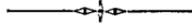


its strength and its hope. They are the mature and solid product of its system, "the holy seed which is the substance thereof," and the centre of gravity round which the looser parts cohere, and towards which floating elements converge.

T. D. BERNARD.



#### ART. VI.—RICHARD BAXTER.

*The Life of Richard Baxter, of Kidderminster, Preacher and Prisoner.*  
By JOHN HAMILTON DAVIES, B.A., Rector of St. Nicholas, Worcester ;  
Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. London : W. Kent and Co.,  
Paternoster Row. 1887.

THERE is a touch of quaintness in the very title of Mr. Hamilton Davies's book which almost seems to recall the literature and theology of the seventeenth century. Mr. Davies has bestowed no little labour and pains on his task. Like all who have yielded to the pleasant fascination of Baxter's life and writings, he gives evidence of a true and hearty enthusiasm for the man and his work. There is a great want of a table of contents, and an index is greatly to be desired. There is an absence of references throughout the book ; and though this is evidently the result of much consideration, it is much to be regretted. In certain passages Mr. Davies—especially when dealing with the ministerial office—writes fervently and impressively. He writes in the spirit of one who has felt deeply the gravity and dignity of the pastoral office, and few will dispute the position he occupies when he comes to deal with the most difficult passages of Baxter's career. The words of S. T. Coleridge, "I would almost as soon doubt the Gospel verity as Baxter's veracity," entirely describe the spirit in which Mr. Davies has worked. It is a remarkable feature in Baxter's life and character that it seems to possess a peculiar fascination for all who resolve to make intimate acquaintance with the man and his works. Archbishop Trench was in the habit of saying that he thought "Sylvester's Folio" was one of the most instructive books of the seventeenth century. Archdeacon Hare sometimes playfully tested the quality of a stranger's mind by the opinions he entertained of the affecting review of his ministry, at the end of Baxter's "Autobiography." Readers of the late Sir James Stephen's "Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography," will remember how carefully and lovingly he dwells upon the characteristics and peculiarities of Baxter.

It is to be feared that, in the present age of haste and hurry, the memory and the writings of Baxter are in some danger of being forgotten. It will, indeed, be a true reward for Mr.

Davies's labour if he induces some of the younger generation to bestow a little labour on a mine from which they will be able to draw a very rich ore.

One of the most remarkable things in Baxter's life was the way in which he overcame the defects of his education. We wish that Mr. Davies had said more upon this part of Baxter's history. He must have been a real lover of books. His allusions, especially in his carefully written treatises, even more than his direct quotations, give remarkable evidences of the wideness and correctness of his reading. But even more extraordinary than his want of the highest education and culture that his age could furnish, was the terribly bad health, duly noticed and amusingly chronicled in his "Autobiography," which made his life literally one long disease. With the exception, perhaps, of Blaise Pascal, there is hardly any instance so remarkable in the whole history of literature as the constant struggle maintained by Baxter against the inroads of disease and depression. Mr. Davies deserves the highest praise for the effort he has made to assign to Baxter his real position amongst the controversialists of his day. The more that his "Life and Times" are examined, his remarkable independence of character becomes evident. We wish that Mr. Davies had bestowed more time upon that portion of English history in which Strafford and Laud played prominent parts. Mr. Gardiner in his history has the merit, and it is no small one, of approaching the subject of Laud's reforms in a really impartial and unprejudiced spirit. We look with great interest to the publication of a life of Laud, on which the accomplished son of the Primate who now rules at Lambeth is said to be engaged. With all his faults—and we are by no means inclined to under-estimate them—Laud had a certain grasp and feeling after some great principles which must not be forgotten, even by those who look with abhorrence on his mistaken policy and unfortunate discipline. When Mr. Davies, as we have said, comes to deal with Baxter as a pastor, he is at his best. The fifth chapter, which contains an account of Baxter's life from 1640 to 1642, is written with great energy and with real appreciation of the noble work done at Kidderminster. The "Reformed Pastor," which ought to be read, not in the abridgment but as it proceeded from Baxter's pen, is a delightful commentary on the pastoral labours of its author. It is clear, from what we now know of the effect produced by Baxter's work, that he gradually acquired a reputation inferior to none of his contemporaries. In his own account of the Civil War, there is a good deal that requires to be corrected by the multitude of writers who have written upon the politics of that difficult time. One thing, however,

is certain, that personal antipathy had nothing whatever to do with Baxter's views as to some of the great leaders of the strife. We hardly think that Mr. Davies has done full justice to this part of Baxter's career; and he quite inclines to think "that there was some private misunderstanding or personal offence which disposed Baxter to regard Cromwell with so much disfavour." We are among those, perhaps prejudiced persons, who are inclined, on the other hand, to think that the mere fact of Baxter's entertaining an ill opinion of the great Oliver is a staggering difficulty. The real sincerity of Cromwell, *pace* Mr. Carlyle, is one of those matters which must remain an insoluble problem for many a day. It required courage of no ordinary kind to put forward, at the very moment of Mr. Carlyle's triumphant success, such a view of Cromwell's character as that which the late Professor Mozley has elaborated with such power in his well-known essay. His words, however, told, and must tell whenever men read the documents of the period for themselves. The question is indeed a complex one, and it may surprise some of our readers that we should be able to assert, as we can with the highest authority, that Mr. Emerson, at one time the docile disciple of Carlyle, mistrusted his view and was strongly impressed by Professor Mozley's argument.

