

Transactions

of the

Baptist Historical Society.

Richard Baxter's Relation to the Baptists AND HIS Proposed Terms of Communion.

BAXTER does not appear to advantage in his first recorded encounter with the Baptists. In section five of the general dedication of his "Saints Everlasting Rest"—1st edition 1650—he wrote:—"Anabaptists¹ play the Divels part in accusing their own children, and disputing them out of the Church and covenant of Christ; and affirming them to be no Disciples or Servants of God, not holy, as separated to him . . . I cannot digress to fortify you against these Sects² you have seen God speak against them by Judgments from Heaven. What were the two monsters³ in New England but miracles? Christ hath told you by their fruits you shall know them . . .

¹ Baxter apologises for using this name; *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part ii, page 181. This book is henceforth quoted as R.B.

² He has mentioned Antinomians, Arminians, Socinians, Independents as well as Anabaptists. He is thinking chiefly of the first.

³ Monstrous births alleged—on the testimony "of all the godly reverend ministers and sober Christians in New England"—to have been "brought forth" by Mrs. Hutchinson and Mrs. Dyer, "the leading" Antinomian "sectaries." See Baxter's *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants' Church Membership and Baptism*, p. 197, 8, and "New England's Memorial" sub-year 1637.

Heretikes may seem holy for a little while, but at last all false doctrines likely end in wicked lives. Where hath there been known a society of Anabaptists, since the world first knew them, that proved not wicked? . . . They have confident expressions to shake poor ignorant souls . . . but when they meet with any that can search out their fallacies how little have they to say? You heard in my late publike dispute at Bewdley January 1 with Mr. Tombes who is taken to be the ablest of them in the land, and one of the most moderate, how little they can say even in the hardest point of Baptism; what gross absurdities they are driven to and how little tender conscientious fear of erring is left among the best." The date of this was January 15th 1649/50, a fortnight later than the debate referred to in the last sentences. Mr. Tombes was "Lecturer"⁴ to the Baptist Church at Bewdley, three miles from Kidderminster. Naturally resenting such aspersions he issued "an Antidote against the venome of a Passage in the 5th direction of the Epistle Dedicatory. . . ." (1650).

Mr. Tombes speaks of having been well content "to enjoy the neighbourhood and assistance in the Lord's work of so precious a man as Mr. Baxter was, and is still accounted by me"; and asserts that the Bewdley disputation had been thrust upon him after vain efforts to gain his arguments against Believers' Baptism in writing.

Baxter in the second edition of S.E.R. modified without mollifying his unworthy attack. "For Ana-

⁴ John Tombes (1603?-1676), a native of Bewdley, Oxford graduate, noted preacher, and after 1643 ablest advocate of Baptist views. Chosen as incumbent of Bewdley by his fellow-townsmen, he gathered also a small Baptist Church (Baxter says about 20). He was a zealous propagandist, but deserved far more respect from Baxter than he received. Baxter came to see this afterwards.

baptism and Antinomianism I have writ against them in two other books (and more shall do against the latter, if God will). But my guilty friends are offended with me for what I have done. I dare not therefore be silent, as being the officer and ambassador of Christ and not of men. God spoke effectually against them by those wondrous monsters in New England. But wonders are overlookt where the heart is hardened, and God intends to get his Justice a name."

The two books here mentioned were "Aphorisms of Justification by Faith" (1649)—against Antinomianism; and "Plain Scripture Proof of Infant Church-membership and Baptism" (1651). The "Proof" consists of the arguments which he "prepared for (and partly managed in)" the recent discussion—with much besides, including personal details about himself and Mr. Tombes. With regard to himself, he says that the matter of Infant Baptism had so troubled him that, after baptizing two infants at Bridgnorth, he "forebore the practice and set himself "as" he "was able to study the point." He was troubled even more concerning "the other sacrament"; and this was why he "durst not adventure upon a full Pastorall charge but to preach only, as a Lecturer till" he "was fully resolved." Then came the war; and his retirement (for a month) to Gloucester, where he "spoke so much in extenuation of" Anabaptism that his "conscience" had "since checked" him "for it." At Coventry, where he spent more than two years, he found no Anabaptists either in city or garrison, but, after awhile, they crept in and so increased that "at last they got a separated society and despised the Ministers." But few of the soldiers took the infection. It prevailed most with "some younger people of the city"; and "one Mr. Coxe (an ancient minister of competent learning and parts) was sent from London to confirm them."

