

## Richard Baxter and Friends

Our attention has been given to the chapter in Dr. Powicke's new life of Richard Baxter (*A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter, 1615-1691*, Frederick J. Powicke, M.A., Ph.D., London: Jonathan Cape, 9 by 6, pp. 326, 15s. net), which deals with Baxter's "Controversy with Quakers." The controversy was opened by Thomas Goodaire and Richard Farnsworth about 1655, the former of whom shouted forth a question in the church of St. Mary, at Kidderminster, when the preacher, Baxter's assistant minister, had concluded his sermon, and was lodged for so doing in the town prison. Perhaps it was the nature of the question—"How are the Ministers of Christ and the Ministers of Anti-Christ to be known asunder"—which aroused the indignation of the "many hundreds" present rather than the fact of the outburst.<sup>1</sup> Wordy warfare spoken and written followed. Baxter complained: "I seldom preached a lecture but going and coming I was railed at by a Quaker in the Market Place or in the way and frequently bawled at by the name of Hireling Deceever, False Prophet, Dog, and such language," worse degrading epithets appearing in print, of which Dr. Powicke remarks: "Not quite the language that might be expected from people inspired by the Spirit of Christ." The author writes:

"Nothing shows better how imperfectly Baxter was able to apprehend the inner springs of Quakerism than his belief that, together with other Sectarian movements, it was continued and engineered by the Papists. . . . This notion became an obsession." (On this subject see Prynne's *Quaker Unmasked*, 1655.)

Dr. Powicke concludes the chapter:

"The pity is that their differences excited a cloud of prejudices so dense and a heat of temper so violent, that they had no chance of realising the common foundation of Christian faith and experience which lay beneath their feet. Baxter's regretful memory of his feud with Edward Bagshaw [an Independent] when it was too late, might have arisen here on both sides, if they had known each other better. 'While we wrangle here in the dark, we are dying and passing to the World that will decide all our Controversies; and the Safest Passage thither is by peacable Holiness' (*Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, iii. 89)."

We thank Dr. Powicke for his faithful summation of this sad controversy.

There are two references to Mary Dyer (pp. 231, 233) and others to John Tombes, minister at Leominster.

<sup>1</sup> On this question of *matter* rather than *manner*, see a quotation from John S. Rowntree in *Camb. Jnl. Supp.*, p. 284. See on the whole subject *Beginnings of Quakerism*, pp. 193ff.