It is always interesting to dwell upon Baxter's pastoral labours. It was said of one who afterwards laboured in the same place as Baxter, the present venerable Bishop of St. Albans, that in his preaching he seemed to yearn after the soul's health of his hearers. This would be a faithful description also of Baxter's constant and indefatigable labours. He had no easy task during the fourteen years of the second period of his work at Kidderminster. His intense and consuming energy overcame all difficulties. His simple account of the work he undertook is full of teaching. The whole soul of the man was in his office, and his belief that his small success was the result of his fourteen years' stay in Kidderminster, is a salutary reproach to many who in these days seem to find a very few years too much to bestow on any particular sphere of work.

Baxter rejoiced, as he well might, in the rapid sale of his "Call to the Unconverted," and "Saint's Rest." It is certainly a wonderful fact that of the former "in a little more than a year there were about 20,000 of them printed by my own consent, and 10,000 since, besides many thousands by stolen impression, which poor men stole for lucre's sake." We are glad to see that Mr. Davies has done what many writers have failed to do, called attention to Baxter's long and careful study of Hooker's great work. It would be well if one of our younger

theologians would undertake to draw from the volumes of Baxter's doctrinal works a catena of some of his opinions upon certain questions still hotly debated. The result would surprise many, who would feel as much astonished as some of the Bishop of St. Albans' former parishioners did, when their excellent vicar reprinted for their use the strong and simple "Counsels upon Holy Communion," which give a most delightful evidence of the way in which Baxter preserved what Bishop Fraser called the proportions of truth.

Mr. Davies dwells perhaps at too great length upon the general history of Baxter's age. He has given, however, an interesting account of the persecutions of the clergy of the Church of England during the time of its suppression. The high-handed and oppressive acts of Cromwell and his council prepared the way for the intolerant reprisals of the Restoration. During the hours of stern military government Baxter was passing what has been well called the Sabbath of his life at Kidderminster. Mr. Davies's account of his work in his parish is distinct and forcible. The untiring intellectual energy of Baxter has often been dwelt upon. There are few divines who have ever kept pace with his activity and zeal. We have seldom read anything better than Mr. Davies's account of the peculiar theological position occupied by Baxter towards the close of his life. Mr. Davies, we think, underrates the effect of Baxter's teaching in later days. The truth is that many divines have freely used his vast store of materials without due acknowledgment. His influence has been felt by many who have never read a line of his writings, and who only know him as the author of the "Saint's Rest," a book we fear at the present day more praised than read. Mr. Davies says truly "that Baxter's system of theology neither limits the Divine mercy nor lessens the responsibility of man." The fate which seems to attend the writings of all really moderate men has overtaken many of the writings to which Dr. Johnson gave a somewhat exaggerated praise. We heartily wish, however, that some large selections, following the lines of Arthur Young's "Baxteriana," could be made for the benefit of a generation too forgetful of what we owe to the illustrious and robust writer who has been again forcibly and lovingly portrayed in Mr. Davies's pages. We trust that if the book reaches, as we hope it will, a second edition, Mr. Davies will compress the historical portions of it, and it will then take its place beside the admirable sketch of the late Principal Tulloch, a divine of whom many have said, "Cum talis sis utinam noster esses."

We live in an age of haste, and in an age of research. Critical inquiries must go on, and our neighbours in Germany tell us how rapid is the succession of schools of thought and

criticism. We do not of course believe that any special answers to intricate problems and difficult questions can be extracted from the many volumes which Orme has reprinted, or the forgotten folios which are now seldom opened by the most curious readers. But the temper and tone of much of Baxter's writing, in spite of the querulous and captious spirit which often disfigure his pages, is the temper and tone which we often look for in modern writing, and look, alas! in vain.

G. D. BOYLE.



## Reviews.



*The New Religio Medici.* By FREDERICK ROBINSON, M.D. Elliot Stock. 1887.

THE "Religio Medici" of Sir Thomas Brown is a book that never loses its charm. We read and we re-read it, and each fresh perusal affords us fresh pleasure and instruction. A convincing proof of the high estimation in which it is held is the fact that some thirty-four imitations of it are said to have been written. The last of these (if it be designed for an imitation) is "The New Religio Medici" of Dr. Robinson now under review. It is a very different book from that of "The Good Old Knight of Norwich," who, by the way, was neither old nor a knight when he wrote his famous work. Its author does not, when taking up his pen, cut himself adrift from "fixity of belief" and sail away into a sea of speculation, trusting to his learning, his logic, and the soundness of his principles to bring him safely into the haven of right faith again. He lets us know at the outset that it is on the basis of scriptural truth that he takes his stand, and from this secure position he surveys the topics upon which his book expatiates. He is not of those who regard the Bible as merely "a record of the best thoughts of the human race." To him the sacred book is the revealed word of God, the only safe and sure guide vouchsafed to man in matters spiritual.

Under the heading "Universalism through the flesh" Dr. Robinson combats the somewhat fanciful views of Hinton in reference to "the mystery of pain," sweeping away with a few words of practical sense some philosophic cobwebs with which that charming writer has obscured the subject. After quoting Hinton's rhapsody about the "pleasurable efforts," "rejoicing gifts," and "glad activities" which "the utter losses and unfathomable miseries" of a life of pain afford, he adds: "Speak to some poor woman affected with a terribly painful disorder in this exalted language, and what would the words convey to her? Almost travesty; certainly unreality." Pain, he tells us, "has a logic of its own"; suffering men "regard but two objects," "the Divine will and bodily relief," and he points out that "devout men of old—David, Job, Hezekiah—when under pain from sickness, assuredly weighed no impersonal consideration."

The chapter which deals with the undue length and "vain repetition" of our Sunday services expresses thoughts which doubtless have often occupied the minds of many who will read this book, although few have the courage to publish them. We live in an unsettled age, and from a