Being "desired to depart" he did so; but "came down a second time," and "because he would not promise to leave the city and come no more" he was imprisoned "by the town committee." Baxter was charged with having "procured" his imprisonment, but answered:—"I can truly say that I never spoke word to put him in prison, but did speak to get him out." If Mr. Coxe taught what Baxter says he did, and even went so far as to encourage a "re-baptized husband" not to "Pray with his (supposedly) unbaptized wife," he was certainly provocative enough. Anyhow, by this time Baxter's doubts had all gone. He "preached many sermons against Separation" and "Re-baptizing"; and was requested by the committee to print them; but declined, partly because he "then purposed never to have appeared in print," partly because the sermons would have made "a great volume," and especially because he was not yet so sure of his position but that "somewhat might come forth" to shake it again. In 1645 he joined Colonel Whalley's regiment as a chaplain; and, for the most part, had neither occasion nor desire to discuss Baptism. There were "weightier matters to conferre on." But before this there came what seems to have been his first meeting with Mr. Tombes. While he was in London⁵ that gentleman "came into my quarters at the house of my dear friend Colonel Sylvanus Taylor." Their talk turned on the views of which Mr. Tombes was an acknowledged champion and Baxter urged much the same arguments against them as he afterwards "managed" at Bewdley. But the champion, according to Baxter, put up so feeble a defence that he felt himself more

⁵ "About five or six years ago," p. 210 in "Plain Scripture Proof," (1651) . . . Baxter had just read over Tombes' "Exhortation and Examen," Dec. 1645. He had never before had a word with Mr. Tombes about Infant Baptism.

than ever on sure ground. They parted in friendship; and "when the wars were ended" Baxter, being consulted⁶ as to the respective merits of Mr. Geree and Mr. Tombes for the vacant "chappel" of Bewdley, gave his voice for the latter on the score of "his parts, his piety, and his peaceableness." After his final return to Kidderminster Baxter says he "more rejoiced in Mr. Tombes' neighbourhood, and made more use of it, than of most others." He would, however, never discuss Baptism with him if he could help it: he had come to think the matter of such comparative insignificance. To break the peace on its account seemed to him criminal. Mr. Tombes did not agree; and when "once preaching for Peace (which is the very drift of my doctrine and life, though I speak sharply against Peace-breakers)," he maintained that Truth must sometimes be suspended for the sake of peace. "Mr. Tombes" sent word, "by a godly man, that if I so said I spoke that which is false." Indeed, Baxter himself felt that he was carrying his love of peace too far when some of his hearers began to suspect him of sympathy with Mr. Tombes on the ground that he still refrained from baptizing any infants.⁷ So at length he "began to open himself fully to the congregation." About the same time, his "Book of Rest being Printed," he "was forced to send up the Epistle, and finding my Body almost consumed, and that my abode on Earth was like to be very short; and, withall, being sensible of their danger . . . I set down those lines in that Epistle" which have given offence.⁸ But what is said there about the "strange

⁶ Plain Scripture Proof, Introduction.

⁷ The two forementioned were all he had baptized before 1650.

⁸ "What a fearfull passion was Mr. T in? Not able to contain himself" on "the day of his departure from Bewdley . . . after his sermon," he "made a speech of an hour long against me."

Judgements of God (never to be forgotten) on Mrs. Hutchinson and Mrs. Dyer Antinomians in New England," applied to those only; and Mr. Tombes was mistaken in thinking that he "had intended it as against the Anabaptists." All the same he did mean to be severe on the latter in respect of their schismatic separatism. "Peace-breakers and dividers of the Church, especially that violently and resolvedly go on in that practice should not have the same language as others." When he wrote this (July 5, 1650) and the book it introduces Baxter's mind was evidently overheated: for he declares that the greatest wrong he ever did to Bewdley was in doing anything to settle Mr. Tombes there. But when Mr. Tombes, "yet after this," solicited his "Proofs of Infants Church membership out of the circumcised Church" he wrote them out "at large," "as from the creation downward;" and otherwise showed that he bore no malice.

Here a word seems due as to Tombes's Pluralism—Crosby (vol. i., 289) makes light of this, but Baxter's statement (though not kindly) is very precise and spoke to facts of which he must have had personal knowledge—"To be Parson of Ross and Vicar of Lemster and Preacher of Bewdley, and Master of the Hospital at Ledbury (which requireth many months yearly residence) having means of your own besides—yet to complain as you do in your Books of the great want that you and your Family may be put to—*si ego sic fecissem!*"—Plain Reasons, p. 203.

Nine years later (July 18, 1659)⁹ Baxter makes reference to another scandal after Tombes, but this time in a very different spirit.

Mr. Tombes, it appears, had left the MS. of his *Romanism Discussed* at Will. Allen's house in his absence with a request—through his wife—that he

⁹ R.B. App. iv., p. 92.

would ask Baxter "to prefix an Epistle to it." Baxter was willing enough; "but" (he wrote) "one thing only, a little scruples me (which I charge you to conceal from him and all Men), 'A' great Scandal hath been long raised of him by Collonel Clieve, who about two Years ago put it by Letters into my Hands, and I caused Mr. Tombes to have the Knowledge it, but otherwise stifled it as well as I fairly could. But now Collonel Clieve hath made it very publick, and told it to the Commissioners for Approbation who greatly resent it &c. If you know not of it, you shall know no more for me." But would my "prefacing to his Book savour well" in the circumstances? Yes—replies Allen—"I had heard of it" (the scandal) "more particularly than you express; and am troubled that so little hath been done by himself for his own Vindication. This, however, need not hinder your doing what is asked if the Book "deserve it." You can countenance the man's book "without concerning yourself in his Morals."¹⁰

By 1656 the "Plain Christian Proof" reached a Fourth Edition; and was augmented by the Letters which had passed between Mr. Tombes and himself. These, as well as another addition concerning Mr. Thomas Bedford (who also had been drawn into the dispute), seem to mark a return to "mutual esteem and love." Then in August 1658 Baxter received a letter which spoke to his heart. It was dated the 12th of that month from "London in Great St. Bartholomew"; and signed "Yours in our Lord Jesus, Barbara Lambe."

She wrote of her husband, unknown to him; and her own words best describe the case:

"This dear Husband of mine, Mr. *Lambe*, is one that hath been devoted to God's fear from his Youth

¹⁰ R.B. App. iv., p. 93 (July 23, 1659).

up; and hath desired exceedingly, and delighted greatly, to serve Jesus Christ our Lord. The Ministry he was nourished and bred up in was Mr. *John Goodwin's* for Twelve or Thirteen Years—where he joined a Member and, afterward, by common Consent, and Prayer and Fasting was ordained an Elder over that Flock; and did labour in the Word and Doctrine with great delight, striving to adorn the Gospel in all acts of Love, Righteousness, and Mercy. Going on thus with Joy, about Five Years ago the great Controversy of Baptism had some access into his Judgment through the means of another Member of that Body, Mr. *Allen*, a very Holy and good Man who, having had long doubts about Infant Baptism, was carried to the other by means of Mr. Fisher, since Quaker.¹¹ By these Arguments presented, Mr. *Lambe* was taken in his Judgment; and in Conscience of his Duty did practice accordingly, not thinking then but still to hold communion with the Church notwithstanding; but then suddenly was led farther, namely, to leave the Communion of that Church, and, finding not where to find any Society in that Engagement where they could have such means

¹¹ Allen and Lamb had namesakes from whom they should be carefully distinguished. The most famous William Allen was indeed a Baptist preacher, but he was essentially a soldier, and rose to be Quartermaster-General; his home was Devon, his chief place of service Ireland. (See in these Transactions, iii, 251, and iv, 130, and distrust Carlyle.) His name was borrowed by two brother-colonels, one of whom advocated the assassination of Cromwell, the other tried to hang the lord-lieutenant of Ireland. Our William Allen was a Londoner who in 1653 wrote a book of 136 pages on baptism, and replied to John Goodwin's forty queries whether re-baptized people could not join in communion with other Gathered Churches. The famous Thomas Lamb was a General Baptist, preaching at Colchester before 1640, then a soap-boiler in London, and for more than thirty years a mainstay of his denomination. The present sketch gives all that is important about his namesake. [Note by the editor.]

of edification as they had left, they were induced to join in a Body with some others, about Twenty that came off by their means from the same Fellowship; and so for Five Years have gone on till there is an Addition of about an Hundred."

But about nine months ago doubts came upon him—not as to the subject of Baptism but as to the right of practising "separation" on its account. What hurt his conscience was the rigid narrowness of his new society in "unchurching all besides themselves" and even forbidding "any to marry but to those in their own way." She describes his mental sufferings, due simply to his intense desire to suppress all selfish motives and to please God—as a succession of Temptations and Terrors, relieved by gleams of light. So she turns to "sweet Mr. Baxter," whom she does not know except through "some converse" with his writings. This has led her to "Judge" that, being himself "experienced in spiritual affairs and temptations" he is one who has "the tongue of the Learned, to speak a word in Season." Has she been too bold? She trusts not. She trusts that God has put it into her heart to write, because He means the "Sun of Righteousness" to shine "through him" into their dark night.¹²

Baxter received this letter on Saturday night, 21st August, and replied next day. "I thought it no sin to make it a part of this Lord's Day's work" to meet such a call. Indeed, he hailed it with delight. It drew out his soul "into as strong a stream of love and closing Unity of Spirit as almost ever" he "had felt in" his "life." "There is a Connaturality of Spirit in the Saints that will work by Sympathy. . . .

¹² She desires that what he writes in answer he will enclose in a cover to Mr. James Marshal, in Friday St., at the Half Moon, "who is my Son-in-law and so I shall have it with privacy."

as a Loadstone will exercise its attractive force through a stone wall. I have an inward sense in my soul that told me . . . your Husband and you and I are so one in our Dear Lord that if all the self-conceited Dividers in the world should contradict it on account of Baptism I could not believe them."¹³

He does his best to cover most of the points in which Mrs. Lambe sought guidance; but the welcome and important fact, in his eyes, is that her husband has given heed to the Lord's voice calling His followers to unite amid their differences: "I know not Mr. Lambe by Face but Mr. Allen I know.¹⁴ Could he find in his Heart to deny me Brotherly Communion if I desired it of him, and protested that I would be of his Opinion and Practice if I durst, and my contradicting Judgment did not hinder me? I have told the Pastors of the Rebaptized Churches here that if any of their Judgment and Practice will satisfie themselves with being again Baptized, and will live in peaceable communion with us, they shall be as dear to me as any other; and that if I were a member of Mr. Tombe's Church, if he would permit me, I would live obediently under his Ministry (allowing me the Liberty of my conscience). I hope God is working for our Unity and Peace. I have been long preaching of the Unity of the Catholick Church, containing all true Christians as Members; and the last Week save one, Mr. Tombes came to the Rebaptized Church at *Bewdley*, and preacht on the same Subject, and so extremely well (as I hear) for Unity among all true Christians, to the same purpose with your Husband's Arguments, that I much rejoiced to hear of it (though

¹³ Baxter speaks of having received her husband's "lines" as well as Mrs. Lambe's letter. Does this indicate that both unknown to each other had written to him at the same time?

¹⁴ He calls him "our Kidderminster factor." App. No. 4, p. 76.

I hear some of his People were offended). And now that this should be seconded with your Husband's peacable Arguments,¹⁵ puts me in some Hopes of a little more healing. I have strong Hopes that if I were in London I should persuade such as your Husband and Mr. *John Goodwin* and many an honest Presbyterian Minister (as great a distance as seems to be between them all) to come together and live in Holy Communion." He winds up his letter with the following "motion." "Tell him from me . . . (1) if he desire it, I will presently send him a Model of Agreement between the churches of the Pædobaptists and Anabaptists (as commonly called) in order to their charitable brotherly Communion, and the preservation of the common Truth that it suffer not by our Divisions. This he and I will subscribe to, and then I doubt not to get Mr. *Tombes* to subscribe it; and next I will get all our Association to subscribe it; and next let Mr. *T* and he get what other of the Rebaptized to subscribe it that will. If none but he and I do it, we will publish it, and shame the World into a Peace, or do our Parts. . . .

"2. When this Agreement is Published, Mr. *L* shall also Publish his Arguments, and I my Reasons for our Agreement

"3. When this is done, let Mr. *L* become the Pastor of a church that's mixt of the Baptized and Rebaptized, if it may be; if not, at least a Publick Preacher in a convenient Station. . . ."¹⁶

¹⁵ "About a year ago Sir *Henry Herbert* gave me one of your Husband's Books about Baptism, which when I had read, I told him that the Author and I were one in Love, though not of one Opinion and that he wrote in the most savory, honest, moderate style of any of that Mind that I ever read."

¹⁶ In a P.S. he says:—"If Mr. *L*. look into my Book for Infant Baptism, let him know that I much repent of the harsh Language in it, but not of the main matter."

This letter was answered by Mr. Lambe himself (on 16th September) who reveals a state of mind which Baxter in his second letter (September 29th) deprecates as far too scrupulous—especially in regard to his reasons for hesitating to rejoin Mr. John Goodwin's Church.¹⁷ But Mr. Lambe, though pleading the inability of a "wounded Spirit" to feel much present interest, will do what he can with the "Model of Agreement." "If you would draw it up . . . I believe some here would Subscribe it, I hope many. I propounded it to Mr. Manton. He said he should like such a thing very well."¹⁸ His next letter—dated 15 January 1658/9 in reply to two of Baxter's—is much more cheerful. He has regained peace and light. "I see by experience that though I am dark, God is Light; and though I am poor, he is Rich; and I believe there is nothing I want but Heaven is full of it." He has rejoined Mr. Goodwin's Church (in a qualified fashion); he has with his family, begun to frequent the "publick Lectures" of the Parish Church; he has expounded his position to the members of his own congregation with the result that "their hearts" are quite gone from me" and are devising how to "cast me out of the Church." Finally, if that should come to pass, he will "be content to return to Mr. Goodwin and try to settle down because the latter is really for "Free Communion";¹⁹ and "saith (he) will

¹⁷ "I should leave the poor and go among the rich that minded more the adorning of the outward man than the glorious Gospel of Christ ordinarily; whereas my Spirit is much set against gay Apparel and following of fashion; not but that Mr. Goodwin's church is as sober as most."

¹⁸ Mrs. Lambe enclosed a grateful note—dated Sept. 20th, four days after the date of her husband's.

¹⁹ Yet "I am so clog'd with scruples about popular Government and such like things that though to will is present with me, to perform I find not."

join in such a uniting Draught as I hope you will now draw up and prosecute presently; and which I will labour in, God willing, to promote when it cometh here." Meanwhile at the instance of Mrs. Lambe, Baxter had been in correspondence with Lambe's colleague, William Allen; and one long letter is extant, dated 6th November 1658, in which he argues the case for Infant Baptism or, granting the sole validity of Believers' Baptism yet, for free communion. This concludes as follows:—"Your communion with differing Saints is not as sinning against your Opinion about Baptism, nor a leaving your Station. You may own your own way, and yet own Catholick Communion. Dear Brother, I think the Lord of Love and Peace is laying hands on you, and will have you away out of your dangerous Schisms into Paths of Love and Peace. It is Uncharitableness and separation that have made the Rebaptized so odious throughout the world. Love breedeth Love, as Heat breedeth Heat. . . . O! if days of Persecution come, it will cut your hearts to think how you have refused Communion with your Brethren in days of Peace. If we will lay our Heads and Hearts and Hands together for God's Church and Cause it will be too little. My motion to you is That you will Joyn with us for a Brotherly Agreement between the men of your mind and ours. The Articles shall be but these three:—

"1. That all that can, being satisfied in Conscience with their being rebaptized, shall continue loving communion in the Church.

"2. That those that cannot be brought to this, but will hold separated Churches, shall acknowledge us true churches, and profess their Brotherly love, and Distant Communion.

"3. That we all agree on some Rules for the peaceable management of our Differences, without

hardning the Wicked, ensnaring the Weak, hindering the Gospel, and wronging the common Truths we are agreed in. If this motion take with you, I will send you a form of such Agreement: and get as many, as you can of your way to subscribe it; and the Associated Ministers of this County, I doubt not, will Subscribe it; and we will do our parts to lead the world to Peace. Seek God's direction, and return your Resolution to your faithful brother Rich. Baxter."

Allen's response was so satisfactory to Baxter that he wrote (January 7, 1658/9): "I bless the Lord for the great consolation I had in the perusal of your Papers . . . your Arguments for Communion are very weighty. My next work to these ends shall be to perswade some godly ministers that differ from you to a more charitable Judgment and walking towards them of your opinion; and (if I live so long) to perswade our Parliament men against excessive Rigour and Bitterness against them. Do you the like with those of your way. If Love reign in us it must command our Tongues to plead its cause, and to endeavour the promoting of it in the world." Then, on the 22nd of the same month, writing to Mr. Lambe in reply, to his letter of the 15th, he says:—"Is it not a great encouragement to you that your Brother and Fellow-labourer comes over with you, and so your hands are strengthened, and half your opposition taken off and turned into comfort? For though I never told him of your Letters to me, nor you of his, yet I take it for granted that you know each others minds and ways, and yet you know he is resolved for Catholick Communion. I pray you go together, and do what you do as one man, while you have one Mind and Heart. I perceive the Signs of Charity also in him. I beseech you also both to hold on your Charity, even

to them that are offended with you; so far as Christ appeareth in them, let them have your Special love."²⁰

The door being thus opened Baxter entered—on February 28, 1658/9, with his Proposals or Terms of communion. But, before exhibiting these, we may finish with Messrs. Lambe and Allen. These two Brethren say Baxter, "at last cast off their Anabaptistry also;" and became "more zealous than other men" or than Baxter himself, "against Independency and separation by how much the more they smarted by it." As early as July 12th, 1659 Allen reported to Baxter that Mr. Gunning (Episcopalian) had "given out that" Mr. Lambe was "come over to them"; and that he had even "let fall odd expressions" seeming to indicate a bent to Popery. Allen, therefore, earnestly entreated Baxter, with whom his "brother Lambe" was on a visit, to "caution him against extremes to which his temper doth much addict him." But Allen, also, stood in need of the caution. For, although he had no bent to Popery, not only did he conform to the established church and publish (before June 1672) a retraction of his Separatist errors—which Baxter appears to have approved—but he even went so far as to write against the non-conforming 2000. The book in which he did this Baxter "received and read," and answered, on May 13, 1676. Its drift was to the effect that the nonconformists were to blame for continuing to preach, and ought rather to have subsided into quiet henchmen of the conforming Parsons everywhere. Baxter's answer is of crushing force; and stands as perhaps the ablest defence of Nonconformist practice. But, while astonished at his old friend's perversity, he has no doubt of his sincerity and still cherishes "unfeigned Love" for him. There is a pathetic sadness in his

²⁰ R. B. App. No. 4, p. 66.

last words:—"Did I think that ever you would have been one that should publicly have perswaded us to this" (not to preach) "? . . . Papists would silence me; Prelatists would silence me; Quakers, Anabaptists, Antinomians, and Separatists would silence me! and would my Dear and Judicious and experienced Friends silence me also? Alas! how many Difficulties have we to overcome, while our weary Flesh, and too cold Love, and the Relicks of Sloth and Selfishness, which loveth not a laborious suffering Life, doth hinder us more than all the Rest. But the Judge is at the Door."²¹

Baxter issued his Terms of Agreement under the title, "An Offer of Christian fraternal Communion to the Brethren that are against, or doubtful about, Baptizing Infants of Believers."²² But, in sending it to Messrs. Allen and Lambe, he introduced it "with a short Disputation preparatory thereto," a very characteristic piece in respect of his sincere endeavour to define exactly the state of the case; and explore all possible pros and cons. It may be summarized thus: There are extremists who, besides nullifying Infant Baptism, nullify the ministry and all extant Church-order, deny the essentials of the Faith and generally endeavour the ruin of the church. With such it is not possible to hold Peace and Communion; nor indeed, do they seek or desire it. But even towards these there should be felt and manifested "the common love which is due to all men." Then, there are those who, by the strictness with which they construe their particular difference, "make themselves incapable of being members of the same particular Churches with us," and shut us out of their own Churches; yet are loyal to the "fundamentals of the Christian religion

²¹ App. No. 4, p. 107.

²² R.B., Pt. ii, p. 186-7.

and of Church Policy." With such, it is obvious "we cannot have Church Communion"; but we can acknowledge them "to be Christian societies, or truly Particular Political Churches, though *in tantum* corrupt and sinfully separated." Lastly, there are persons who, feeling bound in conscience to be rebaptized, are willing still to continue their membership with "our Churches"; and to "live peaceably and inoffensively under the oversight of the church guides." Such are to be welcomed. Nay, even if a mistaken sense of duty should constrain them "publicly to enter their dissent to the Doctrine of Infant Baptism," they "ought not to be rejected," provided that, after such relief to their conscience, they "acquiesce and live quietly under the oversight of the Ministry."

Extremists opposed to all regular Church practice; separated Strict Baptist Churches; sporadic Baptists in the Parochial Churches—such was the situation as it appeared to Baxter; and his conclusion in view of it is this:—"It is our Duty to invite those called Anabaptists now among us, to loving familiar conferences; of purpose (1) to narrow our Differences as far as is possible, by a true stating of them, that they seem not greater than they are; (2) and to endeavour, if possible, yet to come nearer by rectifying of mistakes; and (3) to consult how to improve the Principles, that we are all agreed in, to the Common Good, and to manage our remaining Differences in the most peaceable manner, and to the least disturbance and hurt of the Church." But "how should such an attempt be managed," and "what hope is there of success"? As to the first question Baxter's answer takes the form of certain "Directions," anticipative of what is embodied in the "Terms of Agreement," and illustrative of the manner in which outstanding differences may be composed. They strike me as a

fine example of sweet reasonableness. As to the second question—what hope of success?—Baxter, speaking for himself, says, “I am not quite out of hope of some measure of success with some few particular Persons, but my hopes are very low as to the generality.” On the one hand, the bulk of those on his own side are ready with many objections (he enumerates and disposes of thirteen); and on the other the Anabaptists will object—“we are bound to propagate the truth, and, if you will have communion with us, you must be rebaptized.” Nevertheless, to attempt reconciliation is a duty if there be no more than a bare “possibility with the least probability” of success. Moreover, we leave extremists without excuse if we try our best. So he shaped his “offer of Christian Fraternal Communion” as follows:—

“It is our exceeding Joy that we have all one God, one Saviour, one Spirit, one Faith, and one Baptismal Covenant, one Rule of Faith and Life, one End and Hope, and are Members of one Catholick Church, and agree about God's Worship in the most and greatest parts; and it is our Grief and the Matter of our great Humiliation, that we can come no nearer, and that by the Remnants of our Differences the Wicked are so hardened, the Weak offended, our Charity hindered, our holy Communion and mutual Edification disturbed, our Minds discomposed, and the Gospel, the Catholick Church and our Saviour dishonoured. Lamenting this, with the rest of our Unhappiness while we are in the Flesh, and absent from the Lord, the Centre of Perfect Unity and Concord, and knowing it to be our Duty to walk by the same Rule, and mind the same things so far as we have attained, and being taught of God to love one another, and observing how frequently and urgently Brotherly Love, and Forbearance, and the

Unity and Concord of Christians, is prest in the holy Scriptures, and Uncharitableness and Divisions condemned, that as far as may be, we may promote our Common Ends of Christianity, and with one Mind and Mouth may glorifie God, We whose Names are underwritten do make this following Offer of Communion:

" 1. To all those who Joyn with us in the foregoing Profession of the Christian Faith, and have been Baptized since their Infant Baptism, as thinking it unlawful or insufficient, we offer free Communion in our particular Churches, with leave to Enter your dissent from our Infant-Baptism into the Church-Register or Records, so be it you will thenceforth walk in that Love and Holiness, and that Obedience to the faithful Overseers of the Flock, and that Concord and Brotherly Communion with the Church, as is required in the holy Scriptures (according to your power), and will resist Uncharitableness, Discord and Divisions, and Joyn with us in our Common Work for the Common Ends.

" 2. To all those who goyn with us in the foregoing Profession of Faith, though they have been baptized since their Infant-Baptism, or think that Baptism unlawful, and dare not hold Local Communion with us in our particular Churches, we yet offer, that we may at that distance that our Infirmities have set us, maintain unfeigned Brotherly Love, and acknowledge our several Churches for Christian congregations, and hold a Correspondency, by Delegates or other convenient Means, for the strengthening of each other, and observe the Rules exprest in the following *Offer*.

" 3. To all those who goyn with us in the foregoing Profession of Christianity, and yet, through their dissent from our Baptizing the Infants of Believers,

dare not hold Local Communion with us, nor yet acknowledge our Churches to be true Instituted Particular Churches, we yet *offer* (1) that we may acknowledge each other for Members of Christ (supposing the foresaid Profession of Christianity to be solemnly and credibly made) and Members of the Church Universal; and (2) that we may converse in the World together in a faithful Observance of the following Rules:—

“1. That we addict ourselves heartily to the promoting and exercising of Brotherly Love towards one another and take heed of all things contrary thereto in Word and Deed.

“2. That we addict ourselves to preserve the Unity of the Church Catholick, and Concord of true Christians and the Common Interest of the Godly, and to farther the Cause of Christ in the World, and take heed of so managing our different Opinions as may be a hindrance to these.

“3. That we study and addict ourselves to promote the Conversion of ignorant, ungodly People, and the building up of the Weak, and that we take great heed, lest in the managing of our different Opinions, or opposing one another, we should hinder these Works, hardening the Wicked, and offending the Weak.

“4. That we always in our esteem and industry prefer the greater common Truths that we are all agreed in, before the lesser Points that we differ in; and that we take heed of so managing our Differences, publicly or privately, as may tend to hinder the Reception or Success of those greater common Truths in which we are agreed.

“5. That we publish our Ageements, and profess our Christian Love, and Resolutions for Peace, in our several Congregations, and profess our goynt disowning and detestation of all Errours, Heresies, and

Ungodliness, contrary to the Profession wherein we are agreed.

"6. That we will not preach publicly for our differing Opinions in each other's Congregations without the Pastor's consent, not privately so to speak for them as is like to tend to the hinderance of God's greater Work in that Place; nor hold any private Assemblies in one anothers Parishes, which shall be more to the distracting of each others Societies, than for common Christian Edification.

"7. That in our Preaching and Conference, we will allow the greater and common Truths such a proportion of our Time and Zeal and Speech, as the Nature, Necessity, and Number doth require, and not lay out inordinately such an undue proportion of Zeal and Time and Speech for our different Opinions, as shall be injurious to those Truths.

"8. That we will avoid in Publick and Private all unbrotherly, scornful, reproachful Speeches of each other; especially before ungodly People; and that we will not, to them, dishonour one anothers Ministry, so as may hinder their profiting by it, but will rebuke all such ungodly Persons that we hear reproaching the Ministry or Brethren of either part.

"9. That we will not receive into any of our Churches any Scandalous Persons that fly from the discipline of other Churches, and pretend a Change of Opinion to cloak their Scandals, but will impartially hear what Accusations shall be sent in against them, and proceed accordingly.

"10. That we will upon any Defamations, or Accusations or Rumours of Injury against one another, or of violating our Profession by contrary Doctrine, or breaking of this Agreement, be responsible to each other as Brethren; and will forbear divulging private or uncertain Faults, or censuring or reproaching one

another, till we have either conferred together to give and receive Satisfaction, and duly admonished each other, or tendered such Conferences and Admonitions seasonably, till we see they are wilfully rejected'

Offerers, *Richard Baxter*, Pastor of the Church at *Kiderminster*²³
&c. &c. &c.

Subjoined to this was a form for use by the Baptists:

"We whose Names are Subscribed, dissenting from Infant-Baptism, heartily accept this Offered Agreement, as followeth:—

In the first Rank (i.e. those of no: 1).

In the second Rank (" " 2).

In the third Rank (" " 3)."

Baxter reinforced his proposals by several apt quotations from Optatus, bishop of Mileve in Numidia, who about 366 A.D. wrote a very broad-minded book, "De Schismate Donatistarum Adv. Parmanianum."

The sequel is not very clear. Messrs Allen and Lambe "had a meeting," which promised well, "with divers of the most moderate Pastors of the Re-baptized Churches";²⁴ and Mr. Allen reported to Baxter a public joint Meeting of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists held in London on September 30, 1659. He wrote of it, on the same date, in no hopeful strain. Presumably they had Baxter's proposals before them; and so long as they dealt with "generals" "the work went on merrily," but when they descended to "some particulars" it came almost "to a stand." What "troubled" them most concerned the "sending forth or furnishing the Nation with Preachers of the Gospel." All were agreed that

²³ The names would be more of the Worcestershire Association. See R.B. App. No. 4, p. 89, and No. 3, p. 57.

²⁴ R.B., Pt. ii, p. 181.

Preachers must be sent; that they must be "godly, sound in the faith and apt to teach"; that they must be conveniently maintained and properly approved. It boded ill for Unity, however, that a Baptist brother, who submitted a little scheme involving some measure of "state patronage and control," was "looked shie on" for his pains, by other Baptists; and dubbed a Presbyterian. In fact, the conference wandered off from Baxter and came to little. Nay, it would have come to nothing had "not my Lord Goff (as some call him) and some others" "earnestly moved" "that that wherein they had agreed might be improved for common benefit; and (which was agreed to) that three or four of each Perswasion should meet privately to see what could farther be done; and that there should be no further Publick Meetings, till they were in a Readiness to call them."²⁵

Here the curtain falls. "Suddenly"—says Baxter, writing about 1670—"the Broils of the Army, pulling down *Richard Cromwell*, and setting up I know not what, and keeping all in Confusion, broke off all our consultations, till the King came in; and since then men dare not prosecute the Agreement, lest they be taken as Conspirators, that do it in preparation of a Plot: so unhappily are the Affairs of the Church oft crossed by Secular Interests and Divisions in the World."²⁶

FRED. T. POWICKE.

²⁵ R.B. App. No 4, p. 94-5.

²⁶ R.B., Pt. ii, p. 181.