God had benefited her soul (Baxter, *BLM*, 20).

¹¹⁶See also Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 37.

dearly appreciated Baxter for his ministry to her soul. The pain of his departure stemmed from the grief she felt at the loss of a key means of grace and the realization she had not been faithful stewarding this blessing.

I have cause to be humbled that I have been so unprofitable under mercies and means; it may grieve me now he is gone, that there is so little that came from him left upon my soul. O let this quicken and stir me up to be more diligent in the use of all remaining helps and means. And if I ever should enjoy this mercy again, O let me make it appear that this night I was sensible of my neglect of it.¹¹⁷

Margaret’s “midnight meditation” provides a key insight into what Baxter meant to her and why she was in such internal turmoil over his departure. The “strivings of her heart towards God”¹¹⁸ reveal that her affection for him stemmed from recognizing him as a means of grace—a bosom friend, pastor, and father figure—through which she had experienced God’s rich mercies. Even though such desires contained nothing inherently unlawful, she recognized they could become excessive and needed to be kept subordinate to her supreme devotion to God. As Wilkinson observed, “Puritan piety demanded” this subordination, and her obedience reveals the extent to which those spiritual convictions had taken root in her.¹¹⁹

The manner in which Margaret coped with Baxter’s sudden departure for London also demonstrates a remarkable level of spiritual maturity, piety, and trust in the will of God. Despite the intensity of her sorrow, she willingly resolved to accept the fleeting nature of even the closest human relationships and the eternal purpose they were ultimately meant to point towards.

The whole world is but a house where God’s children dwell a little while, till he hath fitted them for the heavenly Mansions; and if he send them out of one room and into another to do his work, and try their obedience; and if he put some in the darkest corners of his house, to keep them humble, though he separate those that are

¹¹⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 19-20.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 15. Baxter would also refer to these as her “soul workings towards God” (ibid., 22).

¹¹⁹See Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 33-34.

most beloved of each other, it is but that they may not love so much as to be loth to part and come to him who should have all their love.¹²⁰

In reflecting on the loss of Baxter, Margaret recognized a lesson providentially designed to wean her affections off even the most beneficial human companions. The inherently momentary nature of such relationships entailed that they were always accompanied by frustration. She recognized that such disappointments ultimately served to remind her that heaven was the end goal of her life on earth. Therefore, she sought to wisp her soul away from rooting her hopes in the earthly fulfillment of her desires:¹²¹ “When the Lord shall take our carcasses from the grave, and make us shine as the Sun in glory; then, then shall friends meet and never part, and remember their sad and weary nights and days no more! Then may we love freely!”¹²² She recognized “this was the project” of God’s “redeeming love” in her life, and so she comforted herself with the promise that, even if she had not a single friend on earth, “if God be not far from me, it’s well enough.”¹²³ If Baxter sought to show that Margaret was far from an infatuated youth carried away by romantic ardor for her pastor, he had succeeded. Though her affection for him made his sudden departure bitter, she willingly entrusted herself to God’s will and saw his absence as a chance to place her hope in God as the everlasting rest of her soul.

¹²⁰Baxter, *BLM*, 20.

¹²¹I am indebted to Lloyd-Thomas for this insight into what this quotation reflected about Margaret’s mindset (Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 270-71). However, I do believe he stressed the infatuated nature of Margaret’s feelings too strongly (*ibid.*, 269-72). Certainly, romantic feelings were at work in part (a point which will be discussed shortly), but he stressed this aspect of her affections too much and underemphasized how her affections for Baxter primarily stemmed from his role as a key means of grace in her life. In contrast, Wilkinson’s treatment is more sympathetic and attentive to this aspect of Margaret’s thinking (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 36, and see also the larger discussion in 32-36).

¹²²Baxter, *BLM*, 21.

¹²³*Ibid.* Margaret followed this with a resolution to place her hope in God no matter what earthly disappointment she might encounter: “and whatever here befalls the Church and people of God, its but as for one day, and presently the storm will be all over. Let me therefore cast all my care on God: Let me wait on him in the way of duty, and trust him; let me run with patience the race that is set before me, looking to Jesus the Author and finisher of my faith, and believingly go to him in all my troubles; and let me so labour here, that I may find rest to my soul in the Rest that remaineth for the people of God. Rest! O Sweet word! The weary shall haver est [sic], they shall rest in the Lord” (*ibid.*, 20).

Margaret's esteem for Baxter as a means of grace and help in her life can be glimpsed in her explanation for joining him in London in late April, 1660.¹²⁴ In a paper dated sometime after her day of thanksgiving,¹²⁵ she listed three resolutions she had made to God during her sickness concerning her desire to repent of her "unprofitable life" and dedicate herself to God, if he allowed her to recover.¹²⁶ But then she added a fourth resolution, written in the present rather than the past tense, indicating her decision "to go to London as soon as I can . . . for the reasons mentioned in another place."¹²⁷ Though he searched for them, Baxter could not find any evidence of her "reasons" in her other papers, but he did discover and transcribe a "fragment" which he said "hints something of it."¹²⁸ However, as Packer wryly observed, Baxter knew all too well what her reasons were,¹²⁹ and so the "fragment" accurately reflects her underlying motives for joining him in London. Two themes emerge in the "fragment," the first being her growing awareness that in the past she had misused "the helps which God had given" her.¹³⁰ Her realization consequently filled her with a zeal to more faithfully steward such "helps," if providence

¹²⁴No date is known for their arrival but it was likely later in April of 1660 (Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 2:666; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 36).

¹²⁵The paper begins with brief references to the worst days of Margaret's illness, at the end of 1659 and beginning of 1660. She then records that "April 10. Was a day of Thanksgiving" (Baxter, *BLM*, 27). Thus, it seems to have been written sometime after the day of thanksgiving on April 10, 1660, but before she left for London later that month. Packer and Wilkinson however believe this paper was written before the day of thanksgiving (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 35; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 36). They cited the close of the paper where Margaret, resolved "to go to London as soon as I can after the day of Thanksgiving" (Baxter, *BLM*, 29). Both statements therefore provide a different temporal indication for the paper's composition. But if Margaret had already decided to follow Baxter to London before the day of thanksgiving, then the paper written on that day, which recorded her intense grief at Baxter's departure, makes very little sense. Why would she express such sorrow at being separated from him, very little hope of seeing him again, and such willingness to allow God to remove him from her life when she had already resolved to join him after he left?

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 27-28. For these three resolutions, see *ibid.*, 28-29.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 29. The first three resolutions all began with "I resolved that I would" or "I resolved to," meaning she made these resolutions in the past, while she was gravely ill. But the last resolution noticeably begins as follows: "I resolve, if Providence concur, to go to *London* as soon as I can" (*ibid.*, 29).

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 35.

¹³⁰Baxter, *BLM*, 29.

allowed it: “And if ever God more trust me with such treasure as once I had, I will strive to shew that I better know the worth of it than I did before.”¹³¹ Given Baxter’s editorial work to connect the “fragment” with the previous paper mentioning her resolution to move to London, he evidently sought to highlight how Margaret’s decision to join him was motivated by a desire to once again benefit from the spiritual blessings she had received from his pastoral ministry and close friendship.¹³² As Packer observed, “It is to [Baxter], rather than anyone else, that she wants to talk about her spiritual condition, and from him, rather than anyone else that she wants to learn the wisdom of God.”¹³³ A second theme arising from the “fragment” was Margaret’s spiritual maturation. Evidently, she had made significant strides in her prolonged struggle with excessive affection for friends.

I know now how I should love Ordinances and means of grace, and to what end; not to break my heart when Providence removeth them from me, or me from them; but I should love them for God, and use them for him, and expect my greatest comfort from him, and not from men and means themselves: This is no more than what I thought I had known long ago, but I never knew it indeed until now. And now I do but begin to know it.¹³⁴

While she admitted she still had room for growth in guarding against inordinate love for others, she nevertheless perceived she had arrived at a decisive turning point. She now knew how to correctly appreciate her relationships as a means of drawing her closer to God rather than as an end in themselves. She could now comfort herself with God’s

¹³¹Baxter, *BLM*, 30.

¹³²Both Wilkinson and Packer make the same connection (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 36; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 35-36). The link is further supported by Margaret’s secret renewal of her covenant with God (discussed above). In that paper, Margaret had expressed this same grief at Baxter’s removal and resolution to better use such means of grace: “I have now cause of sorrow for parting with my dear friends, my Father, my Pastor. . . . I have cause to be humbled that I have been so unprofitable under mercies and means; it may grieve me now he is gone, that there is so little that came from him left upon my soul. O let this quicken and stir me up to be more diligent in the use of all remaining helps and means. And if I ever should enjoy this mercy again, O let me make it appear that this night I was sensible of my neglect of it” (Baxter, *BLM*, 19-20).

¹³³Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 37.

¹³⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 29.

companionship, rather than grow increasingly distressed, when he removed dear friends like Baxter. By comparing the “fragment” to the paper Margaret wrote after Baxter’s departure, the growth in her spiritual struggle to maintain the supremacy of God in her heart appears striking. She joined Baxter in London because she desired to spiritually profit once again from the man who had been one of the chief means of grace in her life.

By the time she went to London with her mother, Margaret’s affection for Baxter may very well have grown beyond love for her dear pastor and into love for the man himself. This possibility does not impugn the conclusions above but merely suggests that an additional factor may have been at work which even she was not aware of and therefore did not record. If true, this explanation might help explain the deep despondency which settled upon her after Baxter’s departure. Powicke and Wilkinson cautiously affirmed the romantic nature of her admiration for Baxter, while Lloyd-Thomas and Packer believed she was already passionately in love with him before she left for London, though she did not seem to recognize it herself.¹³⁵ These four scholars have pointed to two quotations that suggested strong underlying romantic inclinations. In one place Margaret yearned for heaven as a place where Christians need not fear unreturned love, since there friends “shall meet and never part, and remember their sad and weary nights and days no more! Then may we love freely!”¹³⁶ In another suggestive paper, she desired to wrench her heart away from inordinate earthly loves which tempted her away from resting her hopes in God: “Away then, O my carnal heart; retire to God, the only satisfying object. There mayest thou love without all danger of excess! Let thy

¹³⁵Both Powicke and Wilkinson cautiously affirmed that positive that Margaret’s love for Baxter, at the time of her departure for London, had grown to loving the man himself (Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 442; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 33). Lloyd-Thomas was far bolder and asserted that Margaret was “already passionately in love with Baxter” (Lloyd-Thomas, “Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 268, 269, 270). Packer followed Lloyd-Thomas’ interpretation explicitly without any qualification or dissent (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 36-37).

¹³⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 21. Powicke interpreted this quote as suggesting romantic inclinations on Margaret’s part (Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 442).

love to God be fixed and transcendent. *Amen.*”¹³⁷ Two cautions are needed in evaluating the above quotations. First, the interpretation of her sentiments as the product of obvious romantic love can be easy with the benefit of knowing the course their relationship eventually took, but it could also commit the error of reading the final outcome back into the early stages. Second, recalling the extremely private nature of Margaret’s papers should also temper one’s conclusions, for even her own husband, had not seen them until after her death.¹³⁸ If she felt free to be more open concerning the nature of her affections for Baxter, it would have been in these documents. In short, romantic inclinations may very well have been at work in Margaret, but if so it seems she was not conscious of it or could not distinguish between admiration for her pastor and romantic love for him. Perhaps the reason for her inability to differentiate the two lay in the source of her admiration for Baxter as her dearly loved friend, substitute father figure, and pastor. These blessings she had received through him remained paramount in her mind when she thought of him.

Baxter’s Initial Indifference to Margaret

Baxter was not particularly forthright in illuminating his feelings toward Margaret, either at Kidderminster or while in London, but he seemed to utterly lack any reciprocal affection or a desire to pursue marriage. The only windows into his mind are found in the letters of pastoral counsel he wrote to her during her severe illness and afterward while she struggled with assurance of salvation.¹³⁹ During this period, she was only willing to approach “one person” (Baxter), with the despondency she felt, because

¹³⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 15

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 22.

¹³⁹These letters were transcribed for chap. four of the *breviate* (*ibid.*, 22-26, 33-43). Though the context of each piece of correspondence varies, Baxter said they were written “while in her languishing, and after it” (*ibid.*, 33).

of condemning “her self as a graceless wretch.”¹⁴⁰ Her crisis of assurance stemmed from her excessive love for “creatures” (human beings) which competed with her devotion to God.¹⁴¹ However, as has been demonstrated from Margaret’s personal papers, the relationship prompting her spiritual ailment was growing attachment to her pastor. Baxter knew that “passionate women and young people” that had been recently converted often assumed they could “never too much value and honour and Love those that converted them.”¹⁴² While he veiled his counsel in general language, he likely discerned the object of her creaturely affections as he composed his counsel to her.¹⁴³ As Packer pointed, his awareness shaped the tone of his counsel as well as the fact that it was delivered by correspondence rather than in person.

shrewd pastors know what is in the wind, and what may develop, when young women become exclusively dependent on them for spiritual counsel, and they shape their pastoral care accordingly, keeping their distance in order to ensure, so far as they can, that the feelings they discern will not get out of hand.¹⁴⁴

Though Margaret lived only a few yards from the church and his dwelling,¹⁴⁵ Baxter endeavored to dampen rather than stoke the romantic passion he perceived to be at the root of her affections.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, he was cool and stern in his words urging her to

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁴¹In one paper, Margaret expressed her internal struggle to realize that she could not place her hopes but only in God: “Hath not experience yet taught thee, that creature-comforts, though they may be roses, have their pricks? . . . If thou must needs have them in thy bosom, thou must scratch thy fingers to get them . . . Away then, O my carnal heart; retire to God, the only satisfying object. There mayest thou love without all danger of excess! Let thy love to God be fixed and transcendent. *Amen*” (Baxter, *BLM*, 15).

¹⁴²Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience directing Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1678), pt. 4, 253, answer to question 8.

¹⁴³Several scholars agreed on this interpretation (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 37; Lloyd-Thomas, “Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 269; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 36-37; Black, “Richard and Margaret,” 36). Powicke was more cautious, admitting that it is possible but not with as much certainty as the above authors (Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 443).

¹⁴⁴Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 37.

¹⁴⁵Baxter mentioned how Margaret lived “in the Church-Yard side, where she saw all the burials of the dead” (Baxter, *BLM*, 44).

¹⁴⁶Packer has noted how this practice, in itself was not particularly unusual: “Baxter regularly

allow no creaturely love to compete with the supremacy belonging to God.¹⁴⁷ Scholars have rightly pointed to his letters of counsel as evidence that he gave Margaret no hope of reciprocal love.¹⁴⁸ However, they have overlooked how his method of delivery and tone also served an apologetic aim. By including such letters in the *Breviate*, he sought to exonerate himself from any charge that he had been willing to cast aside his scruples against clerical marriage at a time when he was fully committed to clerical celibacy.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the correspondence vindicated him from any allegation that he had abused his pastoral position over Margaret or was captured by amorous love. Far from encouraging her feelings, the letters emphasized Baxter's efforts to temper them as well as root her hope and love in God rather than himself.

Baxter did not simply censure Margaret but sought to inculcate in his young convert the usefulness and limits of valuing even the best human relationships. She had a tendency to be too deeply grieved when encountering disappointment and failures with her close friends and family members.¹⁵⁰ First, he recognized her need to be equipped with a proper perspective of creatures by comparing their inherently flawed nature to the perfection of God. He exhorted her to not allow herself to be so disturbed by such relational "crosses" but to instead root her joy in God, the only sure anchor for her happiness: "When God has done so much for you," he reasoned, "will you leave it in the

sent his parishioner's letters when communicating matters of permanent spiritual significance to which he and they would need to refer in the future." After the contents had been noted or copied by the receiver, if they wished, Baxter would then ask for the letter to be returned (*A Grief Sanctified*, 200n43).

¹⁴⁷For example, Baxter wrote in one letter, "1. Your trouble of soul is either some *affliction*, 2. Or some *sin*. 3. Or the doubt of your *sincerity* and true grace" (*BLM*, 23).

¹⁴⁸Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 37-38; Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 269-72; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 37-38; Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 216-17.

¹⁴⁹Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 42.

¹⁵⁰Baxter, *BLM*, 34. According to Baxter, this letter concerned the "miscarriage of a Relation troubling her" (*ibid.*), but the content of the letter shows that Baxter saw this problem pervading Margaret's friendships also (*ibid.*, 34-35).

power of an unconstant creature to trouble you, and rob you of your peace? Is the joy in the Holy Ghost so subject to the malice of your enemies, *or the weakness of your friends?* Delight yourself in an Allsufficient constant God, and he will be to you a sufficient constant delight.”¹⁵¹ Even the best creatures, Baxter pointed out to her, came with “infirmities” that could grieve her.¹⁵² Rather than being distraught by the failings of even the “best friends,” he counseled her to view their “frailty and unkindness” as a providentially designed mercy intended to keep her “from inordinate affections” towards them.¹⁵³ His initial step in moderating her growing affections and reliance on him was to instill in her a sober minded perspective of the frailty of human beings in comparison to God. Then she would begin resting her hopes in the all satisfying God rather than becoming ever more relationally dependent upon him.

Baxter also warned Margaret of the precipitous dangers connected with rooting her love too deeply in creatures. He echoed the same warning that he gave regarding bosom friends in the *Christian Directory*.¹⁵⁴ Even in the case of “honest affections,” he explained, the struggle to “keep our hearts in going too far” was a herculean task, and such love proved “sinful and hurtful in the degree” that it was inordinate.¹⁵⁵ He believed such “running after the beloved creature” would “divert and cool” her “love for God,” turn her thoughts away from him, and increase her afflictions through emotional involvement in the perils and plights of those she loved too much.¹⁵⁶ Baxter was concerned that her newfound devotion to God choked by an excessive attachment to

¹⁵¹Baxter, *BLM*, 34. See also 34-35, 37, 41, 43 for similar statements.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 34. See also 43 for a similar statement.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 35. See also 36 for a similar statement. Baxter believed God had providentially used her experience of death to teach her to “see what the world and all its pleasures are,” namely “vanity” (*ibid.*, 36).

¹⁵⁴See the discussion in chap. 5, 226-28, 236-39.

¹⁵⁵Baxter, *BLM*, 35.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 35-36. For another letter giving similar advice, see *ibid.*, 36.

others, especially himself, and his guidance was aimed at helping to keep those holy affections supreme in her heart.

Finally, Baxter recognized that Margaret needed to learn to view human relationships for the purpose God had intended them. On one occasion, she requested his prayers, and he responded with a letter sharing not only how he would pray for her but also to instruct her concerning what she should pray and desire for herself.¹⁵⁷ Rather than having a dependent, excessive and idolatrous love for creatures, he urged her to see them as helpers in the growth of her piety and devotion to God.

I will pray, that no creature may seem greater, better, or more regardable, or necessary to you than it is; and that you should look on all as walking shadows, vanity and liars (that is, *untrusty*), further than you can see God in them, or they lead you up to him; that they may never be over-loved, over feared, over-trusted, or their thoughts too much regarded.¹⁵⁸

While Baxter never rejected the blessings of intimate friendships, he sternly reminded her of the delicate balance between the lawful and unlawful enjoyment of them. Intimate relationships were only profitable so far as they served as a means of grace to further her on her path to heaven, and he sought to redirect her toward that eternal goal. In Baxter's view, her admiration and attachment to him was the result of inordinate affection, and he did not want to encourage such a dangerous drift.

Baxter indicated his negative evaluation of Margaret's affections as well as his determination to dampen them in a letter reproaching her resolution to join him in London. Sometime after he arrived in the capital on April 13, 1660, he received word from her concerning her determination to follow him. His response did not bear the faintest mark of encouragement for her endeavor: "It's not lawful to speak an idle word... much less to go on an idle journey. . . . [W]ill not conscience ask you who called you

¹⁵⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 40.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 41.

hither?”¹⁵⁹ Moreover, he seemed sure that her motivation for coming stemmed from a sinful restlessness and lack of contentment at Kidderminster.

Your weakness of Spirit, that cannot endure this or that, at home, with your dearest friends, is so far below the quite composed fortitude which you should have, that you ought not to give way to it. If you are at the command of your impatience, how are you obedient to the command of God? It's a greater work to bring your mind and will to the will of God, than to change place, or apparel, or to run away as *Jonah* in discontent.¹⁶⁰

Rather than believing she was coming to London to benefit again from his ministry, Baxter diagnosed her decision as the result of an inability to control her emotions and thoughts.¹⁶¹ She had been the sole author of her decision to come join him in London, and he did everything he could to dissuade her.¹⁶² But if Baxter gave no evidence of warning to Margaret before she and her mother relocated to London in April 1660, what circumstances occasioned his change of heart?¹⁶³ To answer this question, one must first

¹⁵⁹Baxter, *BLM*, 42 (misprinted as 24).

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹In another letter, Baxter blamed Margaret's high strung and fearful nature for exercising too much control over her mind. While Baxter was sympathetic to the difficulty of this struggle, he nevertheless reminded her of her ability to control her mind, since God had made it her duty: "When unreasonable fears and troubles are upon you, and troubling thoughts are still up on your mind, you say that *you cannot help it, nor turn your thoughts away to anything else*. I know you have not an absolute power over your thoughts, but some you have: why else hath God made a Law for our thoughts, and laid so much duty on them, and forbidden their sin so much? Much may be done if you will be resolute. (ibid., 38). In another letter, Baxter also told Margaret he would pray that she would "be much less tender, and liable to commotion, and disquiet of mind" (ibid., 41).

¹⁶²In a previous letter, he blamed Margaret for being "*self-willed*," since she was often "too passionately or immovably set" upon fulfilling all her desires (ibid.).

¹⁶³There is some debate whether Baxter or Margaret authored the final entry in this chap. concerning the spiritual struggle and grief caused by love for other humans: "The best creature-affections have a mixture of creature-imperfections, and therefore need some gall to wean us from the faulty part: God must be known to be God, our rest, and therefore the best creature to be but a creature! O miserable world! (how long must I continue *in it*? And why is this wretched heart so loth to leave it), where we can have no fire without smook, and when we begin in hope, and love, and joy, before we are aware, we fall into an answerable measure of distress. Learn by experience, when any condition is inordinately or excessively sweet to thee, to say, *From hence must be my sorrow*. (O how true)!" (ibid., 43). The question of whether these words reflected the sentiment of Baxter or Margaret affects whether one sees Baxter having an attraction to Margaret at this point in their relationship. Lloyd-Thomas viewed Baxter as the author and consequently saw Baxter beginning to succumb to his own obsession with Margaret (Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 271). Wilkinson however offered good reasons for disagreeing with Lloyd-Thomas's interpretation and instead ascribed authorship of this passage to Margaret (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 38-39). Furthermore, based on this, Wilkinson did not believe Baxter had a reciprocal attraction to Margaret before she arrived in London, at least as far as can be discerned from the available evidence (ibid., 39). Powicke came to the same conclusions as Wilkinson (Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 443). I concur with Wilkinson's

examine his long, yet ultimately fruitless, string of “Pacifactory Endeavours” following his arrival in London on April 13, 1660 and the Restoration of the English Monarchy.¹⁶⁴ His failure to attain conditions under which he could remain a clergyman clarifies not only why he would now feel free to marry but why he chose to marry Margaret.

The Restoration’s Impact on Baxter

The return of the King and England’s Post-Restoration church settlement caused a gradual decline in Baxter’s prospects for continuing as a minister in the Church of England. His involvement in the Restoration is puzzling considering his support for the Protectorate regime. In 1659, he had published *A Holy Commonwealth*,¹⁶⁵ which provided his justifications for siding with Parliamentary forces and giving increasing support for the Cromwells.¹⁶⁶ Simultaneously, he had been in regular correspondence

analysis but would also supplement his rationale by pointing to how the emotional tone of this entry, and particularly its exasperation, does not match the tone of Baxter’s letters to Margaret’s, suggesting that Margaret was the author of the passage rather than Baxter.

¹⁶⁴Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 106 §153. For works on the Restoration in general, see Robert S. Boshier, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement: The Influence of the Laudians, 1649-1662* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1951); Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658-1667* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); N. H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s*, History of Early Modern England (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002); Paul Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime, 1661-1667*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹⁶⁵See the modern critical edition of this work: Richard Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth*, ed. William Lamont, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Baxter would later repudiate this work in 1670. For monographs treating *A Holy Commonwealth* and Baxter’s political thought, see Julius P. Jaeger, “An Introduction to Richard Baxter’s ‘A Holy Commonwealth’” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1936); Thomas Wheeler Nuckols, “A Holy Commonwealth: The Political Thought of Richard Baxter” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1968).

¹⁶⁶William Lamont has demonstrated that Baxter’s attitude toward the Protectorate regime grew steadily more positive through the 1650s; thus in 1650 he was “frigid,” but by 1659 he was actively cooperating with the Protectorate (William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* [London: Crook and Helm, 1979], 104). Tim Cooper has argued that Baxter esteemed Richard Cromwell far more than Oliver Cromwell, since his “Presbyterian sympathies” were clearer and he lacked “all the baggage of the 1640s” that Oliver carried with him (Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011], 228-29). The hope Baxter pinned on Richard Cromwell can be glimpsed in the two works he dedicated to him: Richard Baxter, *Five disputations of church-government and worship by Richard Baxter* (London: Printed by R. W. for Nevil Simmons, 1659); Baxter, *A key for Catholicks, to open the jugling of the Jesuits, and satisfie all that are but truly willing to understand, whether the cause of the Roman or reformed churches be of God; and to leave the reader utterly unexcusable that after this will be a papist* (London: Printed by R[obert] W[hite] for Nevil Simmons, 1659).

since 1658 with an imprisoned royalist named John Maitland, the Earl of Lauderdale.¹⁶⁷ Lauderdale had written Baxter “many letters full of extraordinary kindness” that had persuaded him to “hearken to his judgment.”¹⁶⁸ After his release on March 8 of 1660, he sought to visit Kidderminster in order to win Baxter to the royalist cause of returning Charles II to the throne.¹⁶⁹ Viewing Baxter as the most influential leader among the Presbyterians,¹⁷⁰ Lauderdale recognized that to succeed in the Restoration the Presbyterian party would have to be won over, and so “[t]o win him was to win the game.”¹⁷¹ Baxter, “desiring to prevent [Lauderdale’s] trouble and for other reasons,”

¹⁶⁷The Earl of Lauderdale had been a political prisoner in the Castle of Windsor since being defeated in 1651 at the Battle of Worcestershire close to the end of the English Civil War. In the meantime, he had been translating useful passages for Baxter from a French polemical book written against Roman Catholicism. He was released from prison on March 8 following General Monk’s entrance into London in February 1660 and the restoration of the Long Parliament, which followed the dissolution of the Rump Parliament (Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 85). For Baxter’s account of General Monk’s march to London and the consequences of it, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 214, §67.

¹⁶⁸Richard Baxter, Narrative March 1659-April 1660, Baxter MSS Collection, *Treatises*, vol. 3, item 62 (2), fol. 118v, D.W.L., London. I am indebted to Powicke for pointing me toward this source (Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 189).

¹⁶⁹[The Earl of Lauderdale] to Richard Baxter, March 31, [1659/60], Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 1, fols. 210r-v, D.W.L., London; the bracketed information was deduced by Keeble and Nuttall, eds., *CCRB*, 1:639. See also a previous letter where Lauderdale expressed his desire to come incognito to Kidderminster to see Baxter ([The Earl of Lauderdale] to Richard Baxter, March 20, [1659/60], Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 5, fols. 211r-v, D.W.L., London); again, the bracketed information was supplied by Keeble and Nuttall, eds., *CCRB*, 1:635.

¹⁷⁰I am using the term “Presbyterian” here in the manner that Baxter employed it for those moderate Puritans who favored neither diocesan episcopacy nor congregational or separatist ecclesiology. Baxter did not wish to extend toleration to separatists (Quakers, sects, religious radicals, etc.) and Roman Catholics (Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter’s Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context*, *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions* 62 [Boston: Brill, 2004], 123-28, 138-44).

¹⁷¹Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 190. Lauderdale envisioned Baxter as expressly set apart by God to be “the great instrument of union in these Churches” ([The Earl of Lauderdale] to Richard Baxter, fol. 210v; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 1:639). Lauderdale’s statement appealing for church concord likely touched a matter very close to Baxter’s heart and may have played a role in persuading him to hear the Earl’s case for restoring monarchy. Many scholars have noted Baxter’s lifelong commitment to church unity: Earl Kent Brown, “Richard Baxter’s Contribution to the Comprehension Controversy” (PhD diss., Boston University School of Theology, 1956); Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 117, 119. J. William Black however has questioned whether Baxter always adhered to his desire for church unity in the same, consistent manner (J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor*, *Studies in Evangelical History and Thought* [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004], 155-56). See Cooper’s brief critique of Black’s theory (Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 141n20). Also, it should be remembered that despite Baxter’s love for unity, he also readily admitted his involvement in numerous controversies strongly suggested otherwise (Richard Baxter, *Richard Baxter’s penitent confession and his necessary vindication in answer to a book called The second part of the mischiefs of separation, written by an unnamed author with a preface to Mr. Cantianus D. Minimis, in answer to his letter which extorted this*

journeyed to London to meet Lauderdale in person, which occurred on April 14, the day after his arrival.¹⁷² Lauderdale succeeded in gaining his support after dispelling his doubts about the Restoration's legality as well as producing several letters testifying to Charles II's piety and firm commitment to Protestantism.¹⁷³

Baxter's support was not given without considerable pessimism concerning the likely outcome of the Restoration upon the Church of England and clergymen like himself. In his autobiography, he recorded how different groups held varying expectations about the Restoration. According to Tim Cooper, Baxter's outlook best fit those individuals who believed they were obligated to restore the King and yet held little hope for a moderate church settlement, since they believed the diocesan party (Prelates) would never tolerate non-conformists.¹⁷⁴ Baxter's comments from the very beginning of the Restoration indicate that he aligned very closely with such pessimistic sentiments.¹⁷⁵

publication [London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, 1691], 34, 41).

¹⁷²Baxter, Narrative March 1659-April 1660, fol. 119r. Powicke has noted that this account differed significantly from the account given in Baxter's autobiography (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 215, §69) where Black did not seem to come to London with the explicit intention of meeting Lauderdale (Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 189-90). According to Powicke, Matthew Sylvester, the editor of Baxter's autobiography, probably thought such an account revealed "a degree of subservience to Lauderdale and of esteem for him" which might "startle or scandalize many readers" in light of what later transpired with the 1662 *Act of Uniformity* (ibid., 190).

¹⁷³Baxter, Narrative March 1659-April 1660, fol. 119r. In his autobiography, Baxter gave a more cynical account of this meeting, saying that the letters gave a "pompous Character of the King" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 215 §69)

¹⁷⁴According to Baxter, "A third sort said, You know not the Principles or Spirit of the Prelates, if you look for any Liberty in Public or Private, to be granted to any that do not conform. We all look to be Silenced, and some many of us imprisoned or banished: but yet we will do our parts to restore the King, because no foreseen ill consequence, must hinder us from our Duty: And if ignorant men be put into our places, and never so many souls perish by it, the Fault is not ours, but theirs that do it" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 216 §73). I am indebted to Tim Cooper for this insight (Tim Cooper, "Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661)," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 68, no. 2 [April 2017]: 331).

¹⁷⁵Baxter expressed this exact sentiment upon reading one of the letters produced by Lauderdale to win his support for restoring Charles II. The letter was written to him by the renowned preacher Monsieur Gaches, yet Baxter could not help noting its glaring irony. This "Excellent Divine" had no awareness of the type of clergyman who would be restored along with the King and what they would do to Baxter and likeminded clergymen (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 215 §70). Baxter wrote, "When I read this Reverend Man's excessive Praises, and his concluding Prayer for the Success of my Labours, I thought with my self, how little doth the good Man understand how ill the beginning and end of his words accord: He prayeth for my Congregation, and the blessing of my Labours, when he hath persuaded me to put an end to my Labours, by setting up those Prelates who will silence me and many a hundred more! He perswadeth me to that which will separate me from my Flock, and then prayeth that I may be a Blessing to them. He overvalueth and magnifieth my Service to the Church, and then perwadeth me to that which will put a

His cooperation with Lauderdale did not stem from rosy optimism, but a conviction that restoring the King was his duty to God, which had to be obeyed despite the ecclesiastical repression that would almost inevitably result from it. Moreover, as Cooper observed, Baxter had foretold what would ensue if the diocesan party returned to power, long before any thought the restoration of the monarchy a possibility.¹⁷⁶ Writing in 1656, he recalled from his own experience “*the silencing of most godly, able men, the persecutions, even of the peaceable*” under Archbishop Laud.¹⁷⁷ When Baxter examined the “late practices . . . of the *New Prelatical way*,” he was convinced the same persecution would be repeated if the prelates regained their authority.¹⁷⁸ Based upon the prelates’ past transgressions, he concluded that “by all this they plainly shew what a condition they would reduce this Nation into again, if it were in their power.” They would seek out those “able, godly men” who had rightly replaced them and “would silence them if they could: I think there is no doubt of that.”¹⁷⁹ In 1659, he reiterated the same prediction of what the prelates would do if they returned to power.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless,

Period to my service, and to the service of many hundreds better than my self. But yet his cause and arguments are honest ; and I am so far from being against him in it, that I may think much more for it than he : for he is for our Restoring the King, that our ministry may be freed from the obloquy of malicious Enemies: but I am for restoring of the King, that when we are Silenced, and our Ministry at an end, and some of us lye in Prisons, we may there, and in that Condition, have peace of Conscience in the discharge of our Duty, and the Exercise of Faith, Patience and Charity in our Sufferings” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 216 §71). Baxter claimed these calamities “were long foreseen by seeing men, and they were told and warned of it, year after year” (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 103 §147).

¹⁷⁶Cooper, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661),” 332.

¹⁷⁷Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor shewing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechizing: with an open confession of our too open sins, prepared for a day of humiliation kept at Worcester, Decemb. 4, 1655 by the ministers of that county, who subscribed the agreement for catechizing and personal instruction, at their entrance upon that work*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657), fol. B1r. I am citing from the second edition of *The reformed pastor*.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁸⁰Baxter repeated the same accusation that the prelates would strive to have all godly ministers “*silenced and cast out. I do not think you will deny this to be your desire, and your purpose, if ever should you have power? And if so, what men are you? and what a case would you bring this Nation into?*” (Baxter, *FD*, preface 36).

despite clear cynicism, he dedicated himself to achieving a united church through a religious settlement that moderated between Presbyterians and the diocesan party seeking a restoration of the Church's old episcopacy.

Baxter had a plan ready for settling England's religious question, and at first its prospects seemed promising.¹⁸¹ Citing the late Archbishop James Ussher (1582-1656),¹⁸² he proposed a "reduced episcopacy" that would be "more consultative than coercive" by granting parish pastors the right to preach, administer the sacraments, and exercise discipline over their congregants.¹⁸³ His ecclesiastical alterations would remedy the most glaring faults of England's pre-Civil War system of episcopal government.¹⁸⁴ More importantly, a reduced episcopacy provided the liberty for Baxter's pastoral program—catechizing, discipline, ministerial associations—to continue reforming parish churches. John F. Brouwer pointed out that Baxter's desire to protect his program, especially keeping discipline in the hands of pastors rather than bishops, explains why he was so "tenacious and vociferous" in arguing for a modified episcopacy.¹⁸⁵ When the

¹⁸¹For the most recent study of Baxter's ecclesiastical vision for the Church of England, see Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*,

¹⁸²Baxter said that he and Ussher had agreed on a policy for ecclesiastical government within half an hour (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 218 §80). See the republished version of James Ussher's ecclesiastical model (James Ussher, *The reduction of episcopacie unto the form of synodical government received in the ancient Church: proposed in the year 1641. as an expedient for the prevention of those troubles, which afterwards did arise about the matter of church-government. / By the most reverend and learned father of our Church Dr. James Usher, late Arch-Bishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland. A true copy set forth by Nicolas Bernard, D.D. preacher to the Honourable Society of Grayes Inne occasioned by an imperfect copy lately printed* (London: Printed by E. C. for R. Royston, 1656). Buick Knox however has argued that Ussher's ecclesiology did not align as closely with Baxter's in actual practice as Baxter thought it did (Buick Knox, "Archbishop Ussher and Richard Baxter," *Ecumenical Review* 12, no. 1 [1959]: 60).

¹⁸³This is Lim's summary of Baxter's stance (Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 16, 18, 213). For Baxter's detailed defense of a modified episcopacy for helping reform churches, see Baxter, *FD*, 274-358; Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 268-71. For a monograph of Baxter's lifelong efforts toward achieving a comprehensive church, and the prerequisites he saw as necessary for this, see Brown, "Richard Baxter's Contribution to the Comprehension Controversy."

¹⁸⁴For Baxter's critique of the faults in the English Church's system of episcopal government existing before the Civil War, see Baxter, *FD*, 2-108.

¹⁸⁵John F. Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's Christian Directory: Context and Content" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2005), 115-16.

Restoration of Charles II commenced in the spring of 1660, Baxter's aspirations received encouragement from the King's tone of religious toleration and reconciliation in the *Declaration of Breda* as well as from moderate Episcopalians.¹⁸⁶ The King also expressed his desire for moderation by two other direct actions. First, he sought to satisfy and include "some Chief Presbyterians" by making them chaplains-in-ordinary to the monarch, which Baxter assented to along with ten or twelve others.¹⁸⁷ Second, the King extended an invitation that summer for Baxter and other Presbyterians to propose a church settlement that would mediate between themselves and Episcopal supporters.¹⁸⁸ Though he initially felt "dejected" by the initial drafting of their proposals in the King's *Worcester House Declaration*, he was "much pleased with" the final version of the statement on October 25 and vouched his best efforts to "persuade all, according to my Interest and Opportunity, to Conform according to the Terms of this Declaration."¹⁸⁹ It was also at this time that Baxter, Edward Reynolds, and Edmund Calamy were offered Bishopricks, though only Reynolds ended up accepting.¹⁹⁰ There seemed to be hope that Baxter might remain a clergymen in the English Church, even though he had lost his Kidderminster position a month earlier on September 13 when the *Act for Confirming and Restoring of Ministers* restored all ministers who had been sequestered since 1643.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶See Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 217 §74; *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 229 §87; *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 217 §76; *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 218 §80; *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 218 §81; *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 229 §87; *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 230-31 §90-91.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 229 §88-89.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 231 §91. For Baxter's listing of the various proposals compiled as well as the events surrounding it, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 232-58 §92-101.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 278-79 §114-15. For Baxter's account of the Worcester House Negotiations, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 259-79 §105-14.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281-84 §118-27. For Baxter's reasons for refusing the bishopric of Hereford, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281 §121.

¹⁹¹The bill only restored those ministers who were still alive, which meant about 300 clergymen lost their livings (Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 87). Unfortunately for Baxter the old reading vicar, George Dance, was still alive and regained his benefice (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 298, §151).

Baxter maintained his strong misgivings, even in the midst of some encouraging signs. Soon after the Parliament voted to restore the monarchy, he was troubled by the pattern of many moderate Episcopalians who only expressed “Desires of Concord” in their conversations while “little was done.”¹⁹² More alarmingly, when Baxter afterward sought a private interview with Dr. Morley to see if concord was truly intended, he found Morley only spoke of “moderation in general” but never in any “particular Terms.”¹⁹³ Furthermore, the King’s seemingly generous move to make Baxter and several other Presbyterians court chaplains was interpreted as only a means to pacify moderate Presbyterians.¹⁹⁴ They had no doubt that afterward they “would be silenced with the rest in time” but nevertheless thought it improper to deny the offer.¹⁹⁵ Finally, concerning the King’s declaration, Baxter understood the crux of the issue lay in whether it would be passed into law; if not, then it was nothing more than “a temporary means to draw us [the Presbyterians] on till we came up to all the diocesans desired.”¹⁹⁶ Indeed, he feared that “shortly it would be rebuked or nullified” and his anxiety led him to refuse the offer of a bishopric.¹⁹⁷ If the declaration failed to pass, he had no doubt the “Old Diocesan” structure of laws would be reestablished, which meant bishops “silencing

¹⁹²Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 218 §80.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 218 §81.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 297 §403.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281 §119. Baxter later explained that he did not join those who accused the diocesan party of intending “nothing but Deceit and Juggling” from the beginning of the Restoration. Rather, Baxter perceived that when the Declaration of Breda was released these churchmen never imagined they would have had a smooth road back to a fully restored episcopal church government, and so were content with its moderate terms. Therefore, once the Bishops were restored, “it was necessary that they should proceed safely, and feel whether the Ground was solid under them, before they proceeded to their structure” (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 287 §143). As Cooper pointed out, they waited “and delayed any meaningful action until the power of the Presbyterians had been broken” (Cooper, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661),” 331).

¹⁹⁷Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281 §121.

Ministers, and troubling honest Christians for their consciences, and ruling the vicious with greater lenity.”¹⁹⁸

In the end, Baxter’s suspicions and pessimism proved justified, and the ecclesiastical results largely fulfilled his predictions. The Parliamentary motion to pass the *Worcester House Declaration* failed on November 28, 1660 by a vote of 183-157. From that moment on, according to Keeble, “the exclusion of Puritan opinion from the established church was only a matter of time.”¹⁹⁹ But even before the vote, England began to shift away from Puritan sentiments. In the fall of 1660, large portions of the country did not wait for an official religious policy and instead set about reinstating traditional worship in churches according to the *Book of Common Prayer* and within a revived diocesan episcopacy.²⁰⁰ By the end of 1660, observers of the developing situation would have deemed it likely that the old form of the church would be reestablished.²⁰¹ A key event contributing to the nation’s increasing hostility toward Puritanism was Thomas Venner’s Fifth Monarchist rebellion on January 6, 1661. While the uprising was relatively small and easily squashed, its bloodiness galvanized support among royalist and Episcopalians for the newly restored King. It also discredited any further attempts to make concessions to the Puritans, since religious dissent was now suspected to mask seditious intentions.²⁰² Consequently, a pro-royalist, anti-Puritan sentiment characterized

¹⁹⁸Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281 §119-21.

¹⁹⁹N. H. Keeble, “Introduction: Attempting Uniformity,” in *‘Settling the Peace of the Church’: 1662 Revisited*, ed. N. H. Keeble (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

²⁰⁰Anne Whiteman, “The Restoration of the Church of England,” in *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962*, Owen Chadwick and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, eds., 19-88 (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 75-77; Keeble, introduction to *‘Settling the Peace of the Church,’* 11-13. See Ian Green’s comprehensive examination of the multi-year process by which England’s pre-civil war church was re-established (Ian Green, *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England, 1660-1663* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1978]).

²⁰¹Whiteman, “The Restoration of the Church of England,” 75.

²⁰²Keeble, “Introduction: Attempting Uniformity,” 14-15.

the majority of members in the newly elected “Cavalier Parliament” that began its first session on May 8, 1661.²⁰³

Baxter began to acutely feel the sea change in political temperament while seeking a modified liturgy for the church. He and other Presbyterian representatives met with several Bishops at the Savoy conference in July 1661 to achieve a revision of the Prayer Book that would unite the groups divided over its prescribed liturgy.²⁰⁴ But the drastic changes in the Parliament’s mood put them on the defensive throughout the conference’s proceedings, and the Bishops lacked a “conciliatory and constructive spirit.”²⁰⁵ Scholars disagree on the sincerity of the Bishops’ intentions to compromise and the extent to which Baxter should be blamed for the conference’s failure.²⁰⁶ However, the concern here is to sketch Baxter’s reflections of the debate, regardless of how partial it might have been,²⁰⁷ for it contributed to his growing hopelessness and frustration. He became convinced early in the sessions that the Bishops would not only resist any

²⁰³For a comprehensive study of this Parliamentary era, see Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime*; Annabel Patterson, *The Long Parliament of Charles II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

²⁰⁴For Baxter’s lengthy discussion of the Savoy Conference, which is still the best first-hand account of the proceedings, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 303-72 §170-241. For a lengthy study of Baxter’s role in the Savoy Conference, see Walter Benjamin Theophilus Douglas, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference of 1661” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1972). For shorter treatments, see E. C. Ratcliff, “The Savoy Conference and the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer,” in *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962*, Owen Chadwick and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, eds., 89-146 (London: S.P.C.K., 1962); Cooper, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661).”

²⁰⁵Keeble, “Introduction: Attempting Uniformity,” 15.

²⁰⁶Scholars have often laid nearly all the blame on Baxter for the conference’s failure. For examples of this trend, see Ratcliff, “The Savoy Conference and the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer,” 108-9, 124-25; Anne Whiteman, “The Restoration of the Church of England,” 77-78; Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement*, 119. However, Douglas has raised some challenges to this depiction and sought to mitigate the blame laid on Baxter (Douglas, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference of 1661”). Cooper has not challenged the legitimate arguments put forth by either of these sides, but has rather sought to demonstrate two points (Cooper, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661),” 330). First, that the conference’s failure to reach a compromise stemmed not so much from Baxter’s lack of finesse for such negotiations, but because the Bishops never intended to mediate in the first place (*ibid.*, 334-36). And second, that all the Presbyterian leadership deserved blame because the conference’s failure stemmed from their political miscalculations committed a year before in the Spring and Summer of 1660 (*ibid.*, 336-39).

²⁰⁷Cooper has pointed out that at Savoy Baxter was acting in characteristic fashion by exonerating himself and fellow Presbyterians from blame and laying it all instead on intransigence of the Bishops (Cooper, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661),” 338).

alterations to the Prayer Book but intended to cast out every clergymen who refused to conform: “I perceived that they intended no Abatements, and consequently that they intend the silencing of me, and all that are of my mind.”²⁰⁸ Furthermore, they rejected out of hand the entirely new liturgy Baxter had composed for the conference.²⁰⁹ He summarized the intransigence of the bishops throughout the conference’s proceedings by bitterly reflecting, “we spoke to the Deaf.”²¹⁰ Consequently, the Canterbury Convocation took over revision of the Prayer Book and finished the project in February 1662, making it, in Baxter’s words, “more grievous than before.”²¹¹

²⁰⁸Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 345 §212. For Baxter’s further frustrations at the Savoy Conference, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 336 §192, 364-65 §237, 369 §240. There is a measure of truth to Baxter’s view of the Bishops in the conference. Seaward has pointed out that the newly restored bishops viewed Savoy and similar projects as merely temporary measures “and a means of cooling Presbyterian feelings” (Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime*, 163). Furthermore, Baxter’s belief that the Bishops had no intention of compromising is supported by the observations of another contemporary, James Sharp, who like Baxter was right in the middle of the events surrounding the Restoration settlement (Cooper, “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661),” 334-36). After Savoy, Baxter wrote *A moral prognostication I. what shall befall the churches on Earth, till their concord, by the restitution of their primitive purity, simplicity, and charity, II. how that restitution is like to be made, (if ever) and what shall befall them thence-forth unto the end, in that golden-age of love* (London: Printed for Thomas Simmons, 1680). Except for the last sixteen lines, Baxter composed the entire work in 1661 but chose to withhold it “lest it should offend the Guilty” (*ibid.*, fol. A2r). The treatise constituted Baxter’s dire prediction of what the failure of Savoy would mean for the church. He foresaw how the worldly clergy would strive to make the godly ministers suffer by silencing and ejecting them from their churches (*ibid.*, 13-14). Thus, nearly a year before the 1662 Act of Uniformity became law, Baxter predicted exactly the events to come and which he had always believed would come. I am indebted to Brown for pointing me toward this source (Brown, “Richard Baxter’s Contribution to the Comprehension Controversy,” 122).

²⁰⁹See Richard Baxter, *A petition for peace with The reformation of the liturgy, as it was presented to the right reverend bishops, by the divines appointed by His Majesties commission to treat with them about the alteration of it* (London: n.p., 1661). For studies of Baxter’s *Reformed Liturgy*, see Travis Talmage Du Priest, Jr., “The Liturgies of Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter: A Study of Structure, Language, and Rhythm” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1972); Glen James Seggar, “Petition for Peace: A Theological Analysis of Richard Baxter’s ‘Reformed Liturgy’ in Its Ecclesiological Context” (PhD diss., Drew University, 2008). Seggar’s work was later published as *Richard Baxter’s Reformed Liturgy: A Puritan Alternative to the Book of Common Prayer* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2014). Ratcliff has criticized Baxter’s decision to offer the bishops an entirely new liturgy as a great miscalculation that only worked against the Presbyterians efforts toward revision (Ratcliff, “The Savoy Conference and the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer,” 124-215).

²¹⁰Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 336 §192.

²¹¹*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 §276. However, Keeble pointed out that Baxter exaggerated its flaws, for it was actually a moderate revision (Keeble, “Introduction: Attempting Uniformity,” 16).

In the wake of Savoy's failure, Baxter detected an immediate escalation in the relentless public ridicule, suspicion, and reviling he endured as well as anyone else who had favored his plan for a "Primitive Episcopacy."

And now our Calamities began to be much greater than before We were represented as the most Seditious People, unworthy to be used like men, or to enjoy our common Liberty among them. We could not go abroad but that we met with daily reproaches and false stories of us: Either we were feigned to be Plotting, or to be Disaffecting the People, &c.²¹²

Bishop George Morley, who had disputed the most with Baxter at Savoy, took to the pulpit at Kidderminster and preached "a long vindictive" against the parishioners and Baxter, denouncing them as "Factious, Schismatical, and Presbyterian."²¹³ Baxter was convinced that Morley's "vehement invectives" prompted a stream of opponents who, desiring Morley's "favor and preferment," followed his example by publishing works that depicted Baxter as odious.²¹⁴ According to Baxter, "so vehement was the Endeavor in Court, City and Country to make me contemptable and odious, as if the Authours had thought that the Safety either of Church or State did lye upon it, and all would have been safe if I were but vilified and hated"²¹⁵ Baxter also felt the heightened antagonism through his preaching ministry in the capital's churches. He had already been feeling the watchful eye of authorities on his sermons,²¹⁶ yet now he detected an even greater

²¹²Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 373 §242.

²¹³Ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 375-76 §251.

²¹⁴Ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 377 §258.

²¹⁵Ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 380-81 §268. See also *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 383 §273.

²¹⁶For about a year his arrival, Baxter had "preached up and down London" when invited to, but afterwards decided to join Dr. Bates at St. Dunstan's where he preached weekly. However, the officials soon began to accuse him of preaching "seditiously, or against the Government," though Baxter confessed to have no such inclination toward these ideas. On the contrary, his preaching sometimes directly denounced "Faction, Schism, Sedition, and Rebellion," yet even these sermons were reported as subversive (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 301 §160). As early as November 15, 1660, Baxter lamented the hatred of wicked individuals and the false reports of his preaching which were circulating in London (Richard Baxter, *The vain religion of the formal hypocrite, and the mischief of an unbridled tongue (as against religion, rulers, or dissenters) described, in several sermons, preached at the Abby in Westminster, before many members of the Honourable House of Commons, 1660 ; and The fools prosperity, the occasion of his destruction : A sermon preached at Covent-Garden* [London: Printed by R. W. for F. Tyton, and Nevel Simmons, 1660], fols. A1r-4r). This "daily Clamours of Accusers" dogged Baxter no matter wherever he preached (Baxter,

escalation of criticism after the Savoy Conference: “no sermon that I preached, scarce escaped the Censure of being *Seditious*, though I preached only for Repentance and Faith, and Morality and Common Virtue.”²¹⁷ The cumulative effect of mounting hostility caused him to feel increasingly weary and isolated.²¹⁸

Baxter met with equal frustration and disappointment in his attempts to renew his ministry with the people of Kidderminster. He had already been displaced when George Dance, whom Baxter described him as a “poor unlearned, ignorant, silly Reader that little understood what Christianity and the Articles of his Creed did signifie,” had been restored as the vicar²¹⁹ Since Dance lacked the ability to preach, he had hired Baxter as a lecturer to fulfill the role before his sequestering, and now Baxter hoped to return to Kidderminster as a lecturer or curate under him. He actually made two separate attempts to secure a position at Kidderminster.²²⁰ The first occurred after he declined the offer of a bishopric, and his petitions received “continual encouragement by Promises” until he was “almost tired in waiting on them.”²²¹ But all his appeals to the Chancellor failed due to the conspiring efforts of Bishop Morley and others to secretly prevent his return.²²² Even after Baxter presented the signatures of sixteen-hundred of the eighteen-

RB, bk. 1, pt. 2, 302 §162 and 166).

²¹⁷Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 373 §242. For Baxter’s full account of this continual persecution after the Savoy Conference, see *ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 373-81 §242-68.

²¹⁸*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 302 §162; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 41.

²¹⁹Baxter wrote that when Dance attempted to preach once a quarter, his “sermon” “made him the Pity or Laughter of the People” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 298, §151).

²²⁰Nuttall seemed to conflate these two separate attempts (Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 90-91).

²²¹Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 298-99, §151-54. Baxter received the offer of a bishopric after the King’s Worcester House Declaration (*ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 278-79 §114-15).

²²²*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 298-99, §152-54. Baxter thought that two knights of that Country [Worcestershire], Sir Ralph Clarke and Sir John Packington, “who were very great” with Bishop Morley, caused him to believe that Baxter’s “Interest was so great” and “could do so much with Ministers and People in that Country, that unless I would bind my self to promote their Cause and Party, I was not fit to be there. And this Bishop (being greatest of any Man with the Lord Chancellor) must obstruct my Return to my ancient Flock” (*ibid.*, 298 §153). Thus, they worked to thwart Baxter’s return until he “would conform to the Orders and Ceremonies of the Church, and preach Conformity to the People, and labour to set them

hundred communicants in the parish, “all very earnest for my Return,” his efforts only caused Bishop Morley to become more determined to thwart his return.²²³ Baxter renewed his efforts again in the latter half of 1661, only on this occasion his appeals were definitively rejected. He travelled to Kidderminster and met with the vicar to see if any possible way existed for him to continue preaching under his authority and supervision. Dance flatly refused any proposal for Baxter to serve as either a curate, a lecturer, to preach for nothing, or even to deliver a farewell sermon.²²⁴ Hoping to preach elsewhere in the county, Baxter appealed to Bishop Morley who now oversaw Worcestershire. Morley utterly forbade Baxter from preaching in his diocese, no matter how limited his role was or how little he was paid.²²⁵ Thus, Baxter finally parted from his “dear flock” with many “tears.”²²⁶ He recognized that he had been “silenced” with no hope of any future ministry in Kidderminster or Worcestershire.²²⁷

Other mediums of communication remained for Baxter to channel his pastoral labors but he sensed that even alternative outlets were rapidly closing. After returning to London on November 11, he penned a telling preface to his former parishioners in a collection of sermons titled *The mischiefs of self-ignorance*. The passage offered a

right” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 298-99 §153).

²²³Ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 299 §154.

²²⁴Ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 374 §247. Baxter added that he finally “understood that he was directed by his Superiors to do what he did.”

²²⁵Ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 374-75 §249-50. The reason Bishop Morley gave was that until Baxter “was better affected” he thought it would be better for him not to preach (ibid.). However, it may have also been that Morley “looked at Kidderminster as a Factious, Schismatical, Presbyterian People, that must be cured of their overvaluing of Baxter” (ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 375-76 §251). Baxter also mentioned this exchange with Bishop Morley in *The mischiefs of self-ignorance and the benefits of self-acquaintance opened in divers sermons at Dunstan’s-West and published in answer to the accusations of some and the desires of others* (London: Printed by R. White for F. Tyton, 1662), fols. C2v-3r.

²²⁶Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 376 §253. The tears were mutually felt, for shortly afterward (January 28, 1662) seventeen parishioners wrote to Baxter lamenting this “violent rending of you from us” and feeling “Scattered as sheep upon the mountaines, without our Sheppard” ([The Parish of Kidderminster] to Richard Baxter, January 28, 1661[2], Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 5, fol. 142r, D.W.L., London); the bracketed information was supplied by Keeble and Nuttall, eds., *CCRB*, 2:691).

²²⁷Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 377 §256-57.

glimpse into how pessimistic he felt concerning his prospects for pastoral ministry: “I now direct these Sermons to your hands, that seeing I cannot teach you [a]s I would, I may teach you as I can. And [if] I much longer enjoy such liberty as this, it will be much above my expectation.”²²⁸ By November 1661, then, Baxter expected a future in which he would not only be denied any form of pastoral ministry, but even his writing ministry might be silenced. As Nuttall aptly put it, “the shades of the prison-house were closing in.”²²⁹

Baxter’s situation was so difficult that in late 1661 he expressed a desire to emigrate overseas.²³⁰ Having grown weary of England’s predilection for strife and particularly the unceasing accusations raised against him, he began to ponder leaving its contentious people altogether to go overseas where he could live out the rest of his days in peace.

I was somewhat wearied with this kind of Life, to be every day calumniated, and hear new Slanders raised of me, and Court and Country ring of that, which no man ever mentioned to my face; and I was oft thinking to go beyond Sea, that I might find some place in retired privacy to live and end my days in quietness, out of the noise of a Peace-hating Generation.²³¹

England’s passionate and dedicated champion for a reformed and united national church seemed ready to part ways with both his country and its people. Though he never executed his plan to emigrate,²³² it offers a strikingly honest depiction of his rapidly

²²⁸Baxter, *The mischiefs of self-ignorance*, fols. c4v-5r. The bracketed words and letters are supplied by myself, because the texts tight binding prevented these from being discerned visually.

²²⁹Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 92.

²³⁰Baxter does not provide an explicit date at which he began to consider the option of departing England (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 383-84 §274). But in the very next paragraph he said the rumor of his marriage began to circulate “[a]bout this time also, . . . near a year before it [their marriage] came to pass” (ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 §275). Since they were married on September 10, 1662, this would place the time of his pondering whether to go overseas around October to November of 1661, which was precisely the time at which his efforts to return to Kidderminster finally ended in complete failure. Upon returning to London, he penned the preface to *The mischiefs of self-ignorance* which was a farewell to his congregation (Baxter, *The mischiefs of self-ignorance*, fol. c6v; Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 377 §257).

²³¹Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 383, §274.

²³²For the reasons, see ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 383-84, §274.

fading hope for remaining a pastor in the Church of England. As Brouwer reasoned, the fact that “the lifelong bachelor . . . now felt free . . . to marry attests to the complete and utter finality he felt regarding the end of his own pastoral ministry.”²³³

Baxter’s Change of Heart

Grievous disappointment over England’s church settlement and its impact upon Baxter’s pastoral future, not only made marriage a viable option but also brought Baxter and Margaret closer together. Wilkinson has argued that the mounting hostility he faced and the rapidly dimming hope of ever returning to Kidderminster intensified his loneliness in London, which in turn provided the atmosphere in which his admiration for her began to take root.²³⁴ When Margaret and her mother Mary arrived in London they took up lodgings in Sweetings-Alley.²³⁵ There were undoubtedly times when he visited them at their dwelling, and during these occasions he would have found “rest and renewal” through the sympathy and encouragement they offered as his efforts became increasingly hopeless.²³⁶ Other occasions when he would have been touched by Margaret’s support would have been at the numerous sermons he preached all over London. Though his preaching increasingly met with hostility, threats, and accusations, he could regularly count on the reassuring presence of two ardent devotees in the congregation; Mary and Margaret would “receive his message with a loyalty that must have strengthened him under such stress.”²³⁷ In a very practical way, Wilkinson reasoned,

²³³Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 127.

²³⁴Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 41.

²³⁵Baxter noted that there was once a fire near her lodgings at this location that exacerbated the fearfulness she already suffered from (Baxter, *BLM*, 76).

²³⁶Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 41.

²³⁷*Ibid.*

“these two must have been ministers to his necessity,” and Baxter would have consequently become increasingly aware of Margaret’s “rich sympathy.”²³⁸

Wilkinson’s historical reconstruction has several merits to commend it, despite Baxter’s near silence concerning any interactions between himself and Margaret during their time in London.²³⁹ First, she had stated that her desire in coming to London was motivated by the desire to come under his pastoral care and thus benefit again from the same mercies she had known before.²⁴⁰ It is therefore likely that she and her mother renewed the close relationship they had enjoyed with Baxter at Kidderminster by coming to his sermons and frequently visiting him.²⁴¹ The rumor beginning to circulate in late autumn 1661 that Baxter had secretly been married seems to indicate the renewal of their relationship, for the two must have been seen together frequently enough in public to encourage widespread gossip²⁴²

Second, the context of Baxter’s ecclesiastical labors from 1660-62 explains why he would be so willing to take advantage of the fellowship afforded by Margaret and her mother. In the months preceding his removal to London he did all he could to discourage her growing attachment to him and had also written a stern letter telling her not to come to London. Why then would he be willing to alter his resolve and frequently spend time with her, which would tend to enflame rather than dampen her affections?

²³⁸Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 41. See also Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter*, 179; Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 217.

²³⁹Both the *breviate* and *Reliquiae Baxterianae* are silent about their interactions during this period except for the rumor of their marriage (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384, §275).

²⁴⁰Baxter, *BLM*, 29-30.

²⁴¹In her funeral sermon, Baxter noted that his “familiar” and “near acquaintance” with Mary Hanmer gave him justification to expound on her piety (Baxter, *The last work of a believer*, 62, 63).

²⁴²The rumor of Baxter’s secret marriage began to circulate nearly a year before their union actually came to pass (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384, §275). The rumor also occurred six months before the first indication that they were engaged as indicated by a letter written to Baxter which closed by saying “my service also to your Landlord & may I not say to your espoused wife” (Henry Hickman to Richard Baxter, March 31, 1662, Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 4, fol. 191v, D.W.L., London; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 2:697).

The answer probably lies in the growing discouragement, hostility, and isolation he faced throughout his efforts to moderate a religious settlement. Now, he would have welcomed the encouragement, sympathy, and prayers from two of his most devoted supporters.

Finally, it is unlikely that Baxter would have considered marrying Margaret without having experienced her worth as a helpful and godly companion to him in his labors and sufferings. He testified after nineteen years of marriage that she had been the “meetest help” he “could have had in the world,” and so she almost certainly demonstrated these qualities before their union.²⁴³ Furthermore, Baxter had counseled Christians to look for a spiritual helpmate when choosing a spouse: “If you fear God yourselves, your chief end in marriage will be to have one that will be a helper to your Soul, and further you in the way to Heaven.”²⁴⁴ Mutual help occurred through the counsel, comfort, and support spouses offered one another in all the difficulties of life.²⁴⁵ Since Margaret had grown up in a Puritan household, been converted under Baxter’s preaching, eagerly received his pastoral instruction on the Christian life, and desired to support his ministry, she was an ideal women to be his wife.

Through their time spent together in London, Baxter seemed to increasingly realize that Margaret fit the picture of a godly spouse quite well. First, Margaret and her mother had likely already ministered to Baxter in the midst of rising hostility and disappointment. In addition, two of his key decisions during this period indicate that he came to trust and value the counsel Margaret offered him. The first was his decision to decline the offer to become the bishop of Hereford in late October 1660. In the *Breviate*, he noted how she had “been acquainted” with the offer and forthrightly made known her

²⁴³Baxter, *BLM*, 70.

²⁴⁴Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 11 §46.

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*, pt. 2, 12 §55.

opinion that he should reject it due to the temptations to worldliness and compromise that accompanied it.

she was so far from desiring my accepting it, that I am persuaded had I done it, it would have alienated her much from me in point of esteem and love. Not that she had any opinion against Episcopacy then . . . but that she abhorred a worldly mercenary mind in a Minister of Christ, and was a sharp censurer of all that for gain or honour, or worldly ends, would stretch their consciences to anything that they thought God forbid.²⁴⁶

While Baxter never said that Margaret's opinion settled the matter for him, the passage indicates that the reasons she gave for declining the offer made a significant impression on him. Her counsel may very well have helped convince him to refuse the bishopric, even though in his autobiography he claimed to have come to the decision on his own.²⁴⁷

The discrepancy however is actually consistent with a pattern Nuttall noted in the *Breviate*, namely Baxter's tendency to credit Margaret's influence for decisions he claimed to be his own in the autobiography.²⁴⁸ In addition, she may have been the person responsible for persuading Baxter to remain in England rather than depart overseas. He recorded how an individual, referred to only as "My Acquaintance," counseled him to stay in England, since he "might be more serviceable" to God if he remained there, even though it might mean more suffering and persecution.²⁴⁹ While the connection with

²⁴⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 48.

²⁴⁷According to his autobiography, Baxter refused the bishopric based on his conviction that the old episcopal form of government was unlawful, and since this system was likely to be reinstated, a bishopric would involve him in ejecting or silencing ministers, troubling the consciences of honest Christians, and "ruling the vicious with greater lenity" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281 §121). Baxter listed two additional reasons for his refusal: first, it would take him away from his writing; second if most of the godly ministers were cast out, which he believed they would be, what good could be done upon the "ignorant, vile, uncappable" men who would replace them? (ibid).

²⁴⁸Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 93. For the account in the autobiography where Baxter depicted the decision as being entirely his own. In the latter work, the Earl of Clarendon offered this post to Baxter who eventually rejected it after mulling the decision over for a week (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281-83 §118-25).

²⁴⁹Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 383 §274. This was the first reason Baxter provided for why he stayed in England. The other factors that hindered him from putting his thoughts in action included not knowing any other common languages which would enable him to preach or converse with them, being so sickly that he likely would not be able to bear the voyage or change of climate, and "other impediments which God laid in his way" (ibid., bk. 1, pt. 2, 383-84 §274).

Margaret is tenuous, there is contextual justification for identifying her as the “Acquaintance.”²⁵⁰

The death of Margaret’s mother, Mary, in January 1661 was a crucial event that likely moved Baxter’s thoughts and inclinations toward marrying Margaret.²⁵¹ While he was entirely silent on the impact of Mary’s death, scholars have noted that it undoubtedly played a significant role in bringing matters to a head.²⁵² Baxter knew and admired Mrs. Hamner’s piety quite well as evidenced by the intimate portrait he offered in her funeral sermon, which he later published.²⁵³ Margaret however felt the loss most acutely, since the bond she possessed with her mother had grown far closer ever since her conversion.²⁵⁴ Baxter noted how Mary’s death and the “friendless state [Margaret] thought she was then left in,” increased the “diseased fearfulness” which had always “tyrannized” her.²⁵⁵ Separated from any other friendships she might have developed while in Kidderminster, who else but Baxter—the man she had come to see as her dear

²⁵⁰In the paragraph immediately following Baxter’s mention of the role his “Acquaintance” and “other Impediments” played in keeping him in England, he discussed the rumor of his secret marriage at court (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 275). At least one other scholar has noticed the coincidence of Baxter’s placement of these two paragraphs one after the other. Powicke believed the “other Impediments” was a hinted reference to Margaret and Baxter’s growing affection for each other and the possibility that they might marry (Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 216, 217). Citing the sequential ordering of these paragraphs, he asserted that the “law of association was at work” (ibid., 216n1). Furthermore, there is no other individual in the autobiography that Baxter refers to as “my Acquaintance” (I am indebted to Tim Cooper, one of the editors for the critical edition of Baxter’s autobiography, for this insight).

²⁵¹I am indebted to Packer for first drawing my attention toward the significance of this event (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 23).

²⁵²See Lloyd-Thomas, “Appendix II: Richard Baxter’s Love Story and Marriage,” 273; Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 443; Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 217; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 41, 43; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 23.

²⁵³There are no extant copies of the original publication of this funeral sermon but only the reprints that Baxter had published as one of his wife’s last requests before her death (Baxter, *The last work of a believer*).

²⁵⁴Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691*, 217. According to Baxter’s observation, Mrs. Hamner had loved Margaret “least of her three children” before her conversion, yet as soon as her daughter began to demonstrate sincere repentance and change, Mrs. Hamner “began to esteem her as her Darling” (Baxter, *BLM*, 5, and see also 85).

²⁵⁵Baxter, *BLM*, 76; Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 443.

friend, father, and pastor—could have been more fit and more available to console her grief?²⁵⁶ Noting this likelihood, Wilkinson deduced that the compassion and comfort he showed her while she grieved surely had an effect on his own affections for her.²⁵⁷ Indeed, he composed a poem in late January 1661 that seemed to have been written to comfort the specific afflictions Margaret would have suffered from during her mother’s final illness and death.²⁵⁸ The entire experience may very well have caused him to realize how strong his compassion and sympathy was for her. Finally, Baxter was with Mary at her passing, and so Packer may be correct in asserting that she made known to him her wish for their union to occur.²⁵⁹ Thus, while Baxter did not explicitly note the extraordinary circumstances leading to their marriage, the encouragement Margaret offered him in London as well as the impact of her mother’s death were likely two of the influential catalysts that caused his affection and appreciation for her to grow. Nevertheless, they were not the decisive factors that finally brought about their union.

²⁵⁶Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 443; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 41, 43.

²⁵⁷Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 41.

²⁵⁸See Baxter, *PF*, 76-89. The end of the poem dated its composition as January 18, 1661 while the end gave the date of January 26 (*ibid.*, 76 and 89). Perhaps this was the time during which the poem was gradually composed. While Baxter nowhere explicitly mentioned that this poem was written for Margaret to comfort her after her mother’s death, there is strong evidence for positing this event as the contextual background. First, the poem was certainly written in the same time frame as Mary Hamner’s death in London (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 41). Second, Baxter mentioned in the preface to *Poetical fragments* that the poems “were written in various Passions” and that Margaret’s “Sorrows and Sufferings long ago gave Being to some of these Poems” (*PF*, fol. A2r). Also, at the close of the preface he mentioned how the fragments are “suited for afflicted, sick, dying, troubled, sad, and doubting Persons” (*ibid.*, fol. A5v). Third, the context and content of the poem suggests that Margaret was the person Baxter sought to comfort with the forgiveness and welcome found by looking to Christ. At the beginning of the poem, Baxter said it was written “For sin afflicting the Sinner; especially by the grievous suffering of friends. . . . With the Relief of the Self-condemning Soul” (*ibid.*, 76). By reading along, one finds the sinner’s particular ailment was that they were blaming themselves for the suffering of their friends, because they believed their friends were being afflicted for their own sins: “It’s I that sinn’d: these Sheep what have they done? I sinn’d but with One Heart: O break but One!” (*ibid.*, 77). As mentioned previously, Margaret could be particularly grieved by “miscarriages” with her friends and close relations, and she had a particularly excessive love for her mother which could become a source of grief (Baxter, *BLM*, 44). Also, she had been struggling for some time with self-condemnation due to a lack of assurance regarding her salvation (*ibid.*, 22-27, 33-43). Indeed, the self-condemnation the person in the poem suffered from bears many similarities to Margaret’s own struggles (*ibid.*, 22-27).

²⁵⁹Baxter, *The last work of a believer*, 69; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 23.

The new *Act of Uniformity* was the pivotal factor in determining Baxter's future as a clergyman and therefore his decision to marry Margaret. Parallel to the Savoy Conference, the new "Cavalier Parliament" began its first session on May 8, 1661. By July 9, the House of Commons had passed a bill for uniformity that would return England to the episcopal system of laws and government existing prior to the Civil War.²⁶⁰ However, the act was not simply a return to the status quo.²⁶¹ As the bill passed back and forth between the House of Commons and Lords, it took on an increasingly stringent and demanding character.²⁶² In its final form, the act required all ministers to have episcopal ordination, to follow without deviation the prescriptions for church services in the Prayer Book, and to publicly declare before the congregation their "unfeigned consent and assent" to all its contents.²⁶³ Any clergymen who refused to do so was "*ipso facto* . . . deprived of all his spiritual promotions."²⁶⁴ In brief, all other forms of worship, prayer, and preaching were outlawed. Baxter judged the new bill of uniformity to be "ten times more burdensome than it ever was before" under the "old conformity."²⁶⁵ The revised Prayer Book of 1662 reached the House of Lords on February 25 of that year and was reported to its members along with the *Act of Uniformity* on March 13.²⁶⁶ The bill

²⁶⁰John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 39-40.

²⁶¹Keeble, "Introduction: Attempting Uniformity," 16-17.

²⁶²Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 92.

²⁶³George Gould, ed., *Documents Relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662: with an Historical Introduction* (London: W. Kent and Company, Paternoster Row, 1862), 389.

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 390.

²⁶⁵Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 § 276. Keeble asserted that, taken as a whole, "The stringency of the act was unprecedented," especially when compared with the earlier Elizabethan *Act of Uniformity*. Elizabeth I's Act of Uniformity did not mention episcopal ordination and had only mandated "a general undertaking to use the Prayers Book" (Keeble, "Introduction: Attempting Uniformity," 17).

²⁶⁶Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 41.

received the royal assent on May 19 and would come into force on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1662.

Baxter's ecclesiological scruples were not inflexible, yet they ultimately restrained him from conforming according to the terms of the *Act of Uniformity*. He had received episcopal ordination and did not oppose using the Prayer Book in principle.²⁶⁷ However, while he affirmed the lawfulness of a prescribed liturgy, even asserting that using it might be needed and useful under certain conditions, he steadfastly opposed requiring them of ministers.²⁶⁸ As Keeble observed, Baxter could not accept the declaration that episcopal ordination and a proscribed liturgy were *essential* to the being of a true church.²⁶⁹ Likewise, he was convinced the old episcopal form of government being reinstated was unlawful.²⁷⁰ Finally, he could not conform to a church founded on principles meant to rigidly exclude others.²⁷¹ Therefore, he did not hesitate to preach his farewell sermon on May 25, 1662, one week after the King had signed the Act, though it would not come into force for another three months. According to Baxter, his prompt action stemmed from a desire to signal his willingness to obey the authorities in everything lawful and to "let all ministers in England understand in time, whether I intended to conform or not."²⁷² He would not preach again in a tolerated public assembly

²⁶⁷Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 92. For Baxter's qualified affirmation of using a "stinted" liturgy, see Baxter, *FD*, 359-94.

²⁶⁸Baxter, *FD*, 373-78.

²⁶⁹N. H. Keeble, "C. S. Lewis, Richard Baxter, and 'Mere Christianity,'" *Christianity and Literature* 30, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 29. For Baxter's rejection of the idea that episcopal ordination be required, see Baxter, *FD*, 109-266.

²⁷⁰For Baxter's rejection of the old episcopal model, see Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 281 §121.

²⁷¹Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 92; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "The First Nonconformists," in *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962*, Owen Chadwick and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, eds., 151-87 (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 184. See also Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 144. For the importance of the principle of unity in Baxter's ecclesiology, see Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty*, 117-55, 156-90.

²⁷²Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 §278. Baxter also believed a vague clause in the Act implied that his temporary license to lecture in London had ended with the king's signing of the act (*ibid.*).

for ten years when Charles II issued the *Royal Declaration of Indulgence* in 1672.²⁷³ In 1662, however, Baxter could not have foreseen greater religious liberty arising, and so he viewed the *Act of Uniformity* as signaling the end of parish ministry for him.

Despite witnessing the ruin of his dreams for the English Church, the situation that brought Baxter into such despair carried with it “one brilliant shaft of light.”²⁷⁴ He was quite explicit that his silencing and ejection from the clergy finally allowed him to marry Margaret without violating his argument for clerical celibacy.²⁷⁵

From the first thoughts of it [marriage], many changes and stoppages intervened, and long delays, till I was silenced and ejected with many hundreds more, and so being separated from my old pastoral charge, which was enough to take up all my time and labour, some of my dissuading Reasons were then over.²⁷⁶

Baxter hinted here that there was a substantial length of time when he pondered the possibility of marrying Margaret, although he gives no indication when it began. Based on his indifference to her growing affections while at Kidderminster, he most likely began to consider marriage sometime sometime after her arrival in London. However, the primary apprehension that prevented it was his conviction that he could not conceivably take up the duties of a husband, and possibly father, when the spiritual oversight of every person in Kidderminster consumed every ounce of his time and energy. The passage of the *Act of Uniformity* resolved the impasse in his mind by removing him from his “old pastoral charge.”²⁷⁷

²⁷³On his baptism day, November 19, 1672, Baxter preached in his home (Baxter, *RB*, pt. 3, 103 §226)

²⁷⁴Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 93.

²⁷⁵Both Powicke and Beougher noted this passage from the Breviate but failed to realize the implications it held for understanding Baxter’s personal deliberations about his marriage (Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage,” 148; Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll,” 462).

²⁷⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 46-47.

²⁷⁷Baxter said that his expulsion from pastoral ministry eliminated “some” of Baxter’s “dissuading Reasons,” but this admission hinted that other dissuading reasons still persisted (*ibid.*, 47). The identity of these additional factors can only be speculated, but one of them could have been Baxter’s awareness of the persecuted life they would have to lead together. Baxter had already seen evidence of this, as did Margaret, from Bishop Morley who had actually preached fiercely against Baxter at Kidderminster

Baxter made an even more explicit reference to his removal from parish ministry as the pivotal factor granting him freedom to marry when he sought to exonerate himself from charges of hypocrisy. Such accusations seemed to have occurred early and persisted throughout their nineteen-year marriage. In 1661, when rumors first began to circulate that he had been secretly married, Bishop Morley seized upon the gossip to accuse him of contradicting himself.²⁷⁸ In 1681, Baxter used the concluding chapter of the *Breviate* as an opportunity to defend himself from those who considered him “mutable” on account of his marriage.²⁷⁹ One of the individuals cited a conversation when Baxter told him that “*the Marriage of Ministers had so great inconveniences, that though necessity made it lawful, yet it was but lawful; that is, to be avoided as far as lawfully we may.*”²⁸⁰ Baxter responded by affirming not only the accuracy of the report but also that he had “never changed” his “judgment” on the matter.²⁸¹ To resolve the alleged contradiction, he pointed to his forced removal from parochial ministry as the decisive factor that granted him liberty to marry without violating his argument for clerical celibacy:

The work of the sacred Ministry is enough to take up the whole man, if he had the strength and parts of many men. O how much is there to do oftentimes with one ignorant, or scandalous, or sad despairing soul? And who is sufficient for all that’s to be done to hundreds or thousands? . . . I did not marry till I was silenced and ejected, and had no flock or Pastoral Cure.²⁸²

(Baxter, BLM, 48-49).

²⁷⁸According to Baxter, he had once shared with Morley that he thought “Minister’s marriage is [*lawful, and but lawful*]” (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 §275).

²⁷⁹Baxter did not name these individuals, but only referred to them as “some great men who know their own names” and Baxter was aware of their accusations through the “most credible information” (Baxter, *BLM*, 101).

²⁸⁰*Ibid.*

²⁸¹*Ibid.*

²⁸²*Ibid.*, 101-2.

Since pastoral soul care, according to Baxter's unique model, involved the staggering burden of personally overseeing hundreds or thousands of souls, he had no time to spare for a family.²⁸³ Now, though, he realized his argument for clerical celibacy no longer applied to himself. Not because he no longer considered himself a minister, but because he no longer would have a specific parish to oversee. The *Act of Uniformity* had dashed any future hopes of having a parish ministry in the Church of England, and he instead expected a life of hostility, persecution, and increasing marginalization. He had always refrained from asserting clerical celibacy in absolute terms and pointed out that God could alter the circumstances of a person so that celibacy no longer was the most advantageous state of life.²⁸⁴ In Baxter's view, those conditions had now been met, and this explanation provides a far better harmonization of his decision to marry with his argument for clerical celibacy. He never contradicted his convictions as Schucking, McFarlane, and Nuttall claimed.²⁸⁵ Nor did the "necessity" of love for Margaret so captivate Baxter that his previous scruples were overcome, as Powicke asserted.²⁸⁶ Baxter did not emphasize love as a "necessity" demanding marriage. Indeed, by speaking of romantic love as a "necessity," Powicke seemed to have read into Baxter Victorian notions of romantic love that would have been strange not only to seventeenth-century England but also to Baxter's theology of marriage.²⁸⁷

²⁸³As Powicke pointed out, "Baxter's conception of a minister's work, we must bear in mind, involved the 'pastoral care' of every soul in his parish. And as things are this demands all his time" (Frederick J. Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 4 [1918]: 461-62).

²⁸⁴See the discussion in chap. 3, 146-47 and chap. 5, 255.

²⁸⁵See Schucking, *The Puritan Family*, 24; McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, 173; Nuttall, "The Personality of Richard Baxter," 108.

²⁸⁶Powicke speculated that love for Margaret captured Baxter, thus fulfilling the necessary prerequisite for a pastor being able to marry: "Love stepped in and decreed the necessity" (Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 436-47, 463). Beougher also followed Powicke's logic in his earlier work (Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 152), but later changed his opinion and pointed to Baxter's expulsion as the primary factor (Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion*, 29).

²⁸⁷Packer observed the tendency among early twentieth century scholars to depict Richard and Margaret's marriage as Victorians who "dwelt entirely on the beauty of rose-colored rapport between souls, with bodies right out of the picture" (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 24-25). He cited as an example

Margaret's willingness to embrace the persecuted life awaiting Baxter may have been a final factor that helped confirm his conviction that she was a suitable wife for him. In the *Breviate*, he defended her against the accusation that she married him out of "covetousness" or a desire to share his fame, honor, and fortune. He pointed to the fact that she "was not ignorant of the scorn and the jealousies, and wrath and prosecutions" she was likely to share with him. She had "heard and seen it already" when Baxter was not only silenced by Morley but also fiercely denounced by him and other clergymen from the Kidderminster pulpit.²⁸⁸ Nonetheless, as Baxter pointed out, she willingly chose to participate in "such a life that had no encouragement from any worldly Wealth or Honour, yea, that was exposed to such certain suffering which had no end in prospect on this side [of] death."²⁸⁹ Her willingness to share such a life not only exonerated her from the charge that she married for selfish reasons but likely impressed upon Baxter even more that she was the right woman to be his wife. As Nuttall keenly observed, Baxter had found "a woman of strong character and courage who entered intelligently into his convictions and shared with eager affection whatever suffering or deprivation they were to bring him."²⁹⁰ Having been deprived of his pastoral justifications for remaining celibate, Baxter felt he not only was free to marry but called to marry Margaret.

Wilkinson's depiction of Richard and Margaret as "two souls who love God and love each other with that sublime, spiritual beauty in which souls are wed, which gives orientation to life and is eternal" (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 43-44). Packer noted how Wilkinson even quoted a poem praising human love by the great Victorian poet Robert Browning (1812-89) to "ram the idea home" (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 25). One finds almost exactly the same Victorian sentiments in Powicke's explanation of Richard and Margaret's decision to marry: "For the simple truth was that they loved each other—with a love of that high spiritual character which unites soul to soul, and transfigures life, and is immortal" (Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 444). Therefore, Powicke reasoned, "Loved stepped in and decreed the necessity [of Baxter marrying]. Love is always stepping in and experience bears witness that the Reasons of Love are wiser than all the reasons of abstract logic, even when they emanate from so great a divine as St. Paul" (ibid., 463). Lloyd-Thomas also seemed to speak in Victorian terms when he described the inevitable momentum of romantic love that brought Margaret and Baxter together: "Margaret needed a Protector. Love could not for ever be denied" (Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love-Story and Marriage," 273).

²⁸⁸Baxter, *BLM*, 47-49.

²⁸⁹Ibid., 49.

²⁹⁰Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 93.

Baxter's plea that he never contradicted his argument for clerical celibacy nevertheless seems questionable considering evidence that he was already planning on marrying Margaret before the *Act of Uniformity* became a certainty. Though the House of Commons passed the initial version of the bill on July 9, 1661,²⁹¹ the House of Lords did not approve its final form until March of 1662. The bill did not receive the Royal assent until May 9, 1662, and only came into effect on August 24, 1662. Several scholars have highlighted how, throughout the bill's passage, its success as well as the strictness of its enforcement were far from certain.²⁹² Charles II, who had professed a desire to heal the nation's religious divisions in the Declarations of *Breda* and *Worcester House*,²⁹³ could have rejected the bill since it would likely have the contrary effect. Along with the monarch, Chancellor Clarendon endeavored to moderate the bill as it passed through the House of Lords, so that it more closely conformed to the King's vision of religious toleration.²⁹⁴ After the bill received the royal assent, Clarendon put forth a succession of proposals aiming to temper, delay or suspend the act, though every one of these attempts was blocked.²⁹⁵ Baxter was fully aware of the efforts to obtain more religious toleration

²⁹¹The initial version of the bill "hung fire" in the House of Lords, so that Parliament was dismissed from July 30 to November 20 without having passed it. The bill then went back to the Commons and received so many amendments that it was almost an entirely new bill when it passed on January 8, 1662 (R. W. Harris, *Clarendon and the English Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983) 308).

²⁹²Spurr is the most explicit in this assertion and cited Seaward's work in support (*The Restoration Church of England*, 41-42). See also Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime*, 173-80; Patterson, *The Long Parliament of Charles II*, 145, 146, 147; Harris, *Clarendon and the English Revolution*, 308-11.

²⁹³The *Declaration of Breda* was issued on April 4, 1660, before Parliament had voted to return the King, and the *Worcester House Declaration* was issued on October 25, 1660 (Keeble, "Introduction: Attempting Uniformity," 5, 10-11).

²⁹⁴Harris, *Clarendon and the English Revolution*, 308-9; Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime*, 175-78; Hutton, *The Restoration*, 175.

²⁹⁵Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 42. See also Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime*, 178-80; Harris, *Clarendon and the English Revolution*, 310-11; Hutton, *The Restoration*, 176. For a study of Clarendon's ambiguous attitude toward the *Act of Uniformity* and how his relationship has been perceived in the historiography, see Paul Seaward, "Circumstantial, Temporary Concessions: Clarendon, Comprehension and Uniformity," in *Settling the Peace of the Church: 1662 Revisited*, ed. N. H. Keeble (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 57-84.

before the bill of uniformity was passed,²⁹⁶ yet he seemed to pursue the course of marriage before the outcome was certain. A letter written from Henry Hickman to Baxter on March 31, 1662 closed with an assumption that the two were already engaged: “My service to your landlord, & may I not say to your espoused wife”²⁹⁷ Furthermore, less than a month later on April 29, Baxter applied for and received a license to marry Margaret.²⁹⁸ Both the marriage license and the letter, occurred before the bill had been passed by Parliament, received the King’s approval, or been put into force. They appear to contradict Baxter’s claim to have refrained from marrying until he had been silenced and ejected from the Church of England.

This problem appears less problematic in light of Baxter’s pessimistic attitude toward what a Restoration of the Monarchy would almost inexorably produce. From the very beginning of the Restoration, he carried out what he saw as his duty to restore the King but knew that he would most likely be silenced and ejected by the prelates. The events from 1600-61, especially the failure of the Savoy Conference and his attempts to return to Kidderminster, only confirmed his pessimism about the outcome. By the close of 1661, any hopes he had for continuing pastoral ministry had ceased. Indeed, he was now so pessimistic concerning his hopes for pastoring in England that he seriously considered leaving the country altogether. While Baxter has often been faulted for his lack of political skills, he could see the proverbial writing on the wall and knew the uniformity bill was coming even though its final approval was still far off. As Nuttall observed, “The end cannot have been in doubt, only its date.”²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶Baxter mentioned that Mr. Calamy along with several other ministers had been working with “those they had interest in” to have the King’s Declaration made law by Parliament, and at times “they had some hope from the Lord Chancellor and others” (*RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384, §276).

²⁹⁷Henry Hickman to Richard Baxter, fol. 191v; Nuttall and Keeble, eds., *CCRB*, 2:697.

²⁹⁸Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 43.

²⁹⁹Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 92.

The problematic timeline of Baxter's decision to marry can also be explained by his telescoping of several crucial events over a protracted period into one decisive incident.³⁰⁰ From 1660-62, he had witnessed the Restoration of the Monarchy, the debates over England's religious settlement, the Savoy Conference, his attempts to return to Kidderminster, and finally the *Act of Uniformity*. Rather than providing a lengthy account of all these events and how they gradually worked to erase his hopes for remaining pastor, he simply pointed to the uniformity bill as the one event that decided his ministerial fate. While his explanation was simplified, it was technically truthful, since he did not marry, perhaps deliberately,³⁰¹ until after the bill had been approved and gone into effect. Furthermore, the twenty-year gap existing between Baxter's composition of the *Breviate* (1681) and the events of 1660-62, also lends support to the argument that he telescoped events. The time gap would have compounded the difficulties of sequentially recounting all the factors at work in his decision to marry.

Conclusion

The story of Richard and Margaret's developing relationship and marriage does not reflect a capitulation of Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy. Rather it testifies to his consistency not only with his teaching on the disadvantages of clerical marriage but also what should motivate a Christian to marry. In depicting his wife, Baxter endeavored to show her remarkable transformation from a young, proud, and worldly maiden into a passionately devoted Puritan woman. His pastoral ministry to her soul had

³⁰⁰I am indebted to Tim Cooper for suggesting this explanation.

³⁰¹In the following passage, Baxter hinted that their marriage might have occurred earlier if it had not been for numerous delays: "From the first thoughts of it [marriage], many changes and stoppages intervened, and long delays, till I was silenced and ejected with many hundreds more" (Baxter, *BLM*, 46-47). Furthermore, his use of the word "at last" in reference to when they were finally married supports this argument as well (*ibid.*, 47). See also Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 43. These delays may have been due to Baxter's desire to wait until the *Act of Uniformity* finally came into effect and brought about his expulsion from the clergy. However, this is somewhat difficult to reconcile with Baxter's decision to go ahead and deliver his farewell sermon on May 24 right after the King gave his assent on May 19 (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 384 §278).

been vitally significant to her conversion and flourishing piety. However, the spiritual mercies Margaret received from Baxter also prompted a new struggle whereby her attachment to him seemed to vie with the desire to maintain the supremacy of God in her affections. She came to increasingly feel she could not be parted from the man whom she had come to see not only as her beloved pastor, but a substitute father and the only friend with whom she could freely discuss the vexations troubling her soul. Therefore, while romantic feelings may very well have played a part in her sudden removal to London, by her own admission she was motivated by her desire to once again reap the spiritual benefits of his pastoral care. While at Kidderminster, Baxter's feelings toward Margaret gave no hint of romantic interest but was rather a pastor seeking to quench those distracting affections in his young convert. He judged her growing admiration as symptomatic of youthful infatuation and sought to keep his distance accordingly. His stern, cool and detached manner of counseling her inner struggle indicates that he had been still but was still committed to clerical celibacy while he had a parish ministry that took up all his time.

Baxter's labors to achieve a religious settlement after the Restoration were the context in which his hopes to remain a clergyman rapidly diminished while his admiration for Margaret began to grow. He had been pessimistic about the possibility of achieving a tolerant, comprehensive resolution with the diocesan party even before the Restoration. Nevertheless, he poured himself into these endeavors, and their failure, combined with the loss of his position at Kidderminster, quenched any hopes he might have entertained of continuing as an ordained clergyman. But the increasing hostility, frustration, and isolation Baxter felt during this period provided the context in which his appreciation for Margaret's character and piety began to grow. Having moved to London against Baxter's stern admonishment, she was in a unique position to offer him much needed sympathy, encouragement, and counsel. The death of her mother Mary also provided a significant occasion for them to draw closer as he consoled Margaret in her

grief. Consequently, his growing admiration of her as an apt companion for himself first began to raise thoughts of marriage in his mind. Nevertheless, he refrained from taking the decisive step until the looming 1662 *Act of Uniformity* made his exclusion from a parish ministry in the Church of England certain. Looking back nineteen years later, Baxter deflected allegations of hypocrisy by pointing to this event as a factor that allowed him to marry without violating his advocacy of clerical celibacy. But how would the famous bachelor of Kidderminster adjust to matrimonial life? Furthermore, did his attitude toward clerical marriage alter after nineteen years of companionship with Margaret? Those two questions are the next to be explored

CHAPTER 7

THE MARRIAGE OF RICHARD AND MARGARET BAXTER

Introduction

Despite the stir created by Richard and Margaret's decision to wed, another surprise arises in the scholarly consensus that they enjoyed a mutually happy and beneficial marriage. Such consensus has been aided by Baxter's account of their wedded life together in the *Breviate*, which he composed shortly after her death "under the power of melting Grief."¹ J. M. Lloyd-Thomas concluded that no "minister had a better comrade," for "when all is said, it must have been, except that it was a childless union, as near an 'ideal marriage' as may be hoped of man and woman."² Similar positive evaluations of their marriage have been echoed in nearly every treatment of their wedded life.³ Nevertheless, following Margaret's death in 1681 after nineteen years together,

¹Richard Baxter, *A breviate of the life of Margaret, the daughter of Francis Charlton and wife of Richard Baxter: there is also published the character of her mother, truly described in her published funeral sermon, reprinted at her daughters request, called, The last work of a believer, his passing-prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ, to be received by him* (London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681), fol. A1v.

²J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," in *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, abridged by J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, ed. N. H. Keeble (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1931; repr., Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), 274-75.

³For positive depictions of Richard and Margaret's marriage, see James Anderson, "Margaret Charlton, Wife of Richard Baxter," in *Memorable Women of the Puritan Times*, vol. 2, 145-94 (London: Blackie and Son, 1862; repr., Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001); Frederick J. Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 4 (1918): 436-37, 445-56; Powicke, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross (1662-1691)* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), 100-108; J. T. Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton: A Puritan Love Story*, by Richard Baxter (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928), 17, 19, 43-44, 56-57; J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 274-75; Hugh Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 177-82; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), 93, 95; N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 130, 131; Timothy K. Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage: The Husband/Wife Relationship in Puritan England as Taught and Experienced by a Representative Puritan Pastor, Richard Baxter," *Trinity Journal* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 151-52; J. I. Packer, *A Grief Sanctified: Passing through Grief to Joy and Peace* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1997), 31-32, 43-45, 181-83; Sharon James, "Margaret Baxter, 1639-1681," in *In Trouble and in Joy: Four Women Who Lived for*

Baxter persisted in urging pastors to remain single. In fact, even though the *Breviate* was intended to commend Margaret's piety to the world, he astonishingly used his concluding remarks in that work to reassert several of his justifications for advocating celibacy as the ideal state for clergymen.⁴ Baxter's surprising digression in a work largely perceived to be a praise of marriage has puzzled scholars such as Frederick J. Powicke, J. I. Packer, Geoffrey F. Nuttall, Timothy K. Beougher, and J. T. Wilkinson.⁵

This chapter will explore the considerable tensions presented, on the one hand, by the great benefit Margaret was to Baxter's attempts to continue ministering, and on the other hand, by Baxter's persistent advocacy of clerical celibacy after her death. It will argue that Baxter's positive experience of wedlock failed to mollify his fears concerning the hindering nature of wedlock for pastors, because he saw his marriage exemplifying the same conflict of interest between pastoral ministry and family that had always led him

God (Welwyn Garden City, UK: Evangelical Press, 2003), 134-53; J. William Black, "Richard and Margaret," *Christian History and Biography* 89 (Winter 2006): 35-37; Vance Salsbury, *Good Mr. Baxter: Sketches of Effective, Caring Leadership for the Church from the Life of Richard Baxter* (Nevada City, CA: Piety Hill Press, 2007), 83-91; Elisa Jill Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family: Spheres of Soul Care and Sacrifice" (MCS thesis, Regent College, 2010), 71-76; Michael A. G. Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light': The Marriage of Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton," *The Reformers and Puritans as Spiritual Mentors: Hope is Kindled* (Kitchener, Canada: Joshua Press, 2012), 146-47, 160-61; Haykin, "Richard Baxter's Testimony about Margaret Baxter," in *8 Women of Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 40, 45-52; Allison Searle, "Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent," in *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660-1760*, eds. Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014; repr., New York: Routledge, 2016), 28-31, 37-39

The lone scholar who gave a negative evaluation of Richard and Margaret's marriage is Jacqueline Eales. Based on little evidence, she made the sweeping conclusion that Richard and Margaret were obviously a poor match for each other (Eales, "Samuel Clarke and the 'Lives' of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Women in the Church*, eds. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* 27 [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990], 367).

⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 101-14.

⁵Powicke found it "Strange" that one of the lessons Baxter drew from his marriage experience was confirmation of his view that in normal parish ministry pastors would be better served by remaining single (Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 461); Packer considered this a "lapse" and expressed puzzlement as to why Baxter would include these comments in the tribute written to his wife (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 183-85); Beougher noted surprise that Baxter's exceptional marriage did not alter his convictions but he made no attempt to resolve this tension in Baxter's thought (Beougher, "The Puritan View of Marriage," 152); Nuttall noted Baxter's resilience in affirming clerical celibacy but offered no attempt to resolve it apart from saying that, to the end of his life, "he preserved objectivity of judgment of a kind suggesting the detachment of a naturally celibate mind" (Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 93); Wilkinson also saw this feature of the *Breviate* as strange, though he does see it as more consistent with Baxter's absolute dedication to God (Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 55-56). Benson noted surprise that Baxter did not change his views on clerical celibacy, but made no attempt to explain it (Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family," 75).

to argue for clerical celibacy. Through revealing the “tension” of loyalties he experienced while married to Margaret, his concluding pleas for clergymen to remain celibate will appear far more consistent and understandable with the themes contained in the *Breviate*. Indeed, this insight will offer a new perspective on how the *Breviate* should be interpreted. While both Baxter and scholars have correctly viewed it as a praise of the Puritan ideal of marriage,⁶ Baxter also saw it, paradoxically, validating his argument for clerical celibacy.

The chapter will begin by exploring the nature of Baxter’s continued pastoral work after his ejection in 1662. Though lacking a specific pastoral charge, he still felt obligated to serve the universal church as a minister and used the printing press as an outlet for doing so; furthermore, the particularities that distinguished Baxter were still shaping his life, temperament, and sense of pastoral urgency. This continuity would cause tensions in his marriage, as he adopted the responsibilities of a husband. Baxter’s ministry and personal piety profited immensely from being married to Margaret. Yet he also worried that time spent with Margaret might compete with his pastoral work. This led him to rigidly prioritize ministerial work over his responsibilities to her. The uniqueness of Baxter’s approach to balancing his vocational and familial duties becomes evident by comparing it to the attitudes of other English clergymen. In the end, Baxter used the *Breviate* to continue advocating for clerical celibacy, because he had experienced the same conflict of loyalties that he had always warned would accompany clerical marriage.

⁶Baxter certainly viewed the *Breviate* as celebrating the Puritan ideal of companionate marriage, since he listed it as one of the “uses” or lessons of the book (Baxter, *BLM*, 99). For scholars echoing Baxter’s view, see Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 181-83, 186-87; Searle, “Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent,” 29; Beougher, “The Puritan View of Marriage,” 153, 156-57; Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 56-57; Allison O’Harae, “Theology, Genre and Romance in Richard Baxter and Harriet Beecher Stowe,” *Religion and Literature* 37 (2005): 71; Martin titled his chap. on Baxter’s marriage “A Puritan Love Story” (Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter*, 177); The title Powicke chose for his study of Baxter’s marriage indicated his conviction that it embodied the Puritan ideal of marriage (Powicke, “A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter’s Love Story”).

Baxter's Continued Pastoral Role after 1662

Baxter still viewed himself as a minister after 1662, though his role had significantly changed. The first obligation and priority of parish pastors lay in serving their particular church, and they could only serve the broader good of the universal church with the time they could spare.⁷ Baxter had married, because he no longer would have the enormous responsibility of providing soul care for each person in a parish, as his unique pastoral model required. Lacking a specific pastoral charge, he now saw himself as a minister to the unbelieving world and the universal church. Such ministers were “licensed and commanded to do” their “best for all, as we shall have a call for.”⁸ Regardless of the scope of their ministry, every pastor was “in order of *Nature*” a “*Preacher of the Gospel in General*,” before he began to exercise that charge within the more limited sphere of a particular church.⁹ As William Ross Shealy Jr. observed, since Baxter believed the minister’s first calling was to the unbelieving world, “the world” constituted “the pastor’s first parish.”¹⁰ Therefore, though Baxter felt free to marry since he had been deprived of the burden of parish ministry, his obligations as a pastor to the universal church meant that the possibility still existed for a conflict of interests between devotion to his wife or the ministry.

⁷Richard Baxter *Gildas Salvianus, the reformed pastor shewing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechizing: with an open confession of our too open sins, prepared for a day of humiliation kept at Worcester, Decemb. 4, 1655 by the ministers of that county, who subscribed the agreement for catechizing and personal instruction, at their entrance upon that work*. 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1657), 49, 50. The only exception to this principle arose when a great matter concerning “the public good require[d]” a pastor to prioritize the needs of the universal church over the needs of his particular church, since the public good “must be first regarded” (ibid., 50). For further discussion of Baxter’s view of pastoral calling and ordination, see William Ross Shealy, Jr., “The Power of the Present: The Pastoral Perspective of Richard Baxter, Puritan Divine: 1615-1691” (PhD diss., Drew University, 1966), 214-37.

⁸Baxter, *RP*, 50. For further discussion of Baxter’s view of pastoral government and the universal church, see Shealy, “The Power of the Present,” 54-80.

⁹Richard Baxter, *Five disputations of church-government and worship by Richard Baxter* (London: Printed by R. W. for Nevil Simmons, 1659), 135. According to Baxter, the two roles of ministers roles—to the universal church and to a particular church—were simply different expressions of “the first part” of the minister’s task to raise “a *Church*” out of the world by preaching “*the Gospel to unbelievers and ungodly ones*” (ibid., 134).

¹⁰Shealy, “The Power of the Present,” 78-79.

From 1662 until his death, Baxter was determined to exercise his calling to minister to the universal church.¹¹ He instructed the laity through hosting conventicles in his home to any who were willing to come, despite the threat of imprisonment from the *Conventicle Act* of 1663.¹² He also took advantage of Charles II's 1672 *Royal Declaration of Indulgence*, which briefly allowed nonconformists to preach until the law was repealed by Parliament in 1673.¹³ However, far and away, the bulk of his pastoral work involved theological writing.¹⁴ Evidence of his relentless pen-pushing during this period can be seen in the fact that he composed eighty-three of his one-hundred thirty-five works between 1662 and his death in 1691.¹⁵ Indeed, N. H. Keeble has noted the astonishment that Baxter's literary output has provoked, among Baxter's contemporaries as well as modern scholars.¹⁶

The sheer immensity of Baxter's publications after 1662,¹⁷ stemmed from his expulsion, his pastoral concern, and sense of urgency. He certainly possessed additional

¹¹The accounts of John F. Brouwer, Powicke, and Nuttall covering this period demonstrated his fierce determination to continue pastoring, in whatever form he could (John F. Brouwer, "Richard Baxter's Christian Directory: Context and Content" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2005), 128; Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 98-113; Powicke, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross*, 15-59, 66-108, 128-82).

¹²Baxter, *BLM*, 51. Until it was repealed in 1689, the law forbade conventicles, defined as religious assemblies of more than five people other than an immediate family, outside the auspices of the Church of England (Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. Mathew Sylvester [London: T. Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, J. Dunton, 1696], bk. 1, pt. 2, 435-36 §428).

¹³Baxter, *BLM*, 52; Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 102-3 §226-28. After the declaration, Baxter preached for the first time in ten years in a house (*ibid.*, pt. 3, 103 §226). The law was later repealed on February 4, 1673 by Parliament who declared it illegal. However, it was still supposed that while the Declaration of Indulgence had been repealed, the licenses to preach granted under it were still valid, but then in 1674 the licenses were recalled (Powicke, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross*, 81).

¹⁴Baxter wrote, ". . . all Publick Service being at an end, I betook my self to live in the Country . . . that I might set myself to writing, and do what Service I could for Posterity" (Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 2, 440 §439).

¹⁵See Nuttall's chronological listing of Baxter's works, including those that were published posthumously (Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 132-36).

¹⁶Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 2-3.

¹⁷Baxter composed several massive tomes after 1662, including the *Christian Directory* (1673), *Methodus theologiae Christianae* (1681), *Richard Baxter's Catholick theologie* (1675), and *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (published posthumously in 1696).

time, since he now lacked the demanding obligations of parish ministry. However, he had always made writing his “chiefest daily Labour,” even during his pastorate at Kidderminster, since it was an extension of his pastoral concern for promoting practical piety.¹⁸ As Paul Chang-Ha Lim noted, Baxter viewed his books as sermons that would “preach” to readers and so disseminate his message to a far broader audience outside his parish.¹⁹ Yet after he had been silenced, publication now became the only foreseeable vehicle by which he could exercise pastoral care. In the preface of one collection of sermons, he addressed his Kidderminster parishioners: “I now direct these Sermons to your hands, that seeing I cannot teach you as I would, I may teach you as I can.”²⁰ Since God had “so suddenly” removed “so many faithful Guides,” Baxter realized that now “Books must be” the laity’s “most learned, able, powerful Teachers! O what a mercy it is that even the poor, may keep such *Preachers* in their houses, at so cheap a *rate!*”²¹ Baxter’s sense of urgency also drove his extraordinary literary output after his ejection. The *Breviate* testifies to the fact that wedlock did little to mollify his miserly use of time

¹⁸Baxter, *RB*, bk. 1, pt. 1, 84 §135. Baxter wrote, “But all these my Labours (except my private Conferences with the Families), even preaching and preparing for it, were but my Recreation, and as it were the work of my spare hours: For my Writings were my chiefest daily Labour; which yet went the more slowly on, . . . and specially because my Weakness took so much of my time. For all the Pains that my Infirmities brought upon me, were not so grievous an Affliction to me, as the unavoidable loss of time, which they occasioned. . . . All of which, besides times of Family Duties, and Prayer, and Eating, etc., leaveeth me but little time to study; which hath been the greatest external Personal Affliction of my life” (ibid.). For the most comprehensive study of Baxter as a writer, see Keeble, *Richard Baxter*.

¹⁹Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 62 (Boston: Brill, 2004), 44. Lim was speaking more to Baxter’s literature on conversion, but the same goal of wide reaching dissemination and adoption of his ideas could be true for other books such as *The Reformed Pastor* (Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 139).

²⁰Richard Baxter, *The mischiefs of self-ignorance and the benefits of self-acquaintance opened in divers sermons at Dunstan's-West and published in answer to the accusations of some and the desires of others* (London: Printed by R. White for F. Tyton, 1662), fols. c4v-5r.

²¹Richard Baxter, “To the Reader,” in *A posing question, put by the wise man, viz. Solomon, to the wisest men concerning making a judgment of the temporal conditions: wherein you have the ignorance of man (in knowing, what is good, or evil, for man in this life) discovered, together, with the mistakes that flow from it: and the great question resolved, viz. whether the knowledg of, what is good for a man in this life, be so hid from man, that no man can attain it / preached at the weekly lecture at Upton . . . by Benjamin Baxter* (London: Printed for George Sawbridge, 1662), fol. A6r.

in order to meet the pressing pastoral demands he saw around him.²² He believed he had good reason for his regimented mindset. After 1662, ecclesiastical controversies, the spiritual needs of the common people, and the plight of the poor necessitated his attention.²³ Indeed, when Edward Bagshaw chastised Baxter in 1671 for his “pride” and challenged the benefit of his publications, he retorted with a lengthy defense, explaining that every minister was obligated to defend and promote “the Christian faith” from “infidelity” to the best of his ability.²⁴ Finally, Baxter’s chronic illness and sense of impending death, which intensified his pastoral concern and sense of urgency, not only continued but seemed to have worsened during his marriage.²⁵

In sum, though in 1662 Baxter felt free to marry since he no longer possessed a pastoral charge, several internal and external factors still existed which could potentially create a conflict of interest between marriage and ministry. A letter written in 1671 offers a startling insight into his outlook on life, despite having already been a married man for nine years: “. . . I live only for *Work* and therefore should remove only for *Work*.”²⁶ Consequently, Baxter would experience marital tension as he struggled to fulfill his

²²Baxter provided the following description of the urgent mindset he continued to possess during his marriage to Margaret: “I thought still I had but a little time to live; I thought some considerable work still called for haste; I have these Forty years been sensible of the sin of losing time: I could not spare an hour” (Baxter, *BLM*, 78). This pattern persisted throughout their marriage despite Margaret’s efforts to moderate him; in response to her counsel that he should act and speak with more calmness and deliberation rather than rashness, he said that her “counsel was good for one that could stay, but not for one that must ride Post” (ibid.).

²³Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 4-5.

²⁴Richard Baxter, *A second admonition to Mr. Edward Bagshaw written to call him to repentance for many false doctrines, crimes, and specially fourscore palpable untruths in matter of fact: with a confutation of his reasons for separation* (London: Printed for Nevill Simmons, 1671), see especially 85-87. I am indebted to Keeble for this insight (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 7).

²⁵On two occasions Baxter expressed how his weakness, pain and, decay increased as his marriage went on and incapacitated him further (Baxter, *BLM*, 71, 97).

²⁶Baxter, *RB*, pt. 3, 75 §171. Baxter’s statement should not be taken to appear as if he had totally forgotten about his wife or extended family, for in that same letter he mentioned how he also needed to take care of his eighty-year old mother in law whom he “must not neglect” (ibid.). Despite the statement’s hyperbole, Baxter nevertheless meant for his statement to explain the singular priority he gave to his pastoral work, in comparison to all other concerns. See also Cooper’s comment on this passage (Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England*, 53).

responsibilities as a husband and simultaneously guard the preeminence which he believed the ministry should have over his time. Yet before tracing that tension in the *Breviate*, the benefits he experienced through marriage to Margaret should be examined.

The Benefits of Marriage to Baxter's Pastoral Work

When they were married on September 10, 1662, Baxter and Margaret shared the conviction that the mutual help spouses offered each other lay at the heart of God's design for marriage.²⁷ Baxter's teaching on the family repeatedly drove home the point that spouses served as helpers to each other's souls by providing accountability, admonishment, and exhortation in every aspect of their lives.²⁸ Furthermore, since Margaret was one of his most ardent Kidderminster parishioners, she no doubt would have readily received his teaching. According to Baxter, they experienced a strong "love and concord," because their "Religious judgment and disposition" suited them for one another quite well.²⁹ The result, as Baxter put it, was an idyllic marital harmony: "we lived in inviolated love, and mutual complacency, sensible of the benefit of mutual help. These near nineteen years I know not that ever we had any breach in point of love, or point of interest."³⁰ A word of caution is necessary though. Baxter's overall picture of their homelife is prejudiced in the sense that we must rely solely on his account. It is plausible that Baxter's depiction of their marriage stemmed from having his own way as the dominant partner in their relationship, and Margaret accommodated herself to him. After all, Margaret was twenty-one years younger than Baxter, had come to view him as a surrogate father for the one she had lost as a child, and tended to develop unusually deep attachments in close relationships. While there is no explicit evidence to support

²⁷See Benson, "Richard Baxter's Teaching on the Family."

²⁸See chap. 3, 150-71 for discussion of Baxter's theology of soul care in the family.

²⁹Baxter, *BLM*, 100.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 47. For a similar statement, see also *ibid.*, 93.

such a theory, it is a possibility that should be acknowledged.³¹ Regardless of whether their marriage was less harmonious than depicted, it did little to dampen Margaret's desire to advance her husband's ministry.

Baxter detailed several examples of the greater benefit Margaret was to his ministry and to himself personally.³² Margaret sought to encourage Baxter and fellow nonconformists to continue pastoring, even though ecclesiastical repression for them had been greatly heightened after 1662.³³ Despite the danger Baxter faced from imprisonment or fines for preaching, she never sought to "hinder or discourage" him from preaching "any one Sermon." On the contrary, when she discerned in him the "least fear, or self-saving by fleshly wisdom" that might cause him to shrink back from fulfilling his ministerial office, "it was so great a trouble to her that she could not hide it."³⁴ Margaret expressed the same frustration with other nonconforming ministers who shrank back "for fear of suffering" or complained of their afflictions.³⁵ Neither did her fortitude diminish when those fears became realized. When Baxter suffered his first imprisonment in 1669 for holding conventicles, Margaret "cheerfully" joined him in prison, and her presence did much to assuage his stay there.³⁶ According to Baxter, "she scarce ever had a

³¹I am indebted to Tim Cooper for proposing this theory.

³²This section will focus primarily on Margaret's role in helping Baxter and his ministry rather than the way in which he was a helper to her. There are two reasons for this. First, the goal of this chap. is to understand why Baxter continued to advocate for clerical celibacy despite the benefits he gained from Margaret. Second, in the *Breviate* Baxter aimed to memorialize her life and example, rather than his own, and so he focused on providing examples to support that goal. However, a glimpse of the care Baxter offered to Margaret can be glimpsed in a letter he wrote to her during their marriage and later reproduced in the *Breviate* (Baxter, *BLM*, 87-89).

³³For the most recent study of the 1662 Act of Uniformity and its consequences, see the collection of essays edited by N. H. Keeble: *'Settling the Peace of the Church': 1662 Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 61.

³⁵Baxter declared, "She was exceeding impatient with any Non-conforming Ministers that shrunk for fear of suffering, or that were over-querulous and sensible of their wants or dangers; and would have no man a Minister that had not so much self-denial as to lay down all at the feet of Christ, and count no cost or suffering too dear to serve him (*ibid.*, 61).

³⁶Baxter wrote, "When I was carried to the common gaol . . . I never perceived her trouble at it: she cheerfully went with me into prison; she brought her best bed hither, and did much to remove the

pleasanter time in her life than while she was with me there.”³⁷ In addition to imprisonment, the couple had to flee their dwellings on numerous occasions due to the threat of public officials who frequently spied upon and hunted Baxter.³⁸ Many women, Baxter reflected, would have had difficulty with such tribulations, yet he found Margaret could “easily bare it all.”³⁹ Indeed, on numerous occasions he stressed her remarkable capability to preserve a cheerful and patient spirit, despite the deprivations and afflictions she suffered due to his status as an outlawed minister.⁴⁰ Margaret’s optimism appears all the more remarkable when contrasted with her struggle with assurance, sadness, and melancholy as a young convert.⁴¹ Baxter noted how the security of wedlock did much to dispel the gloom Margaret frequently experienced before their marriage.⁴² Allison Searle has contended that not only these comforts but the context of persecution “enabled her transformation from an introspective, melancholic, young woman, into an energetic, redoubtable and highly intelligent nonconformist patron and activist.”⁴³

Baxter pointed to several ways in which Margaret advanced his ministerial labors. Her zeal for matters of eternal significance seemed to match her husband’s: “She

removable inconveniences of the prison” (Baxter, *BLM*, 51).

³⁷Ibid., 49,

³⁸For their frequent removals, see *ibid.*, 49-52.

³⁹Ibid., 49. At the conclusion of his discussion of his frequent removals due to persecution, Baxter noted that “in all these changes and troubles she lived in great peace” (*ibid.*, 52).

⁴⁰See *ibid.*, 48-49, 49-51, 51, 52, 59, 60, 61. Allison Searle noted Baxter’s observation that his wife actually “thrived in an environment of persecution and political opposition” (Searle, “Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent,” 23). Baxter also observed that Margaret “was not ignorant of the scorn and the jealousies, and wrath, and prosecutions that I was like to be exposed to;” the fact that she chose to participate in “such a life that had no encouragement from any worldly Wealth and Honour, yea that was exposed to such certain suffering which had no end in prospect on this side of death, did shew that she was far from covetousness” (Baxter, *BLM*, 48-49).

⁴¹Baxter, *BLM*, 47. For Baxter’s fuller treatment of her temperament which occasioned her troubles of mind, see *ibid.*, 43-46.

⁴²According to Baxter, “When we were married, her sadness and melancholy vanished; counsel did something to it, and the contentment something; and being taken up with our household affairs, did somewhat” (Baxter, *BLM*, 47).

⁴³Searle, “Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent,” 29-30.

was earnestly desirous of the winning of souls, and of the utmost improvement of mine and other men's labours to that end"⁴⁴ First, Margaret advanced her husband's opportunities to continue teaching through her character and personality. No matter how frequently the couple had to flee to new dwellings, Baxter could not recall a single place where Margaret failed to "extraordinarily win the love of the inhabitants."⁴⁵ While living at Acton, a town inhabited by "worldly ignorant persons," Margaret nevertheless won the esteem and love of the townspeople by her "carriage and charity."⁴⁶ The relationships Margaret forged proved a great boon for Baxter, for she opened up their home to any who desired to receive instruction from him on Sundays between the morning and evening services.⁴⁷ As a result, the "worldly and ignorant persons" of Acton unexpectedly filled their living room and provided Baxter with hope of "their edification, and reformation."⁴⁸ Baxter credited much of this success to his wife's "winning conversation which thus won their love,"⁴⁹ and intimated that she exerted the same influence wherever they resided.⁵⁰

Margaret also sought to promote Baxter's ministry by financing numerous preaching venues and other charitable works. Since she had "absolutely devoted her self, and all that she had to God," she now "earnestly set her self" to dedicate her substantial inheritance to the ministry and charitable purposes.⁵¹ The occasion which opened such

⁴⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 53.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁷For the importance which house based conventicles gained for non-conformists in Restoration England, see Raymond Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity: English Nonconformity in a Period of Repression, 1660-1689*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012), 262-69; G. R. Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution: 1660-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 136-43.

⁴⁸Baxter, *BLM*, 50.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁰Baxter noted a similar sequence of events at Totteridge where "she gladly opened her doors to her Neighbours, that would come in for instruction" (*ibid.*, 53-54). Wherever they removed to, Baxter said that she won the love of the inhabitants (*ibid.*, 49).

⁵¹Margaret's portion was £ 2,000, though by the time she actually came to receive it upon her

opportunities came through the 1672 *Royal Declaration of Indulgence*, which briefly allowed nonconformists to preach and build meeting houses.⁵² After moving back to London, however, Margaret deemed her husband too sluggish in seeking out preaching opportunities. Even though most places in the city had venues suitable for preaching, he had resolved not to “seek any Employment till [he] was called.”⁵³ Unsatisfied with his passivity, Margaret fished out of him which parish he desired to preach in the most, and, when he told her St. Martin’s, she set out, without his knowledge, to secure a meeting place in that precise location. After great endeavor, she had arranged and payed half the cost for him to preach every morning in the rooms above a market house, and in the afternoon “the ablest ministers they could procure in London” preached.⁵⁴ During one of Baxter’s sermons, the center beam supporting the room cracked loudly and nearly caused a panicked stampede by the listeners; however Margaret muscled through the crowd, found a carpenter among them, and had him insert a prop to support the beam until her husband had finished preaching.⁵⁵ Though the incident increased Margaret’s “diseased frightfulness,” she responded by promising God that she would “build a safer place, where they might meet with less fear.”⁵⁶ Motivated by “promise and desire,” she built the new chapel and then funded the construction of several more which Baxter and other nonconformist ministers used.⁵⁷ In addition, seeing the countless number of “ignorant

mother’s death it had been reduced to £ 1650 (Baxter, *BLM*, 47-48).

⁵²Ibid., 52; Baxter, *RB*, pt. 3, 102-3 §226. After the declaration, Baxter preached for the first time in ten years in a house (ibid., pt. 3, 103 §226). The law was later repealed on February 4, 1673 by Parliament who declared it illegal (ibid., pt. 3, 103 §230-32).

⁵³Baxter, *BLM*, 54.

⁵⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 54. In order to arrange this rotation of ministers, “She got a Minister an hundred miles off to come up to help me, promising him 4cl. a year to go from day to day to supply the places of such imminent Ministers as should be got. All this charge, besides paying a Clerk, and woman to look to the seats, rose high. Part of it the people paid, and the rest she paid her self” (ibid.).

⁵⁵Ibid., 54-55.

⁵⁶Ibid., 55-56.

⁵⁷Ibid., 56-57, 58, 59.

untaught poor,” she funded the operation of a school to instruct poor children in the catechism as well as teaching them to read.⁵⁸ Finally, she even grew to exercise more liberality toward the poor than her husband did.⁵⁹ Margaret’s peripatetic activity on illustrated Baxter’s observation that “all the operations of her soul were very intense and strong; strong wit, and strong love, and strong displeasure.”⁶⁰ Indeed, Margaret’s incessant labors drew the condemnation of “accusers” who felt she should have been content to “live privately and quietly.”⁶¹ Rather than resenting her charitable labors, Baxter was not at all “ashamed to have been ruled by her prudent love in many things” and saw many precedents in Scripture for her labors as a woman.⁶² Thus Margaret was a

⁵⁸Baxter, *BLM*, 57-58.

⁵⁹For Margaret’s liberal charity to the poor, see *ibid.*, 53, 63-65.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 45.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 64. For Baxter’s response to similar criticisms see *ibid.*, 66. However, there is little evidence to support Eales’ conclusion that Margaret “clearly found it difficult to accept the constraints of her marriage to one of the most prolific Puritan polemicists of the age” (Eales, “Samuel Clarke and the ‘Lives’ of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England,” 367). Margaret certainly received criticism for her unusual, public role in helping her husband, but she received nothing but encouragement from him in these endeavors.

⁶²Baxter, *BLM*, 66. Baxter, on his part, seemed to see little problem with her endeavors, citing the scriptural examples of godly women helping men in their ministry: “*what needs there all this ado? Doth not Paul call some women his helps in the Gospel?*” (*ibid.*, 64). Later, Baxter plied her accusers with questions meant to highlight God’s pleasure in the small acts of piety done by women: “Did not Christ say of *Marys* Box of Ointment, that it should be remembered wherever that Gospel was Preached? And was it not *Judas* that said, *what need this waist?* And were not the poors clothing, made by *Dorcas*, shewed to move *Peter?*” (*ibid.*, 66). Therefore, to a certain extent, Searle rightly noted that Baxter undercut “the traditional dichotomies” between “mastery and submission” and “public and private” spheres of influence in the marriage relationship (Searle, “Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent,” 28). Yet rather than attempting to entirely overthrow traditional gender roles in marriage, Baxter sought to bring them into greater conformity with Scripture. Even though Margaret’s actions did not fit neatly into contemporary notions of the silent woman living secluded from public life, Baxter saw biblical warrant to grant a certain degree of flexibility concerning the manner in which wives fulfilled their role as helpers. Therefore, when gospel imperatives called for it, a woman such as Margaret was fully justified in stepping outside of the private sphere and into the public realm in order to meet those necessities (*ibid.*, 65). See also Ann Hughes who commented that Baxter’s marriage demonstrated the “ambiguities” of Puritan marriage doctrine (Ann Hughes, “Puritanism and Gender,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, eds. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 297). For further studies of seventeenth-century ideals for woman, see Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982); Caroline McManus, *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Reading of Women* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002).

determined, and at times quite independent, patron of her husband and other nonconformist ministers.⁶³

Perhaps the most remarkable credit Baxter gave to Margaret can be glimpsed in the intellectual stimulus she provided for his pastoral labors. According to Baxter, she possessed an “extraordinary sharp and piercing wit,”⁶⁴ as well as an apprehension of “worldly cares” (day to day tasks of living) that proved “so much quicker, and more discerning than” his own.⁶⁵ On the one hand, her gifts expanded the time he could devote to his writing, since she took the management of all day to day household tasks upon herself.⁶⁶ However, he also discovered that her talents could be a more direct benefit to his ministry. He declared that her skill at resolving counseling cases exceeded the abilities of “*most Divines that ever I knew in all my life.*”⁶⁷ The “excellency of her reason” lay not so much in the “speculative” (doctrinal complexities) but in the “*prudential practical part*” of matters relating to “the Family, Estate, or any civil business.”⁶⁸ Indeed, Baxter admitted “he never knew her equal” in such issues of daily life.⁶⁹ Consequently, he began to seek her advice on nearly every counseling case which came to his attention. According to Jacqueline Eales, Baxter’s practice would have been judged highly irregular since resolving pastoral counseling cases was a professional task

⁶³These pious efforts, and many others, prompted Baxter to say, “She was earnestly desirous of the winning of souls, and of the utmost improvement of mine and other men’s labours to that end” (Baxter, *BLM*, 53). A recent study by Melinda S. Zook has shown that many dissenting women in Restoration England had a ministry similar to Margaret; these “nursing mothers” sought to advance the cause of godly ministers by protecting, sheltering, and financially supporting them (Melinda S. Zook, *Protestantism, Politics, and Women in Britain, 1660-1714*, Early Modern History: Society and Culture [New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013], 16-56).

⁶⁴Ibid., 43.

⁶⁵Ibid., 67.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid. Baxter knew that his ready admission of this would shock many of his readers: “Yea, I will say that, which they that believe me to be no liar, will wonder at” (ibid).

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

of the clergy.⁷⁰ Undeterred by such taboos, Baxter shared his pastoral quandaries with Margaret and was frequently astonished by her talent for quickly scrutinizing all aspects of a counseling case and coming to a more precise resolution than he could.

I often put cases to her, which she suddenly so resolved, as to convince me of some degree of over-sight in my own resolution. Insomuch that of late years, I confess, that I was used to put all, save secret cases, to her, and hear what she could say. Abundance of difficulties were brought me, some about Restitution, some about Injuries, some about References, some about Vows, some about marriage promises, and many such like; and she would lay all the circumstances presently together, compare them, and give me a more exact resolution than I could.⁷¹

As Allison Searle noted, “this was extraordinary praise from one of the most respected English casuists of the seventeenth century.”⁷² However, Baxter’s candid acknowledgment also yields insight into her significant intellectual contribution to his writing. Her agency must be considered when evaluating Baxter’s theological contribution to English Protestantism, for the numerous books he composed during their nineteen years of marriage, including the *Christian Directory*, may very well reflect her influence.⁷³

⁷⁰Eales, “Samuel Clarke and the ‘Lives’ of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England,” 375. Eales based her conclusion on the observation that Samuel Clarke (1599-1683), a Puritan pastor and friend of Baxter, seemed to have disagreed with Margaret’s involvement in his resolution of cases of conscience. When Clarke used Baxter’s account of their marriage to write a heavily condensed biography of Margaret, he noticeably deleted these passages. Eales traced this omission back to the conviction that resolving pastoral counseling cases was a professional task of the clergy, and thus Clarke’s editing work “sought to refine the presentation of Puritan women for public consumption” (ibid.). Furthermore, Eales stated that women comprised a key component of this literary production of the lives of Puritan gentry and ministers, “for they were allotted a distinctly different role from men in both the public and the domestic spheres, and their printed ‘lives’ were intended as examples of ideal feminine behavior, as well as providing a blueprint for the religious conduct of the individual. Women were expected to operate primarily in the domestic sphere, where they would accept the dominion of their menfolk, thus Clarke’s Lives echo many of the sentiments to be found in both the conduct books for women, and in the Puritan domestic handbooks of the early Stuart period” (ibid., 366). Hughes commented, “The households of the Godly clergy are frequently presented as ideals in the writings of Puritan ministers. . . . For the male clergy whose writings we rely on, it was essential to their standing in their communities that they exemplified hierarchical marriage, with obedient and dutiful wives (Hughes, “Puritanism and Gender,” 296).

⁷¹Baxter, *BLM*, 67-68.

⁷²Searle, “Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent,” 31.

⁷³I am indebted to Eales for this insight (Eales, “Samuel Clarke and the ‘Lives’ of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England,” 375). For further support, see also Wilkinson, introduction to *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 44; Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter*, 179; Brouwer, “Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory,” 218. Brouwer’s work is the only study of the conceptual development of Baxter’s *Christian Directory*. However, Lloyd-Thomas discounted this theory of Margaret’s role, since he believed the *Christian Directory*, having been written in 1664-65, was composed

Finally, Margaret was not at all reluctant to hold her husband accountable and admonish his behavior when she felt it was needed. Baxter was well known for his rigorous dedication to holiness and had been a Christian far longer than Margaret, yet he realized that Margaret's standards exceeded even his own.

The nature of true Religion, Holiness, Obedience, and all Duty to God and man, was printed in her conceptions, in so distinct and clear a Character, as made her endeavors and expectations still look at greater exactness, than I and such as I could reach. She was very desirous that we should all have lived in constancy of Devotion, and a blameless Innocency: And in this respect she was the meetest helper that I could have had in the world (that ever I was acquainted with).⁷⁴

Instead of charging Margaret with unrealistic expectations, Baxter viewed her as God's means to bring his faults into the light. Though his own "badness" made it hard to please his wife's "high desires," he reflected that "this was my benefit: for it was but to put me on to be better; as God himself will be pleased."⁷⁵ One such instance illustrates how Margaret sought to reform the reformed pastor, both in his words and actions.

I was apt to be over-careless in my speech, and too backward to my duty; and she was still endeavoring to bring me to greater wariness and strictness in both: If I spake rashly or harshly, it offended her: If I carried it (as I was apt) with too much neglect of Ceremony, or humble Complement to any, she would modestly tell me of it: If my very Looks seemed not pleasant, she would have had me amend them.⁷⁶

After examining the above text, Michael A. G. Haykin commented that Baxter found matrimony to be "nothing less than a school of sanctification."⁷⁷ If Margaret sought to spur her husband to greater holiness through admonishing his remissness of formal pleasantries, one can only wonder at the care she took to rebuke his failings in other areas of his life. In sum, marriage Margaret introduced Baxter to a level of accountability, soul

too early in their marriage for her to influence it (Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 276).

⁷⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 70.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 103.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 70. See also *ibid.*, 103.

⁷⁷Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light'" 154.

care, and sanctification unlike anything he had experienced. In this regard his marriage seemed to be consistent with his teaching on the primary purpose of wedlock.⁷⁸

The Hindrances of Marriage to Baxter's Pastoral Work

Despite greatly benefiting from Margaret, Baxter paradoxically experienced how the responsibilities of marriage competed with his singular commitment to pastoral ministry. When such conflicts of interest occurred, he approached the issue just as he always had while a celibate clergyman, by prioritizing his ministerial obligations to the universal church over any other concern, even devotion to his wife. Thus, while his ejection in 1662 may have removed the primary motivation for remaining celibate, Baxter still did not believe his duties as a husband should have a parity with his ministerial work.⁷⁹ The same desire for a single-minded devotion to his pastoral concerns that had driven his advocacy of clerical celibacy still shaped the ordering of his life within wedlock.

Even before Baxter agreed to marry Margaret, he expressed concern that wedlock would compete with and thus undermine his pastoral obligation to the universal church. Before their union would go forward, he crafted a prenuptial agreement laying down three rules for their marriage which Margaret would have to agree to before the wedding could go forward.⁸⁰ The third condition stated that “she would expect none of

⁷⁸See the discussion in chap. 3, 153-161.

⁷⁹I am qualifying Packer's statement that Baxter knew “his case for clerical celibacy no longer applied to himself,” since the forthcoming Act of Uniformity in 1662 would not only remove him from Kidderminster but also make it illegal for him to ever preach again unless he conformed (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 22). While Packer's observation is correct, Baxter's mentality during marriage was that he still needed to vigilantly guard against his ministry being hindered by his duties as a husband to Margaret.

⁸⁰According to Baxter, “She consented to these Conditions of our Marriage: I. That I would have nothing that before our Marriage was hers; that I (who wanted no outward supplies) might seem not to marry her for covetousness. 2. That she would so alter her affairs, that I might be entangled in no Law-suits. 3. That she would expect none of my time which my Ministerial work should require” (Baxter, *BLM*, 47).

my time which my Ministerial work should require.”⁸¹ While Allison Searle has highlighted the noteworthy degree of “economic and personal freedom” granted by these preconditions,⁸² she has failed to notice how the third issue indicated Baxter’s wariness that marriage would generate a conflict of interests drawing him away from his pastoral work. Hence, he required Margaret’s understanding and assurance that, if such a conflict did arise, his marital obligations to her would always be superseded by ministerial demands. Similar interpretations of Baxter’s strict stipulations have been proposed by Jaqueline Eales and Anthony Fletcher, the latter of whom highlighted its harshness toward Margaret.⁸³

The third condition of Baxter’s prenuptial agreement with Margaret served as a guiding principle for how he approached balancing his ministerial and marital duties. He frequently confronted the disquieting choice between neglecting “his Family or his Flock,” and this dilemma consistently arose in the practice of regular prayer with Margaret.⁸⁴ In the *Christian Directory*, he had stressed at length the scriptural responsibility for husbands to teach and lead their families in frequent and fervent prayer:⁸⁵ “*The Husband is to be the mouth of the Family in their daily conjunct Prayers*

⁸¹Baxter, *BLM*, 47.

⁸²Searle, “Women, Marriage, and Agency in Restoration Dissent,” 30.

⁸³Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 350; Eales, “Samuel Clarke and the ‘Lives’ of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England,” 373. Packer also wrote that it could not have been easy for Margaret that Baxter was “constantly in the home” writing his books but “not available” to her (*A Grief Sanctified*, 44).

It could also be argued that Baxter’s established this precondition, because he remembered how Margaret tended to be excessive in her love and dependence on human relationships, and so Baxter was seeking to guard against this occurring. While Baxter may very well have had this fault of Margaret’s in mind, Baxter’s rigorous attempt to guard his time for ministerial work was driven by his conviction that his pastoral labors were more important than his responsibilities as a husband (Baxter, *BLM*, 71).

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 102.

⁸⁵Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie, and cases of conscience directing Christians, how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by Robert White for Nevil Simmons, 1678), pt. 2, 25 (argument 3), 26 (argument 5 and 6), 27 (argument 10, 11, and 13), 28 (argument 18). Baxter also stressed that joint prayers were particularly powerful in stirring up the affections of family members far more than private prayers offered individually

unto God.”⁸⁶ In his own marriage, however, he felt justified in foregoing the obligation to pray with Margaret when lack of time necessitated it.

Believe it, he that will have a Wife must spend much of his time in conference, prayer, and other family-duties, with her And then it will disquiet a man’s mind to think that he must neglect his Family or his Flock and hath undertaken more than he can do. My conscience hath forced me many times to omit secret [joint] prayer with my Wife when she desired it, for want of time, not daring to omit far greater work.⁸⁷

The conflict Baxter felt between devotion to his pastoral work and Margaret offers a candid view into his strict prioritization of ministerial work. Though he had often commanded joint prayer as a mutual duty of the husband and wife to help spur one another on to greater piety, he also viewed these obligations as secondary in relation to the “far greater work” of the ministry and therefore felt justified in excusing himself from performing them. Whenever “want of time” required it, care for one’s spouse could, and indeed must, be forborne in deference to the demands of pastoral ministry. However, Baxter felt the shortage of time almost ceaselessly due to his constant illness, just as he had throughout his life.

Baxter’s chronic ailments did nothing to lessen the acute sense of lost time, which further heightened his compulsion to prioritize his ministerial work over his obligations as a husband.⁸⁸ Afflicted by a myriad of ailments which seemed to grow worse with age, he was often bed ridden for large portions of the day throughout his marriage. With little available time for both pastoral work and conversing or praying with Margaret, he felt compelled to prioritize his writing, preaching, and other public responsibilities over his wife’s needs and desires.

(Baxter, *CD*, pt. 2, 28-29 [argument 19], 46 §28).

⁸⁶Ibid., pt. 2, 49 §8.

⁸⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 102.

⁸⁸For discussion of Baxter’s ailments, see chap. 4, 186-92.

And of late years, my constant weakness and pain made me unable to speak much in my ordinary discourse of Duty; and my Writings, Preachings, and other publick Duty (which I ever thought I was bound to prefer before the lesser) did so wholly take up those few hours of the day, which I had out of my Bed, that I was seldomer in secret Prayer with my Wife than she desired.⁸⁹

Once again, Baxter justified his absence from family prayer by falling back upon his unwavering conviction that the higher calling of the ministry always superseded her needs and his duties as a husband. Chronic illness, and the valuable time it stole from him, exerted a significant influence on his felt need to follow such a course of action. If he lay debilitated by illness for much of the day, then the precious few hours he possessed had to be redeemed for the advancement of Christ's Church, even if that meant forsaking his obligations to Margaret.

Baxter's pattern of strictly prioritizing his ministry over his marriage seemed to differ markedly from what might commonly occur in any marriage as spouses struggled to reconcile the ideal with reality. One could object that the evidence presented thus far depicts nothing more than Richard and Margaret dealing with the common marital problem where pressures of life occasionally cause certain duties to go unperformed. However, such an interpretation proves difficult to reconcile with Baxter's response when Margaret expressed her disagreement with his rigorous prioritization of his ministry. She believed Baxter would have "done better to have written less books and done those few better," because he instead "should have spent more time in Religious exercise with her, [his] family, and [his] neighbors."⁹⁰ She was not entirely alone in her opinions, for Baxter noted that "some others" had also expressed their wish that he would decrease his involvement in so many controversies.⁹¹ Yet Baxter responded to her criticism by

⁸⁹Baxter, *BLM*, 71.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 73.

⁹¹*Ibid.* This might be a reference to advice like that found in Peter Ince's letter to Baxter. He counseled Baxter to not allow "Polemical writings to take up too much of your paper," but instead urged him to "write what may mend mens hearts & lives which are grievously out of order" (Peter Ince to Richard Baxter, December 8, [1653], Baxter MSS Collection, *Letters*, vol. 1, fol. 8r); the bracketed information was supplied by Keeble and Nuttall, eds., *CCRB*, 1:152.

asserting the standard approach he always instructed Christians to practice when ordering their lives according to necessity and the greatest good. When lack of time and the pressure of “so many other Duties” burdened Christians, the “better” duties ought to be preferred while “lesser” duties should be considered as “no duties.”⁹²

. . . A man is limited in his Capacity and his Time: No man can do all the good he would; and to omit a greater for the better doing of a lesser, . . . , I thought was to be unrighteous by being righteous overmuch. . . . I thought there were many to do such work, that would not do mine; and that I chose the greatest, which I durst not omit, and could not do both in the measure that I desired else to have done.⁹³

Baxter’s justification for neglecting his marital duties seemed markedly different from the common experience of spouses struggling to live up to the ideal in marriage. Rather, they stemmed from his lifelong compulsion to redeem the little time he had by rejecting superfluous endeavors and prioritizing “the one thing necessary.”⁹⁴ This same reasoning had governed his argument for clerical celibacy all his life; since marriage normally posed such a detriment to effective ministry, pastors should strive as much as possible to choose the greater duty of their vocation and forego marriage. Thus, the same rationale that prompted Baxter to remain single until he married Margaret at age forty-six also compelled his conscience to continually prioritize pastoral ministry over his duties to her.⁹⁵ Though now a married man, to a certain extent he still ordered his life as he had

⁹²Baxter, *BLM*, 72.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 72-73.

⁹⁴Baxter explicated this principle in his treatise titled *The one thing necessary: or, Christ's justification of Mary's choice and of his servants wrongfully accused* (London: Printed for J. Salusbury, 1685). It is interesting however that Baxter operated under the exact opposite principle when it came to his writing ministry. Though Margaret thought her husband would have “done better to have written fewer Books, and to have done those few better” (Baxter, *BLM*, 73), Baxter defended his voluminous literary output by noting that none were written “needlessly.” Furthermore, even if some of these books were written less perfectly, Baxter believed that “the modall imperfection of two” constituted a less grievous evil when compared to “the total omission of one” (*ibid.*). The difference, it seemed, lay in the fact that his various writing projects were categorized under his supreme calling to the ministry. Thus, when attempting to balance pastoral and domestic duties, Baxter believed it more important to perform the greater task, the ministry of the gospel, than to perform both deficiently.

⁹⁵Powicke also noted that Baxter “considered his books his best means of service,” and so the decision to prioritize their composition over Margaret seemed perfectly logical to him (Powicke, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross*, 105).

while a celibate clergyman. His struggle to accommodate his mindset to wedlock does not overturn the positive depiction of their married life, but it certainly does nuance it.⁹⁶

Baxter saw no problem in ordering his life as he always had done, yet his method proved problematic when applied to wedlock. First, while his approach was intended to help Christians prioritize the most crucial duties in the pressures of day-to-day life, he did not seem to realize that the responsibility of caring for his wife vis-à-vis ministry was far more complex than simply deciding to forego a lesser duty for the sake of a greater one. After all, Margaret was a part of the universal church, even though he sought to prioritize the needs of the church over her individual needs. Second, perhaps even more startling was Baxter's suggested solution to Margaret's desire for more time with him. In essence, he responded that there were many people she could spend time with in religious exercises, but no one else existed who could perform the unique work he could accomplish for the church. Again, he did not seem to realize a crucial fact: while Margaret might have had other friends available to converse with, he was the only person who was her husband. One can only wonder how Margaret received this treatment, but it might help explain why, according to Baxter, she agreed his judgment that pastors should ideally be single.⁹⁷ Finally, while Baxter may have been convinced that he was right to

⁹⁶For example, Haykin commented that "once he was married, . . . , Baxter found that marriage agreed with him very well" (Haykin, "'One Brilliant Shaft of Light,'" 154).

⁹⁷Baxter said in the conclusion of the *Breviate* that "my Wife lived and died in the same mind" with him in advocating for clerical celibacy (Baxter, *BLM*, 101). Baxter's statement provoked Packer into speculating whether he had deceived himself as to his wife's true feelings, though he ultimately never doubted that Baxter "wrote in good faith" (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 184). Nevertheless, the underlying tensions in Richard and Margaret's marriage described thus far offers at least a partial explanation for why Margaret would agree with Baxter. Like Baxter, Margaret also experienced the painful effects springing from the tension of loyalties between faithfulness to the ministry and a spouse. One can only wonder how she felt on those frequent occasions when she desired to pray with her husband, and yet, due to "want of time," Baxter's "conscience" compelled him to turn her away, since he did not dare "to omit far greater work (Baxter, *BLM*, 102). And she did disagree with Baxter's relentless pen pushing (ibid., 73). One should not overlook the impression which the strains of clerical marriage—between caring for one's family and one's church—may have left on Margaret. Even Packer noted that having her husband constantly in the home and yet unavailable to her must have been difficult for Margaret (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 44). Thus, not only Baxter, but also Margaret, had witnessed firsthand how, even in near idyllic marriages, pastors seemed to inevitably be pulled between these two responsibilities.

spend less time with his wife for the sake of his ministry, he likely would have found few sympathizers for his approach among English Protestants.

Balancing Family and Ministry

The uniqueness of Baxter's mindset toward balancing ministerial and familial responsibilities can be clarified through examining his striking departure from the manner in which other English Protestant clergymen approached the issue. William Perkins, arguably the "father of Puritanism,"⁹⁸ instructed Christians to be faithful in all their vocational callings rather than creating a hierarchy of importance. He exhorted Christians to join the practice of their "General" call to "become a child of God" with the practice of their "personal calling" to an "office"—such as magistrate, minister, master, parent, child, or subject—"just as bodie and a soule are joyned in a living man."⁹⁹ Every particular calling, he insisted, had been ordained by God to fulfill the general call of the Christian to serve "his brother in all the duties of love."¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the master of a family, for example, was obligated to not only live as a Christian "abroad" in the town, congregation, and in the sight of strangers, but he must also live as a Christian in the government of his family and how he treated his wife, children, and servants.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Joel R. Beeke and J. Stephen Yuille, "Biographical Preface: William Perkins, the 'Father of Puritanism,'" in *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), ix-x.

⁹⁹William Perkins, *A treatise of the vocations, or, Callings of men, with the sorts and kinds of them, and the right vse thereof* ([London]: Printed by Iohn Legat, 1603), 13, 31, 32-33.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 20. Perkins contended, "The maine ende of our lives" was to "serve God in serving of men in the works of our callings" (ibid., 32-33). See also where Perkins asserted that every particular calling, regardless of their distinctions, was a direct act of service to God for the common good and benefit of humanity (ibid., 6). However, Perkins did make a distinction between callings in the sense that a particular calling must give place to the general when both cannot stand together. He provided the example of a servant whose Roman Catholic master commanded him to take the mass. Then Perkins unequivocally stated that the particular calling of a man is inferior to the general calling of a Christian (ibid., 37).

¹⁰¹Ibid., 32. The various callings in a family were particularly important to Perkins, since these personal callings made up "the essence and foundation of a society," just as the calling of the magistrate did so in the commonwealth and the calling of the minister in the church (ibid., 37-38).

William Gouge made a similar effort to teach Christians the need for faithfulness in all their personal callings. He contended that even Christians with public offices, such as a “Magistrate or a Minister,” “may not thereupon thinke themselves exempted from family-duties,” so that they neglected their wife, children, and servants.¹⁰² Though these were “privat duties,” they were nevertheless “necessary duties,” for even the most involved public callings could never supersede a Christian’s duty to his family.¹⁰³ Furthermore, though the “privat” good done in a family might seem of less importance, it nevertheless served a highly valuable role by contributing directly to the good of the church and the commonwealth.¹⁰⁴ For Gouge, the distinction between public and private good failed to provide justification for creating a hierarchy of importance by which works should be prioritized.

Samuel Clarke published several biographical accounts of English clergymen, largely based on funeral sermons, that reinforced Gouge’s teaching. Clarke praised the efforts of notable clergymen – including Thomas Watson, Richard Stock, Thomas Gataker, and Jeremy Whitacre - for refusing to neglect the spiritual care of their families, despite the strenuous nature of their pastoral labors.¹⁰⁵ The historicity of English

¹⁰²William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties: eight treatises*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed by George Miller for Edward Brewster, 1634), 19.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁰⁵Samuel Clarke, *The lives of thirty-two English divines famous in their generations for learning and piety, and most of them sufferers in the cause of Christ: together with the lives of Gustavus Ericson, King of Sweden, Jasper Coligni, Admiral of France (who was slain in the massacre of Paris), and of Joan, Queen of Navar, who died a few dayes before that bloody massacre: also the effigies of some of the eminent divines in copper-plates* [London: Printed for William Birch, 1677], 65, 256, 265; Clarke, *The lives of sundry eminent persons in this later age in two parts: I. of divines, II. of nobility and gentry of both sexes; printed and reviewed by himself just before his death; to which is added his own life and the lives of the Countess of Suffolk, Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston, Mr. Richard Blackerby and Mr. Samuel Fairclough, drawn up by other hands* (London: Printed for Thomas Simmons, 1683), 34; Clarke, *The lives of thirty-two English divines famous in their generations for learning and piety, and most of them sufferers in the cause of Christ: together with the lives of Gustavus Ericson, King of Sweden, Jasper Coligni, Admiral of France (who was slain in the massacre of Paris), and of Joan, Queen of Navar, who died a few dayes before that bloody massacre: also the effigies of some of the eminent divines in copper-plates* [London: Printed for William Birch, 1677], 65, 256, 265. In the case of Jeremy Whitacre, for example, his piety compelled him to strive for faithfulness to his family and ministry, despite the fact that he often carried preaching responsibilities at multiple locations simultaneously: “Such was his love to *Christ*, that his publik

Protestant funeral sermons, which Clarke largely based his accounts on, has been a matter of debate among scholars who have taken both sides on the issue.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, regardless of these texts' historicity, they sprang from the Puritan tradition and therefore were intended to reflect a common expectation or ideal regarding how ministers ought to balance their familial and pastoral responsibilities.

Finally, George Swinnock argued against disregarding family duties based on the fact that they were bound up with each Christian's general call to follow God. It seems he viewed the Christian's treatment of family members as so crucial to their spiritual life that neglecting their edification was tantamount to neglecting one's own salvation. The Christian's duty, he asserted, was to "give the affairs of thy soul and thy God precedence."¹⁰⁷ Therefore, he rebuked the remissness of Christians who, citing the taxing demands of their "*particular calling*," demonstrated negligence in their "general calling" by failing to cultivate both their own piety and that of their family members.¹⁰⁸

employments (though many and great) did not take him off from attending his Family duties, nor from more private exercises of communion with God" (Clarke, *The lives of thirty-two English divines*, 265).

¹⁰⁶On the one hand, Patrick Collinson downplayed their usefulness as sources for the piety and devotional lives of the subjects due to the constraints pastors felt to conform to the expectations of the genre (Patrick Collinson, "'A Magazine of Religious Patterns': An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism," in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, History Series 23 [London: Hambledon Press, 1983], 522-24). Similarly, Eales doubted their historical accuracy in light of the sermons formulaic and often predictable nature (Eales, "Samuel Clarke and the 'Lives' of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England," 365-69). See also Keeble who noted that Baxter and other seventeenth century Puritan biographies primarily used this type of literature for the benefit of the audience, rather than the departed, to teach doctrine by example rather than by precept (Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 121-24). On the other hand, Eric Josef Carlson's has pointed to considerable internal evidence in these funeral sermons that indicates they can be "fruitful, revealing, and trustworthy sources for studying the behaviors and practices of some segments of English society" (Eric Josef Carlson, "English Funeral Sermons as Sources: The Example of Female Piety in Pre-1640 Sermons," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 32, no. 4 [Winter, 2000]: 568, 580-93).

¹⁰⁷George Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling, or, A treatise of making religion ones business Wherein, the nature and necessity of it is discovered: as also, the Christian directed how he may perform it, in religious duties, natural actions, his particular vocation, his family directions*, vol. 1 (London: Printed by J. B. for Tho. Parkhurst, 1662), 479.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 1:479. According to Swinnock, those who fell into this perilous trap had succumbed to the Devil's schemes: "I know the devil and they corrupt heart will often juttle and quarrel with thy Closet and Family duties, by suggesting to thee that they must of necessity be omitted, because otherwise such and such concernments of thy calling (upon which the welfare of thyself, Wife, and Children doth depend) will be neglected" (*ibid.*, 1:479). In Swinnock's view, such reasoning did not constitute a "sufficient excuse" to acquit Christians before God on the Day of Judgment (*ibid.*, 1:481). Therefore, he reminded his readers of the need to assiduously practice godliness in every human relationship. "A Christian must not be diligent in one relation, and negligent in another; but as a candle in a Chrystal Lanthorn, be lightsome quite round it,

On the contrary, he was determined to refute any notion that one's time was so short that certain duties and relationships could be neglected while others had to be prioritized.¹⁰⁹ Entertaining such a thought gave way to the Devil, since it caused "the commands of God to quarrel and clash against one another."¹¹⁰ Rather, God had given all Christians sufficient "piety" and "prudence" to organize their life so that their vocational and familial duties did not "interfere or cross each other."¹¹¹ Swinnock did concede that one's vocation could create so much unmanageable work that it allowed a person no time to "Worship God daily in his Closet and Family."¹¹² Nevertheless, in such a case the "good Christian" should, like the "wise mariner" of an overburdened ship, cast some of their vocational responsibilities "overboard" rather than "endanger the loss of all, and himself too."¹¹³

be holy in every Relation in which he standeth" (Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 1:515). For the only existing monograph on Swinnock's spirituality, see J. Stephen Yuille, *Puritan Spirituality: The Fear of God in the Affective Theology of George Swinnock*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007).

¹⁰⁹Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 1:478, 482, and 495; Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling, or, A treatise of making religion ones business wherein the Christian is directed how to perform it: as also, some means directing, and motives perswading thereunto*, vol. 3 (London: Printed by J. Best for Tho. Parkhurst and D. Newman, 1665), 513.

¹¹⁰Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 3:513.

¹¹¹Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 1:478. Nowhere in Swinnock's exhortations concerning the weighty nature of the pastoral vocation did he say that their ministerial duties superseded their responsibilities to their family (ibid., 1:498-515). See also Swinnock's assertion that God had allotted Christians time for both their temporal and spiritual responsibilities; those who sacrificed one for the sake of the other were guilty of making "the commands of God to quarrel and clash against one another" (Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 3:513).

¹¹²Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 1:481-82. See also his prayer at the end of the section where he mentioned how vocational duties often tempt a Christian to rob some of their time from "closet and family duties" (ibid., 1:495).

¹¹³Ibid., 1:482. For a similar statement, see ibid., 1:495. Robert Sanderson also made a similar assertion that regardless of a Christian's vocational calling—magistrate, minister, lawyer, etc.—they should remember that they were a Christian first and could not let the necessities of their particular calling cause a breach of their "general calling." Since God was "the author of both callings," Christians should not think that he had called them to service in one type of calling and liberty in the other. There Sanderson warned Christians against indulging so much in their particular callings that they abridged themselves of religious duties they were bound to perform by virtue of their general calling, such as prayer, thanksgiving, confession, meditation ("The Fovrth Sermon Ad Populum," in *XXXIII sermons XVI. Ad aulam, III. Ad clerum, VI. Ad magistratum, VIII Ad populum*, 237-74 [London: Printed by R. Norton for Henry Seile, 1657], 272-73).

Using the above authors as a foil, the lines of continuity and discontinuity between Baxter and English Protestantism become more apparent. Baxter concurred that the first place Christians should begin to learn and show neighborly love was to their immediate family members, and insisted that those who sacrificed their family responsibilities for the sake of the public good of the church and society were hypocrites.¹¹⁴ Hence, one should not hastily judge Baxter as heartless and cold toward Margaret when reflecting on how he handled the conflict of interest between her and pastoral ministry. On several occasions, he mentioned how he felt the sting of disappointing Margaret.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, he had repeatedly insisted that Christians should esteem and desire the good works of a public and spiritual nature far more than private acts of good done to one's family.¹¹⁶ Thus, the sense of urgency constantly driving him to redeem the time for the greatest good and the allowances he made in his casuistry for occasions when public good should supersede one's duty to family,¹¹⁷ frequently led him to practice the very model of marriage which he denied to be valid. In Baxter's view, there nearly always was a pressing pastoral concern in the church that had to be prioritized over lesser duties. In contrast, other English Protestants exhibited far less willingness to grant the same prioritization of public duties over familial responsibilities.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴See the discussion in chap. 3, 166-67.

¹¹⁵Baxter reflected, "My dear Wife did look for more good in me, and more help from me then she found, especially lately in my weakness and decay. We are all like pictures that must not be looked on too near. They that come near us find more faults and badness in us than others at a distance know" (Baxter, *BLM*, 97). For similar statements, see *ibid.*, 80, 86, 89. See also the manuscript where Baxter expressed regret over not having made "a better usage and improvement of so great a mercy [his wife]" (Richard Baxter, Additions for the years 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, Baxter MSS Collection, *Treatises*, vol. 7, item 223, fol. 33v [misprinted as 32v], D.W.L., London).

¹¹⁶See the discussion in chap. 3, 166-167 and chap. 5, 230-40.

¹¹⁷See especially the discussion in chap. 5 of Baxter's view that a minister was justified in leaving his wife and children to go preach the gospel overseas, 275-76.

¹¹⁸Perhaps the reason lies in a tendency to include the duty to instruct one's family under the Christian's "general calling" to follow Christ: Swinnock, *The Christian-mans calling*, 1:479; Clarke, *The lives of thirty-two English divines*, 265.

Baxter's Continued Advocacy of Clerical Celibacy

Baxter had found that marriage was both a great benefit to his pastoral labors but also a hindering conflict of interests. His paradoxical marital experience answers a question that has befuddled scholars:¹¹⁹ why did Baxter use the concluding chapter of the *Breviate* to reassert that celibacy was the ideal state for pastors? There, he elucidated the precise “uses” or lessons he desired readers to learn from his depiction of Margaret and their married life together.¹²⁰ The lessons built off the themes Baxter had highlighted throughout the narrative of the *Breviate*, and consequently reflect his reasoning that, despite richly profiting from Margaret as a wife, their marriage failed to overturn many of his long-held apprehensions concerning clerical marriage.

On the one hand, Baxter readily acknowledged that the *Breviate* served as a praise of the blessings wedlock bestowed on spouses when they endeavored to aid each other in all areas of life. One lesson he learned from of his wife lay in her vivid embodiment of the Proverb that declared “*there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*, Prov. 18. 24.”¹²¹ Margaret cheerfully supported and suffered with Baxter in his pastoral labors and trials. In addition, she endeavored to bring his speech, demeanor, and actions into ever stricter degrees of holiness. Furthermore, her endeavors to advance his ministry seemed to specifically undermine his objection that marriage was a hindrance to clergymen.¹²² Rather than being a financial drain on Baxter’s ability to practice charitable works, Margaret leveraged her inheritance to rent or build chapels for her husband and other nonconformist ministers as well as to endow schools for educating poor children. In fact, by the end of her life she had spent all of her considerable inheritance on charitable

¹¹⁹See footnote 5 of this chap.

¹²⁰Chap. ten of the *Breviate* is subtitled “*Some Uses proposed to the reader from this History, as the reasons why I wrote it*” (Baxter, *BLM*, 94)

¹²¹Baxter, *BLM*, 98.

¹²²See the discussion in chap. 5, 257-74.

causes and actually left Baxter in debt by resorting to borrowing funds to “relieve the poor, especially the most worthy.”¹²³ But as he pointed out to those who criticized her for being “wasteful and imprudent,” she did not go into debt “to pamper her own body,” for she wore “mean clothing” and ate a “far meaner diet.”¹²⁴ Moreover, Margaret proved an invaluable aid in resolving the flood of counseling cases Baxter was always responding to. While being married permitted less time for Baxter to answer these cases, he realized Margaret’s intelligence and insight greatly expedited the speed with which he could resolve them, as well as the quality of the results. Finally, while Baxter had asserted that celibacy was usually the ideal state for preachers and persecuted Christians, matrimony had actually proved very advantageous for him in an environment of persecution and suppression where the church doors had been barred shut to him. Margaret labored to use her personal qualities and financial resources to undermine governmental efforts to keep her husband silent. Nuttall aptly summarized how crucial Margaret was for Baxter after 1662: “If the vicar of Kidderminster was clearly a bachelor, it is no less clear that the ejected minister would scarcely have survived without his wife.”¹²⁵ Rather than showing how burdensome a spouse could be in times of ecclesiastical persecution, Baxter’s marriage demonstrated that it could be a significant boon.

On the other hand, Baxter paradoxically believed that his marriage vindicated his long-held conviction that clerical celibacy should be the ideal for ministers. He devoted the lengthiest lesson in the conclusion of the *Breviate* to elucidating three justifications for why his experience of wedlock, despite all of its benefits, had failed to

¹²³Baxter, *BLM*, 65. Baxter’s debt is explained by the new tactics Margaret adopted to raise money for her charitable works. Baxter noted that when Margaret’s own resources proved insufficient to “maintain her in the exercise of such good works as she was devoted to,” she was not ashamed to live on charity by asking others to devote their money to these causes (*ibid.*, 60-61).

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 65. See also Baxter’s defense of her contentedness to live with very little (*ibid.*, 48)

¹²⁵Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 95.

make him budge from discouraging clerical marriage.¹²⁶ First, the spiritual state of the English church, the scarcity of ministers, and Baxter's advocacy for the pastoral oversight of every parishioner, necessitated that ministers give themselves wholly to their work. It was hard enough to personally instruct and admonish "one ignorant, or scandalous, or sad despairing soul," but each English church was filled with "hundreds or thousands" of such persons that ministers were obligated to care for.¹²⁷ Baxter pointed out that while the early church had many pastors to share the responsibility of soul care, now the "covetousness of Clergy and people" meant there usually was only enough income for two in "very great Parishes."¹²⁸ In his comment on this passage from *Breviate*, Powicke observed, "Baxter's conception of a minister's work, we must bear in mind, involved the 'pastoral care' of every soul in his parish. And as things are this demands all his time."¹²⁹ Baxter's point was that England's pastors bore such staggering ministerial burdens that they simply had no time to spare for a family. Consequently, pastors who did marry would ceaselessly face a conflict of loyalties forcing them to make the agonizing choice between negligence of their family or their parishioners. Even though Baxter did not have a pastorate after 1662, his own experience of marriage had confirmed this suspicion.

Believe it, he that will have a Wife must spend much of his time in conference, prayer, and other family-duties, with her And then it will disquiet a man's mind to think that he must neglect his Family or his Flock and hath undertaken more than

¹²⁶Baxter, *BLM*, 101-4. At the beginning of this segment, Baxter repeated for his readers his judgment that "*the Marriage of ministers had so great inconveniences, that though necessity [strong sexual desire] made it lawful, yet it was but lawful; that is, to be avoided as far as lawfully we may*" (ibid., 101).

¹²⁷Ibid., 101.

¹²⁸Ibid., 101-2. The "covetousness of clergy" no doubt was a reference to the practice Baxter condemned in *The Reformed Pastor*: pastors refusing to live in poverty so that extra funds could pay for an assistant (see the discussion in chap. 3, 143-44, 147-48). The "covetousness" of "people" could refer to the laity's unwillingness to pay their full tithes (see the discussion in chap. 4, 206) or the nobility's refusal to fund greater ecclesiastical benefices that would support a higher minister to parishioner ratio (see the discussion in chap. 3, 114-15, 147-48).

¹²⁹Frederick J. Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll, or, The Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 4 (1918): 461-62.

he can do. My conscience hath forced me many times to omit secret prayer with my Wife when she desired it, for want of time, not daring to omit far greater work.¹³⁰

Baxter frequently confronted the vexing choice between devoting time to his writing ministry or spending it with his wife. Furthermore, he seemed to have acutely felt the hurt and disappointment it caused Margaret. He stated the deep regret he felt over his failings as a husband on several occasions in *Breviate* but most noticeably as one of the lessons in the book's conclusion: "My dear Wife did look for more good in me, and more help from me then she found, especially lately in my weakness and decay."¹³¹ While other factors could partly explain Baxter's remorse,¹³² his rigid prioritization of the ministry over Margaret did apparently cause her to experience considerable frustration and even outright disagreement with his thinking.¹³³ The anguish he felt from being pulled between devotion to Margaret and the church was precisely the dilemma he had urged pastors to avoid if they could.

Second, Baxter surprisingly did not believe his marriage contradicted his argument that clerical marriage severely handicapped pastoral charity. On the contrary, he reasserted his claim that a married pastor seldom had any spare income, especially if

¹³⁰Baxter, *BLM*, 102.

¹³¹Baxter stated that his account of their marriage should "warn all to take heed of expecting too much from so frail and bad a thing as man: My dear Wife did look for more good in me, and more help from me then she found, especially lately in my weakness and decay. We are like Pictures that must not be looked on too near. They that come near to us find more faults and badness in us than others at a distance know" (ibid., 97). In similar statements elsewhere, Baxter stated his regret over failing Margaret (ibid., 80, 86, 89). See also the manuscript where Baxter expressed regret over not having made "a better usage and improvement of so great a mercy [his wife]" (Richard Baxter, Additions for the years 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, Baxter MSS Collection, *Treatises*, vol. 7, item 223, fol. 33v [misprinted as 32v], D.W.L., London).

¹³²Packer has argued that Baxter's brutally honest reflection stemmed from either his perfectionist attitude or Margaret's excessively high expectations (J. I. Packer, *Puritan Portraits: J. I. Packer on Selected Classic Pastors and Pastoral Classics* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2012), 177; Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 178. Powicke also identified Baxter's remorse as a product of Margaret's high expectations (Powicke, "A Puritan Idyll," 460)/ Lloyd-Thomas dismissed Baxter's statement as an exaggeration arising from his overwhelming grief over his wife's recent death (Lloyd-Thomas, "Appendix II: Richard Baxter's Love Story and Marriage," 274).

¹³³Packer also observed the difficulty Margaret experienced through being married to Baxter: "Richard was a public man, a preacher and a tireless writer, constantly in the home but not available to Margaret. It cannot have been easy for her, even though, as was usual with aristocratic ladies, she had in their home for much of the time a companion of her own sex" (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 44). See also Fletcher who reasoned that Baxter's prioritization of ministry likely was hard on Margaret (Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, 350).

he had children, to accompany his preaching with gifts of “charity and liberality.”¹³⁴ The reason for his, he reasoned, lay in women’s frail nature: “most women are weak, and apt to live in fear of want, if not in covetousness; and have many wants real or fancied of their own to be supplied.”¹³⁵ Had he entirely forgotten the charity of his wife which seemed to fundamentally undermine his judgment of women? Perhaps, but a more plausible explanation for the paradox was that his estimation of the female sex, as a whole, was quite common in seventeenth-century England, even to a certain extent among Puritans.¹³⁶ Baxter therefore viewed Margaret as an exception, rather than the norm, for what husbands should expect in wives.¹³⁷

Third, Baxter’s experience of marriage confirmed his conviction that the effort to care for and please a spouse proved to be a deleterious distraction, especially for pastors. Citing 1 Corinthians 7:7, 28, and 32, he reasserted that “caring for things of the world, and caring to please another” were “troublesome businesses,” which threatened to “choak the word” out of Christians, especially “a man that should still dwell on holy things.”¹³⁸ Having now lived with a spouse, he knew all too well that “*the pleasing of a Wife is usually no easie task*”; though he and Margaret had been united “in Religion, in Love, and Interest,” they still experienced daily disagreements over “occasional occurrences, persons, things, words, &c.”¹³⁹ In fact, he argued that his wife proved the

¹³⁴Baxter, *BLM*, 102.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

¹³⁶See the discussion in chap. 2, 77-80.

¹³⁷There is some truth to Baxter’s attempt to present Margaret’s charity as an exception to most women. Margaret’s unusually large inheritance certainly helped enable her unusually charitable practices. Yet Baxter seemed aware that there was far more to her charity than the fact that she had extra money. He had stressed at length that her charity sprang from her piety and zeal for good works, as evidenced by the fact that when her inheritance money ran out she was not at all ashamed of borrowing money to continue those endeavors.

¹³⁸Baxter, *BLM*, 102-3.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 103, 68. According to Baxter, “there is an unsuitableness in the best, and wisest, and likest” (*ibid.*, 103).

principle that “very good people are very hard to be pleased”: “My own dear wife had high desires of my doing, and speaking better than I did, but my badness made it hard to me to do better.”¹⁴⁰ Packer has argued that Margaret’s “high desires” indicated her “built in perfectionism” which influenced her expectations of others, especially her husband.¹⁴¹ Consequently, she was “obsessive to a fault, so that living with her would not have been easy.”¹⁴² Packer’s observation has merits, for Margaret did have a history of immoderate love toward friends and family members before marriage.¹⁴³ Furthermore, in the *Breviate* Baxter pointed out how during their marriage she could still become easily frustrated when her desires went unfulfilled through the failure of friends or circumstances.¹⁴⁴ Baxter never seemed to explicitly accuse Margaret of nitpicking, saying instead that God’s purpose in it was to sanctify him.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the experience of being so pulled between living to please God and living to please Margaret did confirm his judgment that wedlock would be a distracting anxiety that pastors would do better to be free from.¹⁴⁶ It also did not help that Baxter, once again, believed his wife represented an exception to the norm for what men should expect among potential wives. The primary

¹⁴⁰Baxter, *BLM*, 103.

¹⁴¹Packer asserted that Margaret’s perfectionism “made her very hard on Richard when she felt he had not behaved perfectly in company or toward her personally” (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 178). In addition, Packer listed many other forms that Margaret’s perfectionism took: “It led her to insist on keeping a spotless house; it totally inhibited her from speaking in a group about Christian truth and experience and from taking family prayers when Richard was away, for fear her performance was hypocritical; it moved her to wish that Baxter would write fewer books, and write those few better” (Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 178).

¹⁴²Packer, *Puritan Portraits*, 177.

¹⁴³See chap. 6, 300-311.

¹⁴⁴See Baxter, *BLM*, 43-44, 45, 56, 63, 70, 71-73, 73-76, 77, 86, 97, 98, 99, 105-6.

¹⁴⁵Baxter wrote, “This [Margaret’s high demands] was to my benefit; for it was but to put me on to be better; as God himself will be pleased: that it’s hard to please God and holy persons is only our fault” (ibid., 103).

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 104.

difficulty with Margaret lay in meeting her standards for piety, yet for most wives the problem of pleasing them proved far more treacherous.

But there are too many that will not be pleased, unless you will contribute to their sin, their pride, their wastefulness, their superfluities and childish fancies, their covetousness and passions: and too many who have such passion, that it requireth great skill to please them than almost any, the wisest can attain. And the discontents and displeasure of one that is so near you will be as Thorns or Nettles in your bed.¹⁴⁷

Though Margaret certainly had faults, she possessed none of these vices, yet if pleasing the interest of both God and a wife proved challenging enough for Baxter, then it would be far more wearisome for a clergyman whose wife displayed the immaturities which Baxter believed were common to the female sex.

In sum, despite all Margaret had done to advance Baxter's ministry, he still believed his reservations against clerical marriage had been validated by the tension he had experienced in being pulled between the interest of his wife and the church. For that reason, he used the conclusion of the *Breviate*, even though it was a tribute to his wife, as a platform to offer his reflection on how readers, particularly clergymen, should apply the lesson. Consequently, it should invoke little surprise that he launched into a lengthy justification for urging clerical celibacy as the ideal for pastors. Far from constituting "a lapse" in the thematic cohesion of the *Breviate*, as Packer claimed,¹⁴⁸ Baxter's reflections sprung from the tensions between marital and ministerial responsibilities, which he had already highlighted in the preceding narrative of the book. His objections to clerical marriage therefore did not rest on the denial that marriage could be an exceptional blessing, but rather that even these blessings come at too high a price for clergymen.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷Baxter, *BLM*, 103-4.

¹⁴⁸Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 183-85.

¹⁴⁹According to Packer, "What [Baxter] wanted to get across, I think, judging by his teaching on marriage which we reviewed earlier, was that marriage, even at its best, brings its blessings within a frame of burdensome cares, which easily put a married pastor at a disadvantage" (*ibid.*, 184).

Conclusion

When Baxter decided to marry Margaret in 1662, he believed he would no longer be a parish based minister facing the overwhelming burden of providing soul care to each parishioner. He seemed to have looked toward a future where he finally possessed the time to be a devoted husband, whereas before he had no time for any interest that might compete with ministry. Nevertheless, the same internal and external factors that had shaped and defined his life persisted, and this increased the likelihood of experiencing the same conflict of interest between ministry and family, which he had always warned pastors to avoid by remaining celibate. He still felt an intense pastoral concern to serve the universal church and had an opportunity to do so through writing, which he had always considered his chief labor. Furthermore, he continued to express his pastoral concern through a strict dedication to redeeming the time by focusing only on matters of necessity. Therefore, when time was scarce, he persisted in rigidly prioritizing his pastoral work over anything else, even Margaret. This feature sets Richard and Margaret's marriage apart from other English Protestants and qualifies its frequent depiction as a model of Puritan marriage practice. Moreover, chronic illness, which was the key factor spurring Baxter's miserly use of time, persisted and seemed to grow worse as he aged. Therefore, it should be little surprise that throughout his marriage he felt the agonizing pull between his passion for prioritizing ministry and his duties as a husband. Baxter was still Baxter, a man driven by his sense of urgency to focus with a single-minded intensity on his vocational calling to the church. His great fear was that the unnecessary cares and concerns of wedded life would prevent pastors from devoting their precious time exclusively to the Lord, and his marriage reconfirmed that worry. Even the benefits afforded by a wife such as Margaret, could not make up for the loss of time and singular dedication which marriage inevitably caused. Thus, Baxter's interpretation of his wedded life reflected the paradox in his own thinking, namely that marriage was always a double-edged sword that put the married pastor at a disadvantage. Yet the strength of his

argument also depended on another paradoxical assumption regarding the nature of women. It is quite surprising how easily he could reject the possibility that Margaret's example called into question many of his justifications for clerical celibacy. Nevertheless, he did so by simply asserting that she represented an exception to the weaknesses and immaturities typical of the female sex. While such a low estimation of women was not uncommon in seventeenth-century England and Europe, the ease with which Baxter could assert his wife's uniqueness indicates the extent to which those ideas had taken root in his mind.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Richard Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy was a very controversial way of resolving tensions in English Protestant marriage doctrine. His argument was a product of a very stringent model of pastoral care developed in response to England's ecclesiastical situation, was deeply influenced by his personal qualities and life experiences, and was rooted in his overarching ethical principles for Christian living. Baxter remained remarkably consistent, even when appearing to violate his convictions by marrying later in life.

Chapter 2 demonstrated that his argument for clerical celibacy grew out of the internal tensions existing in English Protestant marriage doctrine. English Protestants faced a dilemma because of two seemingly conflicting teachings in Scripture. They defended Genesis marriage as a lawful and honorable state for all people, based on Genesis 1-2, while at the same time affirming the teaching of Jesus and Paul that celibacy provided more pragmatic advantages for serving God and cultivating one's spiritual welfare. How could marriage be commended to all Christians if they were obligated to choose the most advantageous state of life? Most English Protestants evaded the problem by reasoning that the benefits of celibacy only applied during periods of persecution, or that celibacy was advised rather than commanded. Yet William Whately and William Ames challenged these prevailing assumptions. Baxter acknowledged that he had been greatly influenced by the perspectives of Whately and Ames, and so his argument for clerical celibacy was a product of the ongoing tensions in English Protestant Marriage doctrine.

Chapter 3 explicated how Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy did not stem from a negative view of marriage, but from the incredibly burdensome nature of his pastoral model for ministry. Godly Protestants had longed for the work of the Reformation to be completed in England, and Baxter claimed to have discovered the solution through his threefold pastoral model of soul care: systematic and comprehensive catechizing, church discipline, and ministerial associations. His model placed a far more demanding burden upon clergymen than they were accustomed to bearing, yet he urged all pastors to implement it. Clerical marriage created a conflict of loyalties that prevented pastors from the most effective implementation of Baxter's herculean expectations for parish ministry. The appeal of clerical celibacy derived from the abundant freedom it granted pastors to exercise individual soul care over each of their parishioners. Families performed a crucial, complementary role to the pastor's ministry, and Baxter did not deny the benefits of human love, sexuality, or familial relationships as some scholars have supposed. Since the family was a little church, it was ideal for providing biblical instruction, admonishment, and accountability on a small scale.

Chapter 4 explored several internal and external factors in Baxter's life that shaped particularities that would come to define him as a theologian and minister of the gospel. Baxter displayed an unusual eagerness for debate and approached theological and pastoral differences in a dogmatic manner that often offended others. His pastoral urgency displayed itself through his special dedication to redeeming the time by focusing only on necessary matters and avoiding the superfluous. Chronic illness heightened both his pastoral urgency and felt need to never waste a moment of time. His upbringing, his self-education, and his ministerial success at Kidderminster all played a part in shaping how he reasoned theological and pastoral matters in general, and on the matter of clerical celibacy in particular. Taken together, these particularities served in some degree to distinguish Baxter from many of his predecessors and contemporaries and help explain why and how he would advocate for clerical celibacy.

Chapter 5 argued that Baxter's treatment of clerical celibacy in the *Christian Directory* was a product of the three principles that he believed were vital to the Christian life. A life of godliness depended on maintaining a heartfelt love for God, continually meditating on the future life, and ordering one's life to prioritize doing the greatest good. All intimate relationships, whether familial or bosom friends, posed a common potential threat to his three principles for Christian living. Intimate relationships frequently led one to the sin of disproportionately concentrating affections and time on a select few; this imbalance hindered Christians' affections for God, focus on the future life, and devotion to doing the greatest good. Therefore, while the godly life was not impossible in marriage, celibacy usually proved to be the most advantageous state of life for Christians and especially pastors. Since Christians were obliged to choose the most profitable state of life, they should only marry if they had a very definite call from God that wedlock would hold more benefits than hindrances to their spiritual welfare and capacity to serve God. The necessity of choosing the most expedient state of life applied even more to pastors, since the hindrances of marriage would be even more detrimental to them in light of the requirements of their sacred calling.

Chapter 6 concluded that Baxter's decision to marry did not signify a capitulation of his argument for clerical celibacy but rather testified to its continuance. Furthermore, in choosing to marry Margaret, Baxter acted consistently with his teaching on what should motivate Christians to marry. Baxter's account of his wife's early life described her spiritual transformation from a worldly maiden into one of his most pious and devoted parishioners. Margaret's affection for Baxter grew out of the influential role he had played in her life as a dear friend, father figure, and pastor of her soul. Baxter's appreciation of her stemmed from the support, encouragement, and counsel she gave him during his failed attempts to achieve a moderate church settlement after the Restoration. This period was one of the lowest points in Baxter's life, and Margaret proved to be a great help to his distressed soul. Nevertheless, he remained firmly committed to clerical

celibacy and only decided to marry once he had been silenced and ejected from the Kidderminster with no hope of ever having a parish ministry again. Baxter still considered himself a minister of the gospel. However, he would never have a specific pastoral charge that would require him, according to his specific pastoral model, to personally oversee the spiritual state of every parishioner. Since his argument for clerical celibacy no longer applied to his situation, he now felt at liberty to marry and called to marry Margaret.

Chapter 7 argued that the problems Baxter experienced in adjusting to married life help explain his continued support for clerical celibacy, despite the great benefit Margaret was to him. Though without a parish ministry, he still devoted himself to serving the universal church and training pastors, primarily through his writings. He persisted in his dedication to redeeming the time by prioritizing matters of necessity, especially choosing his public duties to the church over his private duties to Margaret. When time was scarce, which often proved true because of his chronic illness, his sense of pastoral urgency compelled him to put his ministerial responsibilities before Margaret. Hence, he experienced the same agonizing conflict of loyalties between ministry and marriage that he had always warned pastors to avoid. The benefits afforded by a godly wife, even one as extraordinary as Margaret, seemed to fail to make up for the loss of time and singular devotion which marriage inevitably compromised. Moreover, Baxter viewed Margaret's exceptional godliness and helpfulness as an exception to what he had always believed men could usually expect from wives. Though scholars have puzzled over why he continued to argue for clerical celibacy, the answer lies in the fact that Baxter was still Baxter, a man driven by a single-minded focus on his public ministry.

This study of Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy has contributed several insights into English Protestant marriage doctrine and Baxter himself. It has shown that English Protestants were less monolithic in their praise of marriage over celibacy than previously thought. Celibacy actually experienced a revival of interest among English

Protestants during the course of the seventeenth century, and not just among radical sects but also some members of the Church of England. Furthermore, there was considerable disagreement over whether Christians were obligated to remain single, if they could remain chaste, since Paul had said that celibacy was better than marriage. While most stressed that marriage was a lawful and honorable state for all people, a significant minority believed that Christians should only marry once they discovered they lacked the gift of chastity. Underlying their disagreement was the dispute over which scriptural text served as the Bible's normative teaching on marriage and celibacy: Genesis 1-2 or 1 Corinthians 7.

Second, nearly all scholars have failed to realize that Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy was key to fulfilling the rigorous ministerial expectations he proscribed in *The Reformed Pastor*. Baxter presented a model that expected pastors to personally catechize, admonish, and discipline each one of their hundreds or perhaps thousands of parishioners. The ideal pastor was not only defined by his assiduous labor to care for the soul of each parishioner, but also by the fact that he had been freed to do so by foregoing marriage for the sake of the sacred ministry. Only celibacy allowed for the maximal implementation of Baxter's pastoral model for church reform.

Third, this study has reaffirmed the necessity of understanding Baxter's unique doctrinal convictions within the context of his unusual life. Baxter's upbringing, education, chronic illness, emphasis on the future life, and success at Kidderminster worked to shape his temperament, pastoral fervor, and approach to theological debate. Scholars have often noted the profound and lasting influence that chronic illness had upon Baxter but devoted less attention to the impact of his time at Kidderminster. Experience was an influential teacher to Baxter, and he often exhorted all Christians to imitate what he found to be successful in his own life and ministry. His argument for clerical celibacy provided a prime example, for he was simply commending the practice that had been crucial to his pastoral triumph at Kidderminster.

Fourth, the uniqueness of Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy forces one to reexamine the nature of the *Christian Directory* in terms of the book's purpose and overarching principles. Scholars have presented the *Christian Directory* as a summa of the very best of Puritan practical divinity, but such a depiction is difficult to square with Baxter's argument for clerical celibacy. The conundrum is resolved by understanding that the book was a record of Baxter's pastoral instruction and practice at Kidderminster, which he intended to help re-present his model of ministry for young and inexperienced ministers. He was presenting to them his own convictions about clerical marriage and hoping that many pastors would heed his advice and avoid marrying unless God clearly called them to it. Furthermore, Baxter rooted his argument for clerical celibacy in the overarching principles for Christian living in the *Christian Directory*. Hence, by studying the ministerial hindrances he saw in clerical marriage, one can better see the practices that he believed were essential to Christian piety.

Finally, this study has offered a reinterpretation of the *Breviate*, one of the most revealing windows into seventeenth century English Protestant marriage practice. Scholars have often interpreted the book as praising the Puritan ideals of companionate marriage. While Baxter's intentions for the book certainly included commending the benefits of marriage to Margaret, he also saw his experience of marriage vindicating precisely the reasoning that had always motivated his argument for clerical celibacy. Thus, the *Breviate* served as an apologetic text to both prove that Baxter had never contradicted his argument for clerical celibacy as well as to explain why he continued to affirm and advocate it.

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ABSTRACT

THE REFORMED AND CELIBATE PASTOR: RICHARD BAXTER'S ARGUMENT FOR CLERICAL CELIBACY

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This dissertation explores Richard Baxter's (1615-1691) argument for clerical celibacy. It argues that his teaching on clerical celibacy was a very controversial way of resolving tensions in English Protestant marriage doctrine. His argument was a product of a very stringent model of pastoral care developed in response to England's ecclesiastical situation, was deeply influenced by his personal qualities and life experiences, and was rooted in his overarching ethical principles for Christian living. Baxter remained remarkably consistent, even when appearing to violate his convictions by marrying later in life. Chapter 1 details the importance of the study for scholarship, the state of research, and finally the methodology and sources to be used. Chapter 2 examines English Protestant attitudes toward marriage and celibacy in Elizabethan and Stuart England in order to demonstrate their struggle to reconcile the Bible's praise of marriage in Genesis 1-2 with its teaching on celibacy's expediency in 1 Corinthians 7. Chapter 3 analyzes Baxter's theology of soul care in the church and the family; it argues that Baxter did not possess a negative attitude toward marriage and family life, but rather he realized that clerical marriage strained the ability of ministers to fully implement his burdensome pastoral model of soul care. Chapter 4 explores several internal and external factors in Baxter's life that shaped "particularities" that would come to define him as a theologian and minister of the gospel. Chapter 5 studies Baxter's practical divinity in order to show that his argument for clerical celibacy logically arose from themes repeated in his

teaching on Christian ethics. The next two chapters explore Baxter's seemingly contradictory marriage to Margaret Charlton. Chapter 6 argues that he did not violate his convictions, because the 1662 *Act of Uniformity* appeared to have closed off all opportunities for public ministry. Chapter 7 proposes a solution to the question of why Baxter continued to advocate for clerical celibacy, despite the great help Margaret was to him and his pastoral work during their marriage; it argues that even though Baxter received many blessings through Margaret, his experience of marriage also reconfirmed many of his arguments for why pastors should remain single. Chapter 8 summarizes the conclusions of the study and its contribution to understanding both English Protestant Marriage doctrine as well as Richard Baxter as a pastor and theologian.

VITA

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EDUCATION

B.A., Campbell University, 2006

M.Div., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011

PUBLICATIONS

“‘Is Marriage Truly Open to All?’ The Diverging Perspectives of Puritan Casuistry on the Christian’s Freedom to Marry.” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 8, no. 1 (January 2016): 84-109

ORGANIZATIONS

Conference on Faith and History

American Society of Church History

The Evangelical Theological Society

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Garrett Fellow, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2012-2016

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Campus Ministry Staff, Campus Crusade for Christ, La Plata, Argentina, 2006-2007

Pastoral Intern, The Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina, 2010-2011