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**The Hallowing of Logic:
The Trinitarian Method of Richard
Baxter's *Methodus Theologiae***

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and that the work contained therein is my own, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Simon J. G. Burton

Abstract

While Richard Baxter (1615-91) is well known and rightly held in high esteem for his practical divinity and his evangelistic zeal, he has hitherto been conspicuously neglected as a theologian. In particular there have been no major studies of him with respect to the renewed paradigm of Protestant Scholasticism and none at all of his *Methodus Theologiae* (1681), which represents the fruit of a lifetime of theological reflection and study and which is arguably, in both scope and vision, one of the last great *Summas* of English scholastic divinity. This thesis focuses on the *Methodus* and on Baxter's theological method, which he took, though imperfect, to be the closest to the true Scripture method of theology that anyone had yet come.

Baxter believed that every level of (active) created reality reflected the impress of God's Triune being in metaphysical composition, structure and activity. This he described, following the Italian metaphysicist Tommaso Campanella, in terms of the divine primalities or principles of Power, Wisdom and Love. In the *Methodus* these insights are systematised into a kind of Trinitarian logic. Baxter held that human reason should be sanctified in order to conform to the Trinitarian structure of created reality, and therefore espoused a method of trichotomising organised according to these same divine principles, derivative of both Ramist and Lullist method. This thesis argues that the whole of Baxter's mature thought is structured in a Trinitarian fashion according to his own 'hallowed logic' and that two themes, often interlinked, are the key to interpreting his thought: the metaphysics of the divine principles and the Christian's baptismal covenant with the Triune God. Furthermore it examines Baxter's analogical ascent from the general *vestigia Trinitatis* present in the whole created order through the special *vestigium* of man's soul fashioned in the image of God and finally to the Trinity itself. This detailed exposition provides the basis, in the concluding chapter, for an examination of the whole of the *Methodus* and a demonstration that this represents a methodological unfolding of the covenant between the believer and God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the threefold Kingdom of Nature, Grace and Glory. In this way the *Methodus* may

be seen as having taken its inspiration from the *Theo-Politica* (1659) of Baxter's friend George Lawson.

Finally this thesis concludes that Baxter's thought has pronounced Scotist and Nominalist accents. His Scotism in particular runs deep and has strong ties with his Trinitarian thought, which is especially significant in light of the recent increasingly vocal discussions of the Scotist character of Protestant Scholasticism. Overall therefore it is suggested that Baxter is a neglected figure who deserves to be rediscovered and whose mature theology represents a fascinating reconstrual of biblical ideas according to a Trinitarian and scholastic paradigm.

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List of Abbreviations

Primary Sources

Aquinas

De Fide *De Fide et Spe*

ST *Summa Theologiae*

Baxter, Richard

CD *A Christian Directory*

KL *A Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared*

Duns Scotus, John

Lect. *Lectura*

Ord. *Ordinatio*

Rep. *Reportatio Parisiensis*

Rep. 1A *Reportatio Parisiensis 1A*

Secondary Sources

CHRP *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*

CHSP *Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*

DNB *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

PRRD Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*

The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter's *Methodus Theologiae*

Introduction

1. Prologue

Near the end of his great apologetic work *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* Richard Baxter lays out on a grand scale his vision for Christian theology:

There is greater exactness of true logical method in some parts of the Scripture, (as e.g. in the Covenant of Faith, the Lord's Prayer, and the Decalogue) than any is to be found in Aristotle or Cicero; though men that understand them do not observe it. The particular books of Scripture were written at several times, and on several occasions, and not as one methodical system, (though the Spirit that indited it, hath made it indeed a methodical system, agreeably to its design:) but if you saw the doctrines of all this Bible *uno intuitu*, in a perfect scheme, as it is truly intended by the Spirit of God; if you saw all begin the Divine Unity, and branch out it self into the Trinity, and thence into the Trinity of Relations and Correlations, and thence into the multiplied branches of mercy and precepts, and all these accepted and improved in duty and gratitude by man, and returned up in love to the blessed Trinity and Unity again, and all this in a perfect order, proportion and harmony, you would see the most admirable perfect method that ever was set before you in the world.¹

The crowning fulfilment of this vision is found in the *Methodus Theologiae Christianae*, published in 1681 but written over a period of years from the end of 1668. This work, which Baxter had to publish at his own cost,² has never achieved widespread recognition. In fact even among scholars of the seventeenth century it remains little known and even less read.

¹ Richard Baxter, *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London, 1667), 411-2. For an account of Baxter's life see Geoffrey Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (London: Nelson, 1965); Neil Keeble, 'Baxter, Richard (1615-1691)', in *DNB*.

² Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), III.190.

The reason for this is twofold: firstly, Baxter's later editors, while they lauded his practical works, conspicuously neglected his technical treatises.³ In fact it was Baxter's misfortune to publish the *Methodus* at the dawning of the Enlightenment when the scholastic method, which had endured for five centuries, was finally eclipsed. Furthermore his own exemplaristic Trinitarian metaphysics, while still acceptable in the seventeenth century, was definitely out of fashion by the early eighteenth century.⁴ Indeed the eighteenth century was a time of general decline in Trinitarian orthodoxy, especially among the non-conformists who were Baxter's greatest sympathisers. It is no wonder then that Philip Doddridge, a noted non-conformist and one of Baxter's most prominent eighteenth-century popularisers, should have been disappointed in the *Methodus*, declaring it to be unintelligible.⁵

Secondly, a widespread prejudice against the entire Protestant Scholastic enterprise prevailed from the eighteenth century almost to the end of the twentieth century. This prejudice was founded on overtly ideological or confessional readings of the period pursued by a number of noted dogmaticians. These propounded the 'central dogma' theory, which regarded post-Reformation Reformed theology as a system deductively structured around a variety of central dogmas (most notably predestination). This theory was often correlated with the view that Protestant Scholasticism represented a rationalistic degeneration of Reformation theology. These ideas were expanded on and propagated widely in the twentieth century and quickly established themselves as canonical.⁶

As is now increasingly recognised, both the central dogma theory and the assumption that Protestant Scholastic theology was governed by a rationalist, predestinarian

³ Carl Trueman, 'A Small Step towards Rationalism: The Impact of the Metaphysics of Tommaso Campanella on the Theology of Richard Baxter', in Carl Trueman and R. Scott Clark (ed.), *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 185.

⁴ For a discussion of exemplaristic metaphysics see Chapter Two.

⁵ Geoffrey Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in Tradition* (London, 1951), 17-8.

⁶ For an overview of scholarship on Protestant Scholasticism from the nineteenth century onwards and a detailed classification of the different schools of approach see Willem van Asselt and Eef Dekker, 'Introduction', in Willem van Asselt and Eef Dekker (eds.), *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), 11-43; Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63-102.

metaphysic are groundless.⁷ Following the pioneer work of Richard Muller, Willem van Asselt, Carl Trueman and Antonie Vos among others, a new paradigm of scholarship has emerged. The claims of these scholars rest on a fundamentally revised understanding of the nature of scholasticism, as well as a clear understanding of the complex patterns of continuity and discontinuity that run between the three foci of the late medieval and Renaissance eras, the Reformation and the era of Protestant Scholasticism itself.⁸

In these terms scholasticism is no longer to be viewed as a philosophy inherently at odds with Reformation norms, but rather, following what has emerged as a consensus among medievalists, as a value-neutral method of academic discourse.⁹ Furthermore it is now clear that the movement of Protestant Scholasticism originated in the need to place insights of the Reformers within the context of a comprehensive and coherent system. Thus Protestant Scholasticism was in no way a departure from the pristine, biblical theology of the Reformers. Rather it preserved these selfsame biblical insights for succeeding generations, giving them new and vital expression in ever-changing intellectual and cultural contexts. For as is often pointed out, without the influence of scholastic methodology on Protestantism it is difficult to see how it could have retained its intellectual credibility and philosophical coherence in the face of renewed Catholic onslaughts in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this regard we may conclude that Protestant Scholasticism was simply the academic wing of that complex process which historians call confessionalisation.¹⁰

Richard Baxter, by common consent, was the most scholastic of all the Puritans and his *Methodus* itself the Puritan *Summa* par excellence.¹¹ Yet despite the widespread resurgence of interest in Protestant Scholasticism Baxter remains little studied. Indeed, there are no full-scale treatments of his thought according to this new paradigm. As Trueman has suggested:

⁷ *PRRD*, 1.123-40.

⁸ Muller, *After Calvin*, 71-80.

⁹ *PRRD*, 1.34-7.

¹⁰ *PRRD*, 1.27, 44-6, 63.

¹¹ Carl Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 26, 32.

...it is also clear that there is considerable work to be done on the sources of Baxter's thought. Whether dealing with his practical works or with his controversial writings, any approach which focuses solely upon the narrow seventeenth-century English, or even Protestant, context without reference to the wider Western tradition will simply not do justice to the content and structure of his theology. His use of medieval and Renaissance scholastic sources, and, one might add, the relationship between his practical and his doctrinal writings, needs to be explored in far greater depth than has hitherto been the case... A brief paper such as this [on Baxter and Campanella] can, of course, only scratch the surface, merely hint at what potential there is in this field, but even so, it should by now be clear that Baxter's dependence upon a thinker such as Campanella for things as basic as general ontology and methodology makes it crucial that a full exploration of this aspect of his thought should now be undertaken in order to further our understanding of the dynamics of English Reformed thought in the mid-seventeenth century.¹²

Over ten years later such a study is still lacking. The aim of this thesis is to meet this want, by considering in depth the intellectual and theological sources of Baxter's thought, his especial link to the scholastic heritage of the Western Church and the Trinitarian dynamic of his theoretical and practical theology.

2. Approaching Baxter's Theology

In our own approach to Baxter's theology we will be aided considerably by those pioneers who have gone before. The start of modern Baxter scholarship is found in the nineteenth-century scholar George Fisher.¹³ Fisher particularly admired Baxter's theological acumen, calling him a 'marvel' and suggesting that he 'gained an acuteness, as a metaphysician, which few men have ever attained'. We also owe him a great debt in pointing to the importance of the *Methodus* and *Catholick Theologie* as mature expressions of Baxter's thought.¹⁴ For our purposes Fisher is especially important for including a brief discussion of Baxter's doctrine of the Trinity. In particular he notes the importance of the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love in grounding both the immanent and transient acts of God and as exemplars for

¹² Trueman, 'Small Step', 195.

¹³ George Fisher, 'The Theology of Richard Baxter', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 9 (1852), 135-69. For a comprehensive review of Baxter scholarship see Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 1-24.

¹⁴ Fisher, 'Theology', 137-8.

the *vestigia Trinitatis*. Crucially he also indicates Baxter's unwillingness to speculate on the connection between the Trinity of Persons and this Trinity of Principles, which will be a major aspect of our own discussion. He rightly locates the source of Baxter's distinctive doctrine of the Trinity in the exemplaristic thought of the Middle Ages and indicates the thoroughness of Baxter's Trinitarian method saying 'Baxter has gone beyond every other writer, in the minuteness with which he has carried the system of trichotomy through every form of existence and every department of science'.¹⁵

J. I. Packer's *Redemption and Restoration* remains the best and most comprehensive work on Baxter's theology. In it Packer investigates Baxter's intellectual and spiritual heritage, placing him squarely within the Puritan camp and giving a fascinating and lucid account of Baxter's thoughtworld, which he maintained must be grasped for any complete understanding of Baxter's theology.¹⁶ He was therefore the first to grapple with Baxter's own distinctive method, pointing out its intimate connection to the Puritan theory of the unity of all knowledge in the mind of God. The primary epistemological axiom of such a theory was that creation embodies a rational design – in Baxter's terms an '*ordo*' – which can be detected, analysed, anatomised and subsequently reproduced through reason. Method was the key to achieving this and Packer notes Baxter's particular affinity to Ramist logic in which systematic dichotomising was used to yield the elementary principles of the universe.¹⁷ Importantly Packer also draws attention to the *Methodus* as representing the mature fruit, long in gestation, of Baxter's methodological endeavours, demonstrating the way in which Baxter developed his own method of trichotomising as a pattern of logic akin to Ramism but employing threefold rather than twofold division. He traces the specific inspiration for this to Baxter's reading of Tommaso Campanella, whom Baxter followed in positing Power, Wisdom and Love as metaphysical principles informing all of nature and exemplified within God himself.¹⁸ However, while he acknowledges that Baxter viewed his trichotomous

¹⁵ Fisher, 'Theology', 154-7.

¹⁶ J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 64.

¹⁷ Packer, *Redemption*, 64-76.

¹⁸ Packer, *Redemption*, 81-5.

logic as entirely scriptural, Packer himself is dismissive, remarking that ‘the marvellous industry which he showed in trichotomizing cannot but impress the modern reader as largely wasted effort’.¹⁹

Packer is also the first to have given significant attention to the intellectual sources which shaped Baxter’s thought. However in emphasising the Puritan nature of his thought he tends to downplay its scholastic roots. Nevertheless, he does draw attention to a particular Scotist influence on Baxter’s thought, seen, for example, in Baxter’s definition of theology as ‘*scientia-affectiva-practica*’ and especially, by his own admission, in his voluntarist psychology.²⁰ Packer also stresses that, while Baxter never lost his appreciation for scholastic subtlety and clarity, he came to fear the scholastic presumption to which he himself had fallen prey to in his youth.²¹ This is important to remember in our own endeavours to elucidate the scholastic contours of Baxter’s thought. For it should not be forgotten that in everything Baxter desired to be scriptural and that Scripture itself was therefore the benchmark of all his thought. Baxter thus emerges as a true Protestant scholastic, willing to criticise the medieval scholastics for their departure from biblical theology, yet at the same time to make extensive use of their concepts and methodology.²² While Packer does not use such terminology, he says what amounts to exactly the same thing: that Baxter stands out as a truly catholic thinker, gathering up the incomparable riches of Scripture, with the entire wealth of tradition, into one comprehensive and methodical system of Christian thought.²³

Much more could be said about Packer’s magisterial work. However its main contribution is undoubtedly the thesis that Baxter’s ‘political method’ is the key to understanding his whole theology. By this Packer referred to Baxter’s use of contemporary political categories in expounding his theology and especially his application of the governmental triad of Owner, Rector and Benefactor, derived from the primary triad of Power, Wisdom and Love. Through these, and according to

¹⁹ Packer, *Redemption*, 84, 402.

²⁰ Packer, *Redemption*, 73-4, 86-7, 113-4.

²¹ Packer, *Redemption*, 74.

²² For a comparison see Joel Beeke, ‘Gisbertus Voetius: Towards a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety’, in Trueman and Clark (eds.), *Protestant Scholasticism*, 227-243.

²³ Packer, *Redemption*, 10, 395-406.

Packer, particularly through God's Rectoral role, Baxter came to understand the whole of salvation history and to reconfigure redemption, in Grotian terms, as the equivalent (rather than identical) satisfaction of God as Rector. Consequently, according to his much vaunted theory of universal redemption, Baxter held that Christ suffered the penalty for the sins of the whole world and not only for the elect, and that in doing so won the authority, as Rector by redemption as well as creation, to issue a new and universal law. This is the Gospel, promising the gift of Christ's legal righteousness, and hence salvation, under the condition of what Baxter called inherent evangelical righteousness, gained through sincere faith and obedience to the terms of the new law. Controversially this meant that justification was no longer simply by faith alone. Final or sentential justification, that is justification at the last judgement, is according to both faith and obedience.²⁴ No doubt all these facets of Baxter's soteriology were well known but it was Packer's especial genius to show how they all fitted together logically and coherently into the framework of the political method.

In *Redemption and Restoration* Packer's own assessment of this political method, while not always uncritical, was certainly measured. Yet later Packer expressed a very different opinion, remarking of Baxter that 'as a theologian he was, though brilliant, something of a disaster', and adding that:

Thus Baxter, by the initial rationalism of his 'political method', which forced Scripture into an *a priori* mould, actually sowed the seeds of moralism with regard to sin, Arianism with regard to Christ, legalism with regard to faith and salvation, and liberalism with regard to God...What we see in Baxter is an early stage in the decline, not simply of the doctrine of justification among the Puritans, but of the Puritan insight into the nature of Christianity as a whole.²⁵

Although Packer deserves to be taken seriously in his recantation it must be said that he issues it during the course of a passionate defence of limited atonement and his reassessment of Baxter is therefore to some degree ideologically motivated. For this reason, and also because I do not think Packer here takes the scriptural and

²⁴ Packer, *Redemption*, 179-263.

²⁵ J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 1990), 159-60.

Trinitarian roots of Baxter's political method seriously enough, my own sympathies lie entirely with his earlier work.

Another highly significant study of Baxter's soteriology is Hans Boersma's *A Hot Pepper Corn*. Boersma highlights briefly the importance of method to Baxter suggesting that Baxter's logic, which, like Packer, and others he views as essentially Ramist, is a matter worthy of further study.²⁶ His main concern, however, is with refining Packer's account of the political method. This he describes as a key which only unlocks half of Baxter's theology – God's will as Rector – and leaves untouched the other half – God's will as Owner.²⁷ Instead Boersma regards the distinction between God's revealed will as Rector and his absolute will as Owner as determinative of Baxter's thought, arguing convincingly that the high Calvinist William Twisse was one of Baxter's primary contemporary sources for this.²⁸

Taking up this distinction, which Baxter referred to as a 'singular key for opening the sence of Scripture',²⁹ Boersma traces its vital role in every aspect of Baxter's soteriology.³⁰ Furthermore, in providing a detailed context for Baxter's soteriology he goes well beyond Packer, offering a wealth of references to both Baxter and his opponents and thus highlighting very effectively Baxter's own distinctive contributions. He is himself very sympathetic to Baxter, using his twofold distinction on the one hand to deny the perennial charge that Baxter was a legalist and on the other to indicate his similarity to a Roman Catholic and more specifically Scotist position.³¹

On two points however I believe Boersma's satisfying study could be extended even further. Firstly, although he acknowledges Baxter's character as a Protestant scholastic, he does not seek to probe the medieval background of Baxter's soteriology. Indeed he suggests that this is unnecessary, since Baxter's understanding and use of these distinctions is largely refracted through seventeenth-

²⁶ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 29-30.

²⁷ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 8.

²⁸ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 32, 80-3, 88-9, 331-2.

²⁹ Richard Baxter, *Universal Redemption of Mankind* (London, 1694), 28.

³⁰ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 89, 161, 189-90, 193-7, 235, 254-6, 289, 331-2.

³¹ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 194, 330.

century controversy.³² While this is a fair point, it seems to me that for a full understanding of Baxter we must grasp the medieval as well as contemporary context of his thought. Secondly, a more serious shortfall is Boersma's neglect of Baxter's Trinitarian method and the *Methodus* which birthed it. My own contention will be that Boersma's twofold distinction can itself be enfolded within the broader Trinitarian movement of Baxter's theology.

Coming after Boersma is Tim Cooper who holds that Baxter in his extreme antipathy to antinomianism became a neonomian. This is by no means a new thesis and can be found as early as 1692 in Isaac Chauncy's *Neonomianism Unmask'd* and in modern times is represented by Allison's *Rise of Moralism*.³³ Cooper's primary concern is with the polemical function of the twofold distinction in God's will. This he suggests acts as a buttress against antinomianism allowing Baxter to erect his own conditional soteriological system. Furthermore Cooper argues that at each stage in Baxter's career his reaction to the threat of antinomianism was determinative of his theology. This position he characterises, following William Lamont, as anti-antinomianism.³⁴ Without doubt Cooper has done us a valuable service in contextualising Baxter's thought; arguably, however, he fails to penetrate to the true heart of Baxter's mature theology, which I shall suggest lies in its thoroughgoing Trinitarianism.

In his *Claims of Truth* Carl Trueman develops an extensive comparison between Baxter and John Owen, which although not always to Baxter's advantage is certainly illuminating. In no doubt whatsoever about Baxter's theological ability, Trueman describes his 'breathtaking learning' and 'penetrating philosophical acumen', ranking him with Owen as among the leading English Protestant scholastics of the seventeenth century. Of the two Trueman holds that Baxter was much the more scholastic, describing the *Methodus* as the 'English Puritan work which bears the closest resemblance to medieval scholastic antecedents' and as 'perhaps the greatest

³² Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 20, 23.

³³ C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse Barlow, 1966), 157-64.

³⁴ Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); cf. William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 143.

application of the medieval *quaestio* method to the theological task which Puritanism produced'.³⁵ This is undoubtedly high praise but it comes with a sting in its tail. For Trueman throughout uses Baxter as something of a foil for Owen's doctrines. He therefore consistently represents Baxter's theology as a speculative and to a degree rationalistic alternative to Owen's purer and more biblical theology.³⁶

In an earlier essay Trueman developed this thesis much further, focussing on the link between Baxter and Tommaso Campanella, the controversial Renaissance philosopher. Using evidence from Baxter's own writings he shows how Baxter came to modify the standard Ramist dichotomy into a trichotomy structured around Campanella's divine primalities of Power, Wisdom and Love. Campanella held that God communicated his threefold being to creation, with the result that his external works reflect his internal being and are in accordance with these primalities. Trueman argues convincingly that Baxter used these ideas to relate Trinitarian metaphysics to the created order and thus to forge his own theological method grounded on the *vestigia Trinitatis*. For Trueman however this was a negative development, marking a distinct shift towards rationalism and bringing the Trinity (almost) within the sphere of natural theology. As he provocatively concludes, Baxter's Trinitarian doctrine can thus be seen as a 'halfway house' between John Owen's and that of the Socinian John Biddle.³⁷ Such an opinion is completely understandable, but it does not ultimately do justice either to Baxter's own Trinitarian theology or to his frequent strictures against excessive speculation. Nevertheless, in paving the way for future work on Baxter, Trueman's own illuminating studies are to be warmly applauded.

3. Purpose, Rationale and Methodology

It is clear that although significant work has already been done on Baxter much more is still required. While a number of scholars have drawn attention to Baxter's own distinctive theological method, none have considered its nature in any great detail, nor sought to evaluate its significance for our understanding of Baxter. In this light

³⁵ Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 26, 32.

³⁶ Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 32, 49-53, 80-2, 93, 99, 140-2, 206, 214-20, 229, 241-5.

³⁷ Trueman, 'Small Step', 192-4.

the primary aim of this thesis will be a detailed study of what I have called Baxter's 'hallowing of logic', involving close analysis of his Trinitarian method and its application to every sphere of his thought.

I will demonstrate that the Trinity lies at the heart of Baxter's mature thought and of his mature theology in each of its scientific, affective and practical dimensions.³⁸ In particular I will aim to show that the Trinity performs this role theologically according to both the scriptural account of the Baptismal Covenant between the Christian believer and the Triune God (henceforth the Triune Baptismal Covenant) and the metaphysical theory of the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love. In the *Methodus* these twin poles converge, merging into one unified account in which all of Baxter's theology may be seen to proceed as a metaphysical elaboration of this key scriptural *locus*. In scientific terms these convergent Trinitarian ideals shape the pattern of Baxter's theological method (his hallowed logic) and the global architecture of his theology. In affective and practical terms they enable and condition man's threefold response of faith, hope and love to the Triune God.

Here the Triune Baptismal Covenant will be seen as the cardinal doctrine of Baxter's theology, acting as the hinge between theory and praxis, and so justifying Baxter's claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is the fount of *all* theology (both practical and theoretical).³⁹ Furthermore this scriptural schema channels its own metaphysical development according to the traditional doctrine of the *vestigia Trinitatis*, interpreted in terms of the impress of divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love on the causal and constitutive fabric of reality. These metaphysical concepts are of primary importance for Baxter's theology, ontologically as providing the bridge between the immanent and economic Trinity and epistemologically as authorising the analogical extension from man's threefold soul to God's own Triune being. As allowing this two-way traffic between God and man they therefore provide the basis for Baxter's Ramist-Lullist logic encompassing the whole of created and uncreated being, and thus for his Trinitarian account of theology and every field of human endeavour.

³⁸ Baxter characterises theology as *scientia-affectiva-practica* (Richard Baxter, *Methodus Theologiae Christianae* (London, 1681), I.3) and this will be a major theme of the first chapter.

³⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.79.

The secondary aim of this thesis is to examine Baxter as a Protestant scholastic. Here we will discover that Baxter's theology combines key elements from both the Scotist and Nominalist schools, in a way which could perhaps be best described as 'Nominalised Scotism'.⁴⁰ This is especially significant given the recent, increasingly vocal, discussions over the Scotistic character of Protestant Scholasticism and indeed of seventeenth-century metaphysics as a whole.⁴¹ Baxter's Trinitarian perspective is in fact heavily influenced by his Nominalised Scotism. Similarly, for Baxter as for Scotus, divine love is the 'lodestone' of his theological vision.⁴² This places the beatific embrace of man and the Triune God as the eschatological climax of all Baxter's theology, a perspective of final causality which is seen to drive the Christian life.

Ultimately it is the coherence of this vision which belies the common caricature of Baxter as a kind of brilliant but ultimately muddled eclectic, patching together bits and pieces of English practical divinity and scholastic thought into an artificial and unwieldy system. Instead Baxter's mature theology will be seen to be a careful synthesis of traditional scholastic concepts in the context of a Ramistic and Lullist logic and metaphysics, all constrained by his fundamental scriptural concerns and governed by his overarching Trinitarianism.

⁴⁰ While the interpretation of Nominalism has proved a vexed issue, in this thesis I use the term advisedly, and chiefly with reference to three important *loci*: a pared-down extrinsicist metaphysics grounded on the individual, a simplified Trinitarian doctrine often coupled with a scepticism about the power of reason to penetrate the divine mystery, and a covenantal and voluntarist soteriology oriented around the crucial distinction between God's absolute and ordained power.

⁴¹ For Scotism in Calvin see Heiko Oberman, *Initia Calvini: The Matrix of Calvin's Reformation* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1991), 10-19; Richard Muller, 'Scholasticism in Calvin: A Question of Relation and Disjunction', in Wilhelm Neuser and Brian Armstrong (eds.), *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion* (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997), 247-65. For the Scotist character of Protestant Scholasticism see Antonie Vos, 'Scholasticism and Reformation', in van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 99-119; Andreas Beck, 'Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676): Basic Features of his Doctrine of God', in van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 205-26; Willem van Asselt, J. Martin Bac and Roelf te Velde, *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010). Muller suggests that in seeking a specifically Protestant metaphysic theologians often resorted to Scotist and Nominalist systems of thought (*PRRD*, 1.64-5). For more on Scotism in seventeenth-century metaphysics see Chapter Three and for Scotus' metaphysics of synchronic contingency see Antonie Vos et al., *Contingency and Freedom: Lectura I 39. John Duns Scotus; Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (London: Kluwer Academic, 1994); Antonie Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

⁴² William Frank, 'Preface', in John Duns Scotus, *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, tr. Allan Wolter and ed. William Frank (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), ix.

Apart from my first chapter on the catechetical roots of Baxter's theology and theological method I will not in general attempt to locate Puritan antecedents for Baxter's thought, something already well handled by Packer, Cooper and Boersma. This is not to say that their studies have been entirely exhaustive, and certainly not to deny the primary importance of Puritan divinity for Baxter's spiritual and intellectual formation, but simply to suggest that Baxter's theology should be seen in as broad a perspective as possible. However I shall attempt where appropriate to highlight the biblical inspiration for Baxter's thought. Baxter's references to Scripture are multitudinous and it is clear this was by far the most important source for his theology. It is notable that, on his own account, his 'political method' was entirely inspired by Scripture and that his Trinitarian metaphysics also has scriptural, as well as more conspicuous medieval and Renaissance, origins.⁴³

Furthermore, as my focus will largely be on Baxter's *Methodus Theologiae* as representative of his mature thought I will not in general attempt a detailed characterisation of his theological development. Again to some extent this has already been done by Packer, Boersma and Cooper and where appropriate I will therefore draw on their work. The one major exception to this will be my survey of the development of Baxter's Trinitarian political method, where there remains a significant lacuna. For while Baxter's early controversies with Arminianism and Antinomianism have been thoroughly studied and both William Twisse and Hugo Grotius highlighted, and to some degree investigated, as significant influences on his theological formation, as of yet almost nothing has been said about the influence of Baxter's friend George Lawson on the final form of his political method.⁴⁴ This is doubly surprising, firstly since Baxter himself ranks Lawson (with Grotius) as the chief influence behind the political turn in his theology,⁴⁵ and secondly because in his *Methodus* he holds up Lawson's *Theo-Politica* of 1659 as a paramount exemplar

⁴³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.31.

⁴⁴ Lawson's influence on Baxter's theology has been duly noted in Packer, *Redemption*, 84, 207, 216, 244, 252; Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 38-9; Lamont, *Baxter*, 117-9, 144, but there has been no detailed investigation of this. For an account of Lawson's influence on Baxter's politics see Conal Condren, *George Lawson's Politica and the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 137-42.

⁴⁵ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.108.

of theological method.⁴⁶ I will therefore argue that the *Theo-Politica*, which is itself structured around the Triune Baptismal Covenant, had a significant influence on the development of Baxter's Trinitarian political method in theology (as found in its mature expression in the *Methodus* as opposed to the pre-Trinitarian or proto-Trinitarian political method seen in the *Aphorismes* and other early works).

As befits my topic, the main focus of my thesis will be on Baxter's explicitly theological works and especially his *Methodus*. As was made clear above this is without doubt Baxter's theological *Summa*, forming an intentional companion piece to his even more massive *Christian Directory*, sometimes described as his ethical *Summa*.⁴⁷ This represents the full-dress exposition of Baxter's Trinitarian method as well as its subsequent application to all fields of scientific knowledge and to theology itself. To some degree then my thesis will be a commentary on the relevant sections of the *Methodus*. As far as possible each section will of course be supplemented by extensive referencing to a wide range of Baxter's other works and especially his theological treatises. However in this thesis I have not referenced Baxter's voluminous unpublished writings or correspondence. Indeed the task of relating both of these to his intellectual development goes well beyond a single study.⁴⁸

Although wholly inspired by the method and subject matter of the *Methodus*, the chapters in my thesis will not follow the order found there but rather a different Baxterian order – the route of intellectual ascent through the disciplines recommended in the *Christian Directory*. This begins from exposition of the catechism, after which Baxter recommends training in basic logic to be accompanied by study of associated disciplines such as grammar and languages as well as biblical history. This is followed by study of ontology, which for Baxter is essentially the physics and metaphysics of material and immaterial substances. Having completed this study students return to a more advanced study of logic, now seeking to draw

⁴⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

⁴⁷ Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (London, 1673), 'Advertisement'; cf. R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (London: John Murray, 1936), 220.

⁴⁸ Baxter's unpublished writings may be found in over twenty untranscribed and unedited volumes in Dr Williams' Library in London. His voluminous correspondence has been ably catalogued in Geoffrey Nuttall and Neil Keeble (eds.), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) but otherwise remains untranscribed.

together their logic and metaphysics into one comprehensive system. Finally they turn to the detailed study of theological systems as well as the reading of patristic, scholastic and contemporary theologians of all confessions.⁴⁹ What is most notable in Baxter's scheme, apart from the synthesis of the student's intellectual and spiritual development, is the comprehensive intellectual ascent through the disciplines to theological method and system as the crown of science. Yet having said this it is also clear from his account of this progression that he never intends theology to depart from its biblical and catechetical roots.

It is therefore within this intellectual framework, as seeming particularly appropriate given Baxter's encyclopaedic tendencies, that I shall give my own exposition of Baxter's Trinitarian method. Incidentally my choice to follow a logical rather than chronological progression provides a further reason against giving a detailed account of Baxter's theological development, as well as a further incentive to dig down to the sources of his thought. Beginning at the most basic level in Chapter One I will therefore endeavour to show the catechetical roots of Baxter's focus on the Triune Baptismal Covenant and his Trinitarian conception of theology as *scientia-affectiva-practica*. Building on this, in Chapter Two I will consider the hallowing of Baxter's logic, by which I mean his conforming of it to the perceived Trinitarian structure of reality. Chapters Three and Four are two parts of a diptych considering respectively the general *vestigia Trinitatis* and the special and highest *vestigium* of the human soul made in the image of God. The material of these two chapters therefore includes the traditional disciplines of physics, metaphysics and psychology as they emerge from Baxter's comprehensive Trinitarian reformation. The final two chapters are also linked. Thus in Chapter Five I consider in detail Baxter's doctrine of the Trinity and its relation to scholastic norms and in Chapter Six the covenantal relation of the Triune God to triune man. My concluding chapter will also be a return to the theme of the Triune Baptismal Covenant, seeking to establish this as the keystone of all of Baxter's theology: that central aspect of his thought by which all its other parts are held together and from which they all radiate.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *CD*, III.917-20.

Chapter One: Touchstones of Theology

1. Introduction

Despite all the attention given to the prominent role of catechising in Baxter's pioneering Kidderminster ministry, the importance of catechisms in shaping his theology has hitherto gone largely unnoticed.¹ In this chapter our aim will be not only to address this question but also to explore the foundational status of catechisms in Baxter's thought, especially as they are the ground of his theological and Trinitarian method.

In the first section of the chapter we will consider catechising in its post-Reformation spiritual and theological context, seeking to show especially how catechisms provided the link between basic instruction and more advanced theological reflection in the era of Protestant Scholasticism. This historical background will also provide an important context for a brief review of Baxter's own catechetical practice in the second section.

In the third and fourth sections we will consider the nature of Baxter's catechetical theology and its Trinitarian shape respectively. We will see here that the basis of both of these is Baxter's conviction that the Triune Baptismal Covenant contains the essentials of Scripture and the essence of the Christian religion itself. Furthermore we will also see that catechisms are important in determining the character, content and method of Baxter's theology, as well as in mediating between basic and more advanced theological instruction.

We shall then turn to consider Baxter's definition of theology as *scientia-affectiva-practica* concerned with the Kingdom of God, contending that this understanding of theology is rooted in both the catechetical process and traditional scholastic

¹ Carl Trueman, for example, notes that the 'basic imperative for catechizing is theological' and describes a comprehensive list of its benefits but only states quite generally Baxter's desire for catechising to 'promote clear theological thinking about controversial matters' ('Lewis Bayly and Richard Baxter', in Carter Lindberg (ed.), *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 61. J. I. Packer's comprehensive discussion of Baxter's theological method only touches very briefly on the connection (*Redemption*, 43, 79-80).

categories. Likewise the characterisation of theology as an affective, practical science will illuminate Baxter's own Trinitarian method, showing the role of the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments as rules of knowledge, desire and practice as well as scriptural *Summas*. In their cohering in the Triune Baptismal Covenant these will be seen not only as the prototype for a larger theological schema (as in other Protestant Scholastic treatises) but also as the connective of theory and praxis and the very fount of Baxter's Trinitarian method.

2. Catechising – Historical and Theological Background

Without doubt catechising played a central role in the Reformation. Shocked by the level of ignorance among the laity, due to what they perceived as centuries of Catholic neglect, the Reformers introduced widespread catechetical programmes. 'Among us', Luther claimed, 'the catechism has come back into use, by right of recovery'. Similarly in the preface to his catechism Calvin reminded his readers that catechising had been widely practised in the early Church, only disappearing in later years.² Indeed catechising aided considerably the rapid spread and consolidation of the Lutheran and Reformed faiths. This was even acknowledged by the Council of Trent, who in the preface to their own counter-catechism reminded the faithful that Protestants had been able to do great mischief to the Church 'especially by those writings called catechisms'.³

In the wake of the Reformation the following centuries were witness to catechetical revival on a massive scale. In England alone from the Reformation to the Enlightenment over 600 catechisms were printed. If European catechisms are included, the number runs into the thousands. The most popular of these English catechisms were runaway bestsellers, in some cases running to tens of editions.⁴ Indeed so prevalent was the practice that at the end of the seventeenth-century Archbishop Tillotson could remark that catechising and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* had

² Cited from Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 13.

³ Cited from Green, *Christian's ABC*, 1.

⁴ Green, *Christian's ABC*, 45-6, 50-3.

been the ‘two great pillars of the Protestant religion’.⁵ According to at least one contemporary commentator, therefore, catechising was instrumental to the success of the English Reformation. Certainly it became ubiquitous in this period, relevant for every kind of person at almost every stage of life.⁶

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries catechising was regarded almost universally as of divine authority and institution and it became commonplace to assert patriarchal and Mosaic descent, with some even claiming that God had catechised Adam in the Garden of Eden!⁷ In the words of the anonymous E. B., catechising ‘ascendeth to the supremest height of antiquitie’.⁸ Moving forward several millennia, catechising was also regarded as a key feature of Jesus’ life and teaching, the ministry of his Apostles and the subsequent history of the early Church.⁹ The claims for a scriptural mandate were bolstered by the presence of forms of the Greek root verb *katechizo* in a number of places in the New Testament. For many the etymology of this word, meaning ‘to echo’ or ‘to resound’, also gave important biblical precedent to the new question and answer format of Reformation catechisms.¹⁰

The popular catechetical tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was remarkably uniform and had five main hallmarks: instruction in the essentials of Christian faith, deepening understanding of Scripture and Church practice, preparation for the Lord’s Supper, distinguishing true from false doctrine and promoting Christian virtue.¹¹ Catechisms were intended as the ‘pure milk’ of the Gospel for those Christian babes not yet able to digest the ‘strong meat’ of more advanced teaching and were held to contain the ‘grounds’ of the Christian faith and

⁵ John Tillotson, *Six Sermons* (London, 1694), 162.

⁶ Thus the preface of the Paget-Openshaw catechism states ‘in foure monethes space, I haue seene these principles and answeares learned by Gentlemen, Yeomen, Horsekeepers, Shepherdes, Carters, Milkmaidess, Kitchen-boyes, et al in that household...’ (Robert Openshaw and Eusebius Paget, *Short Questions and Answeares* (London, 1579), ‘To Christian Parents and Householders’).

⁷ I. F., *Of the Necessitie and Antiquitie of Catechising* (London, 1617) offers a comprehensive survey of catechising from creation to the time of Christ.

⁸ E. B., ‘To Christian Parents’, in Caspar Olevian, *A Catechisme* (London, 1617).

⁹ I. F., *Necessitie and Antiquitie*; cf. Green, *Christian’s ABC*, 22-4.

¹⁰ Green, *Christian’s ABC*, 23-5.

¹¹ Green, *Christian’s ABC*, 26. This list compares well with that found in Olevian (*Catechisme*, ‘To Christian Parents’) and in Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus, The Reformed Pastor* (London, 1656); cf. Trueman, ‘Bayly’, 61.

its ‘first principles’ – those points of faith regarded as absolutely necessary for salvation.¹² In Richard Bernard’s words it was intended to preserve the ‘purity of doctrine’ and to stop men turning like weather-cocks.¹³ Without a catechetical basis it was held impossible for the average layman either to understand preaching properly or to participate in the sacraments, and a large proportion of catechisms were therefore specifically designed to ensure worthy communicating.¹⁴ Finally, moving beyond the sphere of the Church, catechisms were intended to cement social relations and encourage the reform of manners. This may be seen for example in Cranmer’s *Catechismus*, one of the earliest English vernacular catechisms, which advocates ‘honest conversation of lyuynges’ coupled with ‘office and dewtie’ towards God, the King and their respective servants and ministers.¹⁵

From the onset of the Reformation the catechism also attained new theological prominence. Thus Luther in his ‘Greater Catechism’ remarked that even a doctor of theology could never be past his catechism.¹⁶ Likewise Calvin’s *Institutes* itself began its life as an extended catechetical essay, even in later editions retaining its credal structure.¹⁷ In the years after the Reformation this catechetical basis of theology became established in the common distinction between ‘popular’ and ‘scholastic’ method.¹⁸ This may be seen as early as Ursinus’ *Doctrinae Christianae Compendium*, in its division between ‘catecheticall institution’ intended for both learned and unlearned, a ‘handling of common places’ containing a larger explanation of each point and ‘diligent meditation of the Scripture’ which is theology’s highest degree.¹⁹ This division became the basis for subsequent Reformed prolegomena and can be seen, for example, in the works of Paraeus,

¹² For example William Gouge, *A Short Catechisme* (London, 1615) lays down the ‘fundamentall principles of the Christian religion’ and John Ball, *A Short Treatise* (London, 1654) contains all the ‘principal grounds of the Christian religion’.

¹³ Richard Bernard, *Two Twinnes* (London, 1613), 8.

¹⁴ Green, *Christian’s ABC*, 539-56.

¹⁵ Thomas Cranmer, *Catechismus* (London, 1548), ‘Epistle Dedicatory’.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, ‘Greater Catechism’, in *Luther’s Primary Works*, ed. Carl Buchheim and Henry Wace, (London, 1896), 25.

¹⁷ François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of his Religious Thought* (London: Collins, 1965), 112-23. See also Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 101-17.

¹⁸ Donald Sinnema, ‘The Distinction between Scholastic and Popular: Andreas Hyperius and Reformed Scholasticism’, in Trueman and Clark (ed.), *Protestant Scholasticism*, 127-43.

¹⁹ Zacharias Ursinus, *The Summe of Christian Religion* (Oxford, 1587), 2.

Maccovius and Alsted.²⁰ On a more popular level it is apparent in Egerton's identification of catechisms, common places and commentaries as the staples of 'divine knowledge' for the learned Englishman.²¹

This hierarchical structure however should not be taken to imply the complete isolation of one element from another, for the catechism was the common prerequisite for all,²² often functioning as the prolegomenon to a larger theological system. A good example of this is provided by Edward Leigh who like Ursinus held to a threefold model of 'succinct and brief' catechetical instruction, 'prolix and large...scholasticall' discussion of common places and the 'diligent meditation of Scripture'. Significantly the prolegomenon to his own scholastic *Body of Divinity* consists of a discussion on catechising from Hebrews 6:1, which leads seamlessly into the doctrine of Christ as *fundamentum quid* and Scripture as *fundamentum quo*, thus establishing the pattern for his entire work.²³

As well as acting in a prolegomenal role, a catechetical structure could also be used to frame an entire systematic theology. In this way, as we shall see borne out by Baxter himself, there was a significant overlap between the higher level catechisms and the more basic theological systems, often making it difficult to distinguish between the two. A good example here is Ussher's *Body of Divinity*, referred to by Crawford Gribben as 'Puritanism's earliest and most important volume of systematic theology'.²⁴ Divided into fifty two 'heads', this gave a systematic coverage of the whole of theology entirely through a question and answer format. True to its catechetical roots it also included long expositions of both the Ten Commandments

²⁰ *PRRD*, 1.197-203.

²¹ Stephen Egerton, 'To the Christian Reader', in Matthieu Virel, *A Learned and Excellent Treatise* (London, 1603).

²² Ursinus, *Summe*, 2.

²³ Edward Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity* (London, 1654), 'Prolegomena', I.3. Leigh's identification of Hebrews 6 as an early Church catechism is an important example of just how deeply the practice of catechising was seen as being embedded in Scripture.

²⁴ Crawford Gribben, 'A New Introduction', in James Ussher, *A Body of Divinity: Being the Sum and Substance of the Christian Religion* (London, 1677; repr. Birmingham: Solid Ground, 2007), xi.

and the Lord's Prayer.²⁵ Significantly there is also extant a condensation of the whole into a much smaller, more manageable catechism.²⁶

Ussher's *Body of Divinity* is also thought to have exerted considerable influence on the divines of the Westminster Assembly.²⁷ This is illustrative of the important role that catechisms often played in shaping authoritative confessional documents. Such a process has long been recognised at work in the formation of the Heidelberg Catechism, for it is clear that this draws extensively on the catechisms of Ursinus as well as those of a number of other theologians from a range of confessional backgrounds.²⁸ It is seen even more clearly in the English context of the Westminster Catechisms, which are sourced in Ussher's *Body of Divinity* as well as in an array of other popular catechisms in terms of their structure and even their very wording.²⁹

Finally as well as giving birth, or at least acting in the capacity of midwife, to a range of confessional standards, catechisms could themselves become the basis for entire theological systems. It was extremely common for theologians to write commentaries on standard catechisms, much as medieval theologians had expounded Lombard's *Sentences*, which then became systems of theology in their own right. This gave rise to what Muller has called 'two-level systematic essays', which provided the Reformed orthodox with 'a methodological tool for developing and coordinating their theology at several levels'. Such a practice was particularly prevalent among the Dutch, who employed Ursinus' popular lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism as a standard model. Likewise in seventeenth-century England there developed an entire industry of commenting on the Westminster Catechism, continuing well into the eighteenth century and even beyond.³⁰ One of the earliest examples of such a commentary was that of Joseph Alleine, one of

²⁵ Ussher, *Body of Divinity*, 185-299, 309-45.

²⁶ James Ussher, *A Brief Method of the Doctrine of Christian Religion* (London, 1677), 419-30.

²⁷ Gribben, 'Introduction', xii-xiii. A. A. Hodge claimed that Ussher's *Body of Divinity* had more to do in forming the Westminster Catechism and Confession than any other book in the world. On this basis Gribben suggests that it was 'one of the foundational texts in the construction of pan-Reformed orthodoxy'.

²⁸ Lyle Bierma, *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 75-103.

²⁹ Alexander Mitchell, *Catechisms of the Second Reformation* (London, 1886), xxxi-xxxiv, 1-38.

³⁰ *PRRD*, 1.201-2.

Baxter's closest friends. Baxter himself held the Westminster Shorter Catechism in the highest regard, referring to it in his *Confession* as 'the best catechism that ever I yet saw'. Significantly the only possible lack he could find was that the catechism was not 'more copious' concerning the 'mysterie of the Trinity'.³¹ This was something he certainly sought to remedy in his own catechisms.

3. Baxter's Catechetical Practice

Richard Baxter's catechetical ministry represents one of the high points of the Puritan tradition. Both in his own parish of Kidderminster and much further afield Baxter's pioneering practice of catechising had a remarkable impact. Indeed it was largely through this ministry, immortalised in his *Reformed Pastor*, that Baxter earned his wider reputation. As such his pastoral practice is well known and for this reason we shall not stay too long in describing it.

The parish of Kidderminster, as the scene of Baxter's earliest and greatest pastoral triumphs, was also the testing ground for his catechetical ministry. In the early years of his tenure Baxter neglected catechising in favour of a tireless programme of preaching.³² This changed however following a visit to London in 1654-5. It seems to have been here that Baxter gained a particular enthusiasm for catechising, perhaps through the influence of Archbishop Ussher whom he met during his sojourn and later came to regard as his mentor.³³ Certainly later, in the *Reformed Pastor*, Baxter quotes approvingly a sermon of Ussher's before King James I at Wanstead, in which Ussher advocated strongly the need for catechising.³⁴ However, whether Ussher was

³¹ Richard Baxter, *Rich. Baxter's Confession of his Faith* (London, 1655), 14-5.

³² We may learn this from the *Reliquiae*, I.83 where Baxter says 'I only catechised them in the Church; and conferred with now and then, one occasionally'.

³³ Frederick Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691* (London: Kessinger, 2008 (reprint)), 126-8. J. William Black in *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 181-2 dismisses Powicke's suggestion in favour of his own thesis concerning the influence of Martin Bucer. However this remains hypothetical and unsubstantiated as indeed John Morrill points out in the introduction to the work.

³⁴ Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 'To my Reverend and Dearly Beloved Brethren'. See also *Reliquiae*, I.103-4.

the main influence on him or not, we *do* find Baxter at the end of his London period preaching boldly before Cromwell the necessity of a national catechetical ministry.³⁵

On his return from London Baxter immediately began to implement his programme of catechising, making it his aim to catechise the whole of his flock every year. Together Baxter and his two assistants devoted the best part of two days to this task, catechising upwards of fourteen or fifteen families per week, making it just feasible to catechise the full complement of all 800 families every year.³⁶ All in all it was a sterling effort and one for which Baxter justly became widely known far beyond the boundaries of Worcestershire.

As well as starting his own model Kidderminster ministry, Baxter was also involved in a number of larger catechetical initiatives. The most important of these was his Worcester Association, a group of ministers of different churchmanship gathered by Baxter and united by a common ‘apprehension’ of the great need for catechising and theological instruction in their parishes. Baxter’s hope for this movement was twofold: firstly to foster wider Christian unity and secondly to set in train a national Reformation. He intended the grounds of this unity to be the catechetical staples of the Creed, Lord’s Prayer and Decalogue as may be seen from the Catechism and Articles of agreement that he drew up for the Association. In these Baxter sets out a pattern of Church life and discipline oriented around the Triune Baptismal Covenant.³⁷ The importance of the Baptismal Covenant can also be seen in the Association’s renewed emphasis on Confirmation. This Baxter viewed as a necessary transitional stage between infant and adult Church membership and came to regard as foundational.³⁸ Indeed it was his desire for the Baptismal Covenant and the Creed in particular to become the grounds of Church unity and comprehension.³⁹

The full grandeur of Baxter’s catechetical enterprise may be seen in his vision for a national Reformation. Thus in the *Reformed Pastor* he speaks of the great privilege that his fellow ministers have to be the ‘beginners and awakeners of the nation’ and

³⁵ Powicke, *Life*, 128.

³⁶ Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 328-9.

³⁷ Baxter, *The Christian Religion Expressed* (London, 1660), 5-14.

³⁸ Richard Baxter, *Confirmation and Restauration* (London, 1658), ‘To the Reader’, 36-7.

³⁹ Richard Baxter, *Rich. Baxter’s Catholick Theologie* (London, 1675), ‘Preface’.

suggests that untold millions could be blessed by such a ministry. His hope is that those ‘yet unborn’ might one day live to thank them and that through the Association’s ministry a blessed spiritual inheritance might be secured for generations to come.⁴⁰ It is clear that Baxter viewed catechising as a kind of ‘missing-link’ of the Puritan project. He therefore suggests that all the success of previous initiatives for promoting spiritual revival, such as the Parliamentary days of national prayer and fasting, were simply a foretaste of what could be achieved through a unified and diligent catechising ministry. This he says is the secret ingredient of that universal ‘discipline’ so long sought and prayed for.⁴¹

It was therefore an enormous frustration to him when the Restoration brought an end to his catechising and Association ministry, with the ejections of 1662 finally dashing irretrievably the high hopes spelled out in his *Reformed Pastor*. We find him saying poignantly in the *Reliquiae* that ‘since bishops were restored this book is useless, and that work not medled with’.⁴² In these later years his focus therefore shifted towards the nurturing of the non-conformist remnant. In this, as John Brouwer suggests, he saw the family unit – the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* – as forming the core of the non-conformist movement.⁴³ Likewise, as the preface to the *Christian Directory* reveals, he also came to regard books as his only remaining way of preaching.⁴⁴ It is in this context therefore that we should see his writing of the *Poor Man’s Family Book* and the *Catechizing of Families*, both of which are post-Restoration works.

Overall, Baxter’s catechetical programme clearly transcended the merely individual. Instead he pitched his hope on the transformation of Church and Society.⁴⁵ Here we see the theo-political dimension of Baxter’s catechetical endeavour, in his dynamic conception of the outworking of the Kingdom of God. In this the catechism as political instrument serves a higher politics in which love is regarded as the soul of

⁴⁰ Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 308-9.

⁴¹ Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 379.

⁴² Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.115.

⁴³ John Brouwer, ‘Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory*: Context and Content’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2005), Chapter Four.

⁴⁴ Baxter, *CD*, ‘Advertisement’.

⁴⁵ Trueman, ‘Bayly’, 61-3.

the law. Ultimately then catechising was intended to realise his dream of a ‘Holy Commonwealth’, or sanctified society, living in covenant with the Triune God.⁴⁶

4. Baxter’s Catechetical Theology

4.1. Essentials of the Christian Religion

Underpinning Baxter’s catechetical theology was his distinctive conception of the relation between Scripture and the catechism. In particular, Baxter’s identification of the essentials of the Christian religion with the main elements of the catechism meant that catechisms came to play a central role in his theological enterprise.

Baxter regarded the Bible as the supreme, although not the *sole*, authoritative source of doctrine, insisting on its dual divine-human nature. However this distinction between the two natures of Scripture entailed a question of ‘unspeakable moment’—how we may be sure of the revelation delivered down to us.⁴⁷ Baxter’s own answer to this sceptical enquiry bears some similarity to the ‘latitudinarian’ solution to the problem found in William Chillingworth and his later followers.⁴⁸ It relied firstly on constructing a secure chain of historical testimony and secondly on drawing out the essential, undeniable truths of revelation. Thus while Baxter believed that every word of the Bible spoken by God is infallibly true, he did not think that every truth had equal evidence.⁴⁹ This caused him to focus on the essentials, those truths particularly relating to Christ, confirmed beyond doubt by great miracles,⁵⁰ and held to be necessary for salvation.⁵¹ For Baxter these essentials were ‘comprehended in the Baptismal Covenant instituted by Christ’ himself, which he believed to contain the covenanting parties, the covenanting benefits and the essential duties of

⁴⁶ Richard Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth* (London, 1659), 1-75.

⁴⁷ Richard Baxter, *The Catechizing of Families* (London, 1683), 29.

⁴⁸ For more on this see: William Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (Georgia: University of Georgia, 1993), 14-23, 72-89). Its classic expression may be found in William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford, 1638).

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 32.

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 54. For evidence that miracles were also important for the Latitudinarians see, for example, Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae* (London, 1662), Chapter IX.

⁵¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.12-17.

Christianity, all expressed in terms of man's union with the Trinity and sealed by Christ's own promise.⁵²

In the *Methodus* Baxter formalised the relation between Scripture and the Triune Baptismal Covenant under the notion of the threefold Gospel, making a distinction between the essentials or integrals of the Christian faith and its mere accidentals. Drawing on the Augustinian distinction between signs and things⁵³ he described the integrals – such as the Trinity, grace and glory – as the objective things of the Christian religion, and not simply the words or notions signifying them.⁵⁴ The threefold Gospel itself consisted of the Gospel as manifest in its various 'contractions': the Triune Baptismal Covenant as the most contracted form, the three 'little summaries' of the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue as the intermediate form, containing the necessary integrals, and the whole Canon of Holy Scripture as the most expanded form, containing the lesser non-essential things and accidentals.⁵⁵ As he put it, 'the Scripture is like a man's body, where some parts are but for the preservation of the rest, and may be maimed without death. The sense is the soul of the Scripture, and the letters but the body, or vehicle. The doctrine of the Creed, Lords Prayer and Decalogue, and Baptism, and Lords Supper, is the vital part, and Christianity it self'.⁵⁶

Thus the Triune Baptismal Covenant formed the very heart of the Gospel. This Baxter held not simply conceptually, as it was the supreme contraction of Scripture, but also historically, describing it as the motivation for the entire witness of the Church and the seed of the New Testament itself.⁵⁷ Furthermore the importance Baxter attached to the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue as 'intermediate' expressions of the Gospel is highly significant for our study of his theological and Trinitarian method.

⁵² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.13.

⁵³ Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, tr. R. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8-9; cf. *PRRD*, 1.89-90.

⁵⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.12-13.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.93-4.

⁵⁶ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 30.

⁵⁷ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 75-6.

Baxter's understanding of the relation between Creed and Triune Baptismal Covenant was shaped by his reading of contemporary scholarship. In particular, he derived from Sanford and Parker's comprehensive *De Descensu Christi* the view that the Apostles' Creed had its origin in the Triune Baptismal Covenant.⁵⁸ This gave Baxter the grounds for arguing that the Creed is nothing other than the exposition of the three baptismal articles and that its genesis was considerably before the writing of the New Testament. Nevertheless he denied the traditional view that its words had been written by the Apostles and instead followed the scholarship of Ussher and Vossius, as well as Sanford and Parker, who argued that the words of the Creed were not finally fixed until centuries after the Resurrection. In their view the Creed itself developed gradually from the Triune Baptismal formula – 'I believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' – out of the need for the Church to have a clear dogmatic statement against heretics.⁵⁹ In Sanford and Parker's picturesque language, reminiscent of Baxter's own imagery, the clauses of the Creed were the 'splendid clothes' subsequently wrapped around the naked body of the Triune Baptismal Covenant.⁶⁰

Baxter's engagement with contemporary scholarship indicates that what was important to him was not the words of the Creed so much as the authenticity of the truths that they contained – another instance of the Augustinian distinction. In this he can be seen as in opposition to those Biblicists, present at the Westminster Assembly, who branded the Creed as late and apocryphal and suggested it should be discarded as a theological warrant.⁶¹ Baxter's own stance against such biblicism is apparent from his role in the 1654-5 Conference to determine the Fundamentals of Religion. In this 'ticklish business' he found himself opposing the 'over-orthodox' party led by John Owen and Francis Cheynell. Against them Baxter held that only the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue should be offered to Parliament as

⁵⁸ Hugh Sanford and Robert Parker, *De Descensu Christi ad Inferos* (Amsterdam, 1611), IV.4-8.

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 'Appendix'; Richard Baxter, *A Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared* (London, 1689), 70-3. See further James Ussher, *De Romanae Ecclesiae Symbolo Apostolico* (Oxford, 1660); Gerard Vossius, *Dissertationes Tres de Tribus Symbolis* (Amsterdam, 1642), 1-36.

⁶⁰ Sanford and Parker, *De Descensu Christi*, IV.9.

⁶¹ Chad van Dixhoorn, 'Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly 1643-1652' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2004), 211-70.

essentials. For as he summarised it ‘*quoad rem* there is no more essential or fundamental in religion, but what is contained in our Baptismal Covenant’ and that ‘*quoad verba*, I suppose that no particular words in the world are essentials of our religion’.⁶²

Owen and his party, although they respected the Creed,⁶³ objected to this as giving overly broad terms of subscription encompassing even Catholics and Socinians. Instead, ‘extolling the Holy Scriptures’, they held ‘that no man could know God to salvation by any other means’. For Baxter however this was a subversion of the Christian Church and faith, establishing the Scriptures, rather than God their author, as the formal object of faith. Furthermore he welcomed broader terms of subscription with open arms as providing the best opportunity for concord. In his own views submitted to the conference he identified the main difference between him and Owen as concerning the manner of doctrinal transmission rather than the doctrine transmitted. According to Baxter, Owen held that there could be no salvation without Scripture revelation and that there was no possibility of any ‘co-ordinate way of revealing Christ’. By contrast Baxter held that ‘the very sum and kernel of the Gospel’ had been ‘constantly delivered down by Baptism as a collateral way distinct from the written Word’ and, drawing from Ussher, that Creeds and catechising had likewise been another important ‘collateral way of delivering down the saving truths of the Gospel’. By denying this Owen indeed threatened the faith and assurance of many Christians.⁶⁴

Baxter’s exchange with Owen indicates the foundational nature of Creeds and catechisms in his theology, particularly as summarised in the Triune Baptismal Covenant. It also provides the first intimation of Baxter’s view that theology could and indeed should admit the witness of other collaterals besides Scripture. The most important of these for Baxter were found in Baptism and the Creed which he

⁶² Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.197-205.

⁶³ Trueman suggests that the Creeds functioned as important ‘heuristic devices’ for Owen. In his later correspondence with Baxter, Owen suggested Scripture, the Apostles’ Creed and the first four Ecumenical Councils as a test of orthodoxy (*Claims of Truth*, 29-30).

⁶⁴ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.197-205.

regarded as co-ordinate streams of revelation of equal authority to Scripture.⁶⁵ Another very important, if lesser, collateral was seen in the witness of creation apprehended by reason. Baxter's theology, as we shall see, was intended to pay attention to each of these theological warrants in due proportion to their importance, implying that its content must be as much catechetical as scriptural.

4.2. Theology as *Scientia-Affectiva-Practica*

Like many of his predecessors Baxter held to a kind of two-tier view of catechetical theology. The first tier of 'popular' theology regarded catechisms as a condensed body of saving knowledge – the essentials of Christianity – and, as we shall see, therefore laid particular stress on the nature of theology as an affective and practical discipline, as well as on its habitual character. The second tier built upon this perspective, but was particularly concerned with the role of catechisms as methodological paradigms, providing the templates for in-depth theological discussion. Catechetical reflection therefore acted as the nucleus or seed for a more rigorous systematic or scholastic theology, providing both the genesis of Baxter's theology and its fruition as a comprehensive scientific, affective and practical discipline.

For Baxter all theology, whether catechetical or otherwise, began with the Augustinian distinction between words and things. Thus at the beginning of his *Methodus* Baxter says:

*Syllabarum partes sunt literae, verborum syllabae, sententiarum verba, orationis sententiae, cuius ORDO et debita compaginatio methodus est. ORDO aut RERUM aut verborum et sententiarum est... Quoniam autem conceptus et verba sunt rebus conformanda, vera methodi ratio in conformitate hac consistit.*⁶⁶

Words then are the requisite signs of spiritual things. As he says in his *Catechizing of Families*, 'words are signs, by which we are helpt to know the things, and must be diligently learned to that end... God worketh on man as man, and we must know by

⁶⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.112. Here Baxter says the authority of the Creed is neither more nor less than Scripture.

⁶⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

signs, till we know by intuition'.⁶⁷ Indeed Baxter was only too well aware that attention to words alone without reference to things was a recipe for both theological disaster and Church division.⁶⁸

Catechetical theology was thus in the first place intended to teach the distinction between words and things on a popular level.⁶⁹ Its domain was the 'essentials' of the Christian religion and Baxter therefore characterises it as the 'knowledge of so much of theologie as is necessary, to your own duty and salvation'.⁷⁰ The first task of the catechist was therefore to make his catechism as plain as possible and in particular to avoid both minutiae and controversies in religion.⁷¹ The priority was always that the people must be taught 'very familiarly and plainly, according to their capacities, beginning with the plain and necessary things'. Catechising was therefore 'nothing but the choosing out of the few, plain, necessary matters from all the rest and in due method or order teaching them to the ignorant'.⁷²

The second task of a 'popular' catechetical theology was the effective communication of these spiritual truths. This involved bridging the divide between words and things. For 'true wisdom' did not lie in storing up a 'treasury of words and second notions' but rather in the knowledge of things themselves.⁷³ Baxter was particularly concerned about those who 'like parrots rest in the utterance of words', never considering or understanding 'the sense, much less the power and practice of what their tongues recite'.⁷⁴ A comprehensive programme of catechising, involving repeated reading, memorising, verbalising and reflecting, was thus intended to counter any such tendencies and lead to a personal appropriation of divine truths.

To foster such appropriation as much as possible Baxter held that catechetical education should begin in childhood, even before children could fully understand what they had been taught.⁷⁵ It was his view that children 'can never begin to learn

⁶⁷ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 'Reason and Use'.

⁶⁸ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, 'Preface'.

⁶⁹ Cf. Trueman, 'Bayly', 61.

⁷⁰ Baxter, *CD*, III.917.

⁷¹ Baxter, *CD*, III.499, 574.

⁷² Baxter, *Catechizing*, 4.

⁷³ Baxter, *KL*, 15.

⁷⁴ Richard Baxter, *An Apology for the Nonconformists Ministry* (London, 1681), 22.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *CD*, III.582.

that too soon which they were made and redeemed to learn, and which their whole lives must be employed in practising'.⁷⁶ In order to 'bed down' these essentials, Baxter laid out in the *Christian Directory* a whole curriculum for a general theological education designed not only to ensure complete grounding in the catechetical staples but also to enable a gradual ascent in theological complexity.

This programme begins with the expounding of the Triune Baptismal Covenant 'as the summ of all that is essential to Christianity'. In doing this Baxter suggests that parents should help their children to understand the meaning of their baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as a covenant made between God and man. His reasoning is that this will enable them further to explain the nature of God and man as covenant partners, beginning with man as made in the image of God and moving on to consider God's essential nature and attributes, with such an approach opening the way to a full discussion of the history of the relation between God and man through the stages of Creation, Fall, Redemption, Sanctification and Glorification.⁷⁷

After gaining an understanding of baptism Baxter suggested that children should be taught the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue and have it explained to them that these are rules of belief, desire and practice, essential for fulfilling the covenantal obligations of faith and obedience. At this stage they could also begin to learn their first catechism and Baxter recommended either his own catechism or those of the Westminster Assembly.⁷⁸ Baxter evidently expected the child to be learning his catechism at school as well as at home, for the *Catechizing of Families* was written 'in hope that family and school-diligence, may do much to keep up true religion'.⁷⁹

With this completed, the catechumens were finally ready to graduate to a full exposition of each element of the catechism. These Baxter suggested should be 'not too large to confound them, nor too brief so as to be hardly understood'. For an overall summary he recommended Brinsley's *True Watch*, but for more detailed explanation he suggested that parents should read aloud to their children the works of

⁷⁶ Baxter, *CD*, III.917.

⁷⁷ Baxter, *CD*, III.584-5.

⁷⁸ Baxter, *CD*, III.584.

⁷⁹ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 'Title Page'.

William Perkins on the Creed, Dr King on the Lord's Prayer and John Dod on the Commandments, proceeding one article, one petition and one commandment at a time. At this final stage of catechetical education the catechist should in 'familiar discourse... open plainly to them one head or article of religion at a time'.⁸⁰ It is here then that we see the beginning of the transition into a more advanced catechetical theology.

While this programme was designed for children, Baxter certainly did not think that catechetical education should cease after childhood or Confirmation. Instead he held that the principles learned early in life should continue to form the bedrock of Christian piety and practice. Reflecting in his *Reliquiae* on his own theological development Baxter says 'now it is the fundamental doctrines of the catechism, which I highest value, and daily think of, and find most useful to my self and others... they are to me as my daily bread and drink. And as I can speak and write of them over and over again; so I had rather read or hear of them, than of any of the school niceties, which once so much pleased me'.⁸¹ Clearly Baxter would have agreed with Luther in his opinion that even a theologian never progresses beyond the truths of the catechism!

At the heart of Baxter's catechetical theology is his conviction that belief in Christian essentials should translate into an affective and practical faith. It was axiomatic to Baxter that 'knowledge and goodness have a communicative nature'.⁸² This is one of the main reasons why his educational curriculum offers repeated and prolonged exposure to the essential things themselves. Baxter's hope was that through the spiritual power and efficacy of the words as mediating the essentials, catechetical truths should become a part of the catechumen, informing every aspect of their being. As he writes:

The essential necessary truths of your religion, must imprint the image of God upon your hearts, and must dwell there continually, and you must live upon them as your bread, and drink, and daily necessary food. All other points must be studied in subserviency to those. All lesser duties must be used as the exercise of the love of God or man, and of a humble

⁸⁰ Baxter, *CD*, III.584.

⁸¹ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.126.

⁸² Baxter, *Catechizing*, 4.

heavenly mind. The articles of your Creed, and points of catechism, are fountains ever running, affording you matter for the continual exercise of grace.⁸³

In this we may readily see Baxter's fulfilment of Paul's injunction 'to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom'.⁸⁴ Catechising itself was this 'imprinting', as it worked iteratively through memorising and reflecting.

The process of learning, understanding and spiritual transformation which the catechism initiated and encouraged thus provided the pattern for Baxter's whole theological endeavour. As we have begun to see, for Baxter, theological education and formation entailed participation in the dynamic relationship between words and things. Therefore at the opening of his *Catechizing of Families* he says that true religion is a habit and becomes in us a divine nature.⁸⁵ The nature of habits and their Trinitarian grounding will be an important concern of later chapters of this thesis. For now it is sufficient to define a habit as an indwelling principle of action. Through continual exposure to truth catechising was intended to shape a person's habitual character. It is such a habitual understanding of theology, shared with many of his Protestant scholastic contemporaries, which lay at the heart of Baxter's catechetical enterprise.⁸⁶

In Baxter's thought it is impossible to isolate theological method from its affective and practical concerns. To do so would be to violate the whole character of theology, for theology deals with living truth and therefore all method must subserve this. His initial counsel to young divinity students in his *Christian Directory* is therefore that 'the order of their studies is such as respecteth their whole lives' and is informed throughout by the principle that 'the right intention of our end is antecedent to all right use of means'.⁸⁷ For Baxter there can be no such thing as neutral or redundant knowledge. This he puts very starkly saying 'they that would not have

⁸³ Baxter, *CD*, I.40.

⁸⁴ Colossians 3:16 (KJV).

⁸⁵ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 'Reasons and Use'.

⁸⁶ *PRRD*, 1.355-9.

⁸⁷ Baxter, *CD*, III.917.

children begin with divinity, would have them serve the devil and the flesh. God must be our first and last and all'.⁸⁸

It is for this reason that a rigorous training in theological method comes only after the student has mastered the catechism and attained a thorough grounding in Scripture History.⁸⁹ At this stage Baxter also stresses the necessity of reading 'the most plain and suitable books of practical divinity', a comprehensive list of which he provides in the *Christian Directory*.⁹⁰ His recommendation is to read 'as many affectionate practical English writers as you can get'. At the end of a list of more than sixty of these he reiterates this point saying 'as many as you can get'.⁹¹ As Packer suggests, Baxter clearly 'has little hope for young ministers who will not steep themselves in affectionate practical English writers'.⁹²

A large part of the purpose of this preliminary grounding in practical divinity was to make sure that students did not depart from a scriptural method of theology. Baxter warns against this danger specifically:

And finally, the truth is, that the sacred Scriptures are now too much undervalued, and philosophy much overvalued by many both as to evidence and usefulness. And a few plain certain truths which all our catechisms contain, well pressed and practised, would make a better Church and Christians, than is now to be found among us all.⁹³

This statement is striking for, as we shall see, much of Baxter's own theology draws extensively from logic, metaphysics and philosophy. However this thesis will argue that the logical and metaphysical shape of Baxter's thought is conditioned throughout by both Scripture and especially these 'few plain certain truths' of the catechism. We may see this on a preliminary level from the fact that it is only once the catechism and Scripture are truly mastered and understood, and their spiritual truth properly digested, that the student can progress in sequence to other important

⁸⁸ Baxter, *CD*, III.917.

⁸⁹ Baxter, *CD*, III.918-20.

⁹⁰ Baxter, *CD*, III.918, 922.

⁹¹ Baxter, *CD*, III.922.

⁹² Packer, *Quest*, 49.

⁹³ Baxter, *CD*, III.922.

disciplines.⁹⁴ Indeed for Baxter, as will appear in the course of this study, the understanding and systematising of these other disciplines often builds upon the basic truths learned in catechising.

Divinity proper comes last in Baxter's suggested order of studies, for he did not want students to embark in studies of theological systems and methods before they were properly prepared and spiritually mature. He may have also hoped that by studying other disciplines first students would gain a better theoretical and practical awareness of the vital distinction between signs and things. Whatever the reason, Baxter advises his students that 'when you come to divinity, I am not for their way that would have you begin with the Fathers, and thence form a body of divinity to yourselves'. To his mind this would simply be to invite confusion and error, as well as the proliferation of individualised theologies.⁹⁵ As he says:

And in good sadness, can you that have read both, believe that the writings of the Fathers are as methodical, as accurate, as sound, as full, as useful to form a true body of theology in the mind, as the later writers are? Can you believe this? Is there any thing among them to these uses, like Melancthon's *Loci Communes*, Tzededines Tables, Calvin's *Inst.* Polanus, Ludov. Crocius, Georgius Sohnius, Amesius, *Theses Salmuenses*, *Synops. Theol. Leidensium*, *Camero*, etc. Or if you had rather like Arminius, Episcopius, Dr Hammond, especially like Bishop Andrews, Dr Field, Bishop Davenant, etc.⁹⁶

This is not to say that Baxter was hostile to patristic theology; indeed his own works bear testimony to a critical appreciation of it. Rather he did not think it appropriate for a theological novice and especially one who had only just grasped the basic rudiments of the Christian faith.

For this reason Baxter quickly draws his readers' attention away from the Fathers to contemporary theology, which he eulogises as 'incomparably more methodical, judicious, full, clear, and excellently fitted also by application, to the good of souls, than any that are known to us since the writing of the sacred Scriptures'. His advice is that the young theological student should begin with a 'conjunction of English

⁹⁴ Baxter, *CD*, III.918-20.

⁹⁵ Baxter, *CD*, III.920.

⁹⁶ Richard Baxter, *A Third Defence of the Cause of Peace* (London, 1681), 18.

Catechisms, and the Confessions of all the Churches, and the practical holy writings of our English divines'. These, he says, not only contain the principles of the Christian religion 'but do press them in so warm a working manner as is likeliest to bring them to the heart'.⁹⁷ Having assembled 'six or seven of the most judicious catechisms' and all the 'Confessions of the churches', Baxter's recommendation is to 'compare them well together'.⁹⁸ His purpose in doing this, we may presume, was primarily for students to gain an appreciation of the fundamental doctrines and their usual orderings. With this complete Baxter advises to 'read over three or four of the soundest systemes of divinity' and then proceed via 'some larger theses' to the 'study of the clearest and exactest methodists'.⁹⁹ As a means of transition from catechetical theology to systematic he recommends particularly Ames's *Marrow of Theology* as a first port of call.¹⁰⁰

Underlying Baxter's consideration of catechisms as shaping and patterning affective divinity was his conviction that they form the proper template for all true theological method. Catechetical theology is thus not only prolegomenal in nature, but also wholly integral to Baxter's systematic theology. This is because catechisms follow a scriptural method in the unfolding of theological truth. In its essentials he held that this 'most beautiful and regulating method' of Scripture was that of the Triune Baptismal Covenant, consisting simply of expositions of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Decalogue. Through this method he thought that words might be properly conformed to things and the pattern of divine wisdom manifested without any impediment. Compared to this Baxter dismissed the 'logical systems of philosophers' and the most part of metaphysical systems as mere 'childish trifles', holding that 'whoever has learned or taught rightly Baptism, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and Decalogue learns or teaches the true and necessary method of theology'.¹⁰¹

Baxter also suggests that this method should be combined with further elucidations of Christ, the special laws and the sacraments and be expounded by a 'political method' in the context of the institution, constitution and administration of the

⁹⁷ Baxter, *CD*, III.920.

⁹⁸ Baxter, *CD*, III.898.

⁹⁹ Baxter, *CD*, III.920.

¹⁰⁰ Baxter, *CD*, III.581.

¹⁰¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

Kingdom of God. It is because of this fidelity both to Scripture and to a ‘political hermeneutic’ that Baxter privileges ‘our more common catechisms’ above every other attempt at systematic theology known to him, with the sole exception of George Lawson’s *Theo-Politica*, a work which he saw as the most refined expression of the scriptural and political method in theology.¹⁰² We shall return to Lawson and his influence on Baxter’s ‘political method’ in Chapter Two. For our purposes here, what is more important is the vital role that catechisms can be seen to have played in forming Baxter’s theo-political as well as his Trinitarian method.

Baxter’s final piece of advice to students in the *Christian Directory* is instructive and particularly demonstrates the practical, affective and methodological impulses that he thought should condition all theology:

And think not that you well understand divinity, till 1. you know it as methodized and joynted in a due-scheme, and the several parts of it in their several schemes, seeing you know not the beauty nor the true sense of things, if you know them not in their proper places, where they stand in their several respects to other points. And 2. till it be wrought into your very hearts, and digested into a holy nature: For when all is done, it is only a holy and heavenly life, that will prove you wise, and make you happy and give you solid peace and comfort.¹⁰³

Here again we see the connection between method and the habitual nature of true theology, with the in-forming of a holy nature as the summit of the Christian theological enterprise.

The habitual, affective, practical and methodological character of Baxter’s catechetical theology, along with its political concern, are significantly all combined in his discussion of the nature of theology in the first chapter of the *Methodus*. Here he defines theology as ‘*scientia-affectiva practica de Regno Dei super hominibus*’.¹⁰⁴ Leaving aside, for the moment, its political dimension, it is clear that this definition combines harmoniously into one a number of significant scholastic accounts of the nature of theology.

¹⁰² Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’.

¹⁰³ Baxter, *CD*, III.920.

¹⁰⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.3. See also Baxter, *Confession*, 14.

The debate over the genus of theology in both the medieval and Protestant Scholastic age was highly complex. Broadly speaking however it concerned two related questions: to which of the five Aristotelian genera (*intelligentia, scientia, sapientia, prudentia* or *ars*) theology should be assigned and whether it should be considered as theoretical, practical or affective in character. Aquinas famously held that theology was the highest theoretical science, receiving its principles directly from God himself.¹⁰⁵ However while Scotus allowed that theology was a science in a qualified manner, he argued that it was not primarily theoretical – associated with pure beholding and enjoyment of God – but rather practical – directed towards a goal beyond itself which is salvation and the love of God.¹⁰⁶ Other Franciscans and especially the Augustinians viewed theology as affective, directed to neither theory nor praxis but rather to love itself.¹⁰⁷ One of the most famous exponents of this position was Jean Gerson, the great catechist and pastoral theologian, who held that ‘*theologia est scientia-affectiva non speculativa*’.¹⁰⁸

Baxter of course was well aware of these various scholastic discussions, with his own definition of theology significantly combining the three scholastic definitions into one. However Baxter’s emphasis was decidedly on the affective and practical nature of theology.¹⁰⁹ Indeed in his *Methodus* he specifically downplays the speculative or theoretical character of theology, suggesting that it can be held so only equivocally.¹¹⁰ This was a common position among the Protestant scholastics, who here tended to follow a broadly Scotist line.¹¹¹ It seems therefore that the most likely sources for Baxter’s definition of theology as *scientia-affectiva-practica* may be found in Gerson’s description of theology as *scientia-affectiva non speculativa*

¹⁰⁵ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a1.

¹⁰⁶ Scotus, *Will and Morality*, 127-35.

¹⁰⁷ *PRRD*, 1.324-54. For a concise summary see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology Volume 1*, tr. George Giger and ed. James Dennison (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992), I.vii.

¹⁰⁸ Cited from Henry Hammond, *A Practicall Catechisme* (Oxford, 1645), ‘Title Page’, 2. Gerson’s affective integration of theory and practice is discussed in Mark Burrows, *Jean Gerson and De Consolatione Theologiae* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 135-48.

¹⁰⁹ Packer, *Redemption*, 86.

¹¹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.3.

¹¹¹ *PRRD*, 1.340-54.

(echoed in Hammond's *Practical Catechism* which Baxter greatly admired)¹¹² and Scotus' understanding of its thoroughly practical character. Furthermore, significantly for the understanding of Baxter's theological method that we shall develop in Chapter Two, this practical orientation of theology also accords well with the Ramist definition of theology as the 'art of living well'.¹¹³ Overall, then, Baxter's catechetical understanding of theology as an affective and practical science not only dovetails neatly with scholastic (and specifically Augustinian and Scotist) views, but also provides the dynamic for the whole of his theological system in the *Methodus*.

5. Trinitarian Catechetical Theology

Baxter's understanding of theology as *scientia-affectiva-practica* derives from a very particular Trinitarian worldview, the nature of which will occupy much of our attention in subsequent chapters of this thesis. Here we shall only seek to indicate its importance for Baxter's catechetical enterprise as well as some of its general features. In the *Methodus* Baxter highlights the *una-trina* nature of theology, pointing out its analogy with the motive, illuminative and calefactive virtue of fire and the triune form of the human soul. This latter is particularly important, for Baxter holds that theology as *scientia-affectiva practica* is adapted to the perfection of the human intellect, will and praxis.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, as we shall see, true theology seeks as far as possible faithfully to reflect God's Triune being in both its structure and content.

In relating to the speculative, affective and practical dimensions of human experience theology seeks to be entirely comprehensive, concerning the 'whole man' in his relation to God. This principle acts as the ground of much of Baxter's catechetical theology. For it is axiomatic to him that 'as the soul's essential form is the virtue of vital action, understanding and will conjunct, so holiness is holy life, light and love

¹¹² Hammond, *Catechisme*, 'Title Page', 2; cf. Baxter, *Apology for the Nonconformists Ministry*, 169. Packer also notes the probable connection to Gerson, remarking that Baxter is the first of the Puritans to categorise theology as *scientia affectiva* (*Redemption*, 86).

¹¹³ *PRRD*, 1.345.

¹¹⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.3.

conjunct'.¹¹⁵ It is therefore as truth is contemplated, desired and enacted that we become perfected in its likeness. In this idea, as we saw above, lie the habitual roots of true theology. Another foundational principle of Baxter's theology is that God's being can be understood through analogy with our own.¹¹⁶ This means that the 'natural' trinity of action, understanding and will (or life, light and love) seen in man mirrors the divine primalities of Power, Wisdom and Love which are essentially in God.¹¹⁷

We shall consider the primalities more in subsequent chapters; their immediate importance to us is in their role in Baxter's catechetical theology. This may be seen even from his 'Shortest Catechism. Here, after statements of the Baptismal Covenant, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, Baxter gives an 'explained profession' of the Christian religion:

I believe that there is one GOD; an infinite Spirit of life, understanding and will; perfectly powerful, wise and good; the Father, the Word and the Spirit; the Creator, Governor and End of all things; our absolute Owner, our most just Ruler, and our most gracious Benefactor, and most amiable good.

In the second article Baxter continues in a similar vein saying: 'I believe that man being made in the image of God, [is] an imbodyed spirit of life, understanding and will, with holy vivacity, wisdom and love, to know, and love, and serve his Creator, here and for ever...' Significantly, from these twin perspectives he goes on to unfold the whole drama of sin and redemption.¹¹⁸

In his 'Short Catechism' of the same work Baxter expands on these Triune conceptions of God and man, incorporating a lengthy gloss on each article of his profession. His discussion here is surprisingly technical, including a detailed and systematic discussion of God's Unity and Triunity, his essence, his internal and external attributes and finally his relations, and his ordering of topics demonstrates a strong concern that theology must be dealt with in a methodical manner. As he says

¹¹⁵ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 'Reasons and Use'.

¹¹⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.11.

¹¹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹¹⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Poor Man's Family Book* (London, 1674), II.63.

of the attributes, they ‘must not be cast together into a heap’.¹¹⁹ The whole pattern of discussion demonstrates the Trinity as the main focus of his thought. So for example he organises his treatment of God’s relations with man around the three primalities. This leads onto a ‘governmental’ Trinity of Owner, Rector and Benefactor corresponding respectively to God’s exercise of his Power, Wisdom and Love. As we shall see in Chapter Six this triad is of particular importance for understanding Baxter’s soteriology. It is also the source of his political method and closely related to Boersma’s discussion of God’s twofold will. For our purposes here however it reveals once more an important link between a catechetical and political conception of the nature of theology.

Baxter’s entire discussion of God and the nature of God’s Triunity in his ‘Short Catechism’ is highly abstract and much more suited to a sophisticated systematic theology. It is in fact probably unique among catechisms in the technicality of its language and its employment of natural categories.¹²⁰ This is especially remarkable considering his intended audience of poor families! Even an advanced catechetical theology such as Watson’s *Body of Divinity* gives a much simpler discussion of the Trinity, focussing on the persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and not attempting to give any explanation of their subsistence in one unified essence.¹²¹ It is also unusual to devote so much attention to natural theology in a catechism and especially to give natural considerations – such as the primalities of Power, Wisdom and Love – so much theological weight.¹²² Baxter assumes the complete harmony of natural and scriptural revelation, suggesting that Scripture like nature also bears the inherent stamp of the divine primalities.¹²³ This gives his theology an important dual aspect, placing its development within both a Scriptural and a natural dynamic, something which we shall see is particularly important for his metaphysical thought.

¹¹⁹ Baxter, *Family Book*, II.67.

¹²⁰ Although catechisms did not avoid metaphysical definitions of the Trinity they tended to gloss over these with Scripture (Green, *Christian’s ABC*, 309-10). Having said this, Virel, *Treatise*, 6-7 interestingly does include a discussion of Power, Wisdom and Goodness with reference to the Trinity, although he follows Calvin’s order in which Goodness is attributed to the Father, Wisdom to the Son and Power to the Holy Spirit.

¹²¹ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (London: Banner of Truth, 1958), 76-9.

¹²² This is not to say that other catechisms rejected the witness of creation or were in any way hostile to reason (Green, *Christian’s ABC*, 305-7).

¹²³ Richard Baxter, *More Reasons for the Christian Religion* (London, 1672), 30-1.

Baxter's 'Short Catechism' is therefore important for illustrating just how much overlap he considered there to be between catechetical and systematic theology. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Baxter entirely blurs the distinction by giving standard catechetical fare advanced metaphysical treatment. In developing these ideas Baxter goes on to relate the Trinitarian categories of his own theology to the high drama of man's salvation, in this way clearly demonstrating the nature of theology as *scientia-affectiva-practica* – expressing the knowledge, affection and practice which he regards as the true pattern of faith.

Baxter achieved this goal through a subtle use of the standard catechetical template of the Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments. In his *Christian Directory* Baxter gives the following direction for parents in catechising their children:

When you have opened the Baptismal Covenant to them, and the essentials of Christianity, cause them to learn the Creed, the Lords Prayer and the Ten Commandments. And tell them the uses of them; that man having three powers of soul, his understanding, his will, and his obediential or executive power, all these must be sanctified, and therefore there must be a rule for each. And that accordingly the Creed is the summary rule to tell us what our understandings must believe, and the Lords Prayer is the summary rule to direct us what our wills must desire, and our tongues must ask, and the Ten Commandments is the summary rule of our practice.¹²⁴

What is especially interesting here is that the three 'powers of the soul' are portrayed as the basis of the three catechetical staples. This is because Baxter makes the assumption that the sanctification of each 'power' entails a corresponding and summary rule. The catechism, as a living text explaining these three 'rules' and their implications, is thus perfectly designed for the sanctification and perfection of the 'whole man'.

Later in the same work Baxter grounds his catechetical theology even more firmly on the bedrock of Trinitarian faith. Exploring the nature of the covenant Baxter says that it contains true things, good things and practical things. These he says are the

¹²⁴ Baxter, *CD*, III.584.

credenda, *diligenda* and *eligenda* (or more usually *agenda*) of faith.¹²⁵ These were not terms coined by Baxter but derived from Augustine's *Enchiridion* where the theological virtues of faith, hope and love are prominently linked to the catechetical pattern of the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue.¹²⁶ By the seventeenth century the terms were theological commonplaces. A version of them can be found, for example, in Leigh's *Body of Divinity* where they are once again linked to this catechetical pattern.¹²⁷

The distinctiveness of Baxter's conception of these categories can be seen in their role as Trinitarian correlates. Baxter says that the object of the *credenda* is nothing other than the Holy Trinity, known and believed in as God the Father, Christ the Saviour and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. The *diligenda* he summarises succinctly as 'the same three persons in these three relations as good in themselves and unto us, which includeth the grand benefits, of reconciliation and adoption, justification and sanctification, and salvation'. Finally he suggests that the *agenda* in the context of baptism are the 'actual dedition' of ourselves to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, coupled with the promise to 'faithfully endeavour' to live a creative, reconciled and sanctified life according to these relations. He then reminds his reader that 'the Creed is a larger explication of the *credenda*, and the Lords Prayer of the *diligenda*... and the Decalogue of the natural part of the *agenda*'.¹²⁸ Furthermore in his *Reasons* Baxter explicitly links the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue not only to the Trinity but also to the theological graces of faith, hope and love.¹²⁹ In this we have a link to both the Augustinian and the Scotist tradition. For the Scotist understanding of theology as practical was often directed to faith, hope and love as the highest goal.¹³⁰ This is but the first of many connections which we shall have occasion to note between Baxter's Scotism and his Trinitarian thought. Fascinatingly this link is here

¹²⁵ Baxter, *CD*, III.895-6.

¹²⁶ Augustine, *Enchiridion* in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Volume IX*, ed. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh, 1873), 175-81, 255-60. It should be noted that the exact terms do not appear here but undoubtedly Augustine's pattern of what was to be believed, hoped for and loved is their original.

¹²⁷ Leigh, *Body of Divinity*, 'To the Christian Reader'.

¹²⁸ Baxter, *CD*, III.896.

¹²⁹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 374.

¹³⁰ Gisbertus Voetius, 'Concerning Practical Theology', in John Beardslee (ed.), *Reformed Dogmatics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 265-75; Beck, 'Voetius', 211. A similar point concerning Scotism is made by Muller with respect to Heidanus (*PRRD*, 1.349).

seen to be mediated through his catechetical understanding of theology as *scientia-affectiva practica*.¹³¹

5. The Centrality of the Triune Baptismal Covenant

In this chapter we have considered in detail Baxter's catechetical theology, seeking to place it in its wider historical and theological context. What has emerged from this discussion is Baxter's central focus on the Triune Baptismal Covenant as containing the essentials of the Christian faith. Following contemporary scholarship, Baxter believed this to be the origin of the Apostles' Creed. This view he integrated into his own account of the threefold Gospel, placing the Triune Baptismal Covenant at the heart of Scripture as it was already at the heart of the catechism. This showed his conviction that man's covenant with the Triune God was the most important aspect of the Christian life. At Baptism and Confirmation the Christian affirmed his intellectual assent, willing consent and practical obligation to Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments respectively and in doing so entered into relationship with the Triune God.

As the source of Baxter's catechetical theology the Triune Baptismal Covenant also gave his theology its character as *scientia-affectiva-practica* concerned with the Kingdom of God among men. It is in fact *scientia* as it affirms the truth of the Creed, *affectiva* as it expresses the heart-consent of the Lord's Prayer and *practica* as it demonstrates the practical obligations of the Decalogue. It is all three of these together and at once as it expresses the Trinitarian nature of the Kingdom of God. In this definition therefore we have the first intimations of a Trinitarian structure to Baxter's theology. Furthermore we have seen that this definition deftly combines a number of scholastic accounts of the genus of theology into one. Its Scotist accenting, however, clearly suggests the character of theology as faith, hope and love directed towards the Triune God.

From his *Catechizing of Families* to his *Methodus*, indeed across the full spectrum of his mature theological writing, Baxter affirms the truth that 'the doctrine of the

¹³¹ For Baxter's discussion of the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments in their Trinitarian context see 'Appendix One – The Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue'.

Trinity in Unity is the very summ of all the Christian Religion, as the Baptismal Covenant assureth us'.¹³² In the following chapters of this thesis we will seek to demonstrate in some detail exactly how the Trinity can be said to underpin the logical, metaphysical, physical, psychological and political aspects of his theology, and thus provide full proof for this claim. By its very nature this task will necessitate a close engagement with Baxter's more theoretical treatises. However in doing so we must never forget that for Baxter the Trinity is the fount of all Christian praxis and affections as well as all Christian doctrine.

¹³² Baxter, *Catechizing*, 85.

Chapter Two: The Quest for Method

1. Introduction

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were characterised by an extraordinary ‘exaltation of method’.¹ Although method had played a role in both classical and medieval discussions it had never before gained such prominence.² In theology the question of method therefore attained paramount importance, leading to a focus on both the micro- and macro-structure of theological discourse unrivalled since the heyday of scholasticism. A natural consequence of this was a renewed focus on logic and its competency in theological matters. Such a logical and methodological turn was in Protestant circles a perhaps inevitable result of the internal pressures of systematisation and the external pressures of polemic, and an integral part of that process of self-definition called confessionalisation. Certainly it rendered utterly untenable the extreme (and undoubtedly polemical) position of Luther that all syllogisms should be excised from theology.³

Yet while the century after Luther witnessed a notable resurgence of scholastic logic and methodology, Reformed theologians also drew extensively from non-scholastic or even anti-scholastic sources. Furthermore, following the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, they were particularly concerned that their logical argumentation should be faithful to Scripture. An early and prominent example of this may be found in the *De Verbo Dei Scripto* (1580) of Antoine de la Roche Chandieu which criticised the unscriptural logic of the medieval scholastics, holding that logic must be subordinated to Scripture and must draw all of its precepts from Scripture alone.⁴ Likewise through their departure from exclusively syllogistic reasoning and their

¹ This phrase may be found used with reference to Puritan theology in Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), 104.

² For further background to Renaissance discussions of method and their classical and medieval antecedents see Neal Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

³ Martin Luther, ‘Disputation against Scholastic Theology (1517)’, in *Luther: Early Theological Works*, ed. and tr. James Atkinson (London: SCM, 1962), Th. 47.

⁴ Donald Sinnema, ‘Antoine de Chandieu’s Call for a Scholastic Reformed Theology (1580)’, in W. Fred Graham (ed.), *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives* (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 173-9.

embracing of aspects of Renaissance method, the logic of even the most ardent Aristotelians can generally be seen to represent a refinement of that to be found in their medieval predecessors.⁵ Very generally therefore, both in content and methodology, we are already justified in speaking of a sanctifying of logic among Baxter's Protestant Scholastic forebears.

For Baxter, elaborating a theological method in the seventeenth century, there were, broadly speaking, three options available: Aristotelian, Ramist and Lullist.⁶ Strikingly, in his quest for method Baxter seems to have drawn inspiration from all three, although principally from the Ramist and Lullist schools. In the second section of this chapter we shall therefore consider both of these in detail as well as the theo-political method of Baxter's friend George Lawson, which we shall see is of particular relevance. This will lead into the third section where we shall discuss Baxter's response to scholastic and Ramist logic specifically, as a prelude to an account of his own refining of logic.

In the fourth section we shall consider Baxter's own distinctive 'hallowing of logic' as it is grounded on both the Triune Baptismal Covenant and the *vestigia Trinitatis*. Here we shall suggest that Baxter's logic has a particular affinity both to Lullist Trinitarian exemplarism and to Lawson's Trinitarian theo-politics. Finally in the fifth section we shall consider Baxter's logic from the *Methodus*, showing how his Trinitarian construal of *ordo* marks the centrepiece of his hallowed logic.

2. The Exaltation of Method

2.1. Ramist Logic

The roots of Protestant Scholastic method can be traced back not only to Aristotle and his medieval scholastic successors but also to the topical logic laid out by Rudolph Agricola in his *De Inventione Dialectica* of 1479. As is widely recognised

⁵ Muller, *After Calvin*, 42-3, 74-80.

⁶ These are simply the three contemporary schools of logic identified by Johann Heinrich Alsted in his *Clavis Artis Lullianae* (Strasbourg, 1609). Wilbur Howell also refers to these three main schools as prominent in the sixteenth and seventeenth century (*Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 7). Towards the middle of the seventeenth century the new Cartesian methodology became a fourth option, but Baxter showed little interest in it.

this had a profound influence on European intellectual culture, not least in giving logic a distinctly rhetorical rather than syllogistic orientation.⁷

In the sixteenth century two adaptations of Agricolan logic proved highly influential on the formation of Protestant Scholasticism. The first of these was that of Phillip Melanchthon who organised his famous *Loci Communes* of 1521, the first systematic work of Protestant dogmatics, according to Agricola's *loci*. These he described as 'places...whereby the whole of each science is comprehended' and as the 'goal to which all our studies may be directed'.⁸ Likewise Melanchthon followed Agricola in dividing dialectic (logic) into its two parts of invention and judgement and in describing method as an ordered pathway to be followed through the topics themselves.⁹ Notably in Melanchthon we find both a critique of scholastic logic and a self-conscious desire for a Christian scriptural method.¹⁰ In this way we may immediately talk of a sanctifying of logic as present right at the beginning of Protestant Scholasticism. Furthermore it was Melanchthon's *locus* method, increasingly modified in a scholastic direction, that set the standard for both Lutheran and Reformed theologians well into the seventeenth century.¹¹

The second adaptation of the Agricolan logic to prove important in Protestant Scholasticism was that of Peter Ramus, whose *Dialecticae* was published in 1555. Arguably in fact it is Ramus who represents the true pioneer of method in the sixteenth century, assigning it a prominence in his dialectic which it never possessed in the systems of his predecessors. Ramus was a pedagogical reformer who formulated his ideas in reaction to the prevailing Aristotelianism of sixteenth-century Paris. He saw his role as the radical simplification and reorientation of the traditional

⁷ Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 117-69; Walter Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 92-130.

⁸ Philip Melanchthon, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon (1521)*, tr. Charles Hill (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 63-9.

⁹ Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 320-33; Ong, *Method*, 236-9.

¹⁰ Melanchthon, *Loci Communes*, 63-9.

¹¹ *PRRD*, 1.251-4. Muller also points out that Calvin's *Institutes* was intended as an elaboration on the *loci communes* (*Unaccommodated Calvin*, 101-17).

curricula and to this end proposed to rework the whole of the arts syllabus almost singlehandedly.¹²

Quite naturally the reform of logic itself, as fundamental to all the other disciplines, occupied a central place in the Ramist project. In his search for a new logic Ramus was drawn to the topical system of Agricola with its promise of a streamlined and methodical alternative to the unwieldy system of scholasticism.¹³ His refined dialectic therefore had a rhetorical orientation, substituting the Aristotelian predicaments for Agricolan topical arguments. The task of logic became the efficient classification and relation of these arguments and in this Ramus was aided by the Agricolan method of dichotomising. Logic was therefore grounded on the continuous twofold division of statements or things, culminating in their basic arguments. The famous Ramist charts, so ubiquitous in the works of many of the Puritans and continental Reformed, were originally designed to represent these arguments in their dichotomous relationships in a kind of architectural ground-plan.¹⁴ They also formed an important contribution to the ‘art of memory’, providing a theologically sound alternative to the Lullist or even occult arts.¹⁵

Ramus’ dream was to organise all of knowledge methodically. Applied to logic, which following a long Aristotelian tradition he regarded as ‘master science’, the Ramist dichotomy yielded a definition in terms of the (Agricolan) dual operations of invention and judgement. Invention, referred to by the English Ramist Dudley Fenner as ‘the spring of reasons’, was the gathering and interrelating of arguments. Judgement, which Fenner defined as the ‘ordering of reasons’, concerned the formulation of axioms as coherent logical statements.¹⁶ Both invention and judgement came to be regarded not only as fundamental processes of the intellect,

¹² Howard Hotson, *Commonplace Learning: Ramism and its German Ramifications, 1543-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 38-44.

¹³ Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 343-4; Ong, *Method*, 173-213.

¹⁴ Ong, *Method*, 199-202.

¹⁵ Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Pimlico, 2008), 228-38.

¹⁶ Dudley Fenner, *The Artes of Logike and Rethorike* (Middelburg, 1584), I c. 1, II c. 1. Fenner’s work is lifted from Ramus’ own logic (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric*, 219).

but as ways of tapping into the underlying order of creation in order to yield accurate ‘transcripts of reality’.¹⁷

However it was Ramus’ account of method which was the most important feature of his dialectic and to which we can directly trace many features of Protestant Scholasticism.¹⁸ Although technically classified as a sub-division of judgement, method was given much more importance in the Ramist logic than in the Peripatetic. For Ramus method referred to a suitable arrangement of axioms in their natural order,¹⁹ and was governed by his famous three laws of justice, truth and wisdom. These held respectively that any subject must be treated only according to its relevant subject matter, only according to necessarily true precepts and always as moving from the more general to the more particular.²⁰ Demonstrating their relative importance in the Ramist mindset, Fenner referred to method extravagantly as ‘a plaine and perfect way of handling anything’, while syllogisms he simply defined as a ‘certaine frame of proving’.²¹

The spread of Ramus’ thought after his untimely death was chiefly governed by a pedagogical dynamic. While unpopular with many humanist professors, Ramist compendia, promising as they did a quick and easy route through any subject, were unsurprisingly popular with students.²² Together the works of Ramus and his assistant Omer Talon went through an extraordinary 750 editions.²³ The most prominent centre of Ramism was in Germany but it also took root in Puritan England and New England as well as in Scotland, Ireland, Iceland and Transylvania.²⁴

¹⁷ Miller, *New England Mind*, 128-36; Keith Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 115-8.

¹⁸ Thus Keith Sprunger remarks that ‘Ames and Richardson came very close to turning Ramus’ logic into a trichotomy of invention, judgement and method’ (‘Ames, Ramus and the Method of Puritan Theology’, *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966), 142).

¹⁹ For an account of Ramist method see Ong, *Method*, 225-69. See also Donald McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 1987), 25-33; Miller, *New England Mind*, 146-8.

²⁰ Roland MacIlmain, ‘Introduction’, in Peter Ramus, *The Logike of the Most Excellent Philosopher P. Ramus Martyr*, tr. and intr. by Roland MacIlmain (London, 1574; repr. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1969), 8-12.

²¹ Fenner, *Logike and Rethorike*, II c. 4.

²² Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 51-68.

²³ Walter Ong, *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958).

²⁴ Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 25-37.

However as Hotson suggests Ramism had to adapt in order to survive. Indeed pure Ramism in both England and Europe had a fairly brief lifespan. A spate of Ramist logical works was followed by a resurgence of scholastic logic and the subsequent rise of what is known as semi-Ramism – the mixing of Ramist and Aristotelian or Melancthonian thought. Even this however was relatively short-lived and was soon followed by a further stage of transformation, yielding what Hotson terms post-Ramist method.²⁵

A good example of semi-Ramism is found in Konrad Dietericus' *Institutiones Dialecticae*. Dietericus' critical distance from Ramus is evident in his warnings about the potential dangers of compendia and he characterises his own logic as following a 'safe' middle course between Ramus and Aristotle.²⁶ This hybrid character is seen in his combining of an Aristotelian treatment of the predicables, antepredicaments, predicaments and postpredicaments with a Ramist treatment of the divisions of arguments according to a dichotomous pattern. Throughout Dietericus is also concerned where possible to present the interpretations of both Ramus and Aristotle, with the latter often mediated through Melancthon's dialectical handbook.²⁷

Post-Ramism is exemplified especially by the thought of Bartholomäus Keckermann and Johann Heinrich Alsted, who, although they lauded Ramus for his attention to method, and especially the brevity, clarity and dexterity of his system, criticised vehemently both his attacks on Aristotle and his deformation of Aristotelian logic. According to Keckermann and Alsted, Ramus' own dialectic was both mutilated and confused.²⁸ Keckermann characterised his own logic as 'methodical peripateticism', indicating its combination of Aristotelian content with a Ramist attention to method. His works have a definite Ramist flow, moving from the *praecognita* (those general points such as the nature and definition of the discipline) through the *systemata* (the content of the discipline itself, again ordered from general to particular) to the *gymnasia* (the use and application of the discipline illustrated through examples) and

²⁵ Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric*, 8; Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*.

²⁶ Konrad Dietericus, *Institutiones Dialecticae* (Giessen, 1618), 'Epistle Dedicatory'.

²⁷ Dietericus, *Institutiones, Praecognitae*, Books I and II.

²⁸ Alsted, *Clavis*, 17-19.

much of his material was capable of being rendered in dichotomous charts. However, in the further division of both *praecognita* and *systemata* into *praecepta* (themselves divided into definitions, divisions and canons) and expository *commentaria*, Keckermann showed a sophistication entirely foreign to Ramist pedagogy. Likewise in opposition to Ramus, Keckermann took up key aspects of the Aristotelian thought of Jacopo Zabarella including both his distinction between method (as proving things singly) and order (as disposing them) and his twofold understanding of method as compositive and resolute: the former concerning contemplative disciplines and proceeding syllogistically from cause to effect and the latter concerning operative disciplines and proceeding syllogistically from effect to cause.²⁹

An important feature of both semi- and post-Ramism was their new and pronounced theological orientation. While Ramus had written a methodical work on theology, the *De Religione Christiana*, he himself had recognised its preliminary character, expressly suggesting the need for a methodical dictionary of the commonplaces designed to refer to ‘singular heads of Christian doctrine’ and to lead its readers through dense theological thickets ‘by a short and compendious route’.³⁰ Although incomplete, Ramus’ *De Religione*, and more especially his methodical programme, exerted an enormous influence on the development of Protestant Scholastic methodology.³¹ An early example of this is found in Stephanus Szegedinus’ *Theologiae Sincerae Loci Communes* of 1585, the whole of which is structured in tabular form.³² In England, Dudley Fenner’s *Sacra Theologia* and the varied oeuvre of William Perkins represent prominent contemporaneous examples.³³

One of the most important Ramist works was Amandus Polanus’ *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae* of 1609, the full title of which declared it to be ‘conformed according to the laws of methodical order’. Beginning from Ramus’ own division of

²⁹ Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 144-52. For Zabarella see Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts*, 167-73.

³⁰ Peter Ramus, *De Religione Christiana* (Frankfurt, 1583), 3-5.

³¹ *PRRD*, 1.181-4.

³² Stephanus Szegedinus, *Theologiae Sincerae Loci Communes* (Basileae, 1585). Muller suggests that this is perhaps the earliest major example (*PRRD*, 1.112).

³³ *PRRD*, 1.112.

theology into faith and good works, Polanus proceeded to encompass every aspect of divinity under an astonishing array of Ramist bifurcations. Although implicitly Melanchthon's commonplace structure is still preserved in the *Syntagma*, the various *loci* are now fitted into a Ramist rather than scriptural architectonic. Likewise Polanus' 'symphonic' handling of the individual *loci*, according to patristic and scholastic as well as scriptural sources, is a far cry from Melanchthon's rigid exclusivity.³⁴ In fact the *Syntagma* itself may be seen as a clear fulfilment of Ramus' desire for a methodical dictionary of the commonplaces. In this Polanus was later followed by a large number of other semi-Ramist theologians including Wollebius, Sohnius, Wendelinus, Trelocatius and Gomarrus.³⁵

Another instance of Ramism's early theological orientation is found with Johann Piscator, one of the leading semi-Ramists at the Herborn Academy. Following a trend which can be traced back to Melanchthon, whose primary desire in all his curriculum reforms was to instil *pietas* and *eloquentia* in his students, Piscator chose to illustrate his *Animadversiones* on Ramus' *Dialecticae* not with classical examples, as Ramus himself had done, but with scriptural ones.³⁶ Precisely the same trend may be observed in Dudley Fenner and other English Ramists.³⁷ Thereafter it became commonplace for semi-Ramists to invoke both scriptural and dogmatic examples, in an effort to demonstrate the theological (and Reformed) credentials of Ramist thought.³⁸ In this we see yet another example of that pervasive sanctifying of logic we have already had occasion to highlight.

Ramism was as important in the pulpit as in the theologian's study. This may again be seen in Piscator, whose massive biblical commentaries, analysed according to Ramist method and rearranged as theological *loci*, travelled the length and breadth of Reformed Europe.³⁹ In England two important examples, both with clear Ramist affinities, are Thomas Granger's *Syntagma Logicum*, an introductory textbook on

³⁴ Amandus Polanus, *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae* (Hanover, 1609-10), 'Epistola Dedicatoria'.

³⁵ Cf. *PRRD*, 1.113-6.

³⁶ Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 109-11.

³⁷ See throughout Fenner, *Logike and Rhethorike*; Thomas Granger, *Syntagma Logicum* (London, 1620).

³⁸ Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 108-14.

³⁹ Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 118-9.

logic intended for divines, and Richard Bernard's *The Faithfull Shepherd*, a practical handbook instructing clergy in every aspect of their ministry. For Bernard logic is 'an especiall handmaid by the assistance of Gods Spirit' necessary for understanding any text of Scripture. As he says:

By Logicke we see the method of the Spirit, we behold the arguments, the coherence and the scope; by it we collect doctrines, confirme them, enlarge the proofes, gather thence consequently apt uses and urge them by reasons upon the hearers.⁴⁰

We see from Bernard's *Shepherd* how intimately logic could become entwined with the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. In unveiling the 'method of the Spirit' contained in the Word, logic applied to Scripture is also seen to follow an implicitly Trinitarian dynamic.

Ramism also provided a new dimension to the sanctifying of logic in its entwined theological and encyclopaedic aspirations. The encyclopaedic impulse itself was entirely native to Ramism, and is manifest in Ramus' own *Scholae in Liberales Artes* as well as in the proliferation of semi-Ramist textbooks on a wide range of disciplines.⁴¹ As Hotson suggests, it derives from the Ramist desire to encompass all learning under one universal method.⁴² This reached its zenith in Keckermann's *Systema Systematum* (edited posthumously by Alsted) and in Alsted's famous *Encyclopaedia*.⁴³ In both of these Keckermann's methodical structure of *praecognita*, *systemata* and *gymnasia* is transferred on a grand scale in the first case to the whole course of philosophy and in the second to the entire body of knowledge. Indeed, Alsted's *Encyclopaedia* has a clear Ramist pattern with both its macro- and

⁴⁰ Richard Bernard, *The Faithfull Shepherd* (London, 1607), 25. Bernard also jointly wrote another book called *Davids Musick* (London, 1616) in which he gives a logical exposition of the Psalms complete with Ramist diagrams.

⁴¹ Peter Ramus, *Scholae in Liberales Artes* (Basel, 1569; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1970).

⁴² Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 114-26.

⁴³ Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Encyclopaedia Septem Tomis Distincta* (Herborn, 1630; facs. repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1989); Bartholomäus Keckermann, *Systema Systematum*, ed. Johann Heinrich Alsted (Hanau, 1613)

micro-structure capable of being laid out in dichotomous charts and the order of its parts moving very clearly from general to particular.⁴⁴

Central to the encyclopaedic programme of both Keckermann and Alsted was their desire to restore the image of God lost in the Fall. Both regarded logic and philosophy as remedies provided to cure man's resulting natural ills. As Keckermann claimed, it 'is the greatest glory of logic that it strives to restore that outermost region of the image of God in man, that divine twilight still remaining in us, to a brighter light, to heal the failing of our mind as far as it is possible to do so in this life and to restore to the intellect its rectitude'.⁴⁵ Logic was therefore conceived of as the imitation of man's unspoilt nature. Alsted likewise held that each discipline was designed to remedy a particular fault of man's nature. Thus the whole cycle of disciplines – the *Encyclopaedia* – was intended to restore the entire image of God in man. Here then we find a near merging of the categories of sanctification and logic.⁴⁶

In holding such a position Keckermann and Alsted were not alone. A very similar encyclopaedic drive may be found in English Ramism and especially their doctrine of *technologia*. As enunciated by Alexander Richardson, *technologia* was a philosophy of the liberal arts, the main premise of which was that their diversity attained a unity in the mind of God. The arts were therefore regarded as being radiations or emanations of divine wisdom, like rays of the Sun all leading back to a single source. The metaphysics underling this was clearly exemplaristic, holding creation to reflect the character and dynamics of God's own nature. Ramism was important in this scheme, as invention, judgement and method were all seen as reflections of the inherent order of reality.⁴⁷ The Ramist machinery of analysis by dichotomising was simply the inverse of God's creative powers of genesis.

⁴⁴ Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 148-273. For a Ramist chart of the entire *Encyclopaedia* see p. 253.

⁴⁵ Cited from Howard Hotson, *Johann Heinrich Alsted 1588-1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation and Universal Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 68.

⁴⁶ Hotson, *Alsted*, 66-82. For Keckermann's positive attitude to reason and philosophy in theology see Muller, *After Calvin*, 122-36.

⁴⁷ For more on the exemplaristic, and specifically Platonic, nature of Ramism see Nelly Bruyère, *Méthode et Dialectique dans l'oeuvre de la Ramée: Renaissance et Age Classique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1984).

Mastering analysis was thus a way of conforming the human mind to the mind of God and, as with Keckermann and Alsted, of restoring the prelapsarian order of creation.⁴⁸ As Granger said, ‘the maine end and height of logicke is knowledge, or science: that is the simple apprehension of truthes as they are in God and were from God’.⁴⁹ In this light English Ramism, as much as European, can be seen as a quest to attain the clarity and beauty of a pristine logical archetype.

Similarly Ramism was important in bolstering the Puritan ideal of the practicality of all knowledge, especially in divinity. In fact, Ramist *technologia* integrated conduct into the very nature of knowledge and in this way essentialised praxis. Every art, regarded as an emanation of divine wisdom, thus carried encoded within it a divine purpose. They were not intended merely for contemplation or as speculative aids, but as programmes of action and reform. As Ames suggested, ideas themselves contained the seed of creative genesis and must either be developed or die. For Ramists, theology, as the ‘art of living well’, represented the authentically practical fruit of these seminal truths.⁵⁰

Overall therefore the true genius of Ramism for the Puritans was that it allowed the development of a comprehensive theological logic, grounded on a broadly exemplaristic metaphysics. The warrants or guarantors of this logic were Granger’s ‘Canons of Supernaturall Truth’: the external authority of the Word and the internal witness of the Spirit. As he suggested, ‘these Canons are the fountains of truth, and causes of knowledges, and doctrines, from whence all arts, and sciences, have their beginnings, and progresse’.⁵¹ This was both a grand vision and a profound hallowing of logic. For Granger and the other English Ramists theology was therefore the spring welling up from the conjoined fountainhead of Word and Spirit and flowing out into Ramist channels.

⁴⁸ Miller, *New England Mind*, 166-73.

⁴⁹ Granger, *Syntagma Logicum*, 2; cf. Alexander Richardson, *Logicians School-Master* (London, 1657), 82: ‘the purpose of logic is to direct man to see the wisdom of God’.

⁵⁰ For Ames’ doctrine of *technologia* see Sprunger, *Ames*, 105-27; ‘Ames’, 133-51. An excellent general account of the doctrine and its importance can be found in Miller, *New England Mind*, 173-80.

⁵¹ Granger, *Syntagma Logicum*, 343-4.

2.2. Lullist Logic

An even stronger exemplaristic impulse is found in Lullism, the system of the thirteenth-century Majorcan Ramon Lull. Lull was a remarkable man, a visionary ‘born long before his time’.⁵² After a dramatic conversion he pledged his life to Christ as a missionary and it became his life’s work to seek convincing, rational proofs for the Christian faith. These he derived from his Art – his methodical and combinatorial system of thought – which he believed he had received by divine revelation in 1274 and which he constantly refined throughout the rest of his life. At the heart of this Art lay the attempt to comprehend every branch of knowledge through the science of the divine dignities. In this way Lullism, even more than Ramism, manifests an intrinsic encyclopaedic drive, manifest in Lull’s own encyclopaedic works and the many ‘applications’ of the Art that he wrote.⁵³

Central to the Lullian Art are the divine dignities, which are nothing other than the essential attributes of God. Lull regarded these in exemplaristic fashion as the cause and archetype of all created being, maintaining that the whole of creation bore their stamp by participation and so reflected their likeness.⁵⁴ In this way, as Hillgarth suggests, the Lullian world was one of ‘analogy and symbols, a translucent universe in which the least thing is a living token of the presence of God’.⁵⁵ The exact provenance of Lull’s account of the divine dignities remains hotly debated among scholars, with Christian, Jewish and Islamic sources all having been proposed.⁵⁶ More important, however, than the exact source of Lull’s ideas is the fact that the divine dignities were common currency in each of the three monotheistic faiths and so provided an important platform for Lull’s universal Art. In this light Lull may

⁵² Charles Lohr, ‘Metaphysics’, in *CHRP*, 543.

⁵³ For an account of Lull’s life and missionary goals see E. Allison Peers, *Ramon Lull: A Biography* (London: SPCK, 1929); Jocelyn Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 1-45; Anthony Bonner, *Selected Works of Ramon Lull* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), Vol. 1, 3-52.

⁵⁴ Bonner, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, 53-70.

⁵⁵ Hillgarth, *Lull*, 10.

⁵⁶ For a Christian source see Frances Yates, ‘Ramon Lull and John Scotus Erigena’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960), 1-44; for an Islamic source see Lohr, ‘Metaphysics’, 540-2; and for a Jewish source see Harvey Hames, *The Art of Conversion: Christianity and the Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). Certainly, for example, Ramon Lull’s *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*, in Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 73-187 shows a deep appreciation and wide knowledge of the Jewish and Islamic faiths.

simply be seen as an outstanding, perhaps *the* outstanding, example of the prevailing Neo-Platonic inspired Christian exemplarism of the earlier medieval period.⁵⁷ Similar examples may be found in John Scotus Eriugena, the Victorines and the early Franciscans, all of whom most likely influenced Lull.⁵⁸

In its final Ternary phase (so called due to its triadic pattern) the Lullian Art is founded on absolute, relative and correlative principles. The absolute principles are simply the nine divine dignities: Goodness, Greatness, Eternity, Power, Wisdom, Will, Virtue, Truth and Glory. Corresponding to these are nine relative principles, organised into three triads: Difference, Concordance and Contrariety; Beginning, Middle and End; and Majority, Equality and Minority. Lull considered these the means by which these dignities ‘mutually communicate their nature and diffuse them throughout all of creation’. Interacting with the divine dignities were the three innate correlative principles which may be described as abstract moments of activity or ‘substantial and intrinsic principles of action...valid for all reality’.⁵⁹ Taken together, the correlatives attain a closure highly reminiscent of God’s own Triune being. Indeed Lull held that the correlatives themselves emanate from the dignities and the Triune nature of God, and through participation imprint a Trinitarian image on every created being.⁶⁰ Therefore through the correlatives especially, but also the absolute and relative principles, Lull’s Art is seen to have a Trinitarian ground.⁶¹

⁵⁷ See M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Fernand van Steenberghen, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century: Lectures Given under the Auspices of the Department of Scholastic Philosophy, the Queen’s University, Belfast, (from 4 to 9 May, 1953)* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1955), 40-1, 54-5, 57-61, 89, 101-3. Van Steenberghen records that in his *Hexaemeron* Bonaventure ascribed Aristotle’s errors to his denial of exemplarism (p. 89). For the background to this in Neo-Platonism and especially to the triads of divine principles see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

⁵⁸ For Lull’s affinity to early and proto-scholastic thought see Mark Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 18-20. For Eriugena see Yates, ‘Lull and Eriugena’; Hilary Mooney, *Theophany: The Appearing of God according to the Writings of Johannes Scotus Eriugena* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

⁵⁹ Lohr, ‘Metaphysics’, 541-3.

⁶⁰ Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, 16-20.

⁶¹ Robert Pring-Mill, ‘The Trinitarian World Picture of Ramon Lull’, *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 7 (1955-6), 229-56.

Lullist logic, derived from his *Art*,⁶² differs considerably from its scholastic counterpart in being concerned not primarily with second intentions – the knowledge of a thing as known (by words or terms) – but rather with first intentions – the knowledge of things themselves. Philosophically Lull was an extreme realist and his logic assumes an exact correspondence between reality and our conception of it. In essence Lullist logic is simply a refining of scholastic logic according to his realist and exemplaristic metaphysics. In this way it is what Lull calls a ‘natural logic’, intended to reflect the nature of things themselves.⁶³ Furthermore in its effort to relate everything to God, Lullist logic is also a ‘spiritual logic’, proceeding by what Johnston calls ‘moralising arguments’, which by means of the dignities, relatives and correlatives and Lull’s own distinctive logical operations seek to relate all things to their end in God.⁶⁴ Significantly this means that Lull’s logic manifests a distinct Trinitarian pattern. This may be seen, for example, in his treatment of syllogisms, which he views in terms of the mutual participation of the major and minor premise and conclusion in a kind of Trinitarian dynamic.⁶⁵ It is also apparent in Lull’s own demonstration ‘by equivalence’ founded on the mutual conversion of the divine dignities with each other. This Johnston terms a ‘logic of coessentiality’ patterned on the Godhead and recalling the Trinitarian operation of Lull’s correlatives.⁶⁶

Overall therefore in Lull we find not only a blurring of the traditional boundaries between logic, physics and metaphysics but a profound hallowing of logic. This is manifest both in its exemplaristic grounding in the divine dignities, relatives and correlatives and in its analogical structure seeking to relate the created order to its Creator. Furthermore, especially in its doctrine of the correlatives, Lullist logic may be seen to have a clear, if implicit, Trinitarian orientation.

Lullism never became a major scholastic school like Thomism or Scotism but throughout the Middle Ages a steady trickle of Lullist works can be found. The most prominent of these are Ramon de Sebonde’s *Theologia Naturalis* and a number of sermons and other works of Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, who also owned an extensive

⁶² Anthony Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull: A User’s Guide* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 18-9.

⁶³ Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, 4, 46-52.

⁶⁴ Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, 5-6, 16-18. This is the thesis of Johnston’s whole work.

⁶⁵ Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, 101-6.

⁶⁶ Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, 114-7.

Lullist library.⁶⁷ In the Renaissance however there was a sudden upsurge of interest in Lullism and Lull found a number of highly able exponents and commentators in Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, Bernard de Lavineta and especially Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim. In general Renaissance Lullists were interested in Lullism for its potential as a *clavis universalis* – a key to opening up all knowledge. As a consequence Renaissance Lullism quickly became tainted by occult and magical associations, in a manner quite foreign to Lull's own thought.⁶⁸

Given this it might be thought that Lullism would hold no attraction to Reformed thinkers. However in Johann Heinrich Alsted, himself an alchemist, we find one important exception. In his early career Alsted had the ultimate aim of harmonising Aristotelian, Ramist and Lullist method for use in his encyclopaedic projects.⁶⁹ His *Clavis Artis Lullianae* was written both to defend Lullism against the aspersions of Keckermann and others, and as a means of teaching the Lullian Art. Keckermann had condemned Lullist logic due to it being an admixture of multiple disciplines – a great sin for any kind of Ramist – and its focus on first rather than second intentions. Alsted responded by saying that Lull's disrespect for disciplinary boundaries was due to his desire for a general art capable of discoursing on every knowable thing. To the second accusation he replied with a *quid pro quo*, saying that if the Aristotelian predicaments may be counted as second intentions then so may all of Lull's logical operations. Tacitly, however, he perhaps recognised the need for a universal logic to be a 'natural logic' in the Lullist sense (i.e. a logic of first intentions).⁷⁰

Tommaso Campanella is another seventeenth-century philosopher who can be broadly placed within the Lullist tradition. Campanella is known to have read the

⁶⁷ Ramon de Sebonde, *Theologia Naturalis*, rev. by Jan Amos Comenius (Amsterdam, 1661). For Lullism in de Sebonde and Cusa see Lohr, 'Metaphysics', 544-558.

⁶⁸ For an account of medieval and Renaissance Lullism see Hillgarth, *Lull*, 269-321; Anthony Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus: A Ramon Llull Reader* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 57-73. For the later occultic associations of Lullism see Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language*, tr. Stephen Clucas (London: Athlone, 2000), 29-145. Bonner points out that alchemical and occultic interests are absent from Lull's own corpus (*Doctor Illuminatus*, 59-61).

⁶⁹ For Alsted's Lullism see Hotson, *Alsted*.

⁷⁰ Alsted, *Clavis*, 17 ff.

works of Lull with great interest and appreciation as a young man⁷¹ and certainly there are striking similarities to be found between his doctrine of the primalities and Lull's exemplaristic metaphysics. Campanella came to believe that being itself is intrinsically structured according to three transcendental principles of Power, Wisdom and Love, which he called primalities. He therefore denied the Aristotelian claim that (finite) being was structured according to the transcendental principles of act and potency. He also denied that the primalities could be considered in any way as accidental attributes of being or as physical principles separable from their own effects. Rather he held that the primalities were 'metaphysical principles inherent in the very effects which they produce'. It is therefore through the primalities that a being is said to be essentiated. For this reason he also called the primalities the 'proprinciples' or 'pre-eminences' of being.⁷²

Campanella regarded the primalities as being 'equally first in time, dignity, and nature and...one by a real and essential identity'.⁷³ While they differ in order of procession, with Power generating Wisdom and Power and Wisdom together producing Love, their procession occurs without any division of essence. He describes this coinherence not as participation, which would be the case if one primality was shared partially by another, but as toticipation in which each primality is said to wholly possess the other two. This means the procession of one primality from another is such that what proceeds is already contained in the primality from which it proceeds – an important example of the dictum that '*nihil dat quod non habet*'.⁷⁴ However while the primalities are essentially identical he does not hold that they are identical in every respect. He therefore posits what he calls an 'ideal distinction' between them. This distinction is rooted in their different formal reasons and Bonansea suggests it is basically identical to the Scotist formal distinction *ex*

⁷¹ Bernadino Bonansea, *Tommaso Campanella: Renaissance Pioneer of Modern Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), 25.

⁷² Bonansea, *Campanella*, 144-7; cf. Tommaso Campanella, *De Sancto Monotriade: Theologicorum liber II*, tr. Romano Amerio (Rome: Centro Internazionale di Studi Umanistici, 1958), 84; *Universalis Philosophiae, seu Metaphysicarum Rerum* (Paris, 1638), I.2.2.1.

⁷³ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 147; cf. Campanella, *Metaphysicarum*, I.2.2.4.

⁷⁴ Campanella, *Monotriade*, 22, 126; *Metaphysicarum*, 1.2.2.4, 2.6.11.6.

natura rei, although placing the emphasis not on the formal reasons or formalities themselves but on their apprehension by the mind.⁷⁵

From all this it is clear that the intrinsic dynamic of the primalities mirrors that of the Trinity itself.⁷⁶ Furthermore Campanella believed that God himself possessed the primalities essentially and in an infinite and perfect degree. In this way the primalities may be regarded in exemplaristic fashion as both cause and archetype of all created being. In both these aspects then the primalities closely resemble the divine dignities and especially the divine correlatives of Lull's Art. In fact they could even be said to be a hybrid of the two, mirroring Lull's triad of Power, Wisdom and Goodness (or Power, Wisdom and Will) as convertible divine attributes and his correlatives as dynamic principles.⁷⁷ In this way the primalities constitute Campanella's own 'Trinitarian World Picture'.

Jan Amos Comenius, the Czech polymath, was a philosopher strongly influenced by both Alsted and Campanella. While not a Lullist *per se* he was strongly influenced by Campanella and also published a revised edition of de Sebonde's *Theologia Naturalis*. In an English context Comenius is well known, with Hartlib and Dury, as one of the 'three foreigners' whose work provided the intellectual motivation for the Puritan revolution and later laid the foundations for the Royal Society.⁷⁸ His life-work was the pursuit of a Christian philosophy, which he called '*pansophia*', adequate for all fields of knowledge. Comenius intended *pansophia* to integrate the separate spheres of sense, reason and faith (or revelation). It therefore drew extensively on the 'two books' of God's Word and his works.⁷⁹ Comenius' desire to conform his *pansophia* to a sanctified pattern of knowledge is evident throughout his works. It is strikingly clear however from his extensive discussion of the 'Temple of Pansophical Wisdom'. This he models on the Temple of Ezekiel's vision, the

⁷⁵ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 149; cf. Campanella, *Monotriade*, 130, 132; *Metaphysicarum*, 1.2.3.9, 2.6.11.10.

⁷⁶ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 148; cf. Campanella, *Monotriade*, 20 ff.

⁷⁷ The self-contained triad of Power, Wisdom and Love may be found in Lull, *Book of the Gentile*, 124-30.

⁷⁸ For more on Comenius' role in this see Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975).

⁷⁹ Jan Amos Comenius, *Reformation of Schooles* (London, 1642), 17-9, 24.

sevenfold division of which Comenius relates to an ascent from common notions through sense, reason and revelation to God himself inhabiting eternity.⁸⁰

Comenius' pansophic method shows strong evidence of both Ramist and exemplaristic affinities. The Ramistic elements of his thought were undoubtedly nurtured during the time he spent at the Herborn Academy under the tutelage of Alsted. Although implicit they pervade his discussion of the pansophic method in the treatise on the *Reformation of Schooles*, the Ramist spirit of which is evident from Comenius' desire that the study of wisdom should avoid 'any intricate and thorny difficulties' and seek a plain and easy path.⁸¹ For Comenius, method is the way appointed through the labyrinthine diversity of things and should proceed, as with Ramus, from general to particular and from the known to the unknown.⁸² In true Ramist fashion Comenius emphasises that method should always be oriented to use.⁸³ This he gives a pronounced theological orientation, insisting that pansophical method should direct all things to their end in God.⁸⁴

Comenius' debt to Alsted specifically is most clearly seen from the encyclopaedic aspirations of *pansophia*. It is also apparent however from the role of the *praecognita* as the roots of his pansophical tree and the subsequent system of definitions, ideas, axioms and distributions which form its central branches. These he refers to as the 'measure of all methods' and they may be seen somewhat to resemble, in purpose if not precisely in form, Alsted's own universal methodical template.⁸⁵ Furthermore, in a similar way to Alsted, Comenius saw the goal of *pansophia* as being the restoration of the lost image of God in man. In fact going far beyond both Alsted and Keckermann he even spoke of this as deification, the inculcation of the image of God's omniscience.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Comenius, *Reformation*, 78 ff.

⁸¹ Comenius, *Reformation*, 4-5.

⁸² Comenius, *Reformation*, 14.

⁸³ Comenius, *Reformation*, 20-1.

⁸⁴ Jan Amos Comenius, *Pattern of Universall Knowledge* (London, 1651), 16-7.

⁸⁵ Comenius, *Pattern*, 101, 112-3.

⁸⁶ Howard Hotson, 'The Instauration of the Image of God in Man: Humanist Anthropology, Encyclopaedic Pedagogy, Baconianism and Universal Reform', in Margaret Pelling and Scott Mandelbrote (eds.), *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine and Science, 1500-2000: Essays for Charles Webster* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 13-21.

For Comenius *pansophia* was the ‘glasse or mirrouer of the universe’ and thus had a strong exemplaristic component.⁸⁷ He insisted therefore that method should always be fitted to things themselves, manifesting throughout his life a profound dislike of ‘prickly’ logical second intentions.⁸⁸ This he expressed Platonically in terms of created things being patterned after their exemplars or ideas in the mind of God. Through exemplifying the divine ideas creatures could then be said to be stamped with God’s own likeness.⁸⁹ Following Campanella, whom he cites with great approbation in the *Reformation of Schooles*,⁹⁰ Comenius recognised a Trinitarian ground to this exemplarism. Thus he says that in his pansophical method ‘all the chiefest divisions of things are made by a trichotomie’ reflecting the pattern of One, True and Good in the ‘first attributes of things’. The power and comprehensive scope of this Trinitarian method seem to have taken Comenius completely by surprise, for he says:

Therefore not daring to oppose the truth of things, which represented it selfe so in a threefold mystery, but rather heartily embracing so great an harmony of the Sacred Ternary, I prosecuted it in other things also, without offering them any violence...but even as they divide themselves of their owne accord.

Comenius also suggested that this method had the added advantage of being ‘very profitable for learners’, proceeding methodically so as to aid them in remembering the natural divisions of things. He concludes his discussion saying ‘Let therefore this Christian Pansophy, unfolding the Ternary mysteries be sacred unto that eternall Trinity, JEHOVA, God onely wise, almighty, most good, and ever to be worshipped’.⁹¹

Overall therefore Comenius’ pansophical method reflects a fascinating fusion of Ramistic principles with a pronounced Trinitarian exemplarism. Comenius

⁸⁷ Comenius, *Reformation*, 18.

⁸⁸ Comenius, *Reformation*, 15; *Pattern*, 89-90.

⁸⁹ Comenius, *Reformation*, 36-9.

⁹⁰ Comenius, *Reformation*, 47. Here he calls Campanella and Bacon ‘those famous restorers of philosophy’.

⁹¹ Comenius, *Reformation*, 51-2.

expresses this using the language of ‘order’ and ‘harmony’.⁹² It is through harmony, he says, that the infinite multiplicity and diversity of things may be reduced to a few fundamental principles. The concept of harmony adds a dynamism to his *pansophia* which he saw as lacking in the static systems of other encyclopaedists. Indeed Comenius’ desire for his *pansophia* was that it should be a living science reflecting its archetype in the Triune God.⁹³

2.3. The Theo-Political Method of George Lawson

George Lawson was a divine noted for his interest in politics and especially for his *Politica* and his critique of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. He was also the author of the *Theo-Politica*, published in 1659. This he intended as a ‘Body of Divinity’, as its title page declares, describing it as a ‘method of those saving truths, which are contained in the Canon of the Holy Scripture, and abridged in those words of our Saviour Jesus Christ: Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’. Lawson, like Baxter, viewed this Triune Baptismal Covenant as ‘the ground and foundation of those apostolical Creeds and forms of confessions, related by the ancients’.⁹⁴ Likewise he regarded the Baptismal Covenant and the Creeds as compressed versions of Scripture, containing the nucleus of his own political method. As Lawson described it, the ‘principal if not adequate’ subject of Scripture is the Kingdom of God. This fact, taken as a given from Scripture, determined his method.⁹⁵ In this light theology was considered as ‘divine politicks’ and its scope was to analyse in detail this Kingdom, its foundation, constitution and administration, its government by laws and judgements and its subsequent outworking in terms of rewards and punishments.⁹⁶

⁹² Significantly the theme of *ordo* and harmony, encapsulated by the term *immetio*, is also prominent in the Trinitarian exemplarism of Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld, who was Comenius’ fellow student and Alsted’s son-in-law, and in the philosophical works of Leibniz himself, who was influenced by Bisterfeld (Antagnozza, Maria Rosa, ‘*Immetio* and *Emperichoresis*: The Theological Roots of Harmony in Bisterfeld and Leibniz’, in Stuart Brown (ed.), *The Young Leibniz and his Philosophy (1646-76)* (London: Kluwer Academic, 1999), 41-64), as well as by Comenius and Campanella.

⁹³ Comenius, *Reformation*, 24, 37-50.

⁹⁴ George Lawson, *Theo-Politica* (London, 1569), ‘Title Page’.

⁹⁵ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, ‘Epistle to Reader’.

⁹⁶ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 1.

It is apparent from the *Theo-Politica* that Lawson was also a Ramist. In his epistle to the reader he speaks in thoroughly Ramist terms of his desire ‘by plain doctrine to inform the understanding, by clear method to help the memory’.⁹⁷ He also stresses that ‘practice must be the principal design, and knowledge so far as conducing thereto’.⁹⁸ His Ramism is confirmed by his discussion of logical affections or arguments which he lists as ‘cause, effect, subject, adjunct, whole, part and the rest’, and which closely mirror those found in Ramus’ own logic.⁹⁹ It is also evident in his dichotomous schemes expounding the nature of Holy Scripture and of theological method, the government of God the Creator (the subject of the first book) and the government of God the Redeemer (the subject of the second book).¹⁰⁰ In typical Ramist fashion these charts determine the arrangement of the whole work and of the individual chapters themselves.

While clearly influenced by Ramism in arguing for a political approach to Scripture, Lawson saw his own methodology as both superior to and encompassing the standard Ramist division of theology into faith and obedience. Thus he suggests that these two are only ‘duties to be performed by sinful man, redeemed, and called, according to the commands of their God-Redeemer; and so do not reach the utmost bounds of this heavenly doctrine’. In this way they may be subordinated to government and even then ‘belong onely to that one head, and part thereof, the commands and laws of God Redeemer’ with faith itself simply being ‘but one part of this obedience’. Fascinatingly Lawson suggests that those who follow this division between faith and obedience ‘think they have a sufficient ground in the mandate and commission of our blessed Saviour’, the Triune Baptismal Covenant. Lawson likewise takes inspiration from these verses, but for him they describe the ‘rule of doctrine, concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, along with the three glorious works of Creation, Redemption, Sanctification’, as ‘a divine and wonderful abridgement of all the doctrine of Scripture especially of that which is necessary to salvation’. For Lawson this credal method naturally unfolds into an analysis firstly

⁹⁷ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, ‘Epistle to Reader’.

⁹⁸ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 11.

⁹⁹ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 19-20. Cause, effect, subject and adjunct are identical to Ramus’ first four arguments and part and whole relate to his other arguments (Ramus, *Logike*, 17-70).

¹⁰⁰ These appear before the first and second parts of the work respectively.

of God in himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, secondly of God in his government and works and finally of the Kingdoms of God the Creator and God the Redeemer (and Sanctifier)¹⁰¹ While accommodating his analysis to the Ramist dichotomy it is clear that Lawson is pushing towards a Trinitarian analysis of the Kingdom of God. His theo-political method can therefore be described as a Trinitarian and politicised Ramism.

As should already be clear, Lawson desired to follow a scriptural method in his body of divinity. For in treating of such high matters ‘it is necessary, that we have some certain rules to direct us: yet no direction, except from heaven, will serve the turn’. This heavenly direction is for him Scripture and only Scripture.¹⁰² Lawson also holds that logic itself must be adapted in order to speak about God. Thus in explaining the operation of our understanding he argues that we cannot reach things immediately but only at second hand and ‘cloathed with logisms, or logical affections, which we call arguments’. These affections or arguments are like ‘colours upon the surface of the thing, without which it is not perceivable by the eye’. For Lawson these arguments, as we have seen above, are of course the standard Ramist ones. He goes on to say that God himself is represented to us in his attributes, which are analogous to the logical arguments and derive from Scripture:

The word of God therefore is the rule of our understanding, and directing it in the knowledge of his essence, is our supernaturall logick, and the attributes are our divine topicks. For the logick which we now have composed by man, serves only for a rule in the understanding of things created: we must have a far higher and more excellent logick, to understand the being of our God.¹⁰³

In Scripture then Lawson found a ‘supernatural logic’ which alone was adequate for description of God. This idea, as we shall see in Chapter Five, is found in a number of medieval Nominalists and is extremely significant for our understanding of

¹⁰¹ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 13-17.

¹⁰² Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 1.

¹⁰³ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 19-20.

Baxter's own Trinitarian doctrine.¹⁰⁴ Here then we find a further important dimension to the sanctifying of logic.

3. Baxter's Response to Scholastic and Ramist Logic

3.1. Baxter and Scholastic Logic

Apart from a grammar school education and a month's study with Francis Garbett, 'the faithful, learned minister at Wroxeter', Baxter never received any formal training in logic.¹⁰⁵ Left largely to pursue his studies alone, Baxter began a course of intensive personal study. Having been a lover of method almost since childhood,¹⁰⁶ he focussed his attention especially on logic and metaphysics. He remarked of these that they:

...had my labour and delight, which occasioned me (perhaps too soon) to plunge myself very early into the study of controversies, and to read all the Schoolmen I could get; for next practical divinity, no books so suited with my disposition as Aquinas, Scotus, Durandus, Ockam and their disciples; for I thought they narrowly searched after truth and brought things out of the darkness of confusion; for I could never from my first studies endure confusion...I never thought I understood any thing until I could anatomize it and see the parts distinctly, and the conjunction of the parts as they made up the whole. Distinction and method seemed to me of that necessity, that without them I could not be said to know; and the disputes which forsook them or abused them seem but as incoherent dreams.¹⁰⁷

While the schoolmen clearly inculcated in Baxter an early love of method, in later years he was to temper somewhat his uncritical admiration for them, finding especially that an uninterrupted scholastic diet was too much for his mature theological palate:

¹⁰⁴ Lawson's Nominalist affinities are clear from *Theo-Politica*, 35, 39, 64, 119. Condren also draws attention to this referring to Lawson as an upholder of 'Ockhamist scepticism' (*George Lawson's Politica*, 39).

¹⁰⁵ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.4-6.

¹⁰⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹⁰⁷ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.6. Timothy Beougher (*Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan Concept of Becoming a Christian* (Fearn, Christian Focus Publications, 2007), 36-7) notes the Ramist character of the second of these statements.

I much value the method and sobriety of Aquinas, the subtlety of Scotus and Ockam...the excellent acuteness of many of their followers...but how loth should I be to take such sauce for my food, and such recreations for my business! The jingling of too much and too false philosophy among them, often drowns the noise of Aaron's bells. I feel myself much better in Herbert's Temple; or in a heavenly treatise of faith and love.¹⁰⁸

In fact at his most hostile Baxter can even echo the fierce attacks made on scholastic theology at the Council of Florence.¹⁰⁹ Yet it is also clear that this hostility is not directed at scholastic philosophy *per se*, for throughout his life he continued to regard this in the highest terms, but rather from what he perceived as its overly speculative nature.¹¹⁰ Certainly, even a brief perusal of the *Methodus* or the *Catholick Theologie* should be enough to convince any reader that Baxter never lost either his taste for scholastic distinctions or his grasp of the scholastic corpus. Indeed, Trueman remarks that Baxter's knowledge of scholastic works was quite possibly second to none amongst seventeenth-century Protestants.¹¹¹ It is clear then that this 'scholastic strain' continued to be operative in Baxter's thought long after the partial eclipse in his admiration for the schoolmen.

Nonetheless, as much as Baxter approved of many aspects of scholastic thought it seems that he never had, or at least did not retain, an appreciation for scholastic logic. Despite his own Nominalist affinities¹¹² and his admiration for Ockham we find little evidence that Baxter shared the same abstract concerns as the terminist logicians. Similarly, despite his willingness elsewhere to admit the use of the Scotist formal distinction in theology, Baxter is critical of the numerous treatises *de formalitatibus*. His concern in both cases is that in multiplying so many 'beings of reason' scholastic logic loses its grip on the essential connection between words and things, and thus on reality itself.¹¹³

Baxter is also critical even of conventional Aristotelian logic, remarking that 'the artificial, organical part' of learning 'was made so operous, as that it drowned real

¹⁰⁸ Baxter, *KL*, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Baxter, *KL*, 11.

¹¹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹¹¹ Trueman, 'Small Step', 184.

¹¹² Thus Trueman refers to Baxter's Nominalist logic ('Small Step', 185).

¹¹³ Baxter, *KL*, 18-9.

learning instead of promoting it; and became but like a game at Chess, a devise rather to exercise vain proud wits by, than to find out useful truth'.¹¹⁴ He was particularly critical of the Aristotelian predicaments, one of the most central themes of scholastic logic, echoing the Nominalist Hurtado de Mendoza's critique of the predicaments as congested,¹¹⁵ and holding that Aristotelian treatments of individual predicaments were hopelessly confused.¹¹⁶ Because the predicaments were not 'fitted to the kinds of beings' he also regarded them as arbitrary.¹¹⁷ In this way scholastic logic again failed demonstrably to fit words to things.

Baxter is also critical of the syllogism, the mainstay of Aristotelian logic, holding that the understanding of the true order of things is preferable to the ability to string many syllogisms together.¹¹⁸ He held that excessive syllogising distracted from the proper business of logic, playing into the hands of those cavillers who would twist it to their own purposes, disputing only about 'mood and figure' with no desire to attain the truth.¹¹⁹ In his own disputes Baxter was always concerned to delimit the correct difference between words and things and was scrupulously careful never to let his logic descend into a game of words. While Baxter could admit that the schoolmen, 'where our grammarians deride them as barbarians, have often done well in fitting words to things, and making the key meet for the lock',¹²⁰ he clearly regarded the propensity of scholastic logic to lapse into mere word-play as a major liability.

3.2. Baxter and Ramist Logic

Already in our discussion of Baxter's critique of scholastic logic the twin themes of order and method have begun to shine through, as has Baxter's fundamental concern that logic must always be conformed to things themselves and not be simply a *scientia sermocinalis*. Unsurprisingly therefore, in his search for the right

¹¹⁴ Baxter, *KL*, 5-6.

¹¹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.91.

¹¹⁶ Baxter, *KL*, 22; *Methodus*, I.91.

¹¹⁷ Baxter, *KL*, 47.

¹¹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹¹⁹ Baxter, *KL*, 6, 11. Baxter's mention of 'mood and figure' is a clear reference to conventional scholastic features of the syllogism.

¹²⁰ Baxter, *KL*, 24.

theological method, Baxter was deeply attracted to Ramism. Baxter was of course very familiar with Ramus and his library catalogue shows that he owned both Ramus' *Dialecticae* and *De Religione Christiana*.¹²¹ The general Ramist character of Baxter's thought has been noticed by a number of scholars but hitherto not investigated in any detail.¹²²

In their common desire for a clear, compendious, methodical approach which may easily be committed to memory, it is clear that Ramism and the catechetical enterprise of theology are closely connected. Thus it is no surprise that Baxter's catechetically oriented theology was accompanied by an appreciation for Ramist method. This we have seen already in his advice to the young divinity student that when he has gone through the catechisms he should proceed to 'three or four of the soundest systemes of divinity' and 'to the study of the clearest and exactest methodists'. Through study of these their goal was to understand theology 'as methodized and joynted in a due scheme' and in this way to see its true beauty.¹²³ For Baxter, as for the Ramists, any true exposition of divinity, whether theoretical or practical, must be grounded on right method. In the *Christian Directory* therefore he instructs his readers to 'labour to understand the true method of divinity and to see truth in several degrees and orders and not to confuse these', because 'method or right order exceedingly helpeth, understanding, memory and practice'. He refers to divinity as 'a curious well composed frame', comparing it to an intricate clock which in order to work must have every part in its place.¹²⁴ Such allusions are entirely Ramist, as even more so are Baxter's frequent references to knowledge as a tree with innumerable branches and sub-branches.¹²⁵

Baxter's own pattern of trichotomous logic is a clear adaptation of Ramism and even after his methodological breakthrough he continued to advocate Ramist dichotomies in pure logical discourse. Thus in the *Methodus* he follows Dietericus in maintaining

¹²¹ Geoffrey Nuttall, 'A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue: A Bibliographical Note', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2 (1951), 216, 218.

¹²² See for example: Packer, *Redemption*, 32-4, 57-63, 82-4; Sprunger, 'Ames', 134, 148; Beougher, *Baxter*, 36-8; Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn*, 29-30.

¹²³ Baxter, *CD*, III.920.

¹²⁴ Baxter, *CD*, I.39.

¹²⁵ Baxter, *CD*, I.39. This also perhaps recalls similar examples in Lull (Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, 157-75).

that ‘*distributio, si subjectae rei natura patiatur debet esse bimembris*’ with the proviso that this be understood for things purely logical, such as affirmations and negations.¹²⁶ Indeed, Baxter’s extensive use of dichotomising is amply borne out by the numerous Ramistic charts contained in the *Methodus*, frequently combining dichotomies and trichotomies into one pattern of analysis. Baxter in fact designed all of these charts before writing the text of the *Methodus*.¹²⁷ Thus in true Ramist fashion they form the skeleton of the whole of the work, determining not only the overall chapter order but also the internal order of each individual chapter. Like other Ramists Baxter also held these charts to be important memory aids and recommended to his reader that they should commit their basic outlines to heart.¹²⁸

Further evidence that Baxter was attuned to all the nuances of method may be found in his discussion in the preface of the *Methodus*. Here he identifies four different methods: the synthetic method which is the congruence of doctrine to the order of being and working of things, the notificative or probative method which follows the order of knowing and which thus beginning from signs ascends to the things signified, the practical method of intention which begins from ultimate end and proceeds to the means, and the practical executive method which is from means to end. Apart from the fact that Baxter reconstrues these four methods in terms not of causation but of his characteristic Augustinian pattern of signs and things, this is an entirely conventional discussion.¹²⁹ Baxter follows the writers of theological commonplaces in viewing the synthetic method as the principal one to be employed in theology.¹³⁰ Indeed, as we shall discuss below, the *Methodus* itself may be viewed as both a covenantally and a logically ordered series of theological *loci*. Furthermore Baxter’s discussion of a fourfold method clearly draws on the ideas of Zabarella so favoured by post-Ramists such as Alsted and Keckermann. As Muller suggests this division between a compositive and resolute method became common among the Protestant scholastics.¹³¹ In making a distinction between order and method, in

¹²⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’; cf. Dietericus, *Institutiones*.

¹²⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’; *Reliquiae*, III.69-70.

¹²⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’.

¹²⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’.

¹³⁰ See the discussion on the synthetic and analytic methods in Lucas Trelcatius, *A Brief Institution of the Common Places* (tr. John Gawen; London, 1610), 7-8.

¹³¹ *PRRD*, 1.184-6.

which order refers to the disposition of all the *loci* and method to the route through them, Baxter is again following a Zabarellan pattern.¹³²

Baxter's familiarity and sympathy with Ramism is further borne out by his recommendations of logic textbooks to theological students. Baxter held that young men around the age of eighteen to twenty should spend time especially in improving their memories and he recommended that they should gain the 'exactest acquaintance with the true precepts of logick' and learn 'some epitome of logick without book'. At this stage Baxter thought it important that the fundamentals of logic should become imprinted on their minds. Later when their judgement was riper he recommended returning for a second course of study, especially refining logic in the light of physics and metaphysics – a point we shall return to below and in the next chapter.¹³³ We may find Baxter's specific recommendations in what he calls the Poorest, Poorer and Poor Man's Library of his *Christian Directory*. If, as Brouwer has suggested, Baxter intended these as a kind of seminary curriculum for Non-Conformists then his advice here becomes even more significant.¹³⁴

Interestingly the majority of the logicians that Baxter recommends have some links to Ramism. While George Downname is the only pure Ramist, Konrad Dietericus, of course, was a prominent semi-Ramist as was Heinrich Gutberleth. Keckermann, as we have seen, was a post-Ramist and although Francis Burgersdijk was an Aristotelian his logical works are derived from Keckermann and may be counted as post-Ramist. Although Johann Claubergius was a Cartesian logician he has a Ramist background. Christopher Airay and Samuel Smith are included by Howell among the English 'systematics' who mixed scholastic and Ramist logic. In fact Samuel de Lublin and Martin Smiglecius, both Polish Catholics, are the only 'pure' scholastic logicians recommended by Baxter. Moving beyond logic we also find Baxter recommending Alsted's *Encyclopaedia* as indispensable for even the Poorest Library.¹³⁵

¹³² Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'; cf. *PRRD*, 1.184-6.

¹³³ Baxter, *CD*, III.918.

¹³⁴ This is an important theme of Brouwer, 'Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory*', Chapter Four.

¹³⁵ Baxter, *CD*, III.922, 923, 927. For reference to these see Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, 21, 96, 127, 158, 258; Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric*, 208, 292-8, 308-9; Charles Lohr, 'Renaissance Latin

In the preface to the *Methodus* Baxter includes a list of those methodical writers whom he regards as the best. Apart from George Lawson, he lists Sohnius, Polanus, Gomarrus, Trelcatius, Wollebius, Wendelinus, Szegedinus, Faius, Spanheimius, Zanchi, Hommius, Calvin, Musculus, Martyr Vermigli, Olevian, Cluto, Cocceius, Cloppenburg, Maccovius and Dudley Fenner.¹³⁶ The first thing to point out about this list is that it shows Baxter's comprehensive grasp of Protestant Scholastic theology. Elsewhere we find ample further evidence of Baxter's wide reading and appreciation of both English and Continental Protestant scholastics including a number of prominent figures not on this list, such as Ames and Perkins.¹³⁷ The second thing to note is the rough division between the older commonplace authors, the Ramist or semi-Ramist methodical writers and the covenantal scholastics such as Maccovius and Cocceius (concerning whom Baxter is quick to point out that while he approves of their method he does not approve of their doctrine). The significance of this list is twofold. First it demonstrates the continuity between the *Methodus* and the Protestant Scholastic tradition. Secondly it suggests Baxter's concern in the *Methodus* to draw on a commonplace, Ramistic and covenantal method of theology.

Despite his attraction and affinity to Ramism it is evident that Baxter ultimately became dissatisfied with it. In the *Reliquiae* he dates this dissatisfaction to the early 1640s. Significantly he attributes it to the failure of the Ramist dichotomy to properly accommodate words to things.¹³⁸ Likewise Baxter remarks elsewhere on the failings of modern logic saying:

As to this day when logick and metaphysicks seem much cultivated and reformed, yet the variety of methods, the number of notions, the precariousness of much, the uncertainty of some things, the falshood of many, maketh them as fit for boys to play with in the schools, and to be a

Aristotle Commentaries: Authors L-M', *Renaissance Quarterly* 31 (1978), 544-5; Gabriel Nuchelmans, 'Logic in the Seventeenth Century: Preliminary Remarks and the Constituents of the Proposition', in *CHSP*, I.104-5. It should be noted that the identification of Airay is uncertain. For the Ramist character of Baxter's three 'libraries' and the significance of his recommendation of Alsted see Howard Hotson, 'A Generall Reformation of Common Learning' and its Reception in the English Speaking World, 1560-1642', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 164 (2010), 223-5.

¹³⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹³⁷ See for example Baxter, *CD*, III.924, 927.

¹³⁸ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, III.69-70.

wood into which a sophister may run, to hide his Errours, as to be a means of detecting them.¹³⁹

Clearly Ramism alone was not enough to hold up the superstructure of Baxter's theological method.

4. The Hallowing of Logic

The publication of the *Methodus* marked the culmination of a quest for method which had occupied Baxter for nearly forty years.¹⁴⁰ The method he finally arrived at combined the insights of Ramism, Lullism and Lawson's theo-politics into one coherent system centred on the exposition of the Triune Baptismal Covenant. This he understood, with all due humility, to have improved on all previous conceptions of method, whether Protestant or Catholic, because it marked a return to the true method traced out in the order of both Scripture and nature.

4.1. Political Method of the Triune Baptismal Covenant

According to Baxter's own confession, the proximate cause of his earliest methodological breakthrough may be located entirely in Scripture. In 1647 in the course of writing the book which became his famous *Saints Everlasting Rest* Baxter found himself confronting the thorny issue of justification and the day of judgement. This drove him to prayer and Bible study and after a week of wrestling with various texts Baxter recounts experiencing an 'overpowering light' giving him a 'clear apprehension of those things, which I had often reached after before in vain'.¹⁴¹ Baxter later remarked on this experience that in one week of reading and reflecting on the Scriptures he learned more than in seventeen previous years of wrangling and debates.¹⁴² It was the fruit of these reflections, written down and further expanded

¹³⁹ Baxter, *KL*, 5-6.

¹⁴⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹⁴¹ Richard Baxter, *An Unsavoury Volume of Mr Jo. Crandon's Anatomized* (London, 1654), 5.

¹⁴² Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes of Justification* (London, 1655), 'Appendix', 110 ff., cited in Packer, *Redemption*, 206.

upon, which became the nucleus of his *Aphorismes* and informed his political method from its inception.¹⁴³

However while scripturally motivated it is also true that this method did not develop in a vacuum. Both the pre-history and early history of Baxter's political method have been ably charted, as well as the significant influence of Grotius and Twisse on his thought, and for this reason will not be rehearsed here. Of much greater relevance for our own quest for Baxter's Trinitarian method is the connection with Lawson.

Lawson and Baxter lived in adjoining counties and they probably first became acquainted with each other through Baxter's invitation to his fellow ministers to comment on his newly completed *Aphorismes*.¹⁴⁴ Lawson was one of the first to respond and it was his comments that Baxter came to value the most, describing him as 'the ablest man...of almost any I know in England'. Baxter particularly appreciated his 'methodical head' and his 'great skill in politicks'. Furthermore he owed Lawson a debt in his encouraging him to make a detailed study of politics.¹⁴⁵ Writing in his *Reliquiae* Baxter paid Lawson the compliment of saying that no other work, apart from Grotius' *De Satisfactione Christi*, ever enlightened his mind so much (for 'sudden sensible increase of knowledge') as Lawson's manuscripts had done. In Lawson therefore Baxter found explicitly an attitude towards theology which not only confirmed his own theo-political intuitions, first codified in the *Aphorismes*, but more importantly gave him a new and broader context in which to view these same ideas.

Of all Lawson's works Baxter valued most highly his *Theo-Politica*, that 'excellent summ of divinity'. In fact Baxter tells us that this was written, in part, as a response to his *Aphorismes* and he therefore received an advanced copy for comment. Baxter praised Lawson very highly for this work which he said 'reduced theology to a method more political and righter in the main, than any that I had seen before him' and, together with the common catechisms, surpassed all 'of our exactest

¹⁴³ Packer, *Redemption*, 206.

¹⁴⁴ Condren, *George Lawson's Politica*, 137.

¹⁴⁵ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.107-8.

dichotomizers’ – and this in spite of Lawson’s own evident Ramism! In following the catechetical pattern of the Triune Baptismal Covenant Baxter held Lawson to have approached the true Trinitarian method of Scripture. Even more significantly, in the same passage Baxter makes it clear that this is the true ‘Scripture method’ that he had, at the time of reading the *Theo-Politica*, long been seeking, albeit hitherto to no avail.¹⁴⁶

In Chapter One we considered at length Baxter’s catechetical understanding of theology and its intimate connection to theological method, remarking on the supreme importance of the Triune Baptismal Covenant for grounding Baxter’s own method. However we did not there address the question of when this first became a prominent theme in Baxter’s theology. In some of his earlier works, including the *Aphorismes*, it is conspicuous by its absence. We do, however, find it beginning to take an important place in Baxter’s work at the time that the Worcestershire Association was founded.¹⁴⁷ Likewise the *Reliquiae* suggests that this became the coordinating centre of Baxter’s own preaching to his Kidderminster congregation. For it was his practice to order his doctrine according to the main end and so he ‘daily opened to them, and with greatest importunity laboured to imprint upon their minds...the great fundamental principles of Christianity contained in their Baptismal Covenant’. Baxter was concerned also to teach his flock concerning the ‘right methodizing’ of the truth and as we would expect taught particularly the ‘true and profitable method’ of the Creed, Lord’s Prayer and Decalogue and the ‘great points of faith, hope and love, holiness and unity, which must be still inculcated, as the beginning and end of all’.¹⁴⁸

There is an obvious link with catechising here and it is surely no coincidence that Baxter’s own enthusiasm for a catechetical method dates from around the time of his catechetical enterprise. It is clear then that the seeds of Baxter’s Trinitarian method were sown early, well before the publication of the *Theo-Politica* (although not before his friendship with Lawson). It is after the Restoration however that we find

¹⁴⁶ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, III.69-70.

¹⁴⁷ The whole Association was oriented around covenanting with the Trinity. See Richard Baxter, ‘Profession’, in *Christian Concord* (London, 1653).

¹⁴⁸ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.93-4.

the Triune Baptismal Covenant becoming an explicit methodological theme. In his *Divine Life*, written around 1663, we find Baxter confidently stating, after discussing in detail the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love and their relation to the divine persons and the divine relations with man, that:

Were it not my purpose to confine myself to this short discovery of the nature, attributes and works of God, but to run deeper into the rest of the body of divinity, I should come down to the fall, and work of redemption, and shew you in the Gospel and all the ordinances, etc. the footsteps of this method of Trinity in Unity, which I have here begun; but that were to digress...¹⁴⁹

Likewise in November 1663 we find him writing the following to John Eliot, the famous apostle to the Indians:

If we had a right scheme of theology (which I never yet saw) Unity in Trinity would go through the whole method: It's easy to follow it a little way, and to see how God's three grand relations of Owner, Ruler, and Father or End and chief God, and the correspondent relations in man, and the mutual expressions go far in the great parts of theology: But when we run it up to the numerous and small branches, our narrow minds are lost in the search. But the day is coming when all God's works of Creation and Providence, and all his truths shall be seen to us *uno intuitu*, as a most entire, perfect frame.¹⁵⁰

In both of these Baxter's enthusiasm for such a scheme is palpable. Furthermore it is striking how much these brief snapshots resonate with the overall plan and purpose of the *Methodus*, begun a few years later in 1668-9. To some degree it is speculation, but it seems likely that Lawson's own efforts, to Baxter's mind pioneering, reignited his enthusiasm to again pursue his own methodological quest.¹⁵¹

Whether this is so, it is undeniable, given Baxter's own words on the subject, that Lawson exercised a profound influence on the development of Baxter's Trinitarian theo-political method. Certainly the *Theo-Politica* reads in many ways as a prototype of the *Methodus*. The two are obviously congruent in their common desire

¹⁴⁹ Richard Baxter, *The Divine Life in Three Treatises* (London, 1663), 21.

¹⁵⁰ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, II.297.

¹⁵¹ A thorough study of Baxter's voluminous unpublished works and correspondence would perhaps shed further light on this question.

for a methodological exposition of Scripture according to the Triune Baptismal Covenant and theo-political tenets. It is highly significant therefore that in the preface to the *Methodus* Baxter should single out Lawson's *Theo-Politica* (again along with 'our more common catechisms') as offering the most important reflections on theological method to be found anywhere.¹⁵² Lawson's method we have described as a Trinitarian and politicised Ramism and this provides a very apt description of Baxter's own logic.¹⁵³ Lawson's own adherence to a supernatural logic is yet another striking similarity.

The two works also closely mirror each other in content, with both emphasising that the principal subject of theology is the Kingdom of God and subsequently organising their material on the basis of the constitution and administration of the Kingdom of Nature, the Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory, or to put it another way around the successive epochs of God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. We find also the by now familiar prolegomenal theme of the Triune Baptismal Covenant as the ground of all Creeds and the contraction of Scripture into its essential form, as well as the vital role of Baptism in co-ordinating and enabling the Christian's relationship to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁴ Similarly in Lawson's discussion of the Trinity we find him giving a central role to the three attributes of Power, Knowledge and Will. While it would be going too far to suggest that Lawson himself arranges his exposition around these, he does relate the attribution of different works of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to the interaction of these divine attributes.¹⁵⁵

Of course there are also important differences between Baxter and Lawson and a brief review of these will enable the distinctives of Baxter's own Trinitarian method to stand out in sharper relief. Thus while Lawson ostensibly seeks to structure his own theology on the pattern of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification, in practice

¹⁵² Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹⁵³ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹⁵⁴ Here we should mention also that in the *Theo-Politica* Lawson makes reference to a particular Creed of Tertullian's which he suggests derives from the Baptismal Covenant (*Theo-Politica*, 13-4). It is therefore instructive to find Baxter drawing attention to this Creed in Richard Baxter, *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity* (London, 1655), I.81-4.

¹⁵⁵ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 33-8.

he tends to emphasise a twofold division in God's government of man with respect to God as Creator and Redeemer.¹⁵⁶ This in part seems to be a consequence of his specific methodological constraints and is therefore perhaps evidence that his own Ramist bifurcations hindered him from a full Trinitarian exposition of the Kingdom of God. We may certainly suspect this is how Baxter would have viewed the matter. Furthermore although Lawson is willing to endorse the triad of Power, Wisdom and Will with respect both to God and to man as created in his image, in the *Theo-Politica* he does this with considerable hesitancy, emphasising in Augustinian fashion how imperfect the likeness is.¹⁵⁷ While Baxter would doubtless agree with the sentiment, there is a marked difference here from his own confident employment of metaphysical triads and his frequent assertion of the human soul as a clear mirror of the divine being in all its Trinitarian splendour.¹⁵⁸ The major difference between the two therefore, as Baxter himself confesses, is that Lawson 'had not hit on the true method of the *vestigia Trinitatis*'.¹⁵⁹ To find this Baxter had to have recourse to the exemplaristic logic and metaphysics of the Lullists and their successors.

4.2. Trinitarian and Exemplaristic Logic

Lullist logic, as we have seen, was characterised by a strong Trinitarian exemplarism. Early in his quest for method Baxter obviously encountered the works of Lull and his followers, for he refers to having 'long ago read Lullius and many of his commentators'.¹⁶⁰ At the end of his life Baxter owned works by Ramon Lull, Ramon de Sebonde, Nicholas of Cusa, Campanella, Alsted and Comenius, showing his continued fascination with the Lullist and exemplaristic traditions of logic and metaphysics.¹⁶¹ Despite this Baxter's attitude to Lull and the Lullian Art often seems

¹⁵⁶ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 53.

¹⁵⁷ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 31-2.

¹⁵⁸ There are of course other differences, the most notable of which hinge on a different understanding of God's twofold will and his power to relax the law (Condren, *George Lawson's Politica*, 107-8 and Lamont, *Baxter*, 144-5). However it is these which seem to me most significant for an understanding of Baxter's Trinitarian and political method of theology.

¹⁵⁹ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, III.69.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Baxter, *Richard Baxters Answer to Dr Stillingfleet's Charge of Separation* (London, 1680), 47-8.

¹⁶¹ Geoffrey Nuttall, 'A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue: A Bibliographical Note', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2 (1951), 210, 211, 217, 218, 220; 'A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue (Concluded)', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 3 (1952), 87, 94, 98, 99.

decidedly critical. He thus refers to the Lullist doctrine of spirits as ‘drowned in a multitude of irregular arbitrary notions’ and criticises Lullist physics in no uncertain terms.¹⁶² Likewise he brands Lullist philosophy as ‘palpably uncertain, and full of certain errors’, saying that ‘Lullius and his followers fit not their method to the true order of the matter’.¹⁶³ Most damningly of all, however, Baxter expresses his approval of the mature opinion of Cornelius Agrippa, himself once a leading Lullist, that the Lullian Art is ‘of no other use, than only to show the pomp and magnificence of wit and learning, and is no way prevalent for the attaining of sound learning, having in it far more of confidence than efficacy’.¹⁶⁴ Clearly then, Baxter was no adherent of pure Lullism.

Nevertheless it should be remembered that many of these comments occur in the context of Baxter’s general critique of philosophy. It is also quite possible that some of Baxter’s own ambivalence to Lullism may be traced to its associations with Renaissance occultism.¹⁶⁵ Likewise within Baxter’s works there are at least as many positive comments on Lull as negative ones. In his *Reasons*, for instance, he recommends both Lull’s *Articula Fidei* and Ramon de Sebonde’s *Theologia Naturalis*, as well as contemporary works by Alexander Gill and Bishop Lucy which sought to prove the Creed or the Trinity by recourse to ‘Lully’s reasons’.¹⁶⁶ Likewise in this work and at least one other Baxter cites approvingly Lull’s proof of the non-eternity of the world.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore Baxter evidently admired Lull’s piety and deep love for God, quoting him in the *Christian Directory* as saying: ‘*O Orator, in tua oratione plus dilige Deum quam teipsum et alia: et si hoc facis justus es et prudens, et de charitate et sanctitate habituatus*’.¹⁶⁸ However Baxter’s most important reference to Lull is again found in the *Reasons* when he refers the reader to Lull and Sebonde as important exemplars of his own doctrine of the divine

¹⁶² Baxter, *KL*, 20, 48, 254.

¹⁶³ Baxter, *CD*, III.907-8, 919.

¹⁶⁴ Cornelius Agrippa, *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences* (London, 1676), 47-8; cf. Baxter, *KL*, 48.

¹⁶⁵ Baxter, *Answer to Dr Stillingfleet’s Charge*, 47-8; Richard Baxter, *The One Thing Necessary* (London, 1685) in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (London, 1838), IV.762.

¹⁶⁶ Baxter, *Reasons*, 377, 453.

¹⁶⁷ Baxter, *Reasons*, 14, 582-3; Richard Baxter, *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* (London, 1691), 61-2.

¹⁶⁸ Baxter, *CD*, I.149.

principles.¹⁶⁹ In this way Lull plays an important role in Baxter's quest for method, as he admits even amidst his most hostile comments saying: 'Lullius thought he made the most accurate Art of notions; and he did indeed attempt to fit words to things' and only 'mist of a true accomplishment of his design, for want of a true method of physicks in his mind, to fit his words to'.¹⁷⁰

Importantly Baxter found part of the remedy for this defect in his study of Campanella. That Campanella exercised a decisive influence on Baxter's own Trinitarian method is clear from the preface of the *Methodus* where he says '*ex lectione Campanellae (praecipue eius Metaphysices) lucis nonnihil mihi emicuit. Primalitates eius, seu trina rerum activarum principia ratione et probatione non carere percipi*'.¹⁷¹ It is even more apparent in the *Reliquiae* in which Baxter indicates that Campanella gave him the alternative to Ramist dichotomy that he had long been seeking and the 'method of the *vestigia*' which Lawson's otherwise excellent *Theo-Politica* was lacking:

I never yet saw a scheme, or method of physicks or theology, which gave any satisfaction to my reason: Tho' many have attempted to exercise more accurateness in distribution... yet I could never yet see any whose confusion, or great defects, I could not easily discover, but not so easily amend. I had been twenty six years convinced that dichotomizing will not do it; but that the Divine Trinity in Unity, hath exprest it self in the whole frame of nature and morality. And I had so long been thinking of a true method, and making some small attempts, but I found my self insufficient for it; and so continued only thinking of it, and studying it all these years. Campanella I saw had made the fairest attempt that ever I saw made, in the principles of nature (and Commenius after him)...¹⁷²

His debt to Campanella and to Campanella's follower Comenius is of great significance. In fact on hearing that Campanella had also written a *Theology* Baxter was put in hope that 'he had there also made some attempt' (which in fact he had),

¹⁶⁹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 374.

¹⁷⁰ Baxter, *KL*, 48.

¹⁷¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹⁷² Baxter, *Reliquiae*, III.69-70.

only to be disappointed on being unable to find anyone who had ‘seen any such book of his’.¹⁷³

The nature of the method that his reading of Campanella suggested to him was trichotomy – the systematic threefold division and sub-division of things into their elemental components. As Baxter says, again in the preface to the *Methodus*, referring to both Campanella and Lawson:

*Ex hisce omnibus patet quare trichotomiam eligo. Diu credidi omnem legitimam divisionem esse bimembrem; et ad dichotomiam maxime propendebam...Quando vero a re subjecta sumenda est methodus plerumque trichotomiam praeferendam sentio. Trinitas enim in Unitate, et Unitas in Trinitate a Deo ipso in omnia sua opera nobiliora activa clare impressa sunt. A rebus autem methodus est. Hoc sicut Campanella, D. Glissonus et scholasticorum plurimi observarunt, ita per totum patefacere ego conatus sum....Non mirum est igitur si eius vestigia per totam doctrinam S. Scripturae, et in Dei imagine in fidelibus sanctificatis, et in officiis Christianis, et in tota oeconomia evangelica inveniantur. Si igitur in rebus ipsis explicandis hanc Trinitatem in Unitate non observarem, vera non esset explicatio.*¹⁷⁴

Here for the first time then we find all of the components of Baxter’s mature Trinitarian method and clear evidence for his revised logic patterned on the *vestigia Trinitatis*.

It is necessary to remember that Campanella was by no means the only source for Baxter’s doctrine of the divine principles and much less for his metaphysical exemplarism. In fact Baxter’s *Methodus* makes clear that the triad of Power, Wisdom and Love was ubiquitous in medieval theology, and elsewhere he suggests that he also had other sources for this doctrine.¹⁷⁵ It would be wrong therefore to ascribe to Campanella the sole influence on Baxter’s logical and methodological breakthrough. Nevertheless it is important to be clear on his great significance for Baxter.

¹⁷³ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, III.69-70. This is an important point, for it shows that Baxter was unfamiliar with Campanella’s detailed discussion of the Trinity and could not have been influenced by this.

¹⁷⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘Praefatio’.

¹⁷⁵ Baxter, *Reasons*, 371-8; Richard Baxter, *The Life of Faith* (London, 1670), III.202. For a comprehensive list of sources see *Methodus*, I.95-117.

Campanella's primalities, as we have suggested above, may be viewed as a kind of hybrid of Lull's divine dignities and correlatives. For Baxter in particular, who wanted a method adequate to the Trinitarian nature of God, we may surmise that they had three distinct advantages over Lull's similar account. Firstly Campanella's scheme of the primalities was much simpler to apply than the combinatorial method of the Lullian Art. In this way it clearly lent itself to a more elegant and streamlined physical and metaphysical system, while at the same time preserving all the advantages of Lull's exemplarism. Secondly while Lull's thought was entwined with the Augustinian psychological analogy of memory, understanding and will, Campanella, as we shall see in Chapter Four, offered an alternative understanding of this which Baxter found much more convincing. Thirdly, if one of the attractions of Lull's thought to Baxter was its thoroughgoing but sometimes implicit Trinitarianism, then this was even more true of Campanella's primalities in which a Trinitarian understanding of the structure of reality is made fully explicit.

Nevertheless it still seems right to refer to Baxters' decisive breakthrough as a Lullist turn as much as a Campanellan one. For Baxter's key realisation, as we have suggested, was that in order to reflect the true order of reality logic must be patterned in a Trinitarian fashion according to the divine principles. Whether or not Baxter himself realised it, his own hallowed logic thus bears a marked resemblance to Lull's spiritual logic. Both for example were seeking a logic of first intentions or things rather than a scholastic logic of second intentions or words. In both as well we find a definite blurring of the distinctions between logic, metaphysics and physics, something entirely foreign to Ramism. Most importantly both Baxter and Lull founded their refined, hallowed logic on an exemplaristic Trinitarian metaphysics. In this way both can be said to have sought a logic of the *vestigia Trinitatis*, even though for apologetic reasons Lull wished this to be implicit rather than explicit in his system.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore it was Lull, rather than Campanella, who first sought to refine logic in a Trinitarian fashion and in this (qualified) sense it seems entirely just to call Baxter a Lullist.

¹⁷⁶ Hillgarth, *Lull*, 161.

Finally it is Baxter's distinctive Lullism that most serves to distinguish his method from that of other Ramist or semi-Ramist theologians of his age. In this sense he may be regarded as something akin to Alsted who likewise sought to blend Ramist and Lullist methods into one. Yet Baxter is even more similar to Alsted's pupil, the man he called 'pious Comenius'¹⁷⁷, whose pansophic method, we have suggested, should be seen as a synthesis of Ramism and Trinitarian exemplarism. Baxter, as we have said above, recognised in Comenius' works one of the most promising approaches to the method of the *vestigia*. It is indeed striking that both should have sought a method of trichotomy adequate to the nature of things themselves and in pursuing this have been strongly influenced by Campanella. Far more important than the congruence of their philosophical stance, however, is their shared ardent desire to sanctify their logic to the Triune God.

5. A Primer of Hallowed Logic

At some point in his life Baxter evidently toyed with the idea of writing a textbook on logic.¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately he never did this, probably due to his conviction that preachers should spend time ministering to their flock and not busy themselves writing such treatises,¹⁷⁹ so the only source we have for reconstructing his hallowed logic is the *Methodus* itself. Obviously we cannot hope here to cover every aspect of Baxter's trichotomous method in detail but we can at least lay down its fundamentals and describe the major points of its application in the *Methodus* itself.

For Baxter logic is founded on order. This he refers to as a 'most observable predicament', and Packer suggests that if Baxter had written a logic textbook he would have added order to the Aristotelian Predicaments.¹⁸⁰ In the *Methodus* Baxter's discussion of order notably begins with something of an Agricolan rhetorical orientation: '*Syllabarum partes sunt literae, verborum syllabae, sententiarum verba, orationis sententiae, cuius ORDO et debita compaginatio methodus est*'. Already we see the close connection between order and method for

¹⁷⁷ Baxter, *CD*, III.919.

¹⁷⁸ Packer, *Redemption*, 76-7.

¹⁷⁹ Baxter, *KL*, 165.

¹⁸⁰ Baxter, *KL*, 22; cf. Packer, *Redemption*, 77.

Baxter, which is characteristic of Ramism, although, as we have suggested above, the two are not entirely identical in his Zabarellan conception of method. Baxter continues saying that order is either of things or of words and sentences and the true reason of method consists in the conformity of words to things. This focus on a logic of things, or in scholastic terms first intentions, is, we have already suggested, a major theme of Ramist *technologia* and of Lullist logic itself.

Baxter holds that without order no one can be said to merit knowledge. His reasons for this are chiefly theological but also show strong evidence of his Ramist affinities. Firstly he says that, since God governs everything in perfect order, so we must also do everything in an orderly way, especially through conforming words to things. To this he adds that:

Qui methodice et ordine proprio res novit, non tantum qua veras, sed quasi praegnantas, et plurimarum veritatum evidencias indigitantes eas novit. Veritatem enim est concatenatio; et qui proprio ordine pauca novit, eo facilius et verius is plura intelliget. Methodus et intellectionis et memoriae magnum adjumentum est.

For Baxter ‘*veritates recte ordinatae tibi invicem lumen praebent*’ and it is in this context that he suggests that right ordering is much more important than syllogistic disposition.¹⁸¹ For Baxter, as for Alsted, method is clearly the *clavis universalis*, the key for unlocking the secrets of the universe.

Baxter combines these reflections with an aesthetic focus, saying that symmetry and harmony are the ‘beauty of things’. Such symmetry Baxter recognises as the effect or impression of divine Wisdom, the second primality: for just as divine Power effects the existence and motion of things as necessity, so divine Wisdom effects laws and the order and harmony of things, and divine Love their amiability, perfection and felicity. In this way Power may be called the efficient cause of all things, Wisdom their dirigent cause and Love their final cause. Order therefore is the ‘demonstrative and glorifying effect of wisdom’ and Baxter marshals a number of

¹⁸¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’.

scriptural passages from the Old Testament to show this.¹⁸² Order also has a clear Christological reference as he demonstrates citing from Ephesians:

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.¹⁸³

It is from order therefore, as reflecting the second primality, that beauty arises in any discipline or pursuit, whether music or arithmetic, poetry or rhetoric. Likewise morality is for Baxter nothing but the order of voluntary actions and habits. Returning to his first reason Baxter suggests that human wisdom consists in understanding and following the already established order of things as they are the effect and prescript of divine wisdom. Thus although in God there are no parts nor order of parts, yet from God are all things and their consequent order, and so these may be said to be virtually and causally in God. Above we found a very similar sentiment in Ramist *technologia*. It is notable once again that Baxter should combine this with an attention to the Lullist divine principles.

Such order, as we have already seen, is manifest in Scripture itself. In fact it is here that order attains its highest expression, for as Baxter says elsewhere Scripture bears the intrinsic stamp of God's Power, Wisdom and Love.¹⁸⁴ This order is also of course that of the Triune Baptismal Covenant, namely the exposition of the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue within a Trinitarian context. This Baxter calls a 'most beautiful and regulating method' containing 'delectable beauty and evidence of truth'. Theology is therefore simply the conforming of human wisdom to divine order and beauty. Once again Baxter stresses in Ramist fashion that '*rerum natura, ordo et usus verae methodi sunt regula*', adding the Lullist proviso that '*rebus enim verba et secundae notiones sunt aptandae*'. The material things of theology are '*res verissimae, optimae, necessariae, utilissimae et pulcherrime ordinatae*' compared to which the most part of the logical and metaphysical systems of philosophers are but

¹⁸² Baxter cites Proverbs 3:19, Psalm 104:24 and Psalm 136:5.

¹⁸³ Ephesians 3:9-10 (KJV); cf. Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹⁸⁴ Baxter, *More Reasons*, 1.30-1; *Methodus* III.197.

‘childish trifles’. However, by implication, his own logical system drawn from Scripture and patterned on the *vestigia Trinitatis* is exempt from such criticism, for it seeks above all to fit words to things and to display the lustre of God’s Life, Light and Love.¹⁸⁵

Following ‘order’, the next most important aspect of Baxter’s logic is his attention to causality. The inclusion of the causes in Baxter’s logic rather than in his metaphysics *per se* is distinctively Ramist, for the causes themselves occupy a prominent place in Ramus’ *Dialecticae*, forming the subject of his first logical argument.¹⁸⁶ However Baxter of course treats the causes in terms not of Ramist dichotomies but of his own system of trichotomising, suggesting that there are three causes, rather than the standard Aristotelian four: the efficient, constitutive and final.¹⁸⁷ We shall consider these in much more detail in the next chapter, but it is important to note here, as alluded to above, that these three causes may be correlated to the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love respectively, representing the enacting of order in its full Trinitarian panoply. It is also under these causes that Baxter can accommodate every created thing and it is here therefore that the traditional Aristotelian predicaments find their home. Some of the details of this are again filled out in Baxter’s ontology and so must await the next chapter. However in blurring the distinction between logic, physics and metaphysics Baxter demonstrates once again his Lullist colours.

Theology itself, says Baxter, concerns the Kingdom of God in its threefold state of Nature, Grace and Glory. Here we see the first fruits of Baxter’s Lullist analysis of theology according to the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love, with such a division also corresponding to God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Likewise these divine principles, as we shall consider in much greater detail in Chapter Six, entirely condition man’s relation to God so that according to them God must be considered politically as man’s Owner, Rector and Benefactor. In this we see for the first time the clear convergence of Baxter’s Lullist and political methods.

¹⁸⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘Praefatio’.

¹⁸⁶ Ramus, *Logike*, 18.

¹⁸⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.4-9.

This convergence is seen particularly clearly in the elucidation of his tables that Baxter offers in the first chapter of the *Methodus*. These, following Keckermann, he terms the *praecognita* of his logic. For our purposes they establish its ‘political vocabulary’. Baxter insists that each of the natural, gracious and glorious states of the divine Kingdom must be handled in a threefold manner, meaning that their ‘active efficient constitution’ must be treated before their ‘effected constitution’ and this before their ‘actual regimen’, with legislation likewise being handled before judgement and execution. Here we see Baxter’s threefold pattern of causation applied to his political conception of the divine Kingdom.¹⁸⁸

Baxter handles the constitutive structure of the various Kingdoms by means of a series of Ramist dichotomies. Most basic of all is the division between God the Rector and his creatures ruled by him. This is followed by a distinction between ‘antecedent’ and ‘consequent government’. Antecedent government refers to the legislation or covenant established by God and is defined by Baxter as ‘*illam...voluntatis regentis patefactionem, quae debitum obediendi, et officia absolute, et praemii aut poenae jus sub conditione statuit*’. It is called antecedent because it comes before both the actions of the subjects and the consequent judgement and execution of the Rector.¹⁸⁹

Pertaining to antecedent government are those benefits and gifts distributed not under condition of obedience or as a reward. Therefore antecedent government clearly relates to the acts of God as Owner, doing with us as he wills, and Benefactor, freely giving gifts. Consequent government, by contrast, refers to God’s government according to the laws he establishes as Rector. In this way the dichotomy between antecedent and consequent government is important in establishing that dynamic interaction of Owner, Rector and Benefactor which so characterises Baxter’s soteriology. Baxter adds that God frames his laws according to the capacities of his subjects, suiting them to the threefold character of their faculties (vitality, intellect and will). Thus the Triune God relates in a threefold manner to his triune subjects. We shall explore the ramifications of this Triune covenantal understanding further in

¹⁸⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.9-11.

¹⁸⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.10.

Chapter Six. Finally Baxter's desire to conform this Trinitarian and political method to Scripture is evident from the fact that he chooses to treat this covenant according to a scriptural pattern grounded in 'salvation history', rather than in logical terms according to a series of nested Ramist dichotomies: a 'universal initial' (Adamic, Noachic), 'universal initial and particular' (Abrahamic), 'particular' (Mosaic) and 'universal more perfect' dispensation (the new covenant of the Gospel).¹⁹⁰

Baxter concludes his discussion of logic with the following reminder of the grounds of his Trinitarian method, which is also helpfully illustrative of his entire logical system:

ORDO scilicet FACULTATUM ANIMAE humanae, verae methodi totius theologiae index est; partim qua speculum seu imago est, Trinitatis divinorum principiorum, (primalitatum, seu attributorum) et ita ratio methodi ex causa efficiente indicanda est; et partim, qua methodi ratio sumenda est a subditis, et a facultatibus influxus efficientis RECEPTIVIS. Nullum etenim nobis clarius speculum concessum est, ex quo de natura divina (analogice) concipere et dicere possumus, quam anima humana...

For Baxter the whole of theology unfolds from this dynamic relation between the Trinity of Principles and the soul of man, whether construed in a personal or a political context. He goes on to outline briefly the path of an analogical ascent from the human soul to God, followed by a descent from God to the soul through the divine influx of law and grace.¹⁹¹ This ascent and corresponding descent will be the topic of the rest of this thesis.

¹⁹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.9-11.

¹⁹¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.11.

Chapter Three: The Physics and Metaphysics of the *Vestigia Trinitatis*

1. Introduction

The seventeenth century was a time of great flux and intellectual transition, witnessing the final dissolution of a longstanding medieval and Renaissance worldview and the establishment in its place of a new scientific and mechanistic hegemony, which sought to explain everything, eventually even life and the soul, as the effect of innumerable, invisible atoms. Baxter stood right at the cusp of this development, yet as Packer suggests, by the time of the Restoration and the founding of the Royal Society, his method and ideas would have seemed thoroughly crude and old-fashioned to most of his contemporaries. For this reason his physical thought in general and his *Methodus* in particular were almost entirely neglected.¹

Yet it would be premature in the extreme either to accept this judgement at face value or consequently to try and strip Baxter's thought of, what may seem to us, its physical or metaphysical husk, in order to reach a supposed purely theological kernel. Instead Baxter's work demands a more sensitive and contextual reading in which his theology and physics are understood as wholly allied. For Baxter is the defender of an older view of a harmonious and interconnected universe. Such a worldview was one which sustained – even at times demanded – the *vestigia Trinitatis*.² For in the mutual interconnection of its elements, in its hierarchical and even organic structure, and especially in the immanence of transcendent principles, almost every facet of creation was regarded as in some way reflecting the divine. Ultimately however this worldview was discarded with the rise of an exclusively mechanical science and the Enlightenment 'disenchantment of nature'.

In this chapter, with Baxter's logic and its metaphysical presuppositions already having been examined in some detail in previous chapters, we shall now turn to consider Baxter's physics and his understanding of causality. Not only will this have

¹ Packer, *Redemption*, 77-8, 85.

² For the prevalence of the *vestigia Trinitatis* in the England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see Dennis Klinck, 'Vestigia Trinitatis in Man and his Works in the English Renaissance', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42:1 (1981), 13-27.

further ramifications for our understanding of Baxter's Ramistic logic, but it will also demonstrate the remarkable coherence of Baxter's physical worldview and its foundations in both his scriptural convictions and Trinitarian conceptualisation of reality.

In the second section we shall consider the intellectual context of seventeenth-century physics. This will lead directly in the third section into a discussion of Baxter's opposition to the contemporary atomists such as Hobbes and Descartes and his assertion of higher spiritual principles of physical operations. In the fourth section we shall examine the tenets of Baxter's ontology considering both its hexaemeral ground in the text of Scripture and its Trinitarian shape in Baxter's account of efficient, constitutive and final causation. This will allow a detailed metaphysical study of the general features of the *vestigia Trinitatis*, which will itself prepare the way in the following chapter for a study of Baxter's doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

2. Historical and Intellectual Context

The full story of the dissolution of the medieval worldview is complex but for our purposes it begins with a certain strong dissatisfaction with Aristotelian physical science that surfaced in early sixteenth-century Italy. This was fuelled, at least in part, by the rise of the new Florentine Platonism in the previous century. Among the chief of those dissatisfied, and often grouped on their own as Renaissance philosophers of nature, were Bernardino Telesio, Francesco Patrizi (called Patricius) and Tommaso Campanella. All of these were united in advocating the need for a new philosophy of nature, a desire which was grounded negatively in their antipathy to Peripatetic rational speculation and positively in their differing appropriations of Platonic thought.³

Two distinctive and related features of their thought are particularly worthy of mention. The first is their conviction that nature could be explained through the

³ See Brian Copenhaver and Charles Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 303-28; Paul Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1965), 94-6; Bonansea, *Campanella*, 14-20. Baxter himself groups these thinkers together (*CD*, III.919).

interaction of a very few fundamental principles. For Telesio these were the incorporeal principles of heat and cold which penetrated all matter and were the source of all motion. For Patricius the noblest active principle in nature was light which he understood as infinite in extent and permeating all things. Combined with a Plotinian emanational scheme he postulated light, heat, space and fluid as the fundamental constituents of the world, explanatory of all phenomena. For Campanella himself these were of course Power, Wisdom and Love, the three primalities of being.⁴ The second feature is their panpsychism – their belief that everything, not just animal and vegetative life, was endowed with soul or sensation to various degrees. This is a prominent feature of Telesio's own thought but reaches its heights with Campanella's *De Sensu Rerum*. There is no doubt that his ideas were influential on the science and philosophy of the seventeenth century, however much they were disapproved of in some quarters. Leibniz, for instance, is known to have read and deeply appreciated Campanella's work and echoes of both the Campanellan primalities and panpsychism may be found in his *Monadology*.⁵

As a group the Renaissance naturalists are a prime example of Amos Funkenstein's trend towards homogeneity – that drive to understand natural phenomena through as few fundamental principles as possible which resulted in a view of the universe as interconnected and animated and the blurring of distinctions between ontological orders. This marks a return to a 'symbolical' reading of the universe as permeated throughout by analogical signs of God's presence, reasserting this against the opposing Scotist and Nominalist doctrines, which, according to Funkenstein, postulated a univocal, unequivocal account of God and creatures. In other words where Nominalist physics was associated with a univocal but heterogeneous account of the universe, Naturalist physics held to an analogical but homogeneous account.⁶

⁴ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 14-20; Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers*, 91-109.

⁵ David Skrbina, *Panpsychism in the West* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007), 67-81, 99.

⁶ Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 57-72. Funkenstein's account of univocity is on the whole simplistic. Scotus, at least, did not at all seek for an 'unequivocal account' of God and creatures, regarding many concepts in common as technically equivocal. Nevertheless it remains a helpful categorisation especially with respect to the seventeenth-century univocal turn.

Against this backdrop Funkenstein holds that the seventeenth century must be characterised as asserting a homogeneous but unequivocal approach to nature,⁷ maintaining that in no other century, either before or since, was there such a drive to unite the disciplines of theology and physics.⁸ Thus, while the Renaissance desire for homogeneity became one of the guiding principles of the new science, the symbolical vision of an animated and interconnected universe was eventually discarded. This was marked by a metaphysical turn away from an analogical and towards a univocal understanding of being.⁹ Indeed, as Jean-Luc Marion suggests, in the seventeenth century mathematics became the univocal language of nature. This may be seen especially in physicists such as Kepler and Galileo, the latter of whom famously remarked that we must read the book of nature as ‘written in mathematical language’.¹⁰

Closely allied with this mathematical movement was a new expounding of atomist science. This occurred in the context of what was in some quarters now a deeply entrenched opposition to Aristotelian physics and metaphysics. An early pioneer in this movement was Pierre Gassendi, a Catholic priest as well as natural philosopher, who, from his reading of humanist authors, such as Ramus and Vives, and physicists, such as Copernicus and Galileo, conceived a great dislike of Aristotle. To his mind Aristotle neglected the results of physical experiments and mathematics and instead concentrated his attention on chimeras like substantial forms.¹¹ Influenced deeply by Epicureanism Gassendi suggested instead that the whole of reality is composed of atoms characterised by qualities of shape, size and weight. These, he held, were created by God and endowed with motion. In this way Gassendi clearly held that all (physical) effects were ultimately reducible to matter and motion.¹²

Along with Gassendi and others such as Sennertus, René Descartes was one of the key early exponents of this atomist doctrine. His expression of the laws of motion in

⁷ Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 72.

⁸ Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 3.

⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, ‘The Idea of God’, in *CHSP*, I.266-8.

¹⁰ Marion, ‘Idea of God’, 268-70.

¹¹ Barry Brundell, *Pierre Gassendi: From Aristotelianism to a New Natural Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1987), 16.

¹² Brundell, *Gassendi*, 54-6.

mathematical form gave particular impetus to the atomist project of describing all physical phenomena in terms of matter and motion. Similarly his revision of metaphysics had a profound effect on seventeenth-century thought. Indeed his reduction of everything to extension and thought represents a stark and attenuated view of reality, especially when compared with the florid panpsychism of his Renaissance predecessors.¹³

In England this atomism quickly took root. Hobbes, its acme, effectively ended up denying the existence of spirits. Yet this movement towards a Hobbist atomism and a stripped-down Cartesian metaphysics certainly did not go unchallenged, for many were extremely worried about its theological and social implications. It must be remembered that from a contemporary perspective the advances of the new science often looked suspiciously like the recrudescence of a suspect atheistic Epicureanism. In this context two groups are particularly worthy of mention: the clerical opposition to Hobbes, including notably Bishops Bramhall and Lucy, and the ‘spiritual philosophers’, including Baxter’s correspondent Henry More and his close friends Sir Matthew Hale and Samuel Gott. These latter held that spiritual substance played an active and indeed predominant role in physical processes, serving as the principle of motion and all higher interactions. Baxter himself was at the forefront of opposition to Hobbes, calling for the *Leviathan* to be burned as early as 1655,¹⁴ and has strong affinities with both groups.

Contemporaneous with both the atomist and counter-atomist movements, and often associated with the forging of a theological physics, was the ‘Mosaicall Philosophy’. Following in a long tradition of hexaemeral works,¹⁵ this drew on the Bible and especially the early chapters of Genesis as forming the blueprint for a scientific worldview. It often drew as well on the concept of a pristine wisdom, the *prisca philosophia*, dating back to prelapsarian times and held to be conveyed by Moses in

¹³ Daniel Garber, ‘Soul and Mind: Life and Thought in the Seventeenth Century’, in *CHSP*, I.764-9.

¹⁴ Jon Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England, 1640-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 176 citing Richard Baxter, *Humble Advice* (London, 1655), 7.

¹⁵ The term hexaemeron refers to a study of the six days of creation. Hexaemeral literature was widespread in the patristic era and the medieval period. For an example of a scholastic hexaemeron see Aquinas, *ST*, 1a65-74.

the text of Scripture.¹⁶ The Mosaical philosophy itself was ubiquitous, cutting across all intellectual and confessional boundaries.¹⁷ In these terms, at least in its purer forms,¹⁸ it can be placed within the wider context of the sanctifying of human reason according to a biblical pattern.

Here we have briefly tried to capture the main features of this seventeenth-century revolution in physics and metaphysics as evident from Baxter's own writings. As we have already begun to discover, Baxter shares with the Renaissance natural philosophers a homogeneous and analogical view of nature, endorsing a scriptural physics and 'spiritual philosophy'. By the end of his own century all three positions were largely discarded. In scientific terms the real turning point was the publication in 1687 of Newton's *Principia Mathematica* with its elegant geometrical account of universal gravitation. Coming just a few years after the *Methodus* this sounded the death knell for Baxter's own symbolical Renaissance understanding of the world.¹⁹ As Funkenstein succinctly puts it: 'The medieval sense of God's symbolic presence in his creation, and the sense of a universe replete with transcendent meanings and hints, had to recede if not to give way totally to the postulates of univocation and homogeneity in the seventeenth century'.²⁰ Indeed, with the advantage of hindsight, the lack of such a univocal and homogeneous mathematical description of nature is surely the biggest defect of Baxter's physical system. Baxter unfortunately was in no position to supply such a system for he had little interest or skill in mathematics.²¹ Nevertheless Baxter's scripturally-motivated physics did enable a sophisticated and nuanced metaphysical understanding of the presence of the Triune God in creation, theologically far superior to the bleak deterministic view of reality which was the first fruits of Enlightenment Deism.

¹⁶ Ann Blair, 'Mosaic Physics and the Search for a Pious Natural Philosophy in the Late Renaissance', *Isis* 91 (2000), 32-58.

¹⁷ Stephen Menn, 'The Intellectual Setting', in *CHSP*, I.57-8.

¹⁸ It should be noted that many also considered aspects of this perennial philosophy to be preserved not only in the works of Plato and Aristotle but in more outlandish sources such as the Cabbala or Hermetic corpus. Baxter was well aware of this, referring to interpretations of Genesis being 'abused by ignorants and cabalists' (*KL*, 167).

¹⁹ Packer, *Redemption*, 77-8.

²⁰ Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 116.

²¹ Richard Baxter, *Additional Notes on the Life and Death of Sir Matthew Hale* (London, 1682), 5.

3. Baxter's Response to the Atomists

Baxter himself recognised the dangers of such a pared-down view of the universe. One of his longest and most detailed critiques of atomist philosophy can be found in his Appendix to the *Reasons*. This expounds the primary thesis that matter and motion alone are insufficient as explanatory principles of physical phenomena. Only when this point is established is Baxter able to propose his own metaphysical framework of matter and active formal natures as a credible alternative. In this section we will therefore review in some detail Baxter's arguments, in order to clear the way for a more detailed discussion of his ontology.

In general Baxter opposes those who claim that 'matter and motion, without any more, may do all that which you ascribe to incorporeal substances or souls'.²² His arguments against this position are both theological and physical in character. He begins by pointing out that all his opponents are 'constrained to confess an incorporeal intellectual substance, even that there is a God, and that God is such'. To prove this Baxter rehearses his own variation on a conventional scholastic argument, pointing out that matter did not make itself and that, as motion is but its mode, cannot be said to have been produced by its own motion. From this he deduces the existence of God the Unmoved Mover. Granted this much, even if his opponents were to argue that matter itself was eternal in duration, Baxter is confident that he could still demonstrate to them the existence of an eternal incorporeal cause, since matter 'is in it self so dull a thing' as to require explanation of its existence.²³

With his opponents also granting that God is an intelligent agent and the first cause of matter and motion, Baxter next argues that they cannot deny 'that he still causeth both, by his continued influx or causing efficacy'. His main premise here is that 'there can be no effect without a cause, and therefore when the cause ceaseth, the effect must cease'. From this he concludes that God must continually uphold all things in existence, so that if there were a cessation of this divine influx for one moment all things would cease in being:

²² Baxter, *Reasons*, 493-4.

²³ Baxter, *Reasons*, 499.

And nothing is more abhorrent to all common reason, than that this stone or dirt, which was nothing as yesterday, should be a God to it self, even one independent self-sufficient being, as soon as it is created; and so that God made as many demy-gods as atoms.²⁴

Baxter's own view was that forces communicated to matter not only an external motion but also an internal principle of this motion and its continuation.²⁵ This intrinsic principle, as we shall see, Baxter considered to be lowest in a hierarchy of active natures all upheld and sustained by God.

From these considerations Baxter concludes:

Seeing then it cannot by sober reason be denied, that God himself is by a continued causation, the preserver and intimate first mover of all things, it must needs thence follow, that matter and motion are still insufficient of themselves: and that this is to be none of the controversie between us: but only whether it be any created nature, power, or other cause, by which God causeth motion in any thing, or all things? Or whether he do it by his own immediate causation alone without the use of any second cause, save meer motion it self? So that the insufficiency of matter and motion to continual alterations and productions, must be confessed by all that confess there is a God.²⁶

It is clear that Baxter believed matter itself to be inert. In fact, as we shall consider below, he classed it as a passive nature in stark contrast to the active natures which moulded, activated and even breathed life into it. This division between active and passive natures, between the sufficient and the insufficient, is of fundamental importance to Baxter's own physics and metaphysics and it is significant to see this perspective emerging (negatively) in his critique of atomism.

Baxter next argues that 'it is not a meer motion of the first cause, which appeareth in the being and motions of the creature'. For, as he notes, all things manifest first 'a tendency in the creatures motion to a certain end, which is an attractive good', secondly 'a certain order in all motions to that end' and thirdly 'certain laws, or guidances and overrulings, to keep them in that order'. Taken together these imply that not Power alone but also Wisdom and Goodness are manifest in the motions of

²⁴ Baxter, *Reasons*, 500-1.

²⁵ Baxter, *Reasons*, 500-2.

²⁶ Baxter, *Reasons*, 502-3.

the created order. Without mentioning the Campanellan primalities by name Baxter thus seeks to demonstrate their existence and importance. He argues that it is evident from nature that ‘the first mover doth more than meerly move’ and indeed that he moves things according to his Wisdom and Goodness as well as his Power. Granted this, which Baxter holds can be demonstrated from Gassendi’s own works, Baxter proves to his opponents that ‘there is divine Power, Wisdom and Love, which is more than matter and motion it self’.²⁷

Baxter finds further evidence for these principles of Power, Wisdom and Love (and their analogues) in a plethora of specific phenomena. Here once again he attacks the atomists on their own ground. For in each case Baxter is determined to demonstrate that matter, its various modes (analysed by Gassendi as magnitude, figure and the mysterious *pondus*) and motion are together insufficient to account for observations. A prime example of this is Baxter’s critique of the atomist account of sensation. Asking his opponents for an explanation of how sense can arise from mere matter and motion Baxter argues that ‘atoms, as matter, have no sense, they smart not, they see not, they feel no delight’. He uses this in support of his own theory of active forms saying: ‘tell us how and why the change of meer magnitude and figure should make a thing feel that felt not before. If you difference not matter by some natural difference of forms, or properties and virtues, you will never speak sense in proving sense to be in matter, by meer atomizing it, or moving it’. For Baxter this argument is conclusive for the existence of other principles beyond these.²⁸

The same applies for light and heat, which he calls motion’s ‘great concomitants’. Here he criticises the atomists, noting that ‘they cannot understand motion, without making nothing of light and heat, or greatly obscuring and abusing them’. Baxter does not intend to denigrate motion – ‘a most noble and observable cause of most that is done or existent in the corporeal world’ – but rather to question the reason why it must be regarded as the solitary cause of all things. Baxter therefore argues that heat and light are distinct principles with their own ‘proper, coequal and coordinate properties and effects’. Thus although motion contributes to heat, he

²⁷ Baxter, *Reasons*, 503-5.

²⁸ Baxter, *Reasons*, 512-5.

holds that ‘heat contributeth as much to motion at least, as motion doth to heat’.²⁹ Once again therefore matter and motion alone are proved to be inadequate.

The most serious flaw with atomism according to Baxter is its inability to account for intellect and volition. As he asks rhetorically, ‘if no better a solution be given us of the nature of light and heat, what shall we expect from them about intellect and volition?’ Baxter held the intellectual nature to consist of the three faculties of understanding, will and executive power. For him the atomist focus on just one of these faculties – power construed as motion – begs the question of ‘how that which hath no participation of understanding or will should constitute an agent that doth understand and will?’³⁰

Baxter’s final and most damning arguments against the atomist position centre on the fact that it is dishonouring to God:

Lastly, with nature you deny the being of morality. For if there be no difference of beings, but in quantity, figure, motion and site; and all motion is locomotion, which moveth by natural necessitating force, then a man moveth as a stone, because it is irresistibly moved, and hath no power to forbear any act which it performeth, or to do it otherwise than it doth.

The implication of atomism then is that there is no free will, no moral choice and ultimately no virtue or vice. Man is reduced to no more than an engine, or ‘clod of earth’, and his dignity stripped from him entirely.³¹ For Baxter therefore the dishonouring of God and the loss of man’s dignity are the final, inevitable result of the atomist dogmas.

In his advocacy of physical principles beyond matter and motion Baxter demonstrates a close similarity to the Renaissance natural philosophers. This may be seen from his own ‘recipe’ for natural philosophy:

Cull out into one, and set together, but what Patricius hath said of light, and what Telesius hath said of heat, (and Campanella after him) and what

²⁹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 515-7.

³⁰ Baxter, *Reasons*, 516-7.

³¹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 520-1. In defence of this conclusion Baxter also cites Bishop John Bramhall’s works against Hobbes.

Gassendus and Cartesius have said of motion, and cut off all their superfluties, and you will have a better entrance into sound philosophy, than any one book that I know doth afford you.³²

While this may appear a somewhat eclectic ‘cut and paste’ philosophy, as we shall see its disparate elements are given coherence through their relation to a Trinitarian scheme of the *vestigia Trinitatis*. This Baxter only hints at here, suggesting, for example, of motion, light and heat that ‘in one essence they are three coequal virtues or faculties, the *vis motiva, illuminativa et calefactiva*’ or that the three faculties of understanding, will and executive power are ‘marvellously conjunct and co-operative’.³³

All of Baxter’s principal arguments against the atomists are founded, whether implicitly or explicitly, on the axiomatic principle that ‘*nihil dat quod non habet, vel formaliter vel eminenter*’ which he cites as defended by Campanella in his *De Sensu Rerum*.³⁴ Likewise while Baxter is emphatic that the ‘fanaticisms’ of Telesio and Campanella are no ‘part of our physical creed’ he was strongly influenced by both Campanella’s panpsychism and that of Francis Glisson, its most influential English exponent.³⁵

Thus although Baxter denies that matter is imbued with any kind of sensation, he does advocate the crucial role of the primalities in active natures. He also accepts that lower natures can imitate higher ones, meaning that ‘there is some image or participation of life in inanimates, of sense in vegetatives, of reason in sensitives and of angelical intellection in rationals’. In this way he clearly imbibes the Renaissance doctrines of Campanella and Glisson, while analogically seeking to temper their extremes.³⁶ Indeed Baxter sums up his charge against the atomists saying that ‘they are deluded by taking the *vestigia* and images of things, for the things themselves’. Because they cannot grasp this principle they end up reducing all the higher natures

³² Baxter, *Reasons*, 516; cf. *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’. Incidentally this shows again that Baxter’s hostility was only to exclusive atomism and not to atomism *per se*.

³³ Baxter, *Reasons*, 517.

³⁴ Baxter, *Reasons*, 513. See also Campanella, *Monotriade*, 22, 126.

³⁵ Baxter *Reasons*, 513; *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’. For an account of Glisson see Guido Giglioni, ‘Glisson, Francis (1599?-1677)’, in *DNB* and for an important aspect of his influence on Baxter see ‘Appendix Two – Baxter, Glisson and Inadequate Concepts’.

³⁶ Baxter, *Reasons*, 513.

to the lowest common denominator and thus ‘deny the differencing forms of all things’.³⁷ As Baxter himself succinctly puts it, ‘to violate the harmony of God’s works, and to deny all the steps of the ladder save the lowest, is but an unhappy solving of phaenomena’.³⁸ Furthermore in denuding the universe of its rich analogical texture they do violence to the very essence of its harmonious order – subverting the principle of *ordo* so vital to Baxter’s own hallowed logic.

Once again then we find ourselves in the territory of the primalities, although Baxter’s own circuitous route to this point is markedly different from Campanella’s direct metaphysical and panpsychic approach.³⁹ By demonstrating the insufficiency of matter and motion Baxter opens his readers’ perspective to a whole spectrum of principles beyond them. In effect his argument is that the plenitude of divine goodness cannot possibly be captured through only matter and motion. Baxter here only hints at the fact that all of these necessary further principles can be comprehended under the primalities of Power, Wisdom and Love, but this is certainly implicit in his discussion. As we shall see in ensuing chapters the foundation of his own position is very simple: ‘Know thyself’ and in particular know thyself to be more than the effects of matter and motion, and to be endowed with a soul fashioned in the image of God.

4. Tenets of Baxter’s Ontology

The blurring of the distinction between the sciences is one of the key features of Baxter’s thought, seen nowhere more clearly than in his concept of ontology. For Baxter this marked the confluence of all the other disciplines and he characterised it as the ‘knowledge of real entities’, both spirits and bodies, dividing it into its subcomponents of somatology, pneumatology and theology – respectively the study of bodies, of spirits and of God himself.⁴⁰

³⁷ Baxter, *Reasons*, 498-9.

³⁸ Baxter, *Reasons*, 519.

³⁹ Some of Campanella’s own arguments rely on holding that inanimate objects can somehow know and desire their own existence (Bonansea, *Campanella*, 145). Clearly Baxter would have rejected these.

⁴⁰ Baxter, *CD*, III.918; cf. *Methodus*, I.3.

Far then from being purely metaphysical, Baxter's ontology embraced logic, metaphysics, physics and theology. Baxter affirmed the link between logic and ontology, noting that after having made the 'exactest acquaintance with the true precepts of logick' the young Christian student should interrupt his study of this discipline in order to gain a thorough grounding in '*ontologia*'. With this in turn complete he advised that:

When you have well stated your ontologie, or real science, then review your logick and organical part of metaphysicks; and see *verba rebus aptentue*; fetch then your words and organical notions from the nature of the things. Abundance are confounded by taking up logical notions first which are unsuitable to true physical beings.⁴¹

The consequence of this is apparent in Baxter's shift to a trichotomous blend of Ramist and Lullist logic, which he saw as mirroring the *vestigia Trinitatis* and the ontological order. In this light Baxter's sanctified logic may be clearly seen as an embodiment of his ontology.

Baxter held a similar position with respect to the relation between physics and theology remarking that:

When you come to seek after more abstruse and real wisdom, joyn together the study of physicks and theologie; and take not your physicks as separated from or independant of theologie; but as the study of God in his works, and of his works as leading to himself.

This marriage of physics and theology is clearly seen in his unified science of ontology, involving not only the study of moving bodies and of physical phenomena but also of spirits and of God himself. Baxter held that these could only be understood properly with God taken as 'first and last, the original director and end of all' and with the 'due dependance' of bodies on spirits, passive natures on active natures upheld.⁴² In this way the coherence of Baxter's ontology relies on its theological grounding and implies a prioritising of the spiritual over the material and the invisible over the visible, demonstrating Baxter's thought to be markedly similar to the spiritual philosophers of his own day. Likewise in seeking a scriptural

⁴¹ Baxter, *CD*, III.918-9.

⁴² Baxter, *CD*, III.918.

grounding, Baxter's ontology, as we shall see, represents a variety of the ubiquitous Mosaical Philosophy.

In his ontology Baxter poses an important distinction between the 'order of knowing' and the 'order of being':

When you study only to know what is true, you must begin at the *primum cognoscibile*, and so rise *in ordine cognoscendi*: but when you would come to see things in their proper order, by a more perfect satisfying knowledge, you must draw up a synthetical scheme, *iuxta ordinem essendi* where God must be the first and last; the first efficient governour and end of all.⁴³

What this indicates is that the traffic between physics and theology is necessarily two-way. In the order of knowing we therefore ascend from the *primum cognoscibile* (either self-knowledge or sensible evidence) towards God himself at (or rather beyond) the summit of understanding, whilst in the order of being, in a proper methodical scheme such as the *Methodus*, we descend from God down the hierarchy of being. In this way God is clearly 'first and last' in the study of both physics and theology, which can be seen mutually to inform each other. It is for this reason that chapter four of the *Methodus* on ontology comes *after* chapter two on the doctrine of God even though Baxter's doctrine of God relies to some degree on the metaphysical principles set out in his ontology. In this thesis the order of treatment is again reversed so that having first discussed Baxter's refined logic, metaphysics and physics we may then go on to comprehend better his complex Trinitarian doctrine.

With this in mind we turn now to consider in detail the two most important tenets of Baxter's ontology: its hexaemeral ground and its Trinitarian roots in the metaphysics of divine principles, which together will allow us a comprehensive grasp of Baxter's doctrine of the *vestigia Trinitatis*. Before embarking on this however we must make one important caveat: in handling the topic of the *vestigia Trinitatis*, and later also its link with the divine Triunity, we must always be careful to distinguish between the order of being and the order of understanding. In particular we must consider whether Baxter is talking from a purely natural standpoint of impartiality or whether,

⁴³ Baxter, *CD*, III.918.

as is more likely, he is already making a statement which is at some level informed by faith in the Triune God and belief in the coherence of his universe. It is to be suspected that in dealing with the topic of natural theology in the seventeenth century there will be no neutral ground. Indeed for Baxter ‘natural’ theology and apologetics were always very closely intertwined.⁴⁴

4.1. The Hexaemeral Ground of Baxter’s Ontology

As we have already seen, Baxter located his Trinitarian method in the pattern of Scripture as much as in the pattern of nature. Indeed given the exemplaristic character of his ‘hallowed logic’ it was entirely natural that Baxter should have sought to root this exemplarism in the text of Scripture itself and especially in the account of God’s Trinitarian interaction with creation. Indeed, Baxter declared that his logic of the *vestigia* was no more than the ‘Scripture method’ set out in the first three chapters of Genesis,⁴⁵ and that ‘the book of Job, and the Psalms, may acquaint us that our physicks are not so little kin to theology as some suppose’.⁴⁶ Overall then Baxter held that the Bible, and particularly the first chapter of Genesis, contained ‘sounder doctrine of physicks’ than that of any philosopher who contradicts it.⁴⁷ In Scripture particularly Baxter found justification for two major claims of his ontology – the distinction of active and passive natures and the action of the higher on the lower. Coordinating these within a Trinitarian framework of the divine principles, which he saw as at least implicit in Scripture, Baxter was subsequently able to construct a coherent physics and metaphysics based on the biblical text itself. In this way Baxter’s own thought may be clearly seen as an outstanding example of the contemporary Mosaical philosophy.

Importantly, Baxter’s thought conforms very closely to that of his two friends Samuel Gott and Sir Matthew Hale. Gott was a politician and keen natural philosopher most famous for his utopia the *Nova Solyma*. He was a Baconian and peripherally associated with the circle around Hartlib, Dury and Comenius. His

⁴⁴ This is evident from Baxter’s own personal experience (*Reliquiae*, I.22) and especially from his apologetic works such as the *Reasons* and *More Reasons*.

⁴⁵ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, III.69-70.

⁴⁶ Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 270.

⁴⁷ Baxter, *Reasons*, 415.

work the *Divine History*, was a massive and exhaustive hexaameron much admired by Baxter⁴⁸ Hale was a distinguished judge as well as a talented amateur scientist and philosopher. Baxter made his acquaintance during his sojourn at Acton in Middlesex and they quickly became firm friends. As Baxter says, ‘we were oft together, and almost all our discourse was philosophical, and especially about the nature of spirits and superior regions’.⁴⁹ In fact with some justification Hale may be referred to as the midwife of the *Methodus*,⁵⁰ and it was Hale particularly who encouraged Baxter to integrate his physics with his theology.⁵¹ Given his admiration for both Hale and Gott we are justified in taking them as guides for our interpretation of Baxter’s own hexaemeral thought.

This may be found in highly compact form in both his *Reasons* and *Methodus*. The work of the first day, Baxter says, refers to God’s initial creation out of nothing of those natures closest to him in similitude and dignity: the active natures hierarchically arranged as ‘pure simple intellectuals’, sensitive souls (of animals) and fire. This was followed by God’s subsequent creation of the passive elements of air, water and earth as the ‘matter of the elementary world in an unformed mass or chaos’ over which moved the Spirit of God by his ‘action and formative influx’. God’s first act was the ‘*fiat lux*’ in which he spoke by his ‘Word of Power, Wisdom and Love’, forming the ‘most noble active element’ of fire and causing it to give light and through its threefold motive, illuminative and calefactive virtue to act on and shape the passive matter. In separating the light from the darkness God constituted the first day.⁵²

On the second day, perhaps through the ministry of the angels and of fire, God separated out the attenuated and rarefied element of air, the highest of the passive natures, expanding it upwards from the earth as a firmament, intended to separate the clouds from the lower waters and to act as the medium for light. On the third day

⁴⁸ Baxter, *CD*, III.19; *KL*, 167. For more on Gott see J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Chapter Six.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Additional Notes*, 5.

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, III.69-70.

⁵¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, ‘*Praefatio*’.

⁵² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.124-5; *Reasons*, 415-6.

God separated out the rest of the passive elements to form the land and the sea, making individual plants by species ‘in their specifick forms and virtue of generation’. On the fourth day God separated out the pre-existing fire into the luminaries of the Sun, Moon and stars, appointing them to indicate times and seasons. Then on the fifth day he made the ‘inferior sensitives’, namely the fish and birds, again with the power of multiplying.⁵³

The sixth day marked the culmination of God’s creative acts, first with the creation of the terrestrial animals and then of man in the image of God. While Baxter suggests that the sensitive and presumably vegetative souls of plants and animals may have pre-existed in a separate state, he insists that man’s intellective soul was created from nothing as a special act by God, marking his supreme dignity as the pinnacle of the visible creation. Finally on the seventh day God rests and, beholds his good creation. He loves himself in his own works (that is, the glory of his image in them) and has complacency in them, appointing this day for all time as a Sabbath to commemorate the creation and worship the Creator.⁵⁴

This in bare outline is Baxter’s hexaemeral doctrine. It is helpfully supplemented by his elaboration on the nature of God’s own creative action. Following Christian orthodoxy Baxter insists this was a creation out of nothing. He holds therefore that the world was not created in space or time but in eternity, and not out of any pre-existing material. In this way the creation narrative of the six days refers to God’s progressive and purposive ordering of the unformed, chaotic mixture into a good and fruitful world. In this process Baxter tentatively suggests, perhaps following the much more confident pronouncements of Gott and Hale, that the active natures themselves had a secondary role.⁵⁵

Importantly Baxter affirms the intimate involvement of the Triune God in his creation right from the beginning. In the *Methodus* Baxter formalises this in terms of the action of God the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit as eminent Creator and origin of all things, the action of the Son from the Father and by the Holy Spirit as

⁵³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.124-5; *Reasons*, 415-6.

⁵⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.124-5; *Reasons*, 415-6.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.125; cf. Samuel Gott, *The Divine History of the Genesis of the World* (London, 1670), 112-20; Matthew Hale, *The Primitive Origination of Mankind* (London, 1677), 292-3.

the ordination of all things and the action of the Holy Spirit from the Father and Son and through himself as the perfection of things.⁵⁶ He also is clear that God created all things through his essence and freely by his Power, Wisdom and Will, and denies the position of Aureolus that God created through a transient action acting as a certain mean between the Creator and the created.⁵⁷ In fact he emphasises God's direct involvement at every stage of creation, even to the point of relativising the role of the active natures as secondary causes.

The act of creation itself may be conceived, Baxter suggests, as if by emanation from the divine essence and free will holding in existence and continually sustaining all created things. As he says, if God's efflux were to cease but for a moment all creation would return to nothingness. Through creation as an act of God's Power, Wisdom and Love conjoined, his own likeness is impressed, to varying degrees, on those things he has created. In this way the whole of creation is enclosed within God's eternal purpose, enacted in time, that he should behold and love himself in complacency in everything that he has made. Strikingly creation itself, encompassed and pervaded by his essence, becomes the glorious mirror of God's own reflexive Trinitarian action.⁵⁸

As well as providing Baxter, at least implicitly, with a Trinitarian framework for his ontology, Genesis also justified the important distinction between the active element of fire and the three passive elements of air, water and earth. Likewise in its discussion of multiplication by seed according to kind it could be interpreted as referencing the higher vegetative and sensitive active natures. In this way Baxter's hierarchical understanding of being, marked by its radical ontological distinction between active and passive natures, begins to unfold out of the very text of Scripture itself.

If we take Gott as a guide for our understanding of Baxter then this is made fully explicit. Like Baxter, Gott describes the action of the Spirit of God on the chaotic mixture, characterising it as a 'supernatural incubation' and an act of improper

⁵⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.124.

⁵⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.128.

⁵⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.127-31.

creation distinct from the earlier and proper creation *ex nihilo*. As Baxter also implies in his own account, Gott held that the higher natures (which for him included the four elemental spirits as well as the sensitive and vegetative souls) were all latent in this elemental chaos from the beginning. The action of God's Spirit therefore was to 'prepare and predispose them by fit mixture and temperature of them all; and thereby to produce their proper qualities out of their potentialities into act, gradually and successively'.⁵⁹

Following Aristotle, Gott also speaks of a distinction between matter and form.⁶⁰ To his mind matter, which he understands as something known by corporeal quantity or extension, has a 'common receptivity' of forms and through their activity bodily variations are 'superinduced' onto matter. He therefore understands forms as the architects of matter, fashioning and moulding it for a variety of purposes. The forms themselves he says are known by their active qualities and he describes them as 'active substantial entities' or more generally as spirits. These 'spirits', wholly distinct from the matter they inform, are not only human or angelical but also material, elementary, vegetative, sensitive and even accidental. As active principles they underlie the differentiation of homogeneous substance into heterogeneous substances,⁶¹ in operation throughout the six days of creation as a mode of improper creation.⁶² Furthermore Gott's conception of matter and spirit lies at the root of his antagonism towards Cartesian and Epicurean philosophies. It is an axiom for him that matter tends naturally to rest whereas spirits 'intend their acts and exercises to the utmost'.⁶³ Entirely like Baxter therefore he holds that matter and motion are insufficient to account for the variety of physical processes in the universe.

Notable parallels may also be found between Hale and Baxter. Like Baxter, Hale espoused a general worldview of the *vestigia Trinitatis*,⁶⁴ holding against atomist reductionism that it was necessary to have recourse to the 'infinite wisdom, power and goodness of the glorious God', as 'essentiated' in the laws of nature, in order to

⁵⁹ Gott, *Divine History*, 51-2, 112-7.

⁶⁰ Gott, *Divine History*, 1-3.

⁶¹ Gott, *Divine History*, 39-55, 112-7.

⁶² Gott, *Divine History*, 27-31.

⁶³ Gott, *Divine History*, 43.

⁶⁴ Matthew Hale, *Magnetismus Magnus* (London, 1695), 2-3.

explain physical phenomena.⁶⁵ Although philosophically much more sympathetic to Aristotle than Baxter,⁶⁶ his own physics drew heavily on the same matter-form dualism that we have had already had cause to comment on.

Hale therefore insisted on ‘an active principle...in a naturally passive material world’.⁶⁷ This he called ‘spirit’, ‘form’ or ‘ferment’. Hale’s tract *Magnetismus Magnus* provides a good illustrative example of these spiritual principles. In this he attributes the origin of the magnetic force to ‘self-moving intrinsic principles’ in nature which he says ‘are not unfitly called essential virtues or essential forms’. These principles are self-moving not in the sense that they are self-sufficient or independent of God, but rather in that ‘when they are once settled, they have the root of their motions and operations within themselves, so that no other created cause doth physically contribute to them’ and ‘yet the sovereign cause, and his influence, hath still a most intimate co-efficiency with them in all their motions and operations’.⁶⁸

Hale self-consciously positioned his own physical views on the matter-form relation as a mean between the extremes of mechanistic and vitalist philosophy.⁶⁹ He avoided these by recourse to the theories of John Baptist van Helmont, who rejected Aristotelian teleology, replacing the Aristotelian notions of form and final cause with his own notion of ferments. These were regarded by Helmont as a ‘vis’ or ‘virtus’ – terms which significantly echo Baxter’s own – inhabiting passive matter with the ability to replicate and multiply in material bodies and govern physical processes. According to Cromartie, Hale chose to view ferments as manifestations or instantiations of God’s law (and thus presumably also of his Power, Wisdom and Goodness). As varied principles they could thus be used to explain a whole gamut of

⁶⁵ Matthew Hale, *Difficiles Nugae* (London, 1674), 55 cited from Alan Cromartie, *Sir Matthew Hale, 1609-1676: Law, Religion, and Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 210.

⁶⁶ Baxter, *Additional Notes*, 6; cf. Cromartie, *Hale*, 196.

⁶⁷ Cromartie, *Hale*, 203.

⁶⁸ Hale, *Magnetismus Magnus*, 14-16.

⁶⁹ Cromartie, *Hale*, 206.

phenomena ranging from the nature of light and magnetism to the characteristics of vegetative and sensitive natures and culminating in the description of man's soul.⁷⁰

Importantly Hale clearly viewed his physics not only as consonant with the text of Scripture but even as emerging out of it. Thus as with Gott, it is the action of the Spirit of God moving over the face of the waters which first begins the transformation of this passive matter by imparting to it active forms or qualities.⁷¹ Following the first impartation of active principles, the continuing work of the Spirit of God is coordinated with the action of the spiritual forms themselves. Through light the chaotic matter is digested, allowing the other elements to separate out. Then through the action of all the elements together the different spheres of nature – the heavens, the land, the sea – are established and ordered.⁷² Then, through the 'fecundating principle' of the Spirit of God and by the 'powerful energy of the fiery and luminous nature', the vegetative and sensitive natures are created.⁷³ The culmination of this work is again the creation of man in the image of God and the Sabbath rest of God himself.⁷⁴

It is this spiritualised philosophy of Hale and Gott therefore which provides the proper context for our understanding of Baxter's hexaemeral ontology. The Platonic aspects of this Mosaical Philosophy are readily apparent, especially in the theory of spirits or ferments so reminiscent of Augustine's 'seminal reasons' – those seeds implanted by God at the beginning of creation with inbuilt potential to develop into specific kinds and subsequently actualised by him⁷⁵ – and in its echoes of Plato's *Timaeus*. It is thus evident why Baxter should choose to rest his own much stronger Trinitarian exemplarism on such secure hexaemeral foundations.

⁷⁰ Cromartie, *Hale*, 206-8, 218-29.

⁷¹ Hale, *Primitive Origination*, 292-3.

⁷² Hale, *Primitive Origination*, 294-9.

⁷³ Hale, *Primitive Origination*, 299-309.

⁷⁴ Hale, *Primitive Origination*, 309-19.

⁷⁵ See Alister McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 101-6.

4.2. Trinitarian Metaphysics of Divine Principles

Baxter's metaphysical project carries through to a complete reordering of the Aristotelian causal and constitutive structure of the universe on the basis of the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love. As we have seen this involved a collapsing of the traditional fourfold order of causality – efficient, material, formal and final – into a new threefold order – efficient, constitutive and final. Furthermore for Aristotle, as Baxter points out, these four causes were equivocal.⁷⁶ By contrast in Baxter's sanctified metaphysics these causes are effectively univocal and triune, given coherence again through the divine principles.

For Aristotle the dynamics of causation was central to his entire thought. Wisdom he described as 'knowledge about certain principles and causes'⁷⁷ and he viewed the whole of philosophy prior to him as a quest for these same principles of causation.⁷⁸ For him metaphysics was not only the science of being *qua* being, but also at its roots the science of causation. Furthermore his own theory of the four causes clearly binds his physics and metaphysics together. Indeed the theory of substance which he so eagerly pursues throughout his works, and which is in many ways the crown of his metaphysics, cannot properly be understood outside this causal framework.⁷⁹ Likewise Aristotle's famous discussion of the Unmoved Mover, which was to prove so significant for scholastic theology, itself hinges on his theories of causal chains.⁸⁰ As Christopher Shields makes clear, the sophistication of Aristotle's theory of causation and its perennial relevance lie in its comprehensive explanatory power. For it was Aristotle's mature conviction that all conceivable phenomena could be comprehended by these same four causes.⁸¹

A similar thing may be said about Baxter's own modified Trinitarian account of causation. By placing his threefold order of causation at the heart of his hallowed logic Baxter clearly demonstrated its importance for every aspect of his thought.

⁷⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.4.

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.2, 928a1.

⁷⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.10, 928a13.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VIII.1, 1014b1; XII.1, 1069a1.

⁸⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII.1-7, 1069a1-1073a1.

⁸¹ Christopher Shields, *Aristotle* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 36-96.

Indeed we shall see that the deepest questions of his ontology are intimately linked to his metaphysics of causation. Baxter's own peculiar genius was to express this basic framework of causation in terms of still deeper principles, the elementary primalities of Power, Wisdom and Love. By doing this he was able to unify, in a powerful synthesis, his modified Aristotelian understanding of causation with a Trinitarian account of reality. Although echoes of this idea may be found in Campanella,⁸² an even more impressive precedent, although interestingly not one cited by Baxter, may be found in Bonaventure who also connected an efficient, constitutive and final cause to the three principles of Power, Wisdom and Love.⁸³ Here again therefore Baxter can be seen to draw from the deep wellsprings of medieval exemplarism.

We shall first discuss the efficient and final causes, representing God as the Alpha and Omega, the fount and end of all being, and then move on to Baxter's account of constitutive causes and a wider discussion of his ontology. Before detailing these however there is one further point of importance to note. Although Baxter describes three different kinds of causes he also clearly states that in one sense they may all be considered as efficient, adding that just as there is a wonderful conjunction of the principles of Power, Wisdom and Love so there is a corresponding conjunction of causations. This means, for example, that what is at one moment a constitutive cause at another may be considered an efficient cause. Similarly a final cause considered from a different perspective will be either an efficient or constitutive cause. Therefore just as power has the primacy in the primalities so the efficient cause has the primacy in the order of causation.⁸⁴

This is important to remember because the seventeenth century witnessed a general decline in Aristotelian theories of causation especially with reference to final causes. As Von Leyden suggests, the 'rise...of a mechanistic and deterministic explanation of nature was largely due to the predominance of the notion of efficient causation'. It became common therefore either to reject final causation, as in the case of Spinoza and Descartes, or to treat it as simply an instance of efficient causation, as in the case

⁸² Bonansea, *Campanella*, 183-5; cf. Campanella, *Metaphysicarum*, 1.2.2.1.

⁸³ Maria Calisi, *Trinitarian Perspectives in the Franciscan Theological Tradition* (New York: Franciscan Institute, 2008), 35-9.

⁸⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.6.

of Leibniz and Boyle.⁸⁵ While at one level Baxter might be considered part of this trend, his Trinitarian account of causation rules out such a reductionist understanding. From the vantage point of the primalities then Baxter considers the constitutive cause to be the effect of the efficient through wisdom and the final cause to be a kind of ‘active congruence’ of the efficient through love. This preserves the distinction between them, preventing their collapse into one, undifferentiated efficient cause.

4.2.1. Efficient Cause

For Baxter the efficient cause may be defined as ‘that by which the thing is’. He holds that it is threefold in character:

- i) *Efficiens per Vires Potentiae*
- ii) *Efficiens per Lumen Sapientiae*
- iii) *Efficiens per Amorem seu Bonitatem*

In this way the efficient cause itself clearly mirrors the Campanellan primalities, which is another significant break from Aristotle. Baxter has little to impart concerning the efficient cause through power, most likely because this is closest to its Aristotelian original. He only states that it is familiarly called ‘to effect’. Instead he focuses attention on the efficient causes through wisdom and love, holding that both of these effect ‘morally’ rather than powerfully *per se* and relating their action to the faculties of intellect and will respectively. Such action he adds is ‘mystical’ and outside the reach of human understanding.⁸⁶

By efficiency through wisdom Baxter says that he is not referring to the power of signs, such as laws or promises, to effect, which interestingly enough he classes under efficiency through power. He compares the distinction between efficiency of power and wisdom with that between the different efficiencies operating when light causes primarily the intellection of evidence and secondarily a consequent volition. Efficiency of wisdom as mystical causation is outside of our *active* experience and so

⁸⁵ Wolfgang von Leyden, *Seventeenth-Century Metaphysics: An Examination of some Main Concepts and Theories* (London: Duckworth 1971), 201-11.

⁸⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.4.

can only be understood passively, and even then very obscurely and imperfectly, in the same way that we understand sensation through actually feeling it.⁸⁷

Baxter holds that the best analogy we have for this process – the efficient illumination of the intellect – is that of vision itself. In Baxter’s understanding, very different from our own, light may be termed both the exterior agent and primary object of vision (for we see light itself). According to Baxter external light activates the eye’s own ‘internal light’ and it is in this congress of external and internal lights that vision is constituted. In this way light is both constituting cause of vision and its efficient cause.⁸⁸ What Baxter seems to have in mind here is quite general: the activation by an exterior (although in some respects similar) agent of a human potentiality which is mixed in character (i.e. capable of being both passive and active).

Certainly it is in these terms that Baxter extends the analogy in order to understand the efficiency through wisdom. Thus he suggests that a superior agent intellect (whether God alone or acting through an unknown second cause) activates our receiving intellect just as light from the Sun activates the eye. In this causation, just as the intellect is held to differ formally from both other faculties, so the intellect’s efficiency may be held to differ formally from their efficiency. Therefore although the superior intellect’s effect is primarily in the recipient intellect it also has secondary effects on the will and executive power of the recipient, namely by directing its volitions and acts. Furthermore, since the ordination of external circumstances is eminently an act of divine intellect, it follows that efficiency through wisdom may be said to have a twofold effect. In these terms God’s wisdom is not only the principal cause of order but also rules the world in its own peculiar and peculiarly glorious manner, namely by ruling angelic and human intellects and wills either by its own influx or by the most wise ordination of circumstances.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.4.

⁸⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.4.

⁸⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.5.

Here, as Baxter acknowledges explicitly, the language of formal difference between the various faculties is indicative of the Scotist formal distinction.⁹⁰ This is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, in terms of our broader thesis it indicates the intimate connection between Scotist thought and Baxter's understanding of the Triune primalities. Secondly, in narrower terms, it suggests that Baxter's understanding of causation is prevented from collapsing into an undifferentiated efficiency of power, precisely through this same formal distinction. Here then the formal distinction makes room for the important category of moral, as opposed to physical, causation. As we shall see in the final chapter this will turn out to be vital for Baxter's understanding of the relation between human freedom and divine sovereignty, allowing him to claim that God can determine events infallibly without impairing man's essential freedom.

Baxter construes efficiency through love in an almost identical manner to efficiency through wisdom, emphasising that divine love is not only God's objective '*amabilitas*' but also an active principle which always works inseparably with vital power and intellect, yet has its own formally distinct influx and causality. Thus God as the superior agent will works primarily in an inferior will by his own influx and secondarily by communicating goodness to circumstances as congruous objects for the recipient will. To explain precisely what he means Baxter brings in another analogy with light. Just as the heat of the Sun warms recipients by its own influx, formally (although importantly not substantially) different from the influx of light, so 'love causes love'. This efficiency is again called moral and its operation is more mystic than that of purely natural or motive power. For this reason it is scarcely understood by most as being distinct from other causes, although it is again formally distinct. Baxter adds that perfection and goodness are its peculiar effects.⁹¹

4.2.2. Final Cause

Although Baxter says that most understand the final cause not as good is the cause of love but rather as the goodness of the end moves the one loving to choose the

⁹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.5.

⁹¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.5.

appropriate means to attain it, he rejects the division between them. In this regard he describes the formal object of the will as the material goodness of the object desired and the formal object of the election of means as their ‘middle goodness’, or their aptitude or ‘conducibility’ to an end. Baxter therefore declares his agreement with the ‘more subtle scholastics’ that a good is loved not because it is an end or a means but rather that ‘*bonitas ita amata est ratio talis amoris*’. Therefore although the election of means to reach a desired end is important, for Baxter, it is secondary to the goodness of the end itself.⁹²

However this analysis presents him with a question of ‘great difficulty’, namely ‘whether the end causes and what is its reason of causing’. Baxter believes that according to extrinsic reality a future end does not even exist and therefore cannot be said ‘to cause’ in any meaningful sense at all.⁹³ He says therefore that an end must be considered not according to extrinsic reality but rather ‘*in esse cognito*’, that is as it is apprehended by the mind. Consequently, since it cannot be denied that prior cogitations ‘in a certain manner’ move posterior cogitations, Baxter says the proximate reason of final causality must be sought here.⁹⁴

Baxter expands on this further saying that God, ‘the greatest, most wise and excellent Creator’, has given to mankind a particular appetite which is the principle of its own motions. Furthermore, in order that all things should cohere among themselves in the most beautiful order, God has so arranged things that this natural inclination of appetite and the (objective) goodness or congruity of objects may ‘not unmeritedly be esteemed as causes’. This action as it is a volition or love of a good in species may be placed formally under the efficiency through love but occurs *finaliter* ‘from the unitive congruence of objects’. Thus although an object *qua* object is only a constitutive cause, Baxter holds that as it is an apprehended good ‘congruous and connatural’ with this internal motion of the intellect and will, so it has its own proper and distinct causality which may be called final.⁹⁵

⁹² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.7.

⁹³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.7.

⁹⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.7.

⁹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.8.

Although Baxter emphasises the natural appetite of the will it would be a mistake to suggest that his account of final causality downplays, or worse denies, the objective goodness of the object desired. In fact Baxter says that those who say things are good because desired or loved, rather than loved because they are good, are shamefully deceived. To see that this is true we need only consider God as the supreme final cause. Clearly it would be absurd to think that God's goodness is somehow derivative of his creatures' desire. Instead Baxter holds 'that GOD himself is the FIRST GOOD and total ULTIMATE and that our will has been made by his own will and to the image and complacency of his will'. Likewise Baxter says that it would be a mistake to consider the divine goodness as a merely passive object of desire. For Baxter, following the scholastic tradition, God is to be considered as pure act.⁹⁶ Therefore as he does not contain any potentialities he cannot be considered in any way passive. The point Baxter is drawing out here is that, ultimately, final causality is inseparable from God's active love working in the Universe. As he puts it, '*sicut amor eius est active efficiens, ita ut activus seu actus amorem et amantem sibi alliciens et amplectus, in congressu mutui amoris, voluntatis nostrae objectum finale seu ultimum aestimandus est*'. He adds that every created goodness as an effect of the divine goodness may be esteemed as its *imago, similitudo* or *vestigium*.⁹⁷ Inverting Baxter's discussion this implies that the fulness of the *vestigia Trinitatis* must be understood from within the framework of final as well as constitutive causation. Ultimately final causation comes down to the attractive power of the apprehended good and cannot be reduced further except as this goodness is itself rooted derivatively in the character of the Triune God.

4.2.3. Constitutive Cause

Baxter calls the constitutive cause the effect of the efficient cause. As we shall see it seems in effect to be a conflation of the Aristotelian formal and material causes, although unsurprisingly differs markedly from Aristotle's own interpretation of these. According to Baxter it is the root of all the diversity in the universe, explaining the distinction between active and passive, simple and composite, and

⁹⁶ See, for example, Aquinas, *ST*, 1a3 art. 1.

⁹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.8.

spiritual and material natures.⁹⁸ Baxter holds that this metaphysical unity-in-diversity is itself a reflection of God's own Triune glory.⁹⁹

The primary division in Baxter's metaphysics is between active and passive natures. This we have already seen from his hexaameron, where fire, as the active element, is the producer of light and subsequently works and shapes the passive matter of air, water and earth. Likewise in the later days of creation we also encounter the vegetative, sensitive and intellective formal virtues which are all active, shaping passive matter to their own ends. These form an ascending scale from fire as the lowest to angels as the highest created active natures.¹⁰⁰ In this way we see Baxter's hexaemeral categories informing his metaphysics, indicating again the tight bond between them.

Delving deeper into the metaphysical structure of active and passive natures Baxter makes it clear that the constitutive causes of both are not '*res diversae*' but are instead intellectual parts or '*conceptus inadaequati objectivi*'. Baxter derives his understanding of inadequate concepts from Francis Glisson, as he acknowledges elsewhere.¹⁰¹ They were used by Glisson to indicate the different partial concepts of an object, formed due to the mind's inability to attain a single, adequate conception of it. He was adamant however that these concepts formed by the mind had a foundation in the object itself and were not arbitrary. For Baxter inadequate concepts often seem to indicate something akin to Scotist formalities although as interpreted from a Nominalist extrinsicist perspective, in which they are characterised more according to their external relations than their intrinsic metaphysical ground.¹⁰²

For active natures Baxter identifies these inadequate concepts as the following: *substantialitas*, *substantiae peculiaris dispositio* and *virtus* or *vis formalis*. These he says are '*unica radicaliter, at trina exeunter et objective (seu ab objectis denominata)*'. For passive natures Baxter also names three inadequate concepts,

⁹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.5.

⁹⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.131.

¹⁰⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.5.

¹⁰¹ Baxter, *Immortality*, 'Letter to Henry More', I.6-7, 37, 92, 99.

¹⁰² See further 'Appendix Two – Baxter, Glisson and Inadequate Concepts'.

materia, *materiae dispositio* and *forma*, which he suggests correspond to the Aristotelian understanding of matter, privation and form. These he makes clear are also not compositive but they do not have the same triadic metaphysical structure as the active natures. The precise nature of these internal divisions within active and passive natures is, as we shall see, complex and even somewhat provisional. For it is in their nature as inadequate concepts that they cannot be fully grasped and must be known indirectly through inference from our senses and through relation to each other.¹⁰³

It is clear that this characterisation of active and passive natures according to inadequate concepts is sufficient by itself to capture the Trinitarian structure of creation as it resides in the active natures. As Baxter says concerning these, ‘*analogica rerum SUBSTANTIA cum VIRTUTE per modum Creationis communicata, est imago haec gloriosa Dei in creaturis relucens*’.¹⁰⁴ Thus the *vestigia Trinitatis* for Baxter are found in active natures and consist of some combination of substance with (formal) virtue. In order to understand fully what Baxter means by this difficult statement, we turn now to examine in some detail his associated concepts of substance and formal virtue.

For Baxter, who follows Glisson in this,¹⁰⁵ substance is an inadequate ‘fundamental concept’ of active natures to be compared with matter in material things. By contrast virtue is an inadequate ‘formal concept’ of active natures. It is their ‘*principium agendi*’ and their ‘*potentiam-activam, vim et inclinationem*’.¹⁰⁶ Baxter realises that these terms on their own, while suggestive, are also opaque and require further explanation, which he helpfully proceeds to give.

For Baxter the name of substance is an ambiguous one, signifying different things for both theologians and philosophers. Some he says understand this name ‘*relative tantum quoad accidentia*’, taking virtue to signify the whole essence of spirits and, because it ‘stands under’ (*substat*) accidents, calling it subsistence. These take virtue to be the adequate concept of a spiritual essence. Baxter identifies them as the

¹⁰³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.5-6.

¹⁰⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.131.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Baxter, *Immortality*, ‘Letter to Henry More’.

¹⁰⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.132.

Thomists, who held, following Aquinas, that angels were pure form, existing without any metaphysical composition of form and (analogous) matter.¹⁰⁷ Baxter however regarded this as too rash a position considering our ignorance and blindness to spiritual natures. In particular he could not understand how there could be a stand-alone virtue, which was a ‘virtue of no thing’ but simply an adequate concept of an individual.¹⁰⁸

Baxter says that those opposing this Thomist conception are agreed with it insofar as they hold that substance is ‘*subsistentiam per se et non in alio*’, but differ in their view that it is also an ‘*essentialem primam fundamentalem inadecuatum*’ concept of a spirit. For this reason virtue is not a total concept, but a partial and formal one. Baxter himself favoured this account of substance over its alternative, although he was certainly not unaware of the difficulties it entailed. Principal among these was the problem that if spirits are understood as fundamentally true substances and formally true virtues then it will be no less difficult to distinguish substance from matter than to determine what a ‘stand alone’ virtue might be. For if we understand matter as only being visible or sensible then substance, with a reference to invisible as well as visible natures, must be considered a genus and matter its species. Baxter however takes matter and substance as synonymous, leading him to suggest that we must instead distinguish between spiritual matter as insensible and corporeal matter as sensible.¹⁰⁹

The view that spirits could be considered as in some way material had strong patristic precedent and was certainly held by Augustine.¹¹⁰ While denied by Aquinas and Scotus (at least in his later works),¹¹¹ it was affirmed by a number of Franciscan

¹⁰⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a50 art. 4. It should be noted that Baxter is not unsympathetic with some of Aquinas’ concerns and he therefore discusses at some length the pros and cons of both views concerning angels. However Baxter explicitly suggests his confusion concerning Aquinas’ meaning and in postulating a spiritual form of matter Baxter definitively opposes it (*Methodus*, I.135).

¹⁰⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.132.

¹⁰⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.132.

¹¹⁰ See Baxter, *Reasons*, 528.

¹¹¹ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a50 art. 2; cf. Richard Cross, *The Physics of Duns Scotus: The Scientific Context of a Theological Vision* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 20 n. 31.

doctors including Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure.¹¹² It was also a topic of considerable contemporary relevance, and in support of his own view Baxter cites Scheibler, Crakenthorp and Glisson.¹¹³ In holding that spirits are material Baxter explicitly excludes three definitions of matter: ‘*substantia quae potentia corpus est*’, ‘*substantia incompleta in potentia ad omnes formas*’ (which he says is the prime matter of Aristotle) and ‘*elementum*’ or ‘*corpus aliquod*’. Instead he affirms that this is ‘*materiale aequae late ac substantiale extendatur, ad eam quam Schiblerus, et alii vocant materiam metaphysicam*’.¹¹⁴

It is important to understand that this notion of metaphysical or spiritual matter is very different from our normal conception of matter. According to Scheibler, at least, it is not simply a kind of very subtle matter which can prohibit penetration, for such would anyway be entirely equivocal to ordinary matter.¹¹⁵ Scheibler therefore distinguishes four hallmarks by which spiritual substances differ from material ones: that they do not have quantity, that they are not circumscribed by place, that they do not move by physical motion and that they are simpler than corporeal substance.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless he does accept two senses in which angels (and therefore other spirits) may be said to be composed of matter and form. Firstly as they consist of genus (matter) and difference (form) and secondly as they consist of act (form) and potency (matter).¹¹⁷ Following Damascene it can therefore properly be said that only God is incorporeal by nature, and others by indulgence or grace.¹¹⁸

Baxter’s own understanding of metaphysical matter combines Scheibler’s account with a Glissonian metaphysics of inadequate concepts. He affirms that ‘the metaphysical matter and form of the soul, being but the genus and *differentia*, are not

¹¹² For a detailed account see Michael Sullivan, ‘The Debate over Spiritual Matter in the Late Thirteenth Century: Gonsalvus Hispanus and the Franciscan Tradition from Bonaventure to Scotus’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Catholic University of America, 2010).

¹¹³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.371; *Immortality*, I.11-14, 92-3.

¹¹⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.371.

¹¹⁵ Christopher Scheibler, *Metaphysica* (Oxford, 1665), II c. 2 n. 52.

¹¹⁶ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 n. 127-31.

¹¹⁷ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 4 n. 52.

¹¹⁸ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 n. 112; cf. Baxter, *Reasons*, 528.

two substances, much less repugnant, and therefore have never the more a tendency to corruption'.¹¹⁹ In the *Immortality of Mans Soul* he adds that:

As I have oft said, Dr Glisson after others most subtilly laboureth to prove it of every simple substance, that its matter and form are not compounding parts, but *conceptus inadaequati*. If the intellect compound and divide its own conceptions that maketh not a real composition of two substances in the objects, but as the Scotists call it, of two formalities, or *conceptus objectivi*...¹²⁰

In Baxter's terms spirits or active natures are both simple and incorruptible and able to be characterised by the two inadequate concepts or formalities of metaphysical matter and formal virtue, which concepts further answer to the division between genus and difference.

At first sight the question of the substantiality of spirits may seem to belong only to the rarefied heights of metaphysical enquiry and certainly to have little reference to the business of practical theology. However for Baxter this is emphatically not so. For him it is 'scarcely of the least moment' to have a positive and true concept of what a spirit is, for if we do not then we remain ignorant not only of our own soul and the nature of angels but most importantly of God himself, the Father of all things. Baxter also does not think it is enough to have only apophatic knowledge of spirits, that is knowledge about what spirits are *not*. For him the Augustinian dictum that we are only able to love what we know means that to love God we must have some positive concept of him, however inadequate.¹²¹ The love of God is therefore the motivation for all metaphysical enquiry, and divinity the end of metaphysics.

The question of forms Baxter regards as much easier to answer than the corresponding issue of substances. For since formal virtues are manifest and may be understood through their acts, there must therefore be, underlying any action, a corresponding metaphysical power or virtue of acting.¹²² This is of vital importance for our purposes, for it is this formal virtue that is 'communicated' through the

¹¹⁹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 539.

¹²⁰ Baxter, *Immortality*, I.92-3.

¹²¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.132.

¹²² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.31; cf. Campanella, *De Sancta Monotriade*, 20.

various modes of creation and which thus may be understood to ‘inform’ the material or immaterial substance of an individual *vestigium*.

Baxter’s thoughts here are guided by the Campanellan principle that ‘*nemo facit, id quod facere non potest*’. Thus although an appeal to the senses does not suffice to solve the knotty problem of substantiality it may certainly be employed in order to give the requisite formal definitions. For through the senses we may recognise and classify the external actions which flow from the internal ‘*potentiae*’ of the active nature. This as we shall see in Chapter Five is of fundamental importance for shaping the *analogia entis* which Baxter makes between the human soul and God. Furthermore although this principle does assert a vital connection between the ‘order of knowing’ and the ‘order of being’ it also privileges the ‘economic’ aspect of reality, that is, those things which are manifest and clear to the senses. As Baxter himself succinctly puts it, ‘*formae cernuntur in operationibus*’.¹²³

For Baxter formal virtue, that is form according to its primary sense of ‘regent active principle’ and not its secondary sense of ‘temperament resulting from all the parts’,¹²⁴ may be described as follows:

And the form of simple beings, corporeal or incorporeal, elements or spirits, is neither another substance, distinct from the physical and metaphysical matter, nor yet an accident or mode: but that peculiar nature, consisting in certain powers or virtues, by which, as essential to it, that being is specifically differenced from others: which some call an essential quality, and some a substantial quality, and some a substantial form, because it is the perfection and essential nature of the substance *in specie*, and not another substance besides it.¹²⁵

The formal virtue of an active nature is therefore both its intrinsic dynamic and the specific difference within a genus. This so far accords well with the Aristotelian understanding of substantial forms. However we must not forget that for Baxter formal virtue, like substance, is an inadequate concept.

Returning finally to our original question of how Baxter characterises the *vestigia Trinitatis* in active natures, it is apparent that he sees their substance and formal

¹²³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.137.

¹²⁴ Baxter, *Reasons*, 537.

¹²⁵ Baxter, *Reasons*, 536.

virtue as identical although in some way distinct. To the further question of how the formal virtue itself may be considered to be *una-trina* in nature, Baxter does not give a straightforward answer. Certainly he does make clear that this is a true instance of triunity and not a mere triplicity. Thus he holds that in every active nature this ‘image of the Trinity in Unity’ is found, ‘without composition but in derivative simplicity’.¹²⁶ The intimate connection between the divine Triunity and the derivative triunity of active natures is that bond of creation through which God’s likeness is communicated to his creation. It is this connection that is the heart of the doctrine of the *vestigia Trinitatis*.

The question of how this derivative triunity may be characterised is of great significance for how we describe God’s own Triunity, yet Baxter does not give a clear answer to it, listing instead a whole array of scholastic proposals: the distinction of reason, the formal distinction, the modal distinction and the connotative distinction.¹²⁷ All he will say is that everyone is agreed that this formal virtue is ‘essentially and really one’ and that according to its external relations to objects (in scholastic parlance ‘*denominazione extrinseca ex relatione objectiva*’) it is three. Baxter therefore here suggests that the best way to distinguish the faculties of the soul as diverse is ‘virtually and respectively according to their diverse acts’.¹²⁸ We will consider the nature of this virtual distinction in Chapter Five; it seems however to indicate a ‘Nominalised’ form of the Scotist formal distinction.¹²⁹

5. The Ladder of Triune Being

Our survey of Baxter’s physics and metaphysics has revealed both its scriptural roots and its Trinitarian structure. Exploring this has allowed us to understand Baxter’s definition of a *vestigium Trinitatis* in terms of a combination of substance and triune formal virtue. It is important to remember however that such a definition only allows us to capture the *vestigia* by use of inadequate concepts. Thus it may be said that Baxter’s use of inadequate concepts simultaneously reveals and hides the depth of

¹²⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.134.

¹²⁷ For details on these see Chapter Five.

¹²⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.134.

¹²⁹ For Baxter’s ‘Nominalised Scotism’ see ‘Appendix Two – Baxter, Glisson and Inadequate Concepts’.

mystery at the wellspring of even the humblest (active) being, as it reflects the nature of its Triune Creator. Taken together it might therefore be said that the manifestation of God's Triune glory at every level of creation through the *vestigia Trinitatis* is the fundamental motif of Baxter's ontology.

Furthermore Baxter's dual axiom that the higher natures contain the lower ones eminently and that the lower ones image the higher ones shows an understanding of creation as a hierarchy of *vestigia* ascending towards God himself. The link between each level we have seen to be forged by the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love. In this chapter we have simply climbed the first rungs of this ladder of triune being. It is for the next chapters to ascend even higher.

Chapter Four: The Soul as the *Imago Trinitatis*

1. Introduction

For Baxter the doctrine of the soul is the foundation of true theology. This is a point that he reiterates again and again in his writings and especially in the *Methodus*,¹ stressing that the study of the soul is the most important part of physics. In Baxter's integrated pre-Enlightenment worldview, psychology is therefore clearly at the pinnacle of natural philosophy.² In fact throughout his life Baxter was fascinated by psychological questions. One of his last works, the *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, is devoted to documenting personal accounts of spirits and demons in an attempt to convince Sadducaical doubters of the existence and importance of the spiritual realm.³ While at first sight such an endeavour may seem of little relevance for this study, it is important to understand that for Baxter this was simply the empirical part of a larger and more ambitious science of spiritual natures, referred to by him and others as pneumatology.⁴ Baxter held that pneumatology clearly demonstrated his own claims that spirits were metaphysically embodied and endowed with some kind of vitality, understanding and will⁵ – hence Baxter's definition of a spirit as 'a pure substance transcending our sensitive comprehension or apprehension' consisting of metaphysical matter and an active (threefold) vital virtue.⁶

In this chapter we shall not consider Baxter's angelology, which is in any case comparatively limited in scope,⁷ nor his more extensive discussions of the existence of the separate soul.⁸ Instead we shall consider Baxter's psychology, his science of

¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.11.

² Baxter, *CD*, III.918.

³ Richard Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (London, 1691).

⁴ See Lamont, *Baxter*, 296-7 who discusses Baxter's correspondence with Glanvill, White, Poole and Mather concerning ghosts and their common desire for detailed rational investigation into this subject. It should be noted that I am not suggesting that Baxter's interest had any link to the occult arts.

⁵ Baxter, *Certainty*, 'Preface', 1-16.

⁶ Baxter, *Family Book*, 'Short Catechism', 65-6.

⁷ Baxter had a high regard for angels (*CD*, I.185) but in the *Methodus* does not discuss them extensively.

⁸ The best source for these is Baxter's dialogue with Henry More in *Immortality*. Baxter is however much more cautious in his assertions than More, who elsewhere suggested that some might think he

the soul as an embodied spirit, and especially its striking Trinitarian contours. Baxter held that man was created in the image of God and that his soul was therefore the gateway to understanding the Godhead. As we shall see in Chapter Five it is through reflection on the mystery of the trinity within him that man is able to bridge the gap between the visible and invisible realms and ascend by analogy to the Triune being of God himself. That is not to say that man is able to in any way comprehend this mystery within him, let alone the supreme mystery of God's nature and character, but simply that it is his privilege, as the highest of all visible creatures, to reflect the likeness of God in a special way. Neither, as we shall see, is this naturalised trajectory of theology divorced from man's relationship to God. For in the true scriptural and Augustinian tradition, it is as man worships God that he becomes more and more conformed to his likeness.

This chapter therefore marks the final rung on our ladder of analogical ascent before reaching God himself. It itself follows something of a hierarchical ascent, beginning in the second section with the general scholastic discussion of the relation between the soul and the body and of the lower vegetative and sensitive aspects of the soul. Here it will be seen that Baxter imported his own Trinitarian views into the conventional scholastic doctrine of the soul as vegetative, sensitive and intellectual. In this way he viewed the soul as itself a hierarchy of trinities conditioned by the one overarching trinity of the intellectual soul. The soul is therefore a microcosm of the whole universe. Here we shall also consider Baxter's distancing himself from the seventeenth-century trend of divorcing life and the soul, which is another important aspect of his reaction against somatist philosophy.

In the third section we consider the important scholastic debate over whether the powers of the soul were essential and accidental. Here Baxter takes the side of the Scotists and Nominalists, who argued for the essential nature of the powers, and we shall show that this ties in closely with his Trinitarian concerns. In particular, as we shall discuss in the fourth section, it grounds Baxter's account of the triune interaction and coinherence of vital-active power, intellect and will in man's soul.

had actually travelled in the spiritual realm from his confident assertions (Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul* (London, 1659), 'Preface', n. 7).

Here the self-confessed Scotist character⁹ of Baxter's psychology will become fully evident through what I have termed his 'mitigated voluntarism'.

In the fifth section we examine Baxter's doctrine of the image of God in its scholastic context, showing that although he retained the essential structural and dynamic aspects of the tradition he departed from this considerably in his critique of the conventional Augustinian triad of memory, understanding and will. This break from the medieval psychological tradition had major repercussions for his own Trinitarian doctrine, as we shall see in Chapter Five.

2. The Soul and its Faculties

For Baxter man is a hybrid creature, at one and the same time both body and soul. In other words he is a metaphysical amphibian able to exist in both physical and spiritual reality.¹⁰ Today, if people believe in the soul at all, they tend to believe that possession of a soul is exclusive to man. However for Baxter, as for many others of his own day, this was not so. Instead, following a widespread Aristotelian assumption, which only began to be seriously challenged in the seventeenth century, he held that plants and animals also possessed souls.¹¹ He therefore thought in terms of an inclusive ascending hierarchy, with plants possessing a vegetative soul, animals a vegetative and sensitive soul and man, as a rational animal, a vegetative, sensitive and intellective soul. In this section our focus will be on the standard scholastic outlines of Baxter's psychology as well as his discussion of the vegetative and sensitive aspects of man's soul, together often termed the organic soul.

The principal and prolegomenal question in an Aristotelian scheme of psychology concerned the relation of the human soul to the human body. Aristotle's definition of the soul as the 'first actuality of a natural body which has life potentially' entailed the understanding of the soul as the form of the body.¹² This Aristotle expounded in

⁹ See Packer, *Redemption*, 114.

¹⁰ Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 200; cf. C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* (London: Harper Collins, 2002), 37.

¹¹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.2, 413a20-b32. The belief that plants and animals had souls was almost universal up until the seventeenth century.

¹² Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.1, 412a22.

terms of the soul as the efficient, formal and final cause of the body,¹³ viewing the soul as the intrinsic principle of life and self-motion.¹⁴ This was markedly different from Platonic thought, which tended to view the soul as trapped or imprisoned within the body with no intimate connection to it.¹⁵

Among the scholastics we find two major differing interpretations of the soul as the form of the body. The first, that of Aquinas, is closer in spirit to its Aristotelian original. While Aquinas was adamant on the immortality and self-subsisting nature of the human soul,¹⁶ he also contended equally strongly that this same intellectual soul was the form of a living body. Aquinas' reasoning begins from the principle that 'the prime endowment by virtue of which anything acts is the form of that to which the activity is attributed'. Following Aristotle Aquinas then states that the soul is the 'prime endowment by virtue of which a body has life'. Thus he says that although life manifests its presence through different activities at different levels of existence, the soul is the ultimate principle of all of these and is therefore the formative principle of the body.¹⁷

Scotus, by contrast, argued, based on both philosophical and theological considerations, that a man must possess at least two substantial forms: a bodily form explaining the body's identity and its basic structure, and an animating soul conferring life on the body.¹⁸ In answering the Thomist objection that this position compromised the essential unity of man's nature, Scotus responded that two or more objects can unite to form a substance if the whole formed by them has properties not possessed by the parts alone. In the case of man his body consists of the union of bodily form and matter which is then united with the intellective soul to result in a living human being. According to Scotus the living human as *tertium quid* possessed properties, namely vegetative and sensitive ones, not possessed by either the soul or

¹³ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.4, 415b8-21.

¹⁴ This is the principal theme of Aristotle's *De Anima*.

¹⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, 64-7, 72-100. For a review of Plato's complex thought on the soul see Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 13-21.

¹⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a75 art. 2, 3 and 6.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a76 art. 1.

¹⁸ This is the famous Franciscan doctrine of a plurality of forms. For an account of this in Scotus see Cross, *Physics*, 47-76; cf. Scotus, *Ord.* 4 d. 11, q. 3 n. 46.

body alone and so therefore could be viewed as a new hylomorphic unity. In this way Scotus was able to describe the soul as the perfecting or completing form of the body even though the body itself has its own subordinate form. As Richard Cross suggests, Scotus' account is markedly Platonic in its view of the soul as animating an already formed body. However it also retains an Aristotelian element in terms of the metaphysical union of soul and body and the understanding of emergent properties distinguishing the whole from the parts.¹⁹

Baxter's own view of the relation of soul and body is complex and never entirely spelled out, and is further complicated by his theories of the soul's embodied metaphysical structure. Nevertheless it is clear that while Baxter continues to use the traditional Aristotelian language of the soul as a form he interprets this quite differently. Thus according to his primary sense of form as 'regent active principle' Baxter describes the soul as the form of man but according to the secondary sense of form as temperament of the parts he clearly states that only the union of soul and body is called the form and not the soul alone.²⁰ His own preference, indicated in the *Reasons*, is for calling the active principle the form proper, since the order of parts is only a mode of the substance, ceasing upon dissolution.²¹ This understanding is already clearly different from that of Aquinas, for whom these two aspects of form are inseparably one in his Aristotelian understanding of the soul as 'dynamic configuration',²² and not 'spread out' as they are in Baxter between the soul and the body.

Having said this, Baxter's difference from Aquinas does not mean he espouses an extreme Platonic view of the soul as antithetical to the body and imprisoned within it. Instead he holds that there is a 'narrow and wonderful union' between the soul and body such that 'nothing completely is perfected by the soul in the body without the cooperation of the body'. This cooperation Baxter goes on to describe as being

¹⁹ Richard Cross, 'Philosophy of Mind', in Thomas Williams (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 271-6; Charles Harris, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), II.249-54; cf. Scotus, *Ord.*, 2 d. 8, n. 4 and 4 d. 11, q. 3 n. 46, 54.

²⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.6.

²¹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 536.

²² Stump suggests that soul for Aquinas is 'configured configurer' itself subsistent yet configuring matter into a living body (*Aquinas*, 200).

facilitated by the igneous spirits, which were often understood as the connective between the immaterial soul and material body. His understanding of this leads him to suggest that the acts of the soul are mixed, partly non-organic and partly organic, meaning, importantly, that the incorporated soul has a different mode of operation when within the body – namely through organs – than when separate from it.²³ He concludes therefore that while the disembodied soul is a spirit it is not formally a soul.²⁴ It is clear, then, that contrary to Plato, Baxter regards a soul lacking a body as impoverished, a position which of course makes perfect sense within the Christian context of the longed-for reunion of soul and body at the general Resurrection.²⁵ Yet it is also evident that Baxter's understanding of the igneous spirits as the bond tying soul and body together is itself Platonic.²⁶

In this context Baxter can be seen as attempting to mediate between an Aristotelian and Platonic account of the soul. He is also most likely influenced by the Scotist tradition. Like Scotus, Baxter regarded the soul as the perfecting form, conferring life, intellect and sense on an already informed body. In this way he held to a Franciscan plurality of forms. He also considered the vegetative and (to some degree) sensitive faculties as unique to the composite of body and soul, and therefore as emergent properties, even though unlike Scotus he held that the soul's ability to sense persisted after death.²⁷ Such a Scotist approach to the body-soul relation makes particular sense given Baxter's account of the soul as composed of metaphysical matter and formal virtue, for holding to this means he must of necessity eschew a Thomist understanding of the soul as informing (unformed) bodily matter directly.

Another question of great importance within the scholastic and Aristotelian tradition concerned whether man had more than one soul and if so how these multiple souls could be related to each other.²⁸ Both Aquinas and Scotus believed that the soul of

²³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.161-3.

²⁴ Baxter, *Immortality*, II.27.

²⁵ For Baxter's account of the Resurrection body see *Methodus*, IV.382-90.

²⁶ Stump, *Aquinas*, 194.

²⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.231-2; cf. Cross, 'Philosophy of Mind', 274-8.

²⁸ This was an important issue in the Renaissance as well (Katharine Park, 'The Organic Soul', in *CHRP*, 483).

man was one, but a number of their contemporaries, especially among the Franciscans, held that the striking differences between the three faculties (vegetative, sensitive and intellective) could only be explained by postulating two or three different souls in man.²⁹ In the Renaissance as well there were a number of bipartite theories of the soul. Telesio, for example, notoriously held that man has two different souls: the one a tenuous, fiery body traduced from his parents and by its motions responsible for sensation and the lower operations, the other an immortal soul infused directly by God and responsible for higher operations.³⁰ A similar dichotomous account is also to be found in Campanella.³¹

Baxter is certainly attentive to these various currents of opinion. His own view however is that the intellective and sensitive soul must be considered one whatever is said of the vegetative soul.³² Certainly in further discussion Baxter seems to assume the unity of the whole soul, referring to the soul *qua* intellective, sensitive and vegetative as well as more loosely to the intellective, sensitive and vegetative souls. If he is uncertain as to the status of the vegetative soul this is because of his uncertainty, which we shall discuss immediately below, as to whether it can truly be distinguished from the nature of fire and thus from the igneous spirits joining body and soul together.

2.1. The Vegetative Soul

Baxter's description of the vegetative soul follows in a long Aristotelian tradition, further honed by medieval and Renaissance reflections, which described its faculties as those of nutrition, growth and reproduction.³³ However his primary concern, that of the relation of the vegetative soul to fire, was only peripheral to Aristotle. For although Aristotle touches on this in the *De Anima*, remarking that 'some think that it is the nature of fire which is the cause quite simply of nourishment and growth', his own view is that fire is at most only a contributory cause to the acts of the vegetative

²⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a76 art. 3; Scotus, *Ord.*, 4 d. 44, q. 1 n. 4. See Cross, 'Philosophy of Mind', 275.

³⁰ Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers*, 96-106.

³¹ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 71-5.

³² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.157; *Catholic Theologie*, II.152.

³³ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.4; cf. Park, 'Organic Soul', 464-73.

soul and so does not constitute its actual nature. His reasoning is that fire by nature is uncontrolled whereas the vegetative soul has to act in a controlled fashion.³⁴

By contrast Baxter's understanding of the vegetative soul is shaped by what Henry More called his 'psychopyrism'.³⁵ Thus Baxter viewed the soul in general as a kind of 'eminent fire', although emphasising that it was not formally to be identified with fire itself.³⁶ However, whereas he viewed the relation between fire and the higher sensitive and intellective souls as merely analogical, Baxter tended to assume its univocal ground, considering the vegetative soul itself as having a fiery nature, albeit an incorporated and harnessed one. In order to understand this we must grasp Baxter's technical understanding of fire not as flame – merely its visible 'body' – but as an invisible, spiritual substance possessed of a formal virtue.³⁷ Baxter's high view of the dignity of fire was buttressed by both his wide reading of ancient and contemporary works and his hexaemeral studies.³⁸

However Baxter's understanding of the fiery nature of the vegetative soul is surely most influenced by his Campanellan view of its triune motive, illuminative and calefactive virtue. To illustrate this he gives the example of plant life in which the motive effects of growth, the illuminative effects of diverse colours and the calefactive effects of odours, tastes and medicinal properties are all taken as resulting from the conjoint motion, light and heat of the solar rays.³⁹ This connection led to him describing the vegetative soul either according to the Trinitarian motif of motive, illuminative and calefactive virtue or to the alternative higher analogue of active, discrete and attractive virtue.⁴⁰ As is evident both of these descriptions derive from the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love.

Whichever description he uses Baxter is clear however that, in an entirely Aristotelian fashion, the vegetative soul is an intrinsic principle of life and self-

³⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.4, 416a9.

³⁵ Henry More, *An Answer to a Letter of a Learned Psychopyrist* (London, 1688) in Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 2nd edition, 195-253.

³⁶ Baxter, *Immortality*, I.2.

³⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.235-6.

³⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.235.

³⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.235.

⁴⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.80.

motion (where motion is taken in its broadest sense as including any kind of change). As an active nature it is likewise able to act upon and shape passive matter, which it does according to its intrinsic triune virtue. In doing so, by its ordered and purposive self-motion (conditioned as we shall see by the higher souls) the vegetative soul provides the basic functions of nutrition, growth and reproduction. Furthermore through the medium of the fiery spirits, which are its ‘most noble organ’, the vegetative soul is itself ‘the nexus of the spiritual and corporeal nature’.⁴¹ Since these spirits are themselves threefold – motive, illuminative and calefactive – it follows that the operation of the vegetative soul can be described in terms of the complex interaction of active triune natures. It is this complex mutuality between spiritual and corporeal which allows it to act as the ground of the higher sensitive and intellectual functions of the soul.

2.2. The Sensitive Soul

Like the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul can also be described as a spiritual substance possessing a formal virtue. It is however higher than both fire and the vegetative soul and as such able to do all that either of these are able to without them.⁴² Yet, following what we are beginning to discern as a general principle in Baxter’s thought, in its incorporated state it does not act without either of these active natures, nor without the body itself.

As an active nature the sensitive soul is structured according to a triune vital-active, apprehensive and appetitive virtue, which clearly refers to the metaphysical triad of Power, Wisdom and Love expressed in a manner appropriate for sensation.⁴³ In this way it is able to encompass within itself both the motive, illuminative and calefactive virtues of fire and the active, discretive and appetitive functions of the vegetative soul. Baxter therefore holds that sensation occurs through a conjunction of the sensitive soul and the fiery animal spirits, suggesting that the spirits are like a body to the sensitive soul and describing them as ‘nothing but the igneous principle in a

⁴¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.235.

⁴² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.177.

⁴³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.227.

pure aerial vehicle'.⁴⁴ Such an understanding of spirits was in fact entirely commonplace.⁴⁵ What is distinctive however is Baxter's understanding that the spirits themselves conform to the Trinitarian division of the vegetative soul, being predominantly motive, lucid or calid, although with all three remaining inseparably connected in a Trinitarian fashion. This congruence of triune natures allows for an intimate association between the sensitive soul and the spirits (through the medium of the vegetative soul). Yet this connection is by no means uniform, and thus the different 'texturing' of soul and spirits as well as their differing locations within the body – whether fixed in the nervous system, cerebrum or heart, or mobile within the rest of the body – contribute to the complexity of sensation.⁴⁶

Baxter holds that sensation is not primarily a passion but rather an action of the sensitive soul upon the igneous spirits. This action immediately gives rise to two types of sensation: placid sensations, in which the soul simply acts on the spirits, and dolorous sensations, which are truly called passions because they lead to the soul reflexively acting upon itself. Placid sensations occur through harmony between the exterior agent and sense whilst dolorous sensations occur through disharmony when the motion of the spirits is in any way impeded.⁴⁷ Baxter does not say so explicitly but it seems likely that we should relate these two modes of sensation to the standard scholastic division between concupiscible and irascible passions, with the former involving simple reaction to a pleasant or unpleasant event and the latter an active striving.⁴⁸

Further evidence of a Trinitarian structure to sensation is seen in Baxter's insistence that the diversity of motive, lucid and calid spirits is itself responsible for the diversity of the senses. Baxter holds that the formal specification of the senses is according to the triune virtue of the sensitive soul accompanied in act by the triune virtue of the vegetative soul and spirits. Any other diversification he considers either

⁴⁴ Baxter, *Immortality*, I.71.

⁴⁵ Park, 'Organic Soul', 483-4. Park points out that it was Telesio who gave new impetus to the theory of spirits making them the substance of the soul itself. For a contemporary definition of these spirits see Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 n. 113.

⁴⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.227.

⁴⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.226.

⁴⁸ See Aquinas, *ST*, 1a81 art. 2.

accidental or by some composition of the three. For this reason he rejects the standard view that there are five senses, grouping the senses instead according to a Trinitarian pattern.⁴⁹

Following medieval and Renaissance developments in Aristotelianism, Baxter divides the senses according to whether they are inner or outer (the usual five senses).⁵⁰ Within the inner senses he includes phantasy or imagination, which he divides into receptive memory, estimation and practical collection, and the common sense whose role is to unify the input from all the other senses. Overall Baxter suggests that motion of the motive spirits is responsible for the sense of touch and hearing, motion of the lucid spirits for the three visual senses of sight, common sense and phantasy and motion of the calid spirits for the senses of smell and taste. Clearly this division also corresponds to their external objects of sensation with, for example, hearing detecting air as motive by collisions, sight detecting air as luminous and smell detecting the air as ‘infused with calid vapours’.⁵¹

It is clear then that Baxter’s accounts of sensation and appetite can all be explained in terms of the sensitive soul acting in conjunction with the vegetative soul and the motion of spirits through a complex sequence of interacting triune virtues. Furthermore Baxter holds that this Trinitarian action of the sensitive soul is itself the ground of the higher intellectual functions. This allows him to describe a close and direct connection between them, quite different from the usual Aristotelian (and Thomist) synthesis, suggesting that intellections and volitions themselves are only a more eminent and sublime form of sensation. Philosophically he evidences this from the fact that ‘we feel ourselves to want what we will and to understand what we understand’, and theologically from the analogical ascription of emotions to God and angels.⁵²

Following Scotus’ arguments that the powers of the soul are essential, which we shall review immediately below, Baxter held that the ‘power of feeling’ was of the essence of the soul. Interestingly this led him to the opinion that man’s ability to

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.227.

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a78 art. 3 and 4; cf. Park, ‘Organic Soul’, 466.

⁵¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.227-31.

⁵² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.230-1.

sense persisted even after death.⁵³ In suggesting this he was doubtless affected by a stronger Platonic understanding of the soul as self-sufficient and independent of the body than Scotus was willing to countenance. Such a view is also congruent with the renewed emphasis on sensation found in both Campanella and Glisson.

2.3. Man the Microcosm

Baxter's essentially scholastic conception of the soul as an intrinsic principle of self-motion conferring life and sensation marks him out from many of his contemporaries. For the trend in seventeenth-century thought was to divorce life from the soul and thus focus narrowly on the soul as a thinking, incorporeal substance.⁵⁴ Baxter held however that in reducing all the non-intellective actions of the soul to violent, reactive motion the new philosophers were in fact denying life itself.⁵⁵ In holding to such an intimate connection between life and the soul, Baxter was therefore affirming an essentially Aristotelian position. For taking motion in its wider sense of any form of change, it became possible to account for the whole multiplicity of faculties in plants, humans and animals as being rooted in the soul as the principle of self-determination.⁵⁶

It is clear also that Baxter's conception of the lower organic soul wholly derives from his physics of the *vestigia Trinitatis*. As Klinck suggests, even in the seventeenth century it was not unusual to locate vestigial trinitities in all parts of the soul,⁵⁷ for this was simply one aspect of a lingering Renaissance exemplarism. Nevertheless Baxter's thoroughgoing Trinitarianism is distinctive, especially as manifest in his evident desire to establish a pneumatological science of the *vestigia Trinitatis*. This distinguishes him from many of his Protestant scholastic contemporaries who tended to be wary of the *vestigia Trinitatis* and certainly avoided extensive application of them in their thought.⁵⁸

⁵³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.152.

⁵⁴ Garber, 'Soul and Mind', I.759-95.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.236-7.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.4, 415b8-21.

⁵⁷ Klinck, 'Vestigia Trinitatis', 19.

⁵⁸ *PRRD*, 4.157-9.

For Baxter however the science of the *vestigia* grounded his conception of the whole soul as fashioned in the image of the Triune God. For following a very common Renaissance trope, present in authors as diverse as Calvin and Campanella, Baxter thought of man as a microcosm, comprehending within himself every order of being.⁵⁹ As Gott put it, man was the ‘whole scale in himself’ and the ‘epitome of all’, comprehending within him the full sweep of intellectual, sensitive, vegetative and material nature.⁶⁰ This microcosmic nature was understood to be a special dignity conferred on man and an important and unique way in which he could be said to image God. For it established man’s right to rule over all of visible creation, marking him out from all other creatures and confirming him in the image of God’s Majesty.⁶¹ Thus although Baxter’s generous ontology conferred on the souls of plants and animals especial vestigial patterns, also manifest as lesser trinities in man, he maintained that of all visible creatures it was given to man alone to have fellowship and affinity with God and the angels. In this way he preserved the integrity of the *imago Dei*.

Furthermore Baxter’s microcosmic understanding offers us a picture of the soul as a unity in diversity. For the whole trend of his thought is to affirm both the unity of the soul (with the possible exception of the vegetative soul) and the rich diversity of its operations. The soul itself may therefore be viewed as a kind of hierarchy of nested trinities all conditioned by the overarching trinity of the intellectual soul. In this way the ‘whole man’ and not merely his intellectual soul can be said to image the Trinity at every level of his being.

3. Powers of the Soul

We turn now to a matter which is central for our understanding of Baxter’s psychology and which also acts as the ground of the analogy Baxter poses between the soul and the Triune God. This is the debate over whether the natural powers of the soul (for Baxter its active power, intellect and will) are themselves the essential form of the soul or merely accidental to it. As Baxter suggests, this was a debate

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.156.

⁶⁰ Gott, *Divine History*, 420-1.

⁶¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.156-8; cf. Gott, *Divine History*, 461.

which had a long history in scholastic discourse and came down to the question of whether or not there is a real distinction between the faculties of the soul and its essence.⁶² On the one hand Scotus and his followers, as well as Ockham, Gregory of Rimini and those whom Baxter calls the ‘Nominalist cohort’, denied such a real distinction, while on the other Aquinas and the later Thomists affirmed it, suggesting that the soul’s faculties were simply accidental qualities by which the soul displays and issues its own operations. Baxter, as we shall see, follows the Scotist line, orienting himself against the Thomist arguments of Zabarella.⁶³

Aquinas’ position was philosophically based on the Aristotelian principle that actuality and potentiality must always fall within the same category.⁶⁴ For him this meant that since the acts of the soul are accidental, its powers cannot be in any way identical with its substance. Likewise he argued that if the essence of the soul were the immediate source of its activity – and thus its power – then to have a soul would mean to be always in a state of activity, something which is manifestly false.⁶⁵ Despite this Aquinas in no way intended to deny the intimate association between the soul and its powers, holding indeed that these should be considered midway between substance and accident and thus as ‘natural properties’ of the soul.⁶⁶ In other words he regarded the powers of the soul as ‘proper accidents’ inhering in the soul as their subject and flowing from it as their cause.⁶⁷ Although this preserved an intimate association it did entail that the soul and its powers had to be distinguished by a real distinction.

Scotus denied such a real distinction, holding the powers of the soul to be identical with its essence though formally distinct from it.⁶⁸ Thus, although like Aquinas he held that the powers of the soul were ‘proper’ to it and that the essence of the soul was logically prior to its possession of causal powers, he denied that this meant the powers should be construed as proper accidents. To his mind Aquinas’ real

⁶² This was also a live issue in the Renaissance (Park, ‘Organic Soul’, 477-81).

⁶³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.164.

⁶⁴ Its theological rationale was in preserving the ontological distinction between Creator and created.

⁶⁵ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a77 art. 1

⁶⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a77 art. 5.

⁶⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a77 art. 6.

⁶⁸ Scotus, *Ord.*, 2 d. 16, n. 17-19.

distinction, and thus real separability, of the powers and the soul, had the unfortunate consequence that the powers themselves became independent causal agents detached from the substance of the soul.⁶⁹ Instead Scotus understood the powers as ‘unitively contained’ within, and formally distinct from, the essence of the soul. This allowed him to establish an important comparison between the inherence of God’s attributes in his essence and the ‘affections of being’ (unity, truth and goodness) in being itself, and consequently to assert the soul’s metaphysical simplicity.⁷⁰

Nominalists such as Ockham went even further than Scotus. Ockham, for example, denied not only a Thomist real distinction but also a Scotist formal distinction between the essence of the soul and its powers. Instead he held that the powers of the soul were identical, connoting the same formally indivisible substance. Thus intellect and will, for example, simply indicate the soul’s essence as denominated by its different acts.⁷¹

Having reviewed the principal scholastic positions on the soul and its powers we may now turn to Baxter’s specific refutation of Zabarella. The argumentation here is both dense and subtle and we will simply highlight its most important features. What will emerge from our discussion is Baxter’s employment of the Campanellan primalities within the context of his Nominalised Scotism in order to secure the triune character of the human soul, a pattern of argument which will be seen in Chapter Five to be vital for his Trinitarian conception of God.

In articulating the contemporary Thomist position Baxter cites five arguments of Zabarella from his *De Rebus Naturalibus*, which he holds to represent a significant refining of the standard Thomist account of the powers.⁷² Zabarella’s arguments hinge on two different metaphysical strategies. The first, deployed in four out of the five arguments, depends on an account of the difference between act and potency and relies on the fundamental Aristotelian principle that act is ‘nobler’ than and prior to potency. Zabarella maintains that power in itself denotes a privation – an absence –

⁶⁹ Scotus, *Ord.*, 2 d. 16, n. 5-10, 15-16; cf. Cross, ‘Philosophy of Mind’, 268-9.

⁷⁰ Scotus, *Ord.*, 2 d. 16, n. 17-22; cf. Cross, ‘Philosophy of Mind’, 269-71.

⁷¹ Gordon Leff, *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 532-3.

⁷² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.164-5.

of act. Since every operation is from act (rather than potency) it follows for him that the existence of powers presupposes a prior actual nature from which they must come forth, the essence of the soul itself. This is essentially Aquinas' position, and like him Zabarella suggests that the powers are a mean between cause and operation, really distinct from the soul's essence although naturally flowing from it.⁷³

Baxter's response is to challenge Zabarella's metaphysical assumptions and especially his account of power itself. Firstly he denies Zabarella's position that natural power must be regarded as an accidental quality. Rejecting Aristotelian authority he maintains it must be proved, not simply assumed, that such powers are accidents.⁷⁴ Secondly Baxter holds that Zabarella's Aristotelian framework has been superseded by his own Scotist metaphysics of inadequate concepts. Thus to Zabarella's contention that because we call the soul a 'virtuous substance' the virtues cannot be the substance itself, Baxter responds, according to a now familiar line, that substance and virtue are distinguished inadequately. This means crucially that the two are not separable and so a real distinction cannot obtain between the soul and its powers. Likewise to Zabarella's syllogism that as *posse* relates to *esse* so power relates to essence, but as in the soul *posse* differs really from *esse* so also power must differ really from essence, Baxter simply responds that essence *qua* essence and essence *qua* potent are diverse inadequate concepts of the same entity, differing not as diverse things but as genus and difference.⁷⁵

Baxter also views Zabarella's Aristotelian understanding of *posse* as *posse agere* as far too narrow in scope. For Baxter, *posse* denotes not just *posse agere* but also *posse esse*.⁷⁶ As he says in response to another of Zabarella's arguments, power can be taken not just as active or passive potency but also as the form of the soul itself. Power therefore signifies the essence of the soul *qua* potent and is not as Aquinas held a mere accidental potency. This allows him to establish the essence of the soul as the immediate principle of its own activity and so the simplicity of the soul, mirroring the divine simplicity, is maintained.

⁷³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.164-5 citing Jacopo Zabarella, *De Rebus Naturalibus Libri XXX* (Cologne, 1602).

⁷⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.164.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.169.

⁷⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.169.

Baxter's distinction between *posse esse* and *posse agere* is clearly rooted in Campanella's radical reconfiguring of power and his own distinction between *potentia essendi* and *potentia activa*. For the scholastics in general, as we have seen clearly in Aquinas, power (*potentia*) referred to potency and required actualising. In their works we frequently find therefore the assertion that potency must be reduced to act by something which is itself already in act. Compared to act power is therefore inferior. Campanella however departed entirely from this conventional framework of act and potency. Although he recognised that Aristotle had made act and potency the fundamental metaphysical principles of being, he himself divided act into the act of being and operation. Since operation flows from the agent's power, this allowed him to claim that it cannot be a fundamental principle. Likewise act, although it precedes passive potency, does not precede active potency, which itself is act. By reduction Power remains the only principle of being, together, of course, with Wisdom and Love as its necessary and inseparable conjoints. In this way Campanella effectively conflates, or as Bonansea suggests confuses, act and potency.⁷⁷

The consequence, as Bonansea remarks, is that 'potency, as a mere potential principle of being, could hardly find place in his system of philosophy'.⁷⁸ Instead Campanella speaks of power as either *potentia essendi*, a constitutive principle of being identical with essence, or as *potentia activa*, which is again innate and to be identified with the agent himself even though it is distinguished from *potentia essendi* by flowing out of it. While Campanella does speak of a third *potentia passiva* he attributes this either to privation or to the receptive power of matter.⁷⁹ In summary therefore, for Campanella, power is that which empowers and is self-actualising under God. There is no longer *any* sense in which it needs to be brought into act, for it is itself the source of all act. This conception of power, along with the primalities themselves, must be regarded as one of Campanella's chief bequests to Baxter's thought.

⁷⁷ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 146.

⁷⁸ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 151.

⁷⁹ Bonansea, *Campanella*, 150-5. For more on *potentia essendi* and *potentia activa* see Campanella, *Monotriade*, 20.

Zabarella's second metaphysical strategy is to pose what seems to him an insoluble problem with the non-Thomist account. He argues that if the soul is the same as all of its powers then necessarily these powers must also all be the same as each other. Since this is obviously not the case it follows that the soul and its powers cannot be identical and so must be really distinguished.⁸⁰ This line of argument is not so easily dismissed and Baxter devotes considerably more attention to it.

It is Baxter's chief desire to argue against Zabarella that the powers of the soul are both one and many. That is, they are one *realiter* in essence as they are the form of the soul, but many either *formaliter* (as the Scotists hold) or at least *relative* as they are oriented to different acts (as the Nominalists hold). Baxter recognises that postulating such distinctions between the one and many involves considerable difficulty, but argues that this applies as much to Zabarella as to himself. Interestingly Baxter defends his own position not so much philosophically as theologically, from his conviction that the form of the soul must be the image of the Trinity. His implication is that without such essential unity in distinction within the soul this could not be the case.

For Baxter God is most certainly three persons and three active principles of life, intellect and will in one essence. The relation between essence, principles and persons in God will occupy much of Chapter Five but what is important to note here is Baxter's assertion that our (inadequate) conceptions concerning God must stem from our souls as created in his image. Baxter maintains that the only way the appropriate unity-in-multiplicity can be maintained is through either the virtual or extrinsic distinction of the Nominalists or the formal distinction of the Scotists. It follows for Baxter that if God's Power, Intellect and Will have such a unity in distinction then so also must his creating volitions, intellection and actions. In this way the *una-trina* characteristic of creatures and supremely of the human soul as image of God may be accounted for.⁸¹

Baxter here seems to envisage a kind of two-way epistemological traffic between our conceptions of God and our conceptions of the soul. Just as we know God through

⁸⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.165.

⁸¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.165-7.

the soul, so also are we able to characterise the soul as *una-trina* through our knowledge of God's Trinity.⁸² This entails that just as God can be described as three persons in one essence, so his image in the human soul is both threefold in virtue and one in substance.

Beyond this simple affirmation of the soul's triune nature however Baxter will not trespass. He quite simply refuses to decide between the Scotist and Nominalist alternatives, remarking only that those who do not accept the formal distinction can cleave to Ockham's opinion instead that the powers are distinguished from the soul by extrinsic denomination. Yet his own subsequent discussion is sympathetic to Scotus and he does include a long citation from Scaliger arguing that the powers of the soul can neither be said to be accidents nor absolutes of the soul but rather are its 'proper affections' in the same way that unity, truth and goodness can be called the 'proper affections of being', distinguished from each other as different formalities.⁸³ This as we have seen is a thoroughly Scotist point and begs the question of Baxter's own Scotism in this regard. However since Baxter also leaves wide open the Nominalist alternative it seems best again to characterise his position in terms of his Nominalised Scotism. More importantly still we should recognise that Baxter's scholastic arguments are deployed with the sole aim of preserving the triune character of the image of God. Indeed as we have seen very clearly it is theological considerations that shape his metaphysics and not the other way round.

4. Triune Faculties of the Soul

Baxter's account of the higher faculties of vital-action, intellection and will is undoubtedly the crown of his psychology. It is these which condition the triune nature of man's soul and form the principal seat of the image of God. In his characterisation of these faculties as vitality, intellect and will rather than memory, understanding and will, Baxter, as we shall examine below, departs considerably from the Augustinian and scholastic mainstream. As precedents for this move he cites specifically Suarez, Scheibler, Alsted and Grotius, although undoubtedly

⁸² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.167: '*Prolixius haec dicta sunt, ut melius intelligatur, quomodo facultates seu virtutes diversae, sicut et actus, cum unitate animae humanae consistunt*'.

⁸³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.167.

Campanella, Comenius and later Glisson were prominent influences as well.⁸⁴ Earlier Baxter seems to have adhered to a view of the soul as possessing only the two faculties of intellect and will.⁸⁵ However it was probably through reading these sources, as well as through the desire to develop a Trinitarian science of the soul, that he came to include power within the faculties as well. This is important for it offers a contemporary context for Baxter's psychology and reiterates the complex three-way interaction in his thought between the old and new scholasticism and the new philosophy.

4.1. Vital-Active Virtue

In the *Methodus* Baxter acknowledges the difficulty of distinguishing the vitality of the soul – its vital-active power – from its intellect and will, but holds that it must be so understood. This is because he understands life as standing in relation to intellect and will as the first principle in a trinity of virtues. Life itself is a universal notion comprehending the other virtues and so may be described as analogous to the Father in the Godhead. Therefore just as the Son comes forth from the Father through generation and the Spirit from the Father (and the Son) through spiration so the intellect proceeds from power and the will from power (and intellect).⁸⁶ From the very beginning of his reflections then, it is abundantly clear that the Trinitarian analogy Baxter secured in arguing for the essential nature of the soul's powers is crucial for his understanding of the co-working of the faculties. Within the scope of this analogy power has the role of *principium* just as the Father does within the Godhead.

Baxter holds that vitality in its own right is the principle of 'action so far as it is action', seen especially in the 'executive motions' of the soul, such as locomotion or the activity of inferior powers. At first sight Baxter acknowledges that designating this the principal power of the rational soul seems demeaning, for both motive power and life are shared with animals and so unlike rationality are not a formal distinguishing feature of man. For this reason he notes that many, including Glisson

⁸⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.176; *Reasons*, 516-7.

⁸⁵ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 160.

⁸⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.176-7.

in the *De Vita Naturae*, have placed motive power third after perceptive and appetitive power and as dependent on them.⁸⁷ Furthermore, ironically, Baxter's elevation of motive power could easily be construed as an atomist move, for they above anyone would be sympathetic to the idea that intellect and will arise from the motive power of the body.

Such an atomist construal however is, of course, entirely antithetical to Baxter's understanding of formal virtue. Indeed, as he says against Gassendi, it is the powers of the soul which cause motion and not motion which causes the powers of the soul.⁸⁸ Baxter's understanding is that animal life must be understood analogically and not as being of the same formal species as rational life. He glosses this by Athanasius' reference to the highest form of life being that by which the soul moves itself.⁸⁹ Motive power is therefore the soul's own self-motion, its eminent vitality through which it confers life to the whole composite of body and soul. This means that although Glisson's ordering is entirely justified *ad extra* it must be reversed *ad intra* so that executive acts have priority over every faculty of the soul.⁹⁰

It is clearly this conception of vitality that grounds Baxter's understanding of it as the *principium* of all the soul's powers. For, as the principle of action, vitality must underlie all of the soul's activity, even with respect to the higher functions of intellect and will. Simply put, without life there could be no intellect or will. Yet Baxter's understanding of life is also intrinsically Trinitarian, with intellect and will flowing inseparably from vitality itself and enabled by it as formally distinct active powers. This is counterbalanced by the reciprocal action of the other faculties on power itself, so that just as power excites intellect and will, so the intellect understands power and will, directing them to determinate acts, and the will orders intellect and power towards the moral specification of actions. In this way intellect

⁸⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.177; cf. Francis Glisson, *Tractatus de Natura Substantiae Energetica, seu, De Vita Naturae* (London, 1672), 192-4, 208-9.

⁸⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.177.

⁸⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.177; Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 33.

⁹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.177.

and will may be said to be concauses, necessary but not in themselves sufficient, for the executive acts of the lower faculties.⁹¹

Due to the richness of its mutual interrelations with its co-powers Baxter does not wish to characterise vital power as simply 'nude' or 'indifferent'. Instead he suggests that it has a threefold natural inclination: firstly it is more inclined to acting than non-acting, secondly it is more inclined to congruous natural actions than incongruous ones and thirdly it is inclined for executing volitions. Power can therefore only be properly understood in relation to the other faculties. Significantly these inclinations are themselves, through repeated repetition and reinforcement, the ground of all the soul's habits, according to power's threefold habit of promptitude, fortitude and constancy. Furthermore this triune habit of power subsequently grounds the habits of all the other faculties, enabling and sustaining them and giving them their distinctive Trinitarian shape.

Furthermore this mutual interaction of vital power with its co-powers is also the foundation for the important distinction between natural and moral power. Natural power refers to the action of power *simpliciter*, by mode of nature, whilst moral power is the action of power conditioned by intellect and will and directed to morally good or bad actions.⁹² Moral power is therefore the perfecting of the natural power of the soul, and is nothing less than its health or right disposition. Like any other power moral power can also be habitual. In this way the moral habit of power grounds the moral habits of intellect (divine knowledge, wisdom or faith) and will (divine love or holiness) and so may be described as the right disposition for immanent and outgoing operations as they relate to God. In including within itself the right disposition of intellect and will for knowing and loving God it is, quite simply, the spiritual or divine life as it is directed towards the promptitude, fortitude and constancy of moral actions.⁹³

Baxter's discussion of moral habits relates very closely to his understanding of the image of God, which, as we shall see, is supremely seen in the health and holiness of

⁹¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.178.

⁹² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.178.

⁹³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.179.

the natural man. In these terms habits are not only the expression of a holy life but the very dynamic by which it is enabled. They therefore thoroughly condition the interrelation of the Triune God and the triune soul of man as we shall discuss further in Chapter Six. It is therefore this Trinitarian character of vitality that allows it to pattern the actual and habitual fabric of the entire Christian life.

4.2. Intellectual Virtue

According to his Trinitarian model Baxter understands intellect as proceeding from vital power and consubstantial with it. He emphasises that while the intellect is an active power with respect to inferior beings, it is passive with respect to God's operation,⁹⁴ and needs the illumination of the Father of Lights. He conceives of God as the 'first universal intellect', acting in all created intellects, and in Platonic fashion as the intellectual Sun of the mind.⁹⁵ Understandably therefore Baxter seeks to characterise intellection by a complex analogy with vision. Just as the soul seeing is not at all acted on by inferior objects, so in the higher vision of intellection the soul understanding is only acted on by God (and perhaps by God using a 'universal spirit' instrumentally).⁹⁶

Baxter describes the object of the intellect as not only truth, which he conceives of as exact congruity to the thing understood, but rather *ens* itself in its threefold transcendental affections of One (existing), True and Good.⁹⁷ In saying this Baxter follows Scotus who had held this exact point against Aquinas and Henry of Ghent, who considered that its proper object was the quiddity of material substances or God respectively. As Pasnau suggests, Scotus' position on the question represents a mean between these two extremes and by affirming *ens* as the object of the intellect Scotus is claiming that apprehension of being is common to all of its operations.⁹⁸ For Baxter, who recognised a close relation between the 'affections of being' and his

⁹⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.186.

⁹⁵ Baxter, *Reliquiae*, I.22; cf. Plato, *Republic*, VI.

⁹⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.186.

⁹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.186-7.

⁹⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a84 art. 7; 88 art. 3; Robert Pasnau, 'Cognition', in Thomas Williams (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 293-4. Pasnau adds that Scotus' position here is related to his univocal account of being which we shall discuss in Chapter Five.

own divine principles, the advantage of this Scotist doctrine was surely that it suggested a Trinitarian structure to the processes of intellection.⁹⁹

However in his denial of species in cognition Baxter stands much closer to Ockham and the Nominalists than to Scotus and the earlier scholastic consensus. Both Aquinas and Scotus held to a complex theory of cognition in which sensible species received from external objects were processed and abstracted by the active intellect to yield intelligible species which could be received by the passive intellect.¹⁰⁰ In his earlier writings Baxter seems to have held the same opinion, for he speaks in identical language of species being ‘impressed’ on the intellect.¹⁰¹ Later however, most likely through the influence of Campanella and Glisson as well as the Nominalists, Baxter changed his mind definitively, denying the distinctively Aristotelian position that the intellect in some way becomes the thing understood, whether materially or, as Zabarella interpreted Aristotle, intentionally and spiritually.¹⁰²

Coming after Ockham, Baxter recognises that the question of species in cognition has caused a great deal of contention among philosophers, raising a number of thorny issues such as whether species continually emanate from sensible objects, how they are received in the phantasy and how they impress themselves on the intellect and move it for cognition. His own view is that the notion of species has raised far more questions than it has managed to solve, and so he follows Ockham in denying both their role and their existence as conventionally understood. While Baxter is particularly hostile to any emanation account of species from material objects,¹⁰³ he also strongly critiques contemporary and more sophisticated species accounts, such as that of Sennertus which employed the language of spiritual or intentional species while maintaining that sensation itself was an immanent act of the soul. These alternatives were common ways of retaining the language of species while

⁹⁹ Thus, for example, Baxter links the intimate connection of being and good to the intimate connection of intellect and will (*Methodus*, I.187).

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a84 art.1, 4, 6 and 7; Scotus, *Rep.* IA d. 3, q. 4.

¹⁰¹ Richard Baxter, *Rich. Baxters Apology* (London, 1654), ‘Account’, 3, 4, 22; *Universal Redemption*, 467.

¹⁰² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.192.

¹⁰³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.187.

introducing new philosophical or scientific developments into theories of cognition.¹⁰⁴ Baxter however holds that the language of spiritual or intentional species is equally muddled and does not solve the fundamental problem of whether species should be regarded as substantial, accidental or merely beings of reason.¹⁰⁵

To illustrate his own understanding of cognition Baxter offers a detailed description of how the soul cognises a visible object. Light, he says, reflected off the passive object is conjoined in the eye with the soul's own interior light. By this light the soul exercises its own visive faculty, the act of which flows immediately from the essence of the soul and is perception itself. As Baxter says 'by seeing we perceive ourselves to see and by feeling we perceive ourselves to feel'. Given the immediacy of this act, Baxter denies any role for species whether received externally or generated internally, holding instead that the cognised object becomes an object of the common (integrating) sense and phantasy through the continued apprehensive *ad intra* activity of the soul.

As we saw above Baxter envisages the act of sensation itself in terms of motion. Thus the exterior act (presumably the 'attending' triple act of light, although he does not make this entirely clear) is described as triggering a sensitive motion *ad intra*, met by a primary motion of the soul emitted from the centre outwards.¹⁰⁶ When these meet the soul reverts into itself *ad intra* and from these motions a variety of passions arise. Nominally Baxter suggests that this act of the soul could be termed a 'species' or 'image', so long as by this no 'efflux from the passive object' is understood nor 'images depicted in air', nor indeed anything beyond the received solar influx, the act of the sensation itself and the habit it gives rise to in the internal senses of phantasy and memory. Therefore by species he understands only the acts of the soul progressing from its essence, specified by terminating objects and known through the intuition of intellect. This Baxter says assumes an intimate connection

¹⁰⁴ Gary Hatfield, 'The Cognitive Faculties', in *CHSP*, II.957-9.

¹⁰⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.187.

¹⁰⁶ Ironically this resembles the Thomist account in which two different directions of causation interact with each other. See Eleonore Stump, 'The Mechanisms of Cognition: Ockham on Mediating Species', in Paul Vincent Spade (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 172-3.

between the sensitive and intellective faculties, implying that they are better regarded as two aspects of one soul rather than as two different souls.¹⁰⁷

By his reduction of intellection to motions of the soul, Baxter is also able to deal with the vexed question of the active and passive intellect. For Baxter the soul must always be considered as being in act (at least immanently). However he also recognises that the intellect as active is continually sustained by God as first cause, although he declares himself agnostic to the Averroist question of whether it is also sustained by a further universal intellect as second cause. Thus with regard to the passive intellect Baxter accepts the intellect's passivity to God as well as its quasi-passivity to its own immanent acts, but denies that material objects are in any way able to act upon it.¹⁰⁸ In this way Baxter locates both the active and passive intellect in differing motions of the same soul rather than in distinct faculties.

It may be objected that Baxter's reformulation of species as immanent acts of the soul does not truly solve anything but instead replaces the action of sensible and intelligible species with some equally unknown operations of the soul. To say this however would not be entirely fair to the spirit of Baxter's exposition. As we have already suggested the intimate bond between the sensitive and intellective soul is a vital axiom of Baxter's psychology. The act of intellection therefore involves a felt perception that we are indeed understanding, a knowledge which Baxter calls innate and unconscious and says is to be distinguished from any subsequent artificial and discursive knowledge. The first act of the intellect is thus said to be 'its own intimate and essential perception of itself'. This, Baxter adds, is what Ockham calls intuitive perception.¹⁰⁹

While the theory of intuitive cognition is usually traced to Scotus it was Ockham who made it a major plank of his intellectual and theoretical system. The Scotist definition of intuition, which Baxter cites from Nicholas d'Orbellis, is 'knowledge...of an object as it self present, when a thing in its present existence, is

¹⁰⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.188.

¹⁰⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.190-1.

¹⁰⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.194-5.

the moving object of knowledge'.¹¹⁰ Ockham accepted this definition for natural intuition, although he repudiated it in general due to his controversial position that God according to his absolute power could cause intuitive cognition of non-existents.¹¹¹ In general however it is clear that intuition refers to a direct and unmediated cognition of an object, or a kind of higher 'intellectual vision'.¹¹² Theories of intuitive cognition attained some prominence in the seventeenth century and are to be found in both Campanella and Glisson, to cite examples of particular relevance to Baxter.¹¹³

Baxter's own position is that in this life we only have intuitive knowledge of our own acts and not of anything external to us.¹¹⁴ This marks an important limitation of the scope of (intellective) intuitive cognition. In support of this he cites from Ockham's *Quodlibet*, in which he proves that the intellect knows its own acts intuitively. Fascinatingly Baxter compares this with Descartes' famous *cogito* and the experience of self-consciousness.¹¹⁵ In the *Reasons* Baxter adds a complication to this relatively simple picture, remarking that 'by seeing other things, I am most certain that I see, and by hearing, tasting, smelling, etc. I am certain that I hear, taste, and smell; so is not the intellect here fitted intuitively to understand its own act of understanding; but by understanding other objects, it understandeth that it doth understand'.¹¹⁶ Interestingly he glosses this with Descartes' affirmation that 'the act of intellection is more perceived than the object' so 'I am more certain that I think and understand, than I am of the nature of that which I think of and understand'.¹¹⁷

This should not be taken to mean however that the soul does not know its own substance intuitively. Baxter, in fact, holds that the soul does know its own faculties

¹¹⁰ Baxter, *Reasons*, 549.

¹¹¹ For Scotus on intuitive cognition see Pasnau, 'Cognition', 296-300, for Ockham see Stump, 'Mechanisms', 181-8 and at more length Leff, *Ockham*, 6-44.

¹¹² Glisson defines it as follows: '*cognitio intuitiva est illa, quo objectum per viam visionis intellectui repraesentatur*' (Francis Glisson, *Philosophical Papers: Materials related to De Natura Substantiae Energetica (On the Energetic Nature of Substance)*, 1672, ed. Guido Giglioni (Cambridge: Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, 1996), 56.

¹¹³ For intuition in Campanella see Bonansea, *Campanella*, 78-86.

¹¹⁴ Richard Baxter, *Dying Thoughts* (London, 1683), 71-2, 93, 142. Incidentally it seems likely that Baxter would have rejected Ockham's notion of the intuition of non-existents, for he says in *Methodus*, I.193 that 'what is not, is not known, nor is it an object of true knowledge'.

¹¹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.86-7.

¹¹⁶ Baxter, *Reasons*, 384.

¹¹⁷ Baxter, *Reasons*, 548.

and substance directly, although he adds in clarification: ‘*at primum perceptum non est substantia qua substantia, nec facultas qua facultas; sed facultas et substantia ut agentes primo et immediate percipiuntur*’.¹¹⁸ Significantly, from its intuitive knowledge of itself the soul is able to make an inferential leap to consider the nature of the pure intelligences, something which we shall see in Chapter Five is of great importance for the *analogia entis* between the triune nature of the soul and the Trinity. As Baxter succinctly puts this, ‘the soul by knowing it self, doth gather the knowledge of all higher intellectual beings, which is its most considerable worthy knowledge’.¹¹⁹

Although Baxter does not universally affirm the scholastic dictum that ‘there is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the sense’,¹²⁰ he does hold to a very close connection between intuitive and sensitive cognition. This means both that intuitive knowledge itself may be regarded as an eminent kind of sensation and that in this life all our knowledge of sensible objects comes through the medium of the senses.¹²¹ This runs entirely counter to the diminishing view of sensation found among the mechanists and instead conforms to Campanella and Glisson’s view of knowledge as primarily eminent sensation.

Baxter’s theory of intuition also helps us to make proper sense of the psychological processes operative in cognition. His description of the sense object triggering a sensitive motion *ad intra* resembles Ockham’s account of the first sensitive intuition. Likewise the act of the (presumably intellective) soul in meeting this sensitive motion and the soul’s subsequent reversion into itself may be seen as constituting Ockham’s second intellective intuition.¹²² Indeed Baxter explicitly notes the difference between these two kinds of intuition in his discussion of the views of d’Orbellis.¹²³ Elsewhere Baxter describes the nature of this intuition, saying that ‘every vital faculty hath a self-perception in its acting; which is an eminent sense:

¹¹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.195.

¹¹⁹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 549.

¹²⁰ Baxter, *Reasons*, 547. The exceptions as Baxter suggests in *Reasons*, 547-9 are the soul’s intuitive knowledge of itself and its inferential knowledge of immaterial beings.

¹²¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.195; *Reasons*, 547-9.

¹²² Stump, ‘Mechanisms’, 189.

¹²³ Baxter, *Reasons*, 549.

intuition also of outward sensible objects, or immediate perception of them, as sensate and imaginata, is before all argument and definition, or reasoning action'.¹²⁴ The act of intuition then, encompassed by the soul's internal motions,¹²⁵ affirms once again the intimate link in Baxter's thought between sensitive and intellectual cognition.

Ockham's influence can also be seen in Baxter's account of the way in which the soul gains universal and particular knowledge.¹²⁶ Baxter affirms, like Ockham, that the first object of cognition is '*ens reale incomplexum*' presented as it is imaged and sensed. The second object of intellection is the act of intellection itself, through which we gain knowledge of what something actually is, as '*ens complexum cognitum*'. From this, through the operation of the mind *ad intra*, we are able to form universal concepts.¹²⁷ The entire process closely resembles Ockham's account of abstracting universals from particulars, albeit with the important difference that Baxter holds something akin to a Scotist moderate realist position rather than to a full-blooded Nominalism.¹²⁸ Furthermore Baxter like Ockham also dispenses with the need for species in the memory. Instead he holds that the role of species can be fulfilled by the act of sensation itself and the habit or disposition thence arising in the internal senses.¹²⁹

Before we turn to consider the faculty of the will it is important to linger briefly on Baxter's account of intellectual habits. For these are not only closely connected with the intuitive and sensitive awareness of acts, as per Ockham, but also with the triune interaction of the soul's faculties. Baxter divides intellectual habits into three categories: 'habits of knowledge' for speculation, 'habits of prudence' for right volitions and 'habits of art' for exterior acts. These, as we have suggested, are rooted

¹²⁴ Baxter, *Immortality*, II.26-7.

¹²⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.188.

¹²⁶ For more on this see 'Appendix Two – Baxter, Glisson and Inadequate Concepts'.

¹²⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.189-90.

¹²⁸ For this see 'Appendix Two – Baxter, Glisson and Inadequate Concepts'. Baxter seems, for example, to accept a principle of individuation akin to Scotus' haecceity, which, as Marilyn McCord Adams points out, runs entirely counter to a strict Ockhamist view of universals (*William Ockham* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1987), I.16, 43-69). This does not mean of course that his view of universals is precisely identical to that of Scotus. For instance, Baxter is closer to Ockham in denying sensible and intellectual species any role in the formation of universals. Here therefore the category of Nominalised Scotism once again seems particularly applicable.

¹²⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.188.

in and enabled by the soul's vital-active faculty and themselves condition its volitional and executive activities. Once again habits may be seen to embed the actions of the soul and help establish a network of complex triune interactions, establishing the distinctive Trinitarian stamp of Baxter's psychology.¹³⁰

4.3. Volitional Virtue

Right from the beginning Baxter shows clearly his desire to place his discussion of the will in both a Scotist and a Trinitarian context. He affirms firstly an Aristotelian conception of the will as naturally inclined towards happiness, as a weight is inclined towards the centre of the earth. Thus the will is in some sense a free-standing appetite, independent from determination by any antecedent principle. This is immediately balanced, however, by Baxter's recognition of the 'wonderful harmony' of the soul's powers, by which both power and intellect contribute to the act of the will. Insofar as the will, as a motion towards a recognised good, must be preceded by both recognition of an object's existence and understanding of its nature, the action of the will must proceed from power and intellect together (of which existence and truth are, respectively, the proper objects). Nevertheless this does not lessen the will's dignity, for Baxter, in entirely Scotist fashion, argues that just as goodness, rather than existence or truth, is the most excellent affection of an object, so the will is called the perfective faculty of the soul.¹³¹

In holding that the will was an appetite for good Baxter was simply following a scholastic consensus which endured well into the seventeenth century. As an appetite the will is therefore analogous to the lower sensitive and vegetative appetites, although as a rational appetite it both exceeds them and is specifically differentiated from them, since its good is cognised. Contrary to Aquinas, however, Baxter did not hold that the will desires good generally or universally but only as

¹³⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.187.

¹³¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.200; cf. Scotus, *Rep.* 4, d. 49 q. 2.

grounded in individual instances.¹³² In holding this Baxter was again clearly following the Scotists, as he himself confessed elsewhere.¹³³

Likewise, although Baxter conceived of the will analogically as an appetite, he was careful never to treat it merely as such. Unlike Aquinas, therefore, he did not think that the will was bound to adhere to happiness of necessity, but instead regarded it only as necessarily *inclined*, and always capable of refusing both its own happiness and the love of God, at least by suspension of its own act. In this account of the will as both free and rational we see the beginnings of Baxter's Scotist conception of the will as a self-determining power.¹³⁴

Baxter further analysed the will according to a distinction of ends and means. His division of ends is twofold, into an 'end of nature' and an 'end of reason'. According to the 'end of nature' the will is directed towards the happiness of the one willing, whereas according to the 'end of reason' the will is directed towards God and his goodness. When a particular thing is willed as means it is formally directed towards one of these two ends. This complex network, Baxter remarks, was instituted by God in order that the will might be 'naturally and necessarily inclined' towards loving him when recognised as God. Even after the Fall the will therefore essentially retains these twin ends and inclinations, although their relation is now disordered, with the inclination to love of God and virtue largely effaced. This means that through diversion of the will or deception of the intellect it can and does happen that God is not loved as he ought to be.¹³⁵

Although Baxter does not acknowledge it, his discussion of these twin ends of the will closely reflects Scotus' doctrine of the *affectio commodi* and *affectio iustitiae*. These two affections of the will, which Scotus saw as distinct formalities rooted in its nature, represent, respectively, the natural inclination towards the love of self and the

¹³² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.200; cf. Aquinas, *ST*, 1a82 art. 1.

¹³³ Baxter, *CD*, I.183. Here Baxter affirms the view of Rada and other Scotists that love is of singulars and not general. See also Scotus in *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, tr. Allan Wolter and ed. William Frank (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 157.

¹³⁴ Baxter, *Catholic Theologie*, II.80-2; cf. Aquinas, *ST*, 1a82 art. 1; Scotus, *Will and Morality*, 155-62.

¹³⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.200-2.

free inclination towards the love of God and others.¹³⁶ It should immediately be stressed, however, that for both Scotus and Baxter the *affectio commodi* or ‘end of nature’ is in no way a depraved appetite but instead is God-given and intended to complement the will’s free nature. Both therefore have a very proper Christian understanding of self-love.¹³⁷ What is vicious is the disordered relation between these two affections resulting from the Fall. In particular the continuing strife between flesh and spirit is seen from the fact that man is able to have simultaneously two contrary ultimate ends between which he must choose. The soul is therefore always poised between two alternatives and it is this which characterises the Christian life of struggle against sin as well as the drama of moral decision-making.¹³⁸

Having outlined his basic account of the will Baxter moves on to the important question of the will’s freedom. Here Baxter is careful to avoid both the Thomist intellectualist position that the will’s freedom is rooted in the intellect and the extreme voluntarist position that the will is able to determine itself to specific objects without the guidance of the intellect. These he believes would diminish, respectively, the will’s nature as a self-determining power and its status as a rational, rather than sensitive, appetite.¹³⁹ He also denies the Molinist position, popular in the seventeenth century, that the will’s freedom can be characterised as a freedom of indifference towards alternatives.¹⁴⁰

Baxter is emphatic that the freedom of the will is not a freedom from God or from divine help and so is not the power of determining itself as an independent or absolutely first cause. He affirms instead that the will receives from God as efficient cause and returns to him as final cause. This physical reception from God which antecedes the will’s acts is not however what is meant by ‘to will’, but is rather the

¹³⁶ For these affections see Scotus, *Will and Morality*, 153-4 ;*Rep.* 4 d. 49, q. 4. See further Bernadino Bonansea, ‘Duns Scotus’ Voluntarism’, in Bernadino Bonansea and John Ryan (eds.), *John Duns Scotus, 1265-1965* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 86-8; Mary Beth Ingham, *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living according to John Duns Scotus* (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 1996), 25-8.

¹³⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.193.

¹³⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.203-4.

¹³⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.206-7.

¹⁴⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.209-10; cf. Robert Sleight, Vere Chappell and Michael della Rocca, ‘Determinism and Human Freedom’, in *CHSP*, II.1202-3.

prior dependence on God which enables all of its acts. In this way the will can be called a free cause of its own acts and yet subordinate to God.¹⁴¹ Baxter further asserts that God, as a higher cause, is able efficaciously to predetermine the will's action towards good (although not of course to evil, for this would be against God's nature), which he holds is not to the detriment or diminution of the will's natural power but rather greatly to the advantage of its freedom.¹⁴²

With the boundaries of this freedom outlined negatively, Baxter turns to its positive specification. This he suggests consists fundamentally in three aspects of the will; firstly, that the will is a first cause of its own acts under God and has a 'power of determining itself without some cause physically and efficaciously predetermining it'; secondly, that the will has the power of commanding other faculties, including the intellect, although in different ways according to their diversity; thirdly, that the will is in no way able to be determined necessarily by any created power. Such freedom Baxter insists is integral to the notion of man as created in the image of God.¹⁴³

While Baxter holds that the will can never be free from inclination, he maintains that it retains its basic freedom in three ways: the freedom of contradiction or exercise, the freedom of contrariety or specification and the freedom of competition or comparison. The first of these he characterises as the will's freedom to will or not to will (or to nill and not to nill) and the second as the freedom to will or nill. The third refers to the will's choice between two different things to be willed rather than one thing to be either willed or nilled.¹⁴⁴ The notions of the will's freedom of contradiction and freedom of contrariety were common currency in the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁵ Here Baxter's use of an additional third category, which he notes is relatively uncommon, most likely reflects Scotus' similar threefold schematisation of the will's freedom.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.203.

¹⁴² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.208.

¹⁴³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.207-8.

¹⁴⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.211.

¹⁴⁵ See Sleight et al., 'Determinism'.

¹⁴⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.80; cf. Bonansea, 'Voluntarism', 87-8.

Armed with these subtle distinctions Baxter is able to proceed in his characterisation of the various types of freedom of will. Like Scotus he holds that the will's most perfect freedom consists in its 'most firm adhesion to the good and immutable constancy of willing well'. In our mortal state of pilgrimage our wills are weak through indetermination or indifference and thus the freedom of the pilgrim is properly the imperfection of the will, and the incertitude, fluctuation, mutability, vacillation and inconstancy of will that we experience are all symptoms of the will's bondage to sin. By contrast the angels and souls of the blessed in a confirmed state have the highest kind of freedom attainable by created beings, which Baxter characterises as 'necessarily and immutably by indissoluble adhesion to love God and holiness'. At the summit of freedom is God himself, whose will is said to be the most free of all since it is utterly immutable and never wills what it has not already willed from eternity.¹⁴⁷

Such an account of the will runs entirely counter to that of Aquinas, as is neatly brought out by Bonansea. He points out that for Aquinas freedom is essentially only freedom of contradiction. Where no choice exists, therefore, there can be no freedom and so it is meaningless to talk about the will's freedom towards happiness, the freedom of the blessed to love God and especially of God's own freedom to love himself. For Scotus, however, choice is in fact a mark of the will's current imperfection.¹⁴⁸ This brings us right to the heart of Baxter's Scotist conception of the will, shared with many of his Reformed brethren, in which its freedom is in no way contradictory to necessity and the truest freedom is to act necessarily towards the good.¹⁴⁹

Following his own Trinitarian metaphysics, Baxter seeks further to characterise the will of God and of the blessed in terms of the mutual interaction of the divine principles. Thus although according to nude power God is said to be able to do all things possible, including evil, his power never acts without the conditioning of intellect and will and so he never wills anything which is not good and congruent to his nature. His will however is entirely free and even such that he is able to hold

¹⁴⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.212.

¹⁴⁸ Bonansea, 'Voluntarism', 96.

¹⁴⁹ See Van Asselt et al., *Reformed Thought on Freedom*, 15-47.

himself indifferently to indifferent things. Likewise Baxter holds, following Scotus, that the blessed in their confirmed state retain the power to do both good and evil but according to their perfection of intellect and will are determined by ‘most free necessity’ to the ‘*bonum cognitum volendum*’ and adhere constantly to the willed good from the most free necessity of immutability.¹⁵⁰

In the life of pilgrimage Baxter sees a similar Trinitarian pattern in the interaction of power, intellect and will. Here though it is the freedom of contradiction which is ‘*maxime notabilis*’, extending itself to all objects. Unsurprisingly Baxter’s characterisation of this shows a marked tendency towards the Scotist voluntarist position, which held to the primacy of the will over the intellect, rather than towards a Thomist intellectualist view. Baxter’s precise position was that in any act of the will the intention of end precedes the choice of means but that in determining both of these the will must call upon the intellect for counsel. In broad terms then he would have certainly upheld the scholastic dictum ‘*nihil volitum quin praecognitum*’. Likewise in general terms Baxter held that the specification of an act (i.e. the choosing of a particular act) was from the intellect and its exercise from the will. Yet such a simplistic picture was considerably complicated by the will’s conditioning of the intellect such that its very power of specifying is (for the most part) dependent on the act of the will.¹⁵¹

Baxter expressed this complex relationship between intellect and will using the distinction between simple and compared volitions. He defined a simple volition as ‘that by which we will a thing by simple complacence, considered as simply good, before the understanding compare it with any other good, and call the will to an election’.¹⁵² In these terms the will is therefore determined, of necessity, by the intellect so that it cannot refuse the simple volition of its own happiness and of any sensible good. It is also determined of necessity towards *any* volition of something fully perceived to be its only means of happiness. It is free however with respect to its love towards God and its simple volition of God as ultimate end as well as towards all of its comparative volitions regarding the election of diverse ends and

¹⁵⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.212-3; cf. Bonansea, ‘Voluntarism’, 94-5.

¹⁵¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.213-4.

¹⁵² Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.76.

means. It also remains entirely free with respect to its own exercise. Baxter therefore affirms the will as a ‘self-determining principle’ which is ‘Lord of its own acts’ and ‘able to determine itself with due objects and helps, without extrinsic predetermining physical motion either of God or creatures’.¹⁵³ In the final analysis, then, the intellect is truly able to be called a ‘commanded faculty’, both directly according to exercise and consequently according to the specification of an act. Furthermore, in a profoundly Scotist statement, Baxter maintains that the intellect is only free so far as it is commanded and that it only attains this freedom through participation in the will. For Baxter the will, and not the intellect, is therefore the seat of morality.¹⁵⁴

What is notable in Baxter’s discussion of the will and its freedom is his desire to harmonise a basically Scotist conception of the will with his own Trinitarian metaphysics. Baxter’s adherence to a Scotist account of the will is beyond question. Without doubt therefore Baxter may be called a voluntarist, although his voluntarism, like that of Scotus, is a thoroughly ‘mitigated voluntarism’.¹⁵⁵ In expressing the intimate connection between intellect and will both Baxter and Scotus were aided by their view of the powers as essentially inherent in the soul. Both likewise employed the analogy of the soul’s powers with the affections of being. However in his insistence on the essential equality of the three faculties and his desire to characterise them according to their triune interaction, Baxter goes considerably further than Scotus towards the development of a Trinitarian theory of the souls’ faculties. As he concludes:

*Facultates...mira concomitantia (ex radicali unitate) ita cooperatur, ut numquam agit voluntas sine intellectu et potentia-activa, neque intellectus sine potentia-activa: Et ad intra actu immanente, saltem profundo et confuse, plerumque simul agunt. Attamen ut actus ab objectis speciem et individuationem accipiunt, ex diversitate et separabilitate objectorum, diversificari et separari possunt facultatum actus.*¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.79-80.

¹⁵⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.213-4. See further Scotus, *Will and Morality*, 136-51.

¹⁵⁵ This term is my own although it can be related to recent discussions between Thomas Williams and others on the nature of Scotus’ voluntarism; cf. Mary Beth Ingham, ‘Letting Scotus Speak for Himself’, *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 (2001), 173-216.

¹⁵⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.218.

As equals in a triune partnership the faculties therefore enjoy perfect reciprocal action upon each other, yet conditioned by two provisos: firstly that this does not remove the dignity of each faculty to determine itself and secondly that the relation between the faculties is ordered and in some way hierarchical. In other words for Baxter the faculties of power, intellect and will reflect the Triune interdependence of the three persons in the Godhead. This, as we shall see in the next chapter, gives rise to a profound analogy between the Trinity and the human soul.

5. Image of God

Baxter believes the soul to be specially created by God (although he allows a role to human tradition),¹⁵⁷ to be immortal,¹⁵⁸ and to retain its individuality after the death of the body.¹⁵⁹ He is clear however that the soul's chief dignity, crowning all these, is being fashioned in the image of the Triune God and therefore having the capacity to enter into eternal fellowship with him. In formulating his own doctrine of the image of God Baxter drew extensively on the mainstream Western tradition. The foundation of this, he rightly held, was found in Augustine's famous psychological analogy, as mediated subsequently through Boethius, Damascene and Lombard to nearly all of the scholastics.¹⁶⁰ In his overview of the scholastic account Baxter refers extensively to Augustine, Lombard, Aquinas and Scotus and we shall take their combined thought as our starting point, reviewing it thematically, before turning to consider Baxter's response to it and his own quite different doctrine of the *imago Dei*.¹⁶¹

A first point of importance concerns the precise difference between image and vestige. The distinction between the general *vestigia* and the special image was firmly rooted in the tradition, found in both Augustine and Lombard,¹⁶² but was given formal shape in later scholasticism. Aquinas affirmed a distinction between an

¹⁵⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.124, 237-43.

¹⁵⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.195-6 ; *Immortality*, II.24-72.

¹⁵⁹ Baxter, *Immortality*, II.52, 55-9; *Reasons*, 571-4.

¹⁶⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.81.

¹⁶¹ For a comprehensive discussion of the psychological analogy see Pekka Kärkkäinen, 'Interpretations of the Psychological Analogy from Aquinas to Biel', in Pekka Kärkkäinen (ed.), *Trinitarian Theology in the Medieval West* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 2007), 256-79.

¹⁶² See Lombard, *Sentences*, 1 d. 3 c. 1-2.

image as representing according to likeness of species and a vestige as an effect from a cause. Thus he held that only the internal processions of the mind, through their specific likeness to the intra-Trinitarian processions, could be properly said to image the Trinity.¹⁶³ Scotus held that a vestige represents a part distinctly and the whole indistinctly by way of similarity while an image represents the whole distinctly by way of imitation.¹⁶⁴ While a vestige is unable to lead to the image of the Trinity as a ‘quasi-whole’, this is precisely the function of an image.¹⁶⁵ Like Aquinas, Scotus therefore placed the image of God only in the internal processions of the mind.¹⁶⁶

A second point of importance concerns the precise nature of this image. Augustine established the basis of this in his *De Trinitate* in which he sets out a number of different triadic representations of this image, all of which found their way into subsequent discussion. Two of these are of particular relevance for our discussion and are grounded upon the mind’s reflexive knowledge and love of itself. The first of these is the most basic triad of *mens, notitia sui* and *amor sui*. These Augustine holds neither to be a confused mixture, nor three entities capable of being reduced to a homogeneous unity, but rather to possess both unity and threefold distinction at once through their Trinitarian pattern of interrelation. Attempting to characterise them Augustine describes self-knowledge as a kind of mental word begotten of the mind and representing itself, and self-love as a separate procession, akin to appetite or will, by which the mind and its own knowledge are bound together in essential love and unity.¹⁶⁷ The second of these is his more famous triad of memory, understanding and will, in which Augustine recognises the same process of begetting and binding through love as mirroring the intra-Trinitarian processions.¹⁶⁸

These triads, along with the more general Augustinian triad of the lover, beloved and their mutual love which grounds them, form the basis of scholastic discussion of the image of God. Before considering this further however it is important to understand their rationale for including and prioritising memory. For Augustine and the

¹⁶³ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a93 art. 1-3, 5 6, 9.

¹⁶⁴ Scotus, *Rep.* 1A d. 3 q. 7, n. 202.

¹⁶⁵ Scotus, *Rep.* 1A d. 3 q. 3, n. 78-82; q. 7, n. 202.

¹⁶⁶ Scotus, *Rep.* 1A d. 3, q. 7, n. 205-13.

¹⁶⁷ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, IX.2-3.

¹⁶⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, X.11-19.

scholastics, memory was not only a storehouse of knowledge, as it is for us today, but also a fecund or generative power of the mind, producing occurrent acts of thought or ‘mental words’. They thought that when an intelligible object (for many scholastics an intelligible species) was conjoined with memory, these were naturally and necessarily productive of knowledge as a word of the mind. In this way memory was said to generate or beget understanding. Extending this to the Godhead this theory, proposed by Augustine and elaborated on by his successors, became the foundation of the entire medieval psychological account of the Trinity.¹⁶⁹ It is indeed readily apparent how these internal productions of the human mind could be said both to image the intra-Trinitarian processions and to provide insight into God’s own Trinitarian nature.

However while the scholastics generally agreed on the basic nature of this imaging they differed considerably on its precise interpretation. One major area of contention was the question of the inherence of the image in the soul. Aquinas held that the image of the Trinity was only to be found in the acts of the soul and not in its powers and therefore chastised Lombard for his view that the image resided in the three powers of the soul.¹⁷⁰ Scotus however differed from Aquinas, following both Augustine and Lombard, in holding that the image of God resided in both the acts and the powers themselves. As Francis Lychetus, Scotus’ sixteenth-century commentator, summarised his views: ‘*imago consistit simul in actibus primis et secundis, id est, comprehendit intellectum et voluntatem, et actum intelligendi et volendi*’.¹⁷¹

Another closely related issue concerned which of Augustine’s two triads best represented the image of God within the soul. Aquinas followed Augustine in preferring the triad of memory, understanding and will, even going so far as to suggest the first triad was ‘in part deficient’.¹⁷² Both Lombard and Scotus however preferred Augustine’s other triad.¹⁷³ Thus Scotus says of Augustine that he

¹⁶⁹ For this see Russell Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 50-94.

¹⁷⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a93 art. 7.

¹⁷¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.107 citing Lychetus.

¹⁷² Aquinas, *ST*, 1a93 art. 7.

¹⁷³ Lombard, *Sentences*, 1 d. 3 c. 2; cf. Baxter, *Methodus*, I.106.

'pulcherrime assignat imaginem et perfectissime, quando dicit: mens, notitia, amor'. His reasoning is that mind does not precisely express a fecund principle for begetting or spirating but rather a first act containing both of these virtually in itself. In this way the mind suitably represents the Father as having both fecundities by himself, which Scotus holds to be the most appropriate way of ascribing the image of the Trinity in the soul. By contrast Scotus holds that Aquinas' preferred triad primarily represents the unity of God rather than his Trinity, because its members are the same as the soul and thus do not represent the Triune productions.¹⁷⁴

A final issue concerned the different degrees of the image in man's soul. Augustine held that the true image is found in the soul remembering, understanding and loving God himself.¹⁷⁵ For Augustine memory is therefore the seat of self-transcendence through which man may ascend to God.¹⁷⁶ Thus the true meaning of the *imago Dei* for Augustine is man's participation through wisdom in the Triune being of God, through which he comes to reflect God's own likeness.¹⁷⁷ Aquinas held that the image of God was only properly found in the acts of the three faculties directed to God himself, yet he also distinguished three stages of imaging: firstly according to man's natural aptitude for this, secondly as he actually knows and loves God although imperfectly and thirdly as he does this perfectly. These he called the image of nature common to all men, of grace found only in the just and of glory found only in the blessed.¹⁷⁸ The Scotists held to a similar, although less stringent, hierarchical arrangement. Summarised by Lychetus, there is in the soul firstly an imperfect image when it knows and loves inferior things, secondly a more perfect image when it knows and loves itself and finally a most perfect image when by act it knows and loves the Trinity. In this it becomes not only the image of the Trinity but its similitude, since the act of understanding is the similitude of the object.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Scotus, *Rep.* 1A d. 3, q. 7 n. 209.

¹⁷⁵ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.15.

¹⁷⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, X.8-27.

¹⁷⁷ Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 276-302.

¹⁷⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a93, art. 8.

¹⁷⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.107 citing Lychetus.

Unlike the scholastics surveyed we do not find in Baxter a neat distinction between his doctrine of the *vestigia Trinitatis* and of the *imago Dei*. For Baxter held that even the lower active natures, not just the human soul, had a derivative triune form. He can speak therefore of all active natures as imaging God's own eminent Triune nature and of the whole universe as the Image-Glory of God.¹⁸⁰ In this way the boundary between vestige and image becomes somewhat blurred. This perspective may be usefully compared with the vitalism of Campanella and Glisson, although they, of course, went further than Baxter in seeing some kind of triune impress in every being and not just every active being.¹⁸¹ An even closer precedent can be found in Lull's doctrine of the correlatives as intrinsic triune constituents of all created being.

With regard to the question of the image's inherence in the soul Baxter unsurprisingly follows Scotus in holding that the image of God resides in both the soul's powers and its acts. Specifically Baxter holds that the image is found radically in the powers themselves and actively in the acts, such that both concur for constituting the image of God.¹⁸² In his defence of the essential nature of the powers, reviewed above, Scotus was motivated throughout by a desire to preserve the essential inherence of the image of God in man.¹⁸³ It is now clear that Baxter's defence of this served much the same purpose.

To the related question of whether the image of God consists in inferior acts of the soul or only those directed towards God, Baxter declines the Thomist view that the image is only to be found in the latter. In its place he develops an account of the natural image found in every exercise of the soul and a holy or moral image found in the soul's inclination and acts towards God as well as towards creatures in their possession of the divine image.¹⁸⁴ This is clearly a truncated version of Scotus' account. In addition Baxter also admits a third distinctive component to the image, found in man's role as Dominus, Rector and Benefactor under God to the creatures in

¹⁸⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.131; cf. Hale, *Primitive Origination*, 362.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

¹⁸² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.81.

¹⁸³ Scotus, *Ord.*, 2 d. 16.

¹⁸⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.81.

his care.¹⁸⁵ In this way he shows the image of God to exist not only inherently in the soul but also through man's relation to God and other creatures.

While Baxter follows Augustine closely in maintaining both the essential inherence of the image of God and its various degrees, he differs from him very considerably on the question of which triads best represent the image of God. As Baxter baldly puts it, '*Augustinus triplicem animi et virtutem et actum male nominavit: memoriam scilicet posuit loco potentiae-activae-vitalis*'. Furthermore Baxter adds that this mistake, which he attributes to ignorance, was compounded by Boethius, Damascene, Lombard and nearly all the scholastics.¹⁸⁶

Baxter's discomfort with the Augustinian account stems from his understanding of memory. In fact both Baxter and the scholastic tradition recognised two different kinds of memory, one in the phantasy of the sensitive soul and the other in the intellect itself.¹⁸⁷ Citing both Durandus and Scotus, who describe intellectual memory as an active or pregnant intellect respectively, Baxter demonstrates that (intellectual) memory is not properly distinct from the intellectual faculty. This poses a problem for the Augustinian account as he does not think that the *imago Trinitatis* can be properly grounded on only the two distinct faculties of intellect and will.¹⁸⁸ Another contributing factor is that Baxter did not hold to a scholastic view of memory as a fecund generative power. In fact intellective memory plays a marginal role in his psychology, certainly when compared to the scholastics. Likewise, following the Nominalists Baxter, as we have seen, also rejected a species account of cognition. Therefore the traditional scholastic account of conjoint memory and intelligible species generating a 'word of the mind' could no longer make sense to him, although he retains some of the conventional terminology.

In place of memory Baxter assigned power as *principium* of the image of God. Here he was undoubtedly influenced by the Campanellan reconfiguring of power, as well as by other contemporaries such as Alsted, Comenius and Scheibler cited above. In fact both Baxter and Campanella understood power to lie at the root of the scholastic

¹⁸⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.157.

¹⁸⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.81.

¹⁸⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a78 art. 4; 79 art. 6 and 7; cf. Baxter, *Methodus*, I.193, 232.

¹⁸⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.82.

concept of fecund memory and viewed themselves as simply making this fully explicit. Campanella himself sourced this idea in Bernard's discussion of the image of God and Damascene's conception of fecundity as '*potestas exuberans se ad communicandum*', even going so far as to suggest that Bernard's 'efficacies' could be identified with his own primalities.¹⁸⁹ Baxter likewise cites both Bernard and Damascene in connection with the primalities, as well as the view of Campanella (and of others it must be said) that by memory Augustine meant power or divine life.¹⁹⁰ Baxter himself shared the Campanellan understanding of power as intrinsically self-communicating and therefore as grounding all the internal processions of the soul.

Overall it is clear that while the Augustinian scholastic account of the image of God focussed on the begetting of the mental word through memory, in Baxter attention has shifted quite markedly to the coinherence of the three powers of the soul. Thus his account is significantly different from that of Aquinas and much closer to that of Lombard and especially Scotus. Despite this shift in conception Baxter still retains both the structural and dynamic features of the original Augustinian model; those aspects referred to by Gioia as the image of exemplar and the image of relation.¹⁹¹ In retaining the structural and exemplaristic account of the image residing in the soul's powers Baxter differs from many, although by no means all, of his Reformed contemporaries, who like Calvin tended to be suspicious of Augustine's psychological analogy.¹⁹² Nevertheless like Augustine and Calvin Baxter also emphasises the relational aspect of the image of God, making a careful distinction between the natural image in all mankind and the sanctified image of the blessed acquired through their relation to God. Indeed it is this relational aspect, signified by the intrinsic dynamism of man's cleaving to the living God through his life, understanding and will, which has a fundamental place in Baxter's doctrine and, as we shall see in Chapter Six, wholly conditions the psychological aspect of the Triune Baptismal Covenant.

¹⁸⁹ Campanella, *Monotriade*, 22.

¹⁹⁰ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, III.202; cf. *Methodus*, 1.105.

¹⁹¹ Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 276-302.

¹⁹² *PRRD*, 4.157-9.

Chapter Five: Metaphysics of the Trinity

1. Introduction

The starting point for Baxter's discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity was the Triune Baptismal Covenant.¹ As we have already seen Baxter held that it was in this Covenant itself, as the nucleus of all Scripture, that the full glory of a biblical and Trinitarian method of theology was manifest.² In the last two chapters however this covenantal aspect of Baxter's theology has slipped quietly out of view, for our focus has instead been on elaborating his account of the general and special *vestigia Trinitatis*. Now, in preparation for our wide-angle view of Baxter's theology in the final chapter, it is time to reconnect the scriptural and metaphysical strands of our discussion – strands which for Baxter were never truly separate.³

In recent years there has been renewed interest in the Trinitarian theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴ It is evident that while the Trinitarian theology of the earliest Reformers was relatively basic, retaining the language of essence and persons but eschewing anything beyond this, their successors had frequent recourse to scholastic metaphysics and distinctions in the course of elaborating their doctrine. This was due in part to pressure from radical Biblicists and anti-Trinitarians on the one hand, who claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity was either unscriptural or unreasonable or both, and to pressure from their Catholic opponents on the other hand, who denied Protestants their catholic credentials, often lumping them together with the anti-Trinitarians. In part it was simply a natural consequence of both an

¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.79.

² Baxter, *Reasons*, 411-2.

³ This may be seen clearly from Baxter's definition of theology as *scientia-affectiva-practica* which relates to both the Triune Baptismal Covenant and his catechetical understanding of theology as well as to his account of the three faculties of man's soul.

⁴ See *PRRD*, 4; Philip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2003); Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Jason Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008). Paul Lim's forthcoming book on this topic will doubtless prove an excellent addition (*Mystery of Certainty, or Certainty of Mystery? Use of Reason, Revelation and the Rhetoric of Anti-Trinitarian Debates in Seventeenth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, (forthcoming)). For further context on English Socinianism see Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

increasing drive for systematisation, manifest from the beginning of Protestant Scholasticism, and an increasingly nuanced view of the ancillary role of reason in structuring theological doctrine.⁵

The English context of seventeenth-century Trinitarian theology is particularly important for our understanding of Baxter. The decade after Baxter's death in fact marked an escalation in anti-Trinitarian sentiment, and Baxter himself seems to have been attuned to the beginnings of this change.⁶ A particularly important question to ask therefore concerns the place of Baxter's own doctrine on the spectrum of orthodoxy. As we saw in the introduction, in recent years Baxter's Trinitarian theology has been branded as rationalistic and denounced as paving the way for Unitarianism.⁷ Such concerns were also evident, at least implicitly, among a number of his contemporaries⁸ and in this light it is disconcerting to note the enthusiastic appropriation of Baxter's doctrine of the divine principles by the anti-Trinitarian Stephen Nye.⁹ In this chapter I shall argue however that the perception of Baxter as a rationalist and modalist is ultimately mistaken, although nevertheless entirely understandable given his economic bias, his minimal commitment to a developed Trinitarian theology and the unguarded nature of some of his comments.

The first half of this chapter will be concerned with the basis of Baxter's doctrine of the Trinity, found in the Triune Baptismal Covenant and the metaphysics of the divine principles, the general outline of which is treated in section one. The second and third sections will consider Baxter's distinctive theology of attribution and his departure from the Augustinian mainstream. In the fourth section I will analyse in detail both the Scotist and scriptural contours of Baxter's doctrine of analogy and its actual outworking in his own *analogia entis* between triune man and the Triune God.

⁵ *PRRD*, 4.59-195.

⁶ Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, vii.

⁷ Trueman, 'Small Step', 194.

⁸ *PRRD*, 4.161. Ridgley denounces a position which bears a marked resemblance to Baxter's employment of the Efficient, Constitutive and Final Causes and Power, Wisdom and Goodness in his discussion of the Trinity.

⁹ Stephen Nye, *Institutions concerning the Holy Trinity* (London, 1703). I am indebted to Paul Lim for this reference.

In the second half of this chapter we shall turn to Baxter's own relation to the scholastic doctrine of the Trinity, principally but not exclusively with reference to the main medieval schools of thought. The fifth section will be concerned with Baxter's account of the divine attributes, persons and relations, showing particularly his critique of Thomist Trinitarianism and his desire to reconstrue these aspects of the traditional doctrine of God in terms of his own metaphysics of the divine principles and his Nominalised Scotism. Building on this perspective the sixth section will consider Baxter's endorsement of the Nominalist Robert Holkot's 'logic of faith' and the implications of this for our understanding of his Trinitarian doctrine. Finally in the seventh section, drawing these diverse strands together, I will treat of the relation between the Trinity of Principles and Persons in Baxter's thought, arguing that in their intimate but never total coincidence and coinherence we find a dialectic of immanence and transcendence which belies the modalist and rationalist charges made against his Trinitarian doctrine.

2. The Centrality of the Triune Baptismal Covenant

In making the Baptismal Covenant the starting point for his Trinitarian theology Baxter was following in a very long tradition stretching back even as far as the birth of the Church. As we have seen, Baxter believed that the Triune Baptismal Covenant formed the nucleus of the early Christian credal statements and of the Apostles' Creed itself. Both its dominical provenance and its uniquely clear statement of a basic Trinitarian grammar – three persons linked to one divine name – therefore gave it central importance in later Trinitarian discussions.¹⁰ In particular it helped establish an important link between Christian practice and worship and technical theology.¹¹

For Baxter the Baptismal Covenant was important as the elemental expression of the doctrine of the Trinity. For through the one name and three persons it reveals 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be one, true, coeternal God; one namely in essence

¹⁰ The only comparable verse is 1 John 5:7, the so-called Johannine comma. However, following Erasmus there was increasing doubt about its authenticity and this became a major topic of debate in the seventeenth century (*PRRD*, 4.234-9).

¹¹ See, for example, Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, tr. David Anderson (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 24; Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, II.

and three in a certain manner incomprehensible to mortals'. Combined with 'fiducial assent, consent and practical dedition' to God's covenanting roles as reconciled Father, reconciling incarnate Mediator and sanctifying Spirit this is all the Trinitarian doctrinal content that Baxter holds necessary for salvation.¹²

All of this serves as an important reminder of the credal orientation of Baxter's Trinitarian theology as well as its essential simplicity. Indeed it is noteworthy that in his initial planning for the *Methodus* Baxter had intended to bypass nearly all controversies concerning the Trinity and particularly wished to eschew all speculation over this doctrine. Like many of his Reformed contemporaries Baxter believed that the medieval scholastics had erred considerably in their attempts to probe too closely the mystery of the Trinity. Ironically, given what we shall discern as a Scotist orientation of his Trinitarian doctrine, he blamed Scotus as the main culprit for this.¹³ In fact it was only his conviction that the Trinity was the 'foundation of true theology' and his desire to prevent injury to the Church from the many contemporary anti-Trinitarians that persuaded him to elaborate further on this tremendous mystery. As ever, Baxter's concern was for the proclamation and defence of the Gospel and so he held that the true minister of Christ must be '*probe armatus et instructus*' in such important apologetic matters.¹⁴

Baxter's emphasis on the Baptismal Covenant as the root of all Trinitarian doctrine is a clear indication that he intended his discussion of the Trinity to be scripturally based. This remains true even though some of the terms and concepts Baxter uses to discuss the Trinity cannot be seen to derive immediately from scriptural sources. These he views as 'drawings of water' from the ancient wellsprings of the Church Fathers and the older ecclesiastical doctors. Furthermore although Baxter held that scriptural terms should not be changed lightly, in his opinion it is not the terms used that matter but rather the true meaning of the underlying concept.¹⁵ This was a principle given early expression by Athanasius in his fight against the Arians.¹⁶ Such

¹² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.79.

¹³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.44 citing John Davenant.

¹⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.79.

¹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.37.

¹⁶ Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 18-24.

a ‘Catholic move’ was also a hallmark of the Protestant Scholastic enterprise, found as early as Calvin’s *Institutes*:

The unerring standard both of thinking and speaking must be derived from the Scriptures: by it all the thoughts of our minds, and the words of our mouths, should be tested. But in regard to those parts of Scripture which, to our capacities, are dark and intricate, what forbids us to explain them in clearer terms – terms, however, kept in reverent and faithful subordination to Scripture truth, used sparingly and modestly, and not without occasion?¹⁷

In subsequent generations, due to the pressures of mounting Socinian attacks on Trinitarian doctrine, the Reformed orthodox often made recourse to the founts of tradition in their systematisation of Trinitarian thought.¹⁸

Baxter’s emphasis on the Triune Baptismal Covenant and his essential continuity with Protestant Scholasticism are important to bear in mind throughout this chapter, not least because in its distinctive metaphysical elaboration through the divine principles Baxter’s own Trinitarian doctrine differs markedly from that of many of his fellow Christians. In the complexity of this it is therefore important to remember the very basic nature of Baxter’s prime Trinitarian commitment, which is little more than a mere assertion of God’s essential oneness and threeness.

3. Theology of Attribution

As will by now be becoming increasingly clear, Baxter’s metaphysical elaboration of the scriptural *locus* of the Triune Baptismal Covenant was by means of the divine principles. This is naturally true no less of his doctrine of the Trinity than of the rest of his theology. Indeed it is arguably in shaping his Trinitarian doctrine so profoundly that the divine principles were able to have such a far reaching impact on the rest of Baxter’s thought. Their central importance was in providing a bridge between God’s internal and external actions, or in contemporary theological parlance between the immanent and economic Trinity. This was a role they were able to fulfil according to their attribution, or appropriation, to different divine persons. The usual

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989), I.13.3.

¹⁸ *PRRD*, 4.80-1.

ordering for this was to attribute Power to the Father, Wisdom to the Son and Love to the Holy Spirit. Such attribution clearly allowed what Baxter referred to as the three ‘principles of operation *ad extra*’¹⁹ – Power, Wisdom and Love – to be connected to God’s inmost Triune nature, significantly grounding both the doctrine of the *vestigia Trinitatis* and the analogical ascent from the soul to God.²⁰

Within Church History Baxter identifies two very different approaches to this theology of attribution. The first is hostile, or at least suspicious, and Baxter takes Augustine as its origin:

Augustinus autem omnium primus aut inter primos (ni fallor) attributa sapientiae et amoris divini essentialia qua Deus amat, et qua sapiens est, videtur negasse esse personis appropriata: quem alii, praecipue Lombardus, secuti sunt, et eum scholasticorum plurimi.

According to Baxter Augustine’s reason for denying this was because he held that each principle, as the divine essence, was held in common by the persons and so should not be specifically attributed.²¹

Baxter however was critical of this, objecting that those who, like Augustine, take Power, Wisdom and Love to be nothing other than the divine essence itself are unable to account for why, for example, Wisdom should be attributed to the Son and Love to the Holy Spirit rather than vice versa. Since a strict Augustinian position allows no discrimination of correct attributions Baxter regards it as ultimately unsatisfactory.²²

At the opposite extreme were those who posed a strict identity between the divine persons and the divine principles. These, he said, ‘suppose that the Divine POWER, INTELLECT and WILL (or Wisdom and Love) are the three constitutive persons in themselves, and the three principles of operation *ad extra*’. As examples he cites Origen, Ambrose and Richard of St Victor, ‘but plainlier and fullier’ Damascene,

¹⁹ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, III.202.

²⁰ An alternative ordering espoused by Calvin was of Goodness to the Father as fount of all things, Wisdom to the Son and Power to the Holy Spirit (*Institutes*, I.13.18). Baxter refers to this in *Methodus*, I.111-2.

²¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.98, 106.

²² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.106.

Bernard of Clairvaux, Edmund of Canterbury and Potho Prumiensis.²³ His own view, as we shall see below, is that in posing such an identity these theologians went too far. Yet although he does not endorse the full scope of their conclusions he is noticeably far more sympathetic to their theology of attribution than to the Augustinian alternative.

The main features of this alternative school of thought are exemplified perfectly by Richard of St Victor, Potho Prumiensis and Edmund of Canterbury who are cited to this purpose in the *Life of Faith*, the *Reasons* and the *Methodus*. In their writings we find either an implicit or explicit link between the divine principles and the divine persons. Furthermore in Potho the connection is significantly provided by the triad of Creator, Governor and Sustainer, with the Father as Power creating wisely through Kindness, the Son as Wisdom governing kindly through Power and the Holy Spirit as Kindness conserving powerfully through Wisdom. This provides important evidence that the pattern of attribution was not intended to divorce the principles (or the persons) from each other. Likewise all three state explicitly that man images the Godhead in his three faculties of power, wisdom and will, or as Potho says of *posse*, *scire* and *velle*. Finally in Edmund of Canterbury we find an important outline of an analogical ascent from man's own self-understanding to a realisation of God's Trinity as grounding his own analogous triunity.²⁴

As we shall see below all of these principles may be found prominently in Baxter's own theology of attribution indicating a definitive departure from the mainstream of Augustinian Trinitarianism. The first difference is an inversion of Augustine's usual approach to the *vestigia Trinitatis*, which is by-and-large top-down; that is it begins from an awareness of God's own Triune being and proceeds to find analogues for this in human nature. It is developed therefore chiefly as an illustrative tool from the perspective of faith. By contrast the concept of the *vestigia Trinitatis* employed here, notably by Edmund of Canterbury, is bottom-up, beginning from man's own self-contemplation and ascending to God's Trinity. Although doubtless the initial seeking of such *vestigia* is by no means divorced from a prior awareness of the

²³ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, III.202.

²⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.103.

Trinity and certainly in many cases is inspired by Augustine himself, this nevertheless represents a marked difference of approach.

While the distinction between a top-down and bottom-up approach to the *vestigia* is not always so clear-cut in Augustine as I have suggested,²⁵ it is very clear in Aquinas who holds to a strict demarcation between natural and revealed theology, such that reason is able to attain no *a priori* grasp on the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁶ Within mainstream scholasticism these differing approaches to the *vestigia Trinitatis* led to two very different schools of Trinitarian thought. The first, broadly Dominican, school followed Aquinas in using the psychological analogy of man's own faculties to *illustrate* the internal workings of the Trinity. The second, broadly Franciscan, school, of which Richard of St Victor was a significant precursor, used the psychological analogy to *evidence* the Trinity.²⁷ In fact, going beyond this, both Richard and Lull asserted that it was possible to find 'necessary reasons' for the Trinity and in this way to prove the doctrine.²⁸ Baxter, as we have seen, was influenced strongly by both the Scotists and the Lullist metaphysics of divine principles and in his assertions that we come to characterise God's Triune being through analogy with our own he differs considerably from Thomist Augustinianism.

Baxter's second difference from Augustine lies in his break, reviewed extensively in the previous chapter, from an Augustinian account of the image of God. Importantly this caused him to re-envisage God in terms of *posse, scire, velle* rather than the more usual Augustinian (and Neo-Platonic) *esse, scire, velle*.²⁹ This itself only served to bolster Baxter's distinctive theology of attribution. For, as is apparent, *esse* itself fits uneasily, if at all, into any scheme of attribution. Rather it seems not only to embrace both *scire* and *velle* but to indicate God as the

²⁵ There is for example a definite motif of ascent and self-transcendence in Augustine. He also famously stated that he found the principle of the generation of the Word even in the books of the Platonists (*Confessions*, VII.9) which demonstrates a high view of the capacity of reason to apprehend the Trinity.

²⁶ Aquinas, *De Fide*, 36.

²⁷ This is brought out very clearly by Russell Friedman who identifies the main difference between Dominican and Franciscan Trinitarian thought as the role of the psychological analogy (*Medieval Trinitarian Thought*).

²⁸ See Richard of St Victor, *De Trinitate*, I.4; Lull, *Book of the Gentile*, 73-187. Such proof however was by no means divorced from faith and so is not strictly proof by reason alone. For the complex relation between faith and reason in Lull see Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, 109-33.

²⁹ For more on these Neo-Platonic triads see Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*.

transcendent source of self-subsistent being very different from our own derived, dependent and *remembered* being. By contrast *posse* has a direct correlation with power and thus fits easily into an attributive scheme, neatly linking the immanent and economic aspects of God's being.

This points, finally, to the most deep-seated difference between Baxter and Augustine. In denying a strict theology of attribution, and in stressing that the divine principles were held in common between all persons, Augustine surely intended to prevent too close an assimilation between God's immanent being and his economic working, which could lead to modalistic reduction of the immanent to the economic. Augustine's famous maxim that the works of the divine persons *ad extra* were undivided prevented any such partitioning of divine activity to distinct persons. Likewise by forbidding too close an analogy between man's threefold faculties and the Trinity, Augustine forestalled an obvious objection to his own psychological analogy – that it itself falls prey to modalism by allowing God to be compared to three faculties in one person.³⁰ Furthermore scholastics such as Aquinas had additional reason to be cautious of the triad of Power, Wisdom and Love, for this featured prominently in the suspect Trinitarian theology of Abelard.³¹ Even so it must be clearly understood that neither Augustine nor Aquinas actually repudiated this triad; indeed, ironically given all our discussion, Augustine himself was one of its major sources.³² Instead both carefully sought to limit its theological application.³³

Although Baxter surely sympathised with Augustine's concerns, he did not want to uphold them to the extent of sacrificing his own link between the immanent and economic principles. Instead he found the resolution to the Augustinian problem of attribution in the works of the Thomist Estius, who he said speaks 'most clearly of all' concerning this:

³⁰ The theme of the dissimilarity of the image from God himself occupies Augustine in *De Trinitate*, XV.21-50 and he raises a similar point in XV.42-3.

³¹ Indeed it was the controversy over Abelard which caused Bernard to write to Richard of St Victor to ask for his views about attribution. These Bernard duly gave in what Baxter refers to as the *Opusculum ad St Bernardum (Methodus, I.103)*. For the text see Richard of St Victor, 'De Tribus Appropriatis', in *Opuscles Théologiques* (Paris: Vrin, 1967), 182-7.

³² See, for example, Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV.31.

³³ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a39 art. 7 and 8.

Inter appropriata divinarum personarum frequentatur in Sacris Literis (N.B.) et sanctorum scriptis hic ternio, Potentia, Sapientia, Bonitas; ut Potentia accomodetur Patri, Sapientia Filio, Bonitas Sp. Sancto. Quibus tribus eodem ordine respondent et haec tria velut actus illorum, Creatio, Redemptio et Sanctificatio vel beatificatio.

Baxter held that Estius, unlike the scholastics who blindly followed Augustine, was able to give sound scriptural reasons for his pattern of attribution. Thus since the Father is considered the origin of all created things and *principium* of the divine persons themselves, power is ‘peculiarly accommodated’ to him and to the work of Creation which is the foundation for the subsequent works of Redemption and Sanctification. These latter works and their concomitant principles of Wisdom and Goodness Estius then ascribes, following both Aquinas and Scripture, to the Son and Holy Spirit.³⁴

In summary Baxter’s solution was to eschew both the Augustinian denial of attribution and the alternative endorsement of identity. Instead he held that the scriptural pattern of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification allowed a link to be made between the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love and the divine persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This serves as a salutary reminder of the catechetical grounding and practical orientation of his Trinitarian theology. In holding this view Baxter of course had no intention of separating the work of the divine persons from each other in a potentially modalistic way, but rather always maintained, like Augustine, that the works of the Trinity *ad extra* were indivisible. For Baxter however, as for his friend Lawson, the indivisibility of the works did not prevent a distinction of attribution being made between the persons.³⁵

³⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.106 citing William Estius, *In Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Commentaria* (Paris, 1580), 1 d. 34 n. 3-5.

³⁵ Lawson, *Theo-Politica*, 37-8.

4. The Analogy of Being

4.1. Scriptural and Scotist Grounds of Analogy

As a discipline wholly concerned with God, theology (like the Bible) assumes his existence. Baxter's main concern in the *Methodus*, unlike in the *Reasons*, is not to prove the existence of God but to establish the conceptual apparatus by which he may be properly described. Since, in this life, God cannot be seen in his essence immediately and intuitively, he must be known abstractively, tenuously and *analogically* through his created works. These, he says, since they have been fashioned by an omnipotent, most wise and excellent God retain either the vestiges, likeness or image of his perfection and are therefore suitable 'for truly demonstrating something of God to us by analogy'.³⁶

Baxter's affirmation of analogical knowledge of God goes hand-in-hand with his eschewal of pure apophaticism. Baxter is adamant therefore that to speak or conceive only negatively of God does not suffice for true and saving cognition. His reasoning here is due to his Augustinian conviction that it is impossible to love what you do not know.³⁷ Yet to say this leads him immediately to the problem of theological language and the question of how human words may express truths about God. The resources for dealing with this matter had been developed in the writings of the medieval scholastics and by the seventeenth century were well-established. It is therefore to these that Baxter immediately turns.

The major difference here is between the Thomist and Scotist schools.³⁸ Aquinas held that all language about God is analogical and so terms are used of him neither

³⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.30-1.

³⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.31. Baxter does not ascribe this to Augustine; however it can be found throughout the *De Trinitate* (see, for example, VIII.6).

³⁸ Although recently the Radical Orthodoxy school has asserted a major disjunction between Aquinas and Scotus on this question (see Catherine Pickstock, 'Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance', *Modern Theology* 21 (2005), 543-74) it seems likely that this has been considerably exaggerated. For more sympathetic accounts of Scotus see Alexander Hall, *Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus: Natural Theology in the High Middle Ages* (London: Continuum, 2007); Timotheus Barth, 'Being, Univocity and Analogy according to Duns Scotus', in Bernadino Bonansea and John Ryan (eds.), *John Duns Scotus, 1265-1965* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 210-62.

univocally (as having the same sense) or equivocally (as having an utterly different sense) but analogically (as having a related but non-identical sense).³⁹ Scotus by contrast believed it possible to have univocal concepts of God. His reasoning was entirely philosophical: he could not see how it was possible to ground any analogy between God and man without a shared univocal concept.⁴⁰ Famously he held that being itself was a prime example of such a univocal concept. However in holding this he did not see himself as reducing God to man's level but rather affirmed that divine and created being were infinitely different in degree through their respective infinite and finite 'intrinsic modes'. Furthermore Scotus by no means held that human language about God was entirely univocal. Rather he strikingly suggested that almost all of our concepts of God are in fact technically equivocal.⁴¹

Baxter's first concern in discussing this issue is to stress the considerable common ground between the two schools: '*De caeteris autem inter omnes convenit, formales et univocos nullos in intellectu mortalium de Deo inveniri conceptus, sed tantum analogicos*'. Thus in Baxter's view, while the schools differed considerably in their technical specifics, the end result of both a Thomist and Scotist account of being was to ensure that our language about God remains (in some sense) analogical, and therefore sufficient to allow us to talk meaningfully about God without bringing him down to our level.

Nevertheless it is clear from his subsequent discussion that Baxter in fact favours a definitively Scotist account of theological language and concepts. Thus in discussing God's life, intellect and will he says:

*Et quamvis alii dicant, nec univoce nec aequivoce, sed analogice; hic Scotistae audiendi sunt qui probant (ut in Phil. Fabro, Meurisse, Rada Mayrone, Trombeta, et Lycheto, videre est) non dari tertium, sed quod analogice dicitur aequivoce dici.*⁴²

This Scotist allegiance is made even clearer in his discussion of the Trinity:

³⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a13 art. 5 and 6.

⁴⁰ Scotus, *Rep.* 1A d. 3, q. 1 n. 41-6; cf. Alexander Broadie, 'Duns Scotus and William Ockham', in G. R. Evans (ed.), *The Medieval Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 252-6.

⁴¹ For an account of this see Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37-9.

⁴² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.82.

*Certissimum est nihil (praeter ens saltem) de Deo et creaturis univoce dici; et neminem mortalium conceptum formalem et proprium de Deo aut habere aut exprimere posse. Ideoque quasi in speculo per conceptus improprius (revera aequivocos, ut probant Scotistae, quamvis analogiam alii quidam medium quid inter aequivocationem et univocationem esse vellent) de Deo necessario concipiendum est. Revera plane metaphorici sunt omnes nostri de Deo termini. Quamvis enim res expressa primario in Deo est, notio tamen exprimens primario ad creaturas adaptatur; et famosius significatum est res creata.*⁴³

For Baxter, as for Scotus, such technical equivocity by no means renders our terms about God meaningless. To illustrate this Scotus offers the example of light filtering through a piece of coloured glass onto a wall. Although the glass remains hidden to us we may infer its colour from the colour of the image projected onto the wall. In the same way although we cannot grasp God's essence directly we may dimly perceive it through the lens of such equivocal terms.⁴⁴ As Baxter says, although we have only metaphorical terms about God, 'yet it is not nothing to see as in a glass and enigmatically'.⁴⁵ Like Scotus Baxter also seems to have accepted that to make sense such equivocal terms must be grounded in a univocal concept of being. Thus in the *End of Doctrinal Controversies* after ruling out a long string of potential candidates for univocal concepts Baxter states: 'Scotus excepteth only *ENS*. Which is true, as *ENS* is only a logical term, signifying no more than *EST* or *Quoddity*, and not *QUID est*, or *Quiddity*'.⁴⁶

True to his purpose Baxter seeks to ground such analogies not just in scholastic thought but also in Scripture itself.⁴⁷ The Bible he says speaks adjectivally concerning God but for the most part must be understood substantively. Moreover, he adds, where Scripture *does* use a substantive and abstractive name for God it does so to denominate the divine essence 'more purely and simply'. He indicates four names, in particular, as especially notable for describing God 'according to the analogy of souls':

⁴³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.118. Note this last sentence also echoes Aquinas in *ST*, 1a13 art. 6.

⁴⁴ Hall, *Aquinas and Scotus*, 112-5.

⁴⁵ Baxter, *Immortality*, I.74-5.

⁴⁶ Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, viii.

⁴⁷ For example Baxter references God's Power, Wisdom and Love from: Genesis 1:26-7, 9:6; Deuteronomy 4:32-9; Job 36:22-36; Psalm 9:16, 48:3, 76:1, 91:14, 106:8, 145:17; John 17:3; Romans 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 11:7; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10; Colossians 1:15, 3:10; Hebrews 1:3; 1 John 2:3-14 (*Methodus*, I.31).

- i) 'I am who I am' – taking Exodus 3:14 as the classical *locus* on this Baxter notes that God's self-revelation of his name to Moses as '*Sum quod Sum*' or '*Ero quod ero*' is the 'fundamental concept' of God. For Baxter it establishes God as the '*Ens Entium*' or '*Ens Infinitum Transcendens*', the root of every created entity.
- ii) Life – this, Baxter says, is the first of three names notifying God to us under the concept of 'formal virtue'. It derives from those places in Scripture where God is called '*Deus vivens*'.
- iii) Light – for this name Baxter cites 1 John 1:5 and James 1:17 where God is called both 'Light' and the 'Father of lights' respectively. Baxter sees the Son's title of '*Sapientia*' in Proverbs as related to this. He also notes from John 1:4 that light and life are really identical.
- iv) Love – this name Baxter cites from 1 John 1:8, 16. He interprets it as meaning the perfection of divine will and as the one who is '*OPTIMUS in se*' and '*bonitatis praegnantissimus, et nobis amabilissimus*'.⁴⁸

For Baxter to know God through such similes as these is precisely what it means 'to know God and not to know God', or rather to know him analogically. Such concepts of God are therefore by no means 'empty' but are the 'glory of our intellect, by far excelling every knowledge of mundane things'.⁴⁹ Even more importantly it is clear that these four terms are the scriptural analogues for God of the fundamental and threefold formal virtue in active natures. Put another way, the analogical scriptural identification of God as Life, Light and Love reveals to us the three divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love.⁵⁰ This significantly reconnects his scriptural concept of analogical language to his Scotist metaphysics of inadequate concepts.

4.2. *Analogia Entis*

Having described the theoretical and scriptural underpinnings of Baxter's concept of analogy we turn now to his employment of it. As we have seen Baxter described the

⁴⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.31-2.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.32.

⁵⁰ Campanella also refers to the three persons as Life, Light and Love (*Monotriade*, 56).

ordo of the human soul as the methodical index of true theology. In fact it is this same *ordo* which for Baxter grounds the *analogia entis* between God and man.⁵¹

The starting point for this is the nature of the faculties of the human soul as ‘*tres exeunter ad objecta, ex unica virtute radicali*’.⁵² According to Baxter we come to discover this through intuitive self-perception and through application of the Campanellan axiom that ‘*nihil enim id facit, quod facere non potest*’.⁵³ From understanding of our own capabilities we come to infer corresponding powers within us and finally to recognise the soul’s threefold formal virtue and the nature of its substance. In this way the analogical ascent which Baxter proposes is grounded on the inference from extrinsic acts to intrinsic essential powers. As Baxter succinctly puts it, ‘knowledge of God begins from knowledge of ourselves, and whoever does not know the human soul it is necessary likewise that he does not know God’.⁵⁴

Clearly for Baxter the human soul mirrors its source in God’s own Trinity. This allows us to find analogues between the soul’s substance and formal virtue and that possessed eminently by God. This has three specific consequences. Firstly, just as in human souls the difference between substance and virtue is that between a general concept and a special or differential concept, so we may describe the divine principles analogically in terms of both their unity (genus) and their distinction (species).⁵⁵ Secondly, just as these virtues of the soul are essential rather than accidental so are the analogous divine principles in God. Baxter therefore insists that those who do not know God as essentially life, intellect and will are likewise able to say nothing about ‘what God is’ beyond general or accidental notions’. It is therefore only through an analogous description of God according to this same formal virtue that we can come to have a formal understanding of God as a Trinity of Principles and (perhaps likewise) as a Trinity of Persons.⁵⁶ Thirdly, it is Baxter’s conviction that the whole essence of the soul is contained in this threefold virtue. He

⁵¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.11.

⁵² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.11.

⁵³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.31. A variant of this may be found in *Reasons*, 513 and is attributed to Campanella.

⁵⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.31.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.83.

⁵⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.83-7.

is likewise insistent that this should not be understood either partitively or such that the whole soul is any of these three virtues *totaliter*, but rather that each virtue expresses the soul's essence partially and inadequately, meaning that all three virtues are necessary to give any sort of complete description.⁵⁷ Analogously Baxter holds that the whole divine essence is each principle (or person) and that therefore the name of each principle (or person) expresses the divine essence '*etsi tota non tamen totaliter*'.⁵⁸

Although this analogous pattern of essential predication is important for what we might call a static description of God's Triune nature, it does not suffice by itself to explain either the dynamic interrelation of the divine principles or the character of their subsistence. For this an understanding of the soul's immanent acts is necessary. These Baxter understands to denote an act in which the soul not only affects nothing external to itself but also has no external object, and he tends to view them as essential to the soul.⁵⁹ Baxter certainly views divine immanent acts as essential and broadly following the scholastic consensus suggests that God's living to himself (*vita sibi*), his self-knowledge (*intellectus se intelligens*) and self-love (*amor sui*), are the constitutive grounds of the divine persons themselves.⁶⁰

The other aspect of this 'dynamic' analogy between the soul and God is the relation of these immanent acts among themselves. We have already considered the Trinitarian structure of the intellective soul at length and its internal distinctions according to relations of origin and diverse formal characteristics. In just the same way Baxter holds that the interaction of the divine principles is Trinitarian so that Power generates Wisdom, and Love proceeds from Power and Wisdom together. Likewise he holds that God cannot be said to live formally through divine intellect or understand formally through his will. Then in a striking indication of the correspondence between principles and persons he adds that neither can the Father be said to live formally through the Son nor the Son to understand formally through the

⁵⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.83-4.

⁵⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.83-4.

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.84. Baxter also declares this to be true of a second class of immanent acts which have an objective but not effective external reference.

⁶⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.34; cf. *Reasons*, 377.

Spirit.⁶¹ Indeed to say such a thing would not only violate the logical order of the processions but in so doing would also collapse the divine Trinity into an amorphous modalistic identity.

At this point Baxter seems to suggest that we reach the boundary of human knowledge. It is not that the *analogia entis* between the soul and the divine nature necessarily breaks down in the description of the immanent processions – although of course it may – but rather that the human intellect is scarcely able to comprehend or describe the nature of such fine distinctions. Baxter held that to describe the distinctions in the human soul was something that has eluded the acumen of all the great scholastics from Aquinas to his own day, and is therefore simply too much for ‘our tardy and obtuse minds’ to grasp.⁶² This is therefore all the more true of the character of the distinctions in God himself, whether those obtaining between the divine essence and principles, the divine principles themselves or, in Baxter’s scheme, between the divine principles and persons. As we shall see, Baxter only affirms as a bare minimum that the least distinction which can be affirmed is virtual, relative and denominated from the connotation of acts or by reason ratiocinated.⁶³

Having reached the borders of possible knowledge Baxter is both unwilling and unable to proceed any further in the description of the divine processions. In a sense he has reached a limit with the *analogia entis* – a limit seemingly not dictated by the pattern of analogy but rather by the inability of human conceptual knowledge to grasp the nature of such fine distinctions. In summary Baxter says that the formal virtue of the soul may be characterised as ‘*unica quoad essentiam et centraliter at triplex certe virtualiter, exeunter, et per connotationem, et relationem ad actum triplicem*’. Similarly he defines the divine principles and persons as ‘*unicum radicaliter ut essentia, at tria saltem virtualiter, connotative et relative ad actus*’. However such compact definitions require a great deal of exposition and for that we turn to analyse the relation between Baxter’s Trinitarian thought and that of his scholastic predecessors.

⁶¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.85-6.

⁶² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.32.

⁶³ Baxter, *Reasons*, 376.

5. Scholastic Dimensions of Baxter's Thought

In turning to analyse the scholastic dimensions of Baxter's Trinitarian thought we should be aware that providing a metaphysical analysis of the Trinity often represented the apex of the scholastic project. As a consequence the treatment they give is both highly complex and highly subtle. In their efforts to give an orthodox account theologians often made use of a whole array of fine distinctions which must be grasped before we can attain any understanding of their theology.

In the *Methodus* we find six main kinds of distinction:

- i) Real distinction – that which obtains between two different 'things' (*res*).
- ii) Distinction *rationis ratiocinatae* – that which obtains in one thing following an act of the intellect but is nevertheless grounded *in re*.
- iii) Formal distinction – that between two different formal reasons of one thing, inseparable even by divine power, which obtains '*ex natura rei*' before any act of the intellect.
- iv) Modal distinction – that which obtains between various modes of subsistence of a thing or various ways in which it exists.
- v) Distinction *rationis rationans* – the purely conceptual distinction obtaining in one thing following an act of the intellect without any grounding *in re*.
- vi) Extrinsic or Connotative distinction – that which obtains between a thing as it relates to or connotes objects extrinsic to it.⁶⁴

Armed with these distinctions it is possible to make sense of Baxter's theology. It should be remembered however that for all of these distinctions, and especially the formal and connotative distinction and the distinction *rationis ratiocinatae*, there

⁶⁴ For definitions of the first five of these see Richard Muller, 'Distinctio', in *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms (Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology)* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006) and for the connotative distinction see Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*, 116. For Baxter's discussion of these distinctions see *Methodus*, I.83, 91-2, 94, 113; *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.75.

were in general no standard definitions. Their use and meaning must therefore be considered as much as possible in context.

5.1. Divine Attributes

Baxter believed himself to be the first to methodically describe the attributes. What he meant by this we shall return to below but he was clearly dissatisfied with the treatment of the attributes found in other theologians.⁶⁵ In the *Methodus* he even refers to their confused and unmethodical treatment of the attributes as a ‘most shameful blot’ on very many of their endeavours. For Baxter it is axiomatic that God is the author of order and so must be described in an orderly manner.⁶⁶

Characteristically Baxter suggests that the difficulty of ‘instituting the true method of the divine attributes’ arises from ignorance concerning created things:

Si Philosophi de rebus creatis claram, et distinctam haberent scientiam, et rerum series, categorias, et classes sine errore in tabulis suis possent delineare, hoc etiam in serie attributorum divinorum recte ordinanda, praestantissimum foret adjumentum.

For Baxter the crisis in the description of the divine attributes therefore results from a wider crisis in the realm of knowledge. Unsurprisingly, given his overriding concern for correct method, Baxter’s complaint is that the organic sciences have not been adapted truly to the nature and order of things. As he poetically puts it, the face of the Creator is being seen in a blemished and broken mirror.⁶⁷ Baxter’s purpose in the *Methodus* is to remedy this and so establish a true and methodical science of divinity grounded on the analogy of the human soul.

With respect to the attributes this entails treating them as analogous to accidents in the human soul. Of course Baxter recognises that since God is ‘*simplex essentia*’ he cannot be properly said to have accidents at all. Nevertheless Baxter suggests that the idea of (improper) accidents in God, as assumed from the modes of the human soul, is an important one for discussing the divine attributes. Using essential (proper)

⁶⁵ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, III.402. Lawson also notes the confused state of affairs (*Theo-Politica*, 20).

⁶⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.35.

⁶⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.40.

accidents as exemplars Baxter suggests two ways of discussing the divine attributes ‘*quasi accidentia*’: firstly as they signify God’s essence itself under the analogous notion of accident and secondly as they denote the relation of God to created things and so themselves connote created things.⁶⁸

Baxter also couches his discussion of the divine attributes in terms of his metaphysics of inadequate concepts, describing an attribute as an inadequate concept of the one and simple divine essence. Since it is impossible for ‘our imperfect and narrow intellect’ to know God by a ‘unique total and adequate concept’ we must know him through multiple inadequate concepts – the divine attributes themselves.⁶⁹ This leads to the important question, debated extensively by the scholastics, of how precisely the attributes are to be distinguished from the divine essence. Here Baxter identifies two different camps. The first camp, consisting of the Thomists and Nominalists, hold that the attributes are distinguished only by reason, that is according to the act of the intellect in conceiving distinct concepts of something which in itself is one and indistinct. The second camp, the Scotists, hold that the attributes are distinguished ‘*ex natura rei, secluso omni actu intellectus*’, which is the classic formal distinction.⁷⁰ The standard controversy here, as Baxter notes citing the Scotist Rada and the Nominalist Gregory of Rimini, concerned whether the formal distinction was consistent with divine simplicity, with the Scotists obviously maintaining that it was. Baxter however unfortunately does not offer a resolution of this here.⁷¹ However his own view that the attributes are both inadequate concepts and connotative suggests that he may have held a view similar to that of Aureolus, whom indeed he cites, who held to a connotative distinction between the attributes and essence.⁷²

A more important point for Baxter concerns the relation between the divine principles and the other attributes. Baxter holds this to be confused due to the Scotist tendency to differentiate the attributes and the persons from the essence in precisely

⁶⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.35.

⁶⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.32.

⁷⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.94; cf. Aquinas, *ST*, 1a4 art. 2; 13 art. 12; Scotus, *Rep.* 1A d. 8, q. 4 n. 104-5.

⁷¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.95. For Rada’s discussion of this question see Johannes de Rada, *Controversiae Theologicae* (Cologne, 1620), 58-76.

⁷² Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*, 116-7.

the same way. Furthermore he explicitly attacks the common scholastic view that it is possible to have a perfect and adequate concept of the essence which does not include the attributes, essential principles or even the divine persons themselves. While Baxter accepts that these are not the same as the essence or each other formally, he will not accept the strict formal distinction here if it entails cutting the principles off from the essence in any way. His own view that the attributes, the principles and (in some sense) the persons themselves are inadequate concepts of the divine essence means they cannot be considered separately from it.⁷³

It is clear that Baxter both privileges the essential principles over the other attributes – he is indeed emphatic that these must not be confused with each other⁷⁴ – and holds to a very close connection between the divine principles and divine persons. This is confirmed by his detailed discussion of the attributes. Baxter holds that governing the description of all the divine attributes, which since they are analogous and inadequate concepts of God’s essence are in fact nearly innumerable, is perfection, which he calls the ‘universal attribute of prior order’ and the ‘analogous modal concept’.⁷⁵ Perfection he suggests may be an attribute of both the divine substantiality and of the divine formal virtue. According to the former it leads to a description of God as ‘*maximus*’ and according to the latter a description of him as omnipotent, most wise and most loveable.⁷⁶ Perfection is thus comprehensive of all the divine attributes, including particular perfections of the divine essence such as simplicity, immensity and eternity, and is therefore a kind of universal attribute under which all others may be ordered. Thus Baxter’s thought can be regarded as a version of the Anselmian ‘perfect being theology’ which held that God possesses all compossible pure perfections and could be used as a kind of heuristic tool for analysing the divine essence.⁷⁷

Furthermore Baxter’s suggestion that the divine attributes may be understood through perfection applied to some combination of Power, Wisdom and Love gives the other attributes themselves a Trinitarian ground. We saw above Baxter’s

⁷³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.94-5. He attributes this specifically to the Scotists and Suarez.

⁷⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.94.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.34-5.

⁷⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.35.

⁷⁷ See Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus on God* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 49-54.

statement that the whole divine essence is contained in the three divine principles. A corollary of this he suggests is that all the other attributes must also be comprehended under Power, Wisdom and Love, although according to their diverse names, such as justice, mercy and veracity.⁷⁸ In each of the divine attributes we must therefore assume the conjoint operation of all the divine principles, although presumably according to different degrees of ‘eminency’ in each instance.

Baxter’s express desire to be the first to methodically treat the divine attributes is clearly linked to his subsumption of them under the rubric of the divine principles. Overall it results from his application of the ‘analogy of souls’ to God’s own being. The consequence is a radical reconfiguring of the whole theory of divine attributes around the Trinity of Principles.

5.2. Divine Persons and *Supposita*

The nature of the divine persons is perhaps the central question of Trinitarian theology. For it is only once a definition of person is in place that it becomes possible to ask the further question of how the unique divine essence may subsist in three distinct divine persons without either blurring the distinction of the persons or dividing the essence. It is for this reason that the task of defining divine personality as well as being central to Trinitarian doctrine has also been one of its most vexed and complex issues.

Baxter’s discussion of person begins with Boethius’ definition of person as an ‘individual substance of a rational nature’, particularly as this was taken up by Aquinas.⁷⁹ In his *Summa* Aquinas combined this with his own understanding of divine person as signifying a relation of origin in the Godhead. In God he held that such relations must be the divine essence and so may be defined as ‘subsistent relations’.⁸⁰ To the question of ‘whether there are several divine persons’ Aquinas responded that substance in Boethius’ definition is not used for the essence common between the persons but rather according to the *suppositum* which signifies what is

⁷⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.83-4.

⁷⁹ Boethius, ‘Contra Eutychen et Nestorium’, 3 in *Boethius*, tr. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand and S. J. Tester (London: Harvard University Press, 1973), 85; cf. Baxter, *Methodus*, I.89.

⁸⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a29, art. 4 cited by Baxter, *Methodus*, I.89.

distinct about the persons.⁸¹ Here *suppositum* is used as a logical term indicating a subject or underlying thing subsisting in the category of substance and not as a more general term indicating *quidditas* or *essentia*.⁸²

This leads on to the crucial question of ‘whether divine essence is the same as divine person’. In answering this Aquinas developed an account of the relations which both affirmed the identity of divine essence and persons while at the same time maintaining the distinction between the different persons. This he was able to do by maintaining the key distinction that although persons as relations only differ from essence ‘by reason’, they have a ‘real distinction’ from each other by virtue of opposition.⁸³ Thus although essence and persons together do not make metaphysical composition, persons compared together are different ‘things’ and so not distinguished from each other by reason alone. This is because as subsistent relations persons differ from each other by mode of origin as well as by formal definition, which is to say that since the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten and the Holy Spirit spirated (breathed out by Father and Son) they cannot all be considered the same person.

It is clear that Aquinas’ account of the subsistence of the three divine persons in the divine essence, and thus his account of the Trinity itself, hinged on his use of *suppositum*. Crucially the notion of *suppositum* allowed Aquinas to express the real identity of the ‘three relations really distinct’ with the divine essence, not directly *qua essentia* but indirectly *qua suppositum*.⁸⁴ However Baxter’s immediate response to this is rather dismissive – ‘I hope’, he says, ‘that not all are damned who either do not understand this or are not able to agree’.⁸⁵ Such a riposte is typical of the practical orientation of his Trinitarian thought and signals his concern to avoid scholastic speculation. However it also provides the first indications of his profound dissatisfaction with the Thomistic Trinitarian synthesis.

⁸¹ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a30, art. 1 cited by Baxter, *Methodus*, I.89.

⁸² Aquinas, *ST*, 1a29, art. 2.

⁸³ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a39 art. 1 cited by Baxter, *Methodus*, I.89-90.

⁸⁴ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a39 art. 1 cited by Baxter, *Methodus*, I.90.

⁸⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.90.

Baxter's own preference is for the definition of person offered by Scheibler of person as '*suppositum rationale*' or '*suppositum intelligens*', where *suppositum* was understood to be '*substantia singularis completa et incommunicabilis*'.⁸⁶ Scheibler's definition clearly drew on the alternative Victorine and Scotist understanding of person as an individual (and incommunicable) existence of an intellectual nature.⁸⁷ Scheibler viewed the Thomist definition of *suppositum* as problematic due to the fact that it may be applied to the divine essence as well as the persons. The term 'incommunicable' was intended to solve precisely this problem.⁸⁸

One reason that Scheibler's account was preferable to Baxter was that it solved the objections of Valla more clearly than Aquinas' Boethian understanding. Valla's opinion, roundly criticised by Francis Cheynell also,⁸⁹ was that a person does not signify an individual substance but rather a quality. He therefore held that instead of talking of three persons in God, according to the Boethian or any other sense, we must rather speak of three qualities in God. According to him this neatly avoided the problem of traditional scholastic accounts which seemed to entail there being three substances in God.⁹⁰ Scheibler responded by denying the consequence that to speak of three persons in God is necessarily to speak also of three substances. He maintained that person could be described concretely as essence and personal property together or abstractly as signifying something added to the essence. He suggested that it is understood according to the latter when three persons are said to be in God, the sense of which is one divine essence subsisting under three personal properties.⁹¹ This led Scheibler to pose an analogy between the Trinity and the 'affections of being'. Therefore just as One, True and Good are three as affections and one as being, so the Trinity may be considered 'as if a Trinity of properties added to essence'.⁹²

⁸⁶ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 art. 2 n. 41-4 cited by Baxter, *Methodus*, I.90.

⁸⁷ Cf. Baxter, *Methodus*, I.90.

⁸⁸ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 art. 2 n. 44.

⁸⁹ Francis Cheynell, *The Divine Triunity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (London, 1650), 68-9.

⁹⁰ Cf. Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 art. 2 n. 53-5.

⁹¹ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 art. 2 n. 55-63.

⁹² Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 art. 2 n. 59-63.

Scheibler's view of created *supposita* as distinct from their nature by a positive mode differs considerably from both Aquinas' opinion that *suppositum* adds to a nature singularity and individual accidents and Scotus' opinion that it adds only negation. As Scheibler indicates it represents a refinement of the view of Fonseca and Suarez that *suppositum* adds 'a most perfect mode of *per se* subsisting' to the nature. Although Scheibler is tentative about applying such an understanding to the Godhead, it seems he would understand the divine persons as perfectly subsisting and modally distinct from the essence.⁹³

Another understanding of divine person, contemporary to Baxter, was the Cartesian definition of person as a centre of self-consciousness. This Baxter discusses in his *End of Doctrinal Controversies* where it is clear that he views it as being fraught with difficulties. In particular Baxter holds that the act of self-consciousness cannot be said to constitute a person but is rather the act of a person already constituted. He also argued that to speak of three minds in God leads both to tritheism and, since each mind has its own active power, intellect and will, to the assertion of three Trinities in God, an obviously unorthodox set of conclusions.⁹⁴

While Baxter indicates his preference for Scheibler's account of divine persons and *supposita* he says there still remains the considerable difficulty of discerning what these personal properties are and how they may be distinguished from the divine essence itself. Baxter's own solution is to suggest a threefold conception of divine personality firstly as found '*radicaliter in Trinitate aeterna principiorum*', secondly as '*in Trinitate aeterna horum principiorum ut in actu immanente in Deo ipso*' and thirdly '*quoad nos exeunter, in transitione ad extra*'.⁹⁵ Likewise in the *End of Doctrinal Controversies* Baxter suggests a twofold relative or connotative understanding of divine person, firstly as connoting the internal relations of the divine principles to each other and to the divine essence and secondly as connoting their relations *ad extra* to effects.⁹⁶ Baxter is insistent however both that this connotative account is not all that a divine person is and that these extrinsic

⁹³ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 art. 2 n. 72-92.

⁹⁴ Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, xv-xvii.

⁹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.90.

⁹⁶ Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, xv.

distinctions must be intrinsically grounded in God himself.⁹⁷ Nevertheless its advantage is that it allows divine personality to be reconfigured on the basis of his own Trinity of Principles and according to the three economic relations of Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. In this way the doctrine of the Trinity is brought back to its primary practical focus, eschewing the complexities of the scholastic accounts.

5.3. Divine Relations

The question of divine relations, like that of divine persons, was a vital one in Trinitarian thought. In the scholastic period especially, the concept of relation as understood through the lens of Aristotelian thought came to the forefront of Trinitarian theology. This was a matter which concerned Baxter greatly, relating closely to his proposal that the Trinity of Persons should be effectively treated as the Trinity of Principles.

Within scholasticism numerous different accounts of relations may be found. However while these often differ widely in their understandings of relations they all share a standard description of relations according to their subject, fundament and termini. The subject was understood to be that which received the relation, the fundament that which supports the relation and the terminus that which the relation respects.⁹⁸ In terms of the Trinity, the Father is the subject of the relation of paternity, his generation of the Son is its fundament and the Son himself its terminus.

Baxter held, following Scheibler, that the human intellect is blinded to both the nature of God as most perfect being and the nature of relations as the least of all beings.⁹⁹ The nature of the intra-Trinitarian relations therefore proves doubly elusive. Such pessimism, at first sight surprising in one often seen as a natural theologian of the Trinity, shaped Baxter's entire discourse on the divine relations and as we shall see gave his thought a certain Nominalistic cast.

Baxter's own definition of a relation is that '*relatio est rerum ordinatarum comparabilitas inter se, vel ad invicem*', where comparability is understood as the

⁹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.121; cf. Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2 art. 2 n. 92.

⁹⁸ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 9 n. 1.

⁹⁹ Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 9 n. 1 cited by Baxter, *Methodus*, I.90.

‘passive capacity’ by which things become objects of the intellect’s act of comparison. As he says further:

Quae non est res alia ab ordine fundamentali, neque ipse ordo res alia (proprie dicta) a rebus ordinatis, neque aliis notionibus melius dignoscuntur quam nudis nominibus (cum experientia sensibilis perceptionis) ordinis et relationis.

Baxter therefore holds, contrary to Scotus for example,¹⁰⁰ that relations are not real but ordinal. His reasons for suggesting this are clear: since he understands a relation as resultant from an intellectual act of comparing, it is self-evidently unable to exist outside the mind except as the ordered things themselves.¹⁰¹ Such a view clearly derives from Nominalists, such as Ockham, as Baxter himself confirms in the *Catholick Theologie*.¹⁰² However it must be remembered, and this is a crucial point for understanding Baxter’s Trinitarian thought, that although relations themselves have no existence extra-mentally, except as ordered things themselves, this does not mean that the distinctions they signify are purely mental, for the intellect must have some ground of comparison to establish a relation. Indeed Baxter holds that ‘*ordo nobis notus est tantum inter diversa; sicut et relatio*’.¹⁰³

Still handling the preliminary topic of the metaphysics of relations Baxter denies both the Thomist view that relations are really distinguished from their fundamentals and the Scotist view that they are formally or modally distinguished.¹⁰⁴ Instead he declares his approval of the Nominalist position of Peter Hurtado de Mendoza, that relations are distinguished only by a distinction *rationis ratiocinatae* from their subject, fundament and termini. With Mendoza he also emphasises that the terminus, and not just the subject and fundament, is essential to the relation.¹⁰⁵ This highlights Baxter’s view that a relation is ‘*rei ad aliud comparabilitas*’ and so is said to be

¹⁰⁰ For Scotus’ strongly realist theory of relations see Mark Henninger, *Relations: Medieval Theories 1250-1325* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 68 ff.

¹⁰¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.91.

¹⁰² Baxter makes his Nominalist allegiance clear in his *Catholick Theologie* I.i.10 where he expresses his approval in a marginal note of Ockham’s statement that relations have no real being but are simply external denominations. For Ockham’s theory of relations see Henninger, *Relations*, 120-45.

¹⁰³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.92. Baxter here seems to accept against Scotus that a Thomist distinction of reason is a sufficient ground of comparison.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Henninger, *Relations*, 23-31, 71-9.

¹⁰⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.91-2; cf. Peter Hurtado de Mendoza, *Disputationum a Summulis ad Metaphysicam* (Toulouse, 1618), IV.717-45.

either of or between both things. The idea of a relation as being between two things rather than an accident inhering in both things separately is a significant change from the early scholastic account of relations and perhaps marks the influence of the Nominalist Aureolus. It certainly conforms to the prevailing early modern philosophical trend.¹⁰⁶

Turning to the central question of the fundamentals of the divine relations Baxter first discusses the standard account of the twofold procession of Word and Holy Spirit following the acts of the intellect and will respectively. This was of course a topic of frequent discussion among the scholastics but, at least for the most part, Baxter held that they spoke obscurely. Here, once again, Aquinas comes in for particular criticism. Baxter's criticism of Aquinas is twofold. On the one hand he suggests that Aquinas collapses the distinction between the divine relations through his insistence that their fundamentals in the processions of Word and Spirit are only distinguished by reason. As Baxter says if there is no real, modal or formal diversity in the divine act then it exceeds our understandings how an act completely the same 'is really related to itself by the diverse relations themselves'. On the other hand he suggests that by placing the fundamentals of his four real relations (paternity, filiation, spiration and procession) in the two processions of intellect and will Aquinas proliferates the number of relations in such a way as to make the relational quaternity incommensurate with the personal Trinity unless by rendering the identity of relation and person untenable. Baxter's likely source here is the German theologian Johann Heinrich Posewitz who, he says, proffers many things '*contra numerum Trinarium hac via statuendum*', specifically trying to prove that persons are either many or none.¹⁰⁷

For Baxter Aquinas' defective account of the divine relations and persons is not an isolated instance but is in fact symptomatic of a deeper malaise within Western Trinitarian thought as a whole:

Si, qui trinam facultatem in animis nostris percipiebant Aug. et Scholastici, non memoriam loco activitatis-vitalis posuissent,

¹⁰⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.92; cf. Henninger, *Relations*, 4, 154 ff.

¹⁰⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.120. He also refers to Becanus proving this against Keckermann and other scholastics.

*proculdubio notiones suas de Trinitate aliter ordinassent, quam in plerisque iam ordinatas invenimus. Et qui ex actu solum intelligendi et amandi Trinitatem probare aut illustrare coguntur, in eas se difficultates conjecerunt, quae plurimos a Trinitate per imaginem concipienda, deterrent. Unde Thomas (et ex eo noster Alex. Gill in Symbol. contra Osiandrum et Murschil) laborare multum necesse habuit (et vereor ne frustra) ne plures quam tres personae ex hac ratiocinandi via numerandae sint.*¹⁰⁸

Aquinas' failure is thus placed against the larger backdrop of the Augustinian scheme of memory, understanding and will. By mistakenly substituting memory for vital-activity the scholastics have put themselves in an impossible bind. Furthermore he says by denying the doctrine of attribution and consequently holding that the essential attributes are not the Trinity of Persons they have only compounded this problem.¹⁰⁹

The alternative Baxter says may be found in the controversial notion, denied by Petavius as well as many other theologians in the strongest terms, that the divine persons are constituted by absolute properties. If the schoolmen had construed the Trinity in terms of such absolute properties, he suggests, then the nature of their discussion would have been radically transformed. For Baxter the absolute properties in question are simply the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love.¹¹⁰

The roots of this doctrine of absolute properties are to be found in Scotus who in his earlier works was more sympathetic to an absolute rather than a relational account of divine personality.¹¹¹ In support of this understanding Baxter therefore marshals a number of medieval Scotist voices, including Peter Aquila Scotelus who insisted that '*actus notionales fundantur super essentiales immanentes*', and John de Ripa who sought to prove '*personalitatem includere quid absolutum*'. From among his own contemporaries he cites Posewitz, whose discussion of the question is in fact drawn

¹⁰⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.120.

¹⁰⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.120-1.

¹¹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.120-1.

¹¹¹ For a brief account of Scotus' changing views on this question see Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 65-7; cf. Scotus *Ord.* 1 d. 26 n. 70-1; *Lectura* 1 d. 26 n. 66. Meurisse interestingly denies that this was ever Scotus' view although he does accept that it is not heretical (Martin Meurisse, *Tractatus de S.S. Trinitate* (Paris, 1631), 171-2, 178-80).

from de Ripa.¹¹² A more tentative voice is that of another Scotist, Rada, concerning whom Baxter says ‘*Radae rationes quibus probat non haereticum esse personas in attributis absolutis ponere, validissimas esse judico. Et ipse quidem eas proferendo, ita credere videtur, quamquam id profiteri contra plurimos non auderet*’.¹¹³

As may be clearly seen from Posewitz’s discussion (cited by Baxter), the debate over the constitution of the divine persons involved complex scriptural as well as metaphysical discussion. The most plausible reason given in favour of the absolute account, by both Scotus and de Ripa, was that relations presuppose something absolute upon which they are founded. As de Ripa expressed this, the acting supposit (person) is prior to its own action and since this action is prior to the relation founded upon it (the action being, for example, the generation of the Son by the Father) then so must the supposit be prior to the person.¹¹⁴

Baxter does not explicitly cite de Ripa’s argument but we may safely assume he would have accepted it. He does however seek to solve two particular objections to this theory. The general pattern of the first objection may be illustrated by an example: since the Son possesses the absolute property of wisdom this would seem to imply that the Father and Holy Spirit are not wise in themselves. Baxter’s response is that the divine essence is wise in itself and therefore the other two persons *qua* essence are also wise in themselves, even though the wisdom of the divine essence is formally the person of the Son. It is no more inconvenient to say that the Father as Father is not formally wisdom or love than to say, for example, that divine vitality as vitality is not formally divine wisdom. This brings the second objection that since on this account the Father must understand through the Son, so he must also be said to *be* from the Son. Baxter denies this, saying it does not follow that the divine essence is from the divine intellect just because it understands only through the intellect. He adds that confusion is often caused by those who say that the divine essence is not able to be in any person whole unless it is also present

¹¹² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.121; cf. Johann Heinrich Posewitz, *Theologica-Scholastica* (Helmstedt, 1667), I.i.125-8.

¹¹³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.122. For Rada’s discussion of this see *Controversiae*, 356-9.

¹¹⁴ Posewitz, *Theologica-Scholastica*, I.i.126.

totally. Contrary to this Baxter insists that the whole essence is intellect, but that intellect does not totally express the whole essence.¹¹⁵

In this way Baxter believes he has shown that the reasons offered by Augustine and others against the persons being constituted by absolute properties are invalid and that Scripture does not favour more those who say the persons to be three real relations than those (like himself) who place divine personality both in the Trinity of Principles (radically, immanently and relationally considered) and in God's relation to us as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.¹¹⁶ Here again then we see the practical and economic bias of Baxter's discussion as he seeks to relate the immanent being of the Triune God to his extrinsic relationship with his creatures.

The suggestion that the divine persons are constituted by absolute properties fits extremely well with Baxter's understanding of the Trinity of Principles. However it immediately raises the problem of how these principles are to be distinguished from each other. As we saw above, Baxter's major problem with the Thomist account is that if in the fundamentals of the divine relations there is no difference, either real or *ex parte rei*, then it exceeds human understanding as to how real relations are able to arise between the persons. Significantly Baxter himself neither affirms nor denies this real distinction between the persons, which was a hallmark not only of Aquinas' view but of the broader scholastic consensus. He simply states that if it can be said that the persons are identical with the essence and yet really distinct from each other then there is nothing to prevent exactly the same being said of the primalities and their internal processions (although Baxter would of course insist against Aquinas that this distinction must have a ground greater than that of *rationis ratiocinatae*).¹¹⁷ To add complication Baxter holds that relations in God and man are equivocal, which would seem to pose further problems for the intelligibility of the traditional relational account of the Trinity.¹¹⁸

Baxter is very hesitant about offering his own view but near the end of his chapter on the Trinity he finally does so:

¹¹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.110-1.

¹¹⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.111.

¹¹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.119.

¹¹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.108.

*Quamvis quae eadem sunt cum uno tertio sunt eadem inter se, et ita hae proprietates et relationes et actus fundamentales immanentes, sunt idem quod essentia, et inter se in essentiae unitate idem sunt, ab invicem tamen ratione nobis ignota magis distinguuntur, ex natura rei ante actum nostri intellectus.*¹¹⁹

Just before this Baxter also expresses his approval for Posewitz's 'virtual distinction' saying:

Sed sive aliqua inexplicabilis, inter ipsas virtutes in se, sit differentia quae cum Posewitz realiter virtualis dicenda est; an potius virtus omnimodo eadem in se, sit virtus ad triplicem actum seu effectum, certe differentia haec non male virtualis nominatur.

As Baxter suggests, Posewitz viewed his virtual distinction as the same as Scotus' formal distinction (real although not actual). He adds however that the Nominalists regard Posewitz's virtual distinction as simply their own distinction of connotation or denomination of the same virtue from the diversity of its acts or effects.¹²⁰ Baxter's meaning is a little difficult to disentangle here but it seems that although he accepts the validity of the Scotist formal distinction '*ex natura rei ante actum nostri intellectus*' he regards this as inexplicable and so prefers to characterise it connotatively with the Nominalists.¹²¹ Such an answer affirms the Nominalised Scotist structure of his Trinitarian thought. Yet Baxter's hesitation, his caution, his frequent assertions that some question or matter lies beyond our ken and his persistent refusal to be pinned down on any matter concerning the Trinity, in themselves call for an explanation.

6. Holkot and the Logic of Faith

Perhaps the most fascinating and insightful feature of Baxter's doctrine of the Trinity, his advocacy of Robert Holkot's 'logic of faith', is mentioned almost in

¹¹⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.121. In I.85 Baxter seems to identify the Nominalist virtual distinction with the Thomist distinction *rationis ratiocinatae*.

¹²⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.120; cf. Posewitz, *Theologica-Scholastica*, 136-44.

¹²¹ Here he may be fruitfully compared to Ockham who only reluctantly accepted the use of the formal distinction in Trinitarian theology regarding it as much a mystery as the Trinity itself (Allan Wolter, 'The Formal Distinction', in Bonansea and Ryan, *Duns Scotus*, 45).

passing as a resolution of the problem of how God can be both Three and One. The issue is stated concisely by Baxter from Durandus of St Pourçain:

*...aeque difficile vel impossibile sit quando aliqua sunt penitus idem re, quod unum realiter differat ab aliquo a quo non differt realiter alterum – si enim illa quae sunt unum et idem in tertio, sunt necessario unum et idem inter se; illo modo, fortiori ratione quae sunt omnimodo unum et idem generaliter inter se sunt omnimodo unum et idem respectu cuiuscunque tertii.*¹²²

This issue had wide currency in scholastic thought. Before Durandus, Aquinas had recognised this same problem, attempting to solve it by asserting real relation in the procession of the Word ‘*per actionem intelligibilem*’, but Baxter unsurprisingly was hardly satisfied with this resolution.¹²³

According to Baxter, Durandus’ quandary is rooted in the Aristotelian dictum that ‘*quae sunt eadem uni tertio, sunt eadem inter se*’. One prominent solution to this, that of Vasquez, was that ‘*hoc principium esse verum in rebus creatis, non autem in divinis propter infinitatem*’. Baxter glosses this as follows:

At rationem ille reddit quare infinitudo requiratur ex parte antecedentis, non ex parte consequentis, quia identificatio extremorum non tollit oppositionem eorundem inter se, et in rebus creatis nunquam extrema quae identificantur cum tertio sunt realitates.

In other words Vasquez invokes divine infinitude as a means of transcending the Aristotelian constraint on real relations.¹²⁴

Vasquez’s views are refuted by the Scotist Meurisse, whose work Baxter highly recommends. Baxter however does not offer a definitive opinion but merely states that ‘*Deus quidem non esset Deus si nobis esset comprehensibilis et plane effabilis*’.¹²⁵ Although he deftly sidesteps this issue Baxter then adds that it is possible to say ‘*sano sensu*’ with Robert Holkot that:

Rationalis logica fidei alia esse debet a logica naturali: philosophi non viderunt rem esse unam et tres. Ideo de ea in suis regulis mentionem non

¹²² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.92-3.

¹²³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.93.

¹²⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.93.

¹²⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.93; cf. Meurisse, *Tractatus*, 59-60.

*fecerunt. Sunt in logica fidei tales regulae: Quod omne absolutum praedicatur in singulari de tribus, et non in plurali. Alia, quod unitas tenet suum consequens ubi non obviat relationis oppositum.*¹²⁶

Holkot was a fourteenth-century Dominican who developed his logic of faith in order to avoid the problems of the Trinitarian paralogsms. These were expository syllogisms such as: ‘The Father is the divine essence, The Son is the divine essence: Therefore the Father is the Son’. While theologians prior to Holkot had attempted to solve these by the use of various distinctions, especially Scotus’ formal distinction, or by detecting some kind of fallacy in the syllogism, by the 1330s attention began to shift away from preserving the validity of Aristotelian logic at all costs towards asserting a new logic appropriate to the Trinity. Holkot was part of this movement but in his assertion that Aristotelian logic was only formally valid within the created order went much further than most, although by no means all, of his contemporaries.¹²⁷ His own logic of faith supplied rules – such as those quoted above – according to which the internal relations of the Trinity could be construed. It should be noted that Holkot did not believe his logic of faith violated the law of non-contradiction but viewed it as entirely rational.¹²⁸

For Baxter therefore, as for Holkot, it escapes natural logic how it is possible for anything to be simultaneously one and three. Put another way the concept of ‘Triunity’ makes no sense naturally and so is excluded from the rules and systems of philosophy. The ‘logic of faith’ however recognises that *in divinis* a different set of rules must be applied. Crucially, however, it attempts no explanation of the difference, for it recognises that from a created perspective none can be given. Holkot’s assertion is important as a reminder that the grounds of Christian doctrine, although entirely reasonable in that they conform to the pattern of the ‘logic of faith’,

¹²⁶ Robert Holkot, *In Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Quaestiones* (Lugduni, 1518; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1967), 1 q. 5 ad. 5 cited by Baxter, *Methodus*, I.93. Baxter also quotes Holkot’s suggestion that the unity and diversity of Christ’s two natures can only make sense under the rubric of the *logica fidei*.

¹²⁷ Another fourteenth-century adherent to the logic of faith was Henry of Langenstein, whom Baxter calls ‘pious Henry of Hassia’ and whose *Soliloquy on the Soul* he recommends as ‘*vere docto et pio*’ (*Methodus*, I.123). For more on his account of the logic of the faith and the debates it engendered see Michael Shank, *Unless you Believe, You shall not Understand: Logic, University and Society in Late-Medieval Vienna* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹²⁸ Hester Gelber, ‘Logic and the Trinity: A Clash of Values in Scholastic Thought, 1300-1335’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1974), 265-72.

can never be commensurate with any system of natural logic. In accordance with Baxter's practical and economic focus the logic of faith also represents an effective restraint on metaphysical speculation. We have already noted that Lawson has his own logic of faith and it is quite possible that he influenced Baxter here.¹²⁹ Certainly Baxter's espousal of Holkot's 'logic of faith' took the hallowing of logic to new heights.

7. The Trinity of Principles and Persons Compared

Central to the whole Baxterian account of the Trinity is the relation between the Trinity of Principles and the Trinity of Persons. Yet in neither the *Methodus* nor any of his other works does Baxter make clear the precise relation between them, nor indeed does he think this can or *should* be done:

*Quod Trinitas Essentialitum sit eadem quae Trinitas Personarum ego numquam vel verbis vel mente affirmavi, neque affirmandum puto. Hoc solum assero, dum Trinitas haec Essentialitum seu Primalitatum, per totam rerum naturam sua vestigia ostentat, si non est Trinitas Personarum eam tamen facile credibilem mortalibus reddit. Nulla enim ratio reddi potest, dum Trinitas una in essentiae unitate ex lumine naturae in Deo notissima sit, quare altera ullo modo incredibilis maneat. Non igitur eandem esse assero, sed alteram-revelatam ex altera-naturali ratione certissima credibilem probo.*¹³⁰

By asserting the Trinity of Principles to be known through natural reason Baxter's purpose is therefore not to prove the doctrine of the Trinity of Persons but rather to render it rationally credible. Elsewhere in the *Methodus* Baxter reaffirms the apologetic thrust of his Trinity of Principles, saying that by seeking to explain rationally the mystery of the Trinity he has been able to mollify the objections of Socinians and other doubters and thereby to have rendered them '*placabiles, si non placatos*' to the Christian religion.¹³¹

By way of illustration, in his *Reasons* Baxter identifies two different schools of Trinitarian thought which he expressly tells his readers not to consider heretical:

¹²⁹ The question of how God may be verbally characterised was a focus of discussion between Baxter and Lawson in their early exchanges (Condren, *Lawson*, 107-8, 110).

¹³⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.121.

¹³¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.37.

those ‘who say, that the three persons are *Deus seipsum intelligens*, *Deus a seipso intellectus* and *Deus a seipso amatus*’ and those, like Potho Prumiensis or Edmund of Canterbury, who ‘expresly say, that *Potentia*, *Sapientia* and *Amor*, are the Father, Son and Holy Ghost’.¹³² Baxter however will join sides with neither:

But for my own part, as I unfeignedly account the doctrine of the Trinity, the very summ and kernel of the Christian Religion (as exprest in our Baptism) and Athanasius his Creed, the best explication of it that ever I read; so I think it very unmeet in these tremendous mysteries, to go further than we have God's own light to guide us: And it is none of my purpose at all to joyn with either of the two fore-mentioned parties; nor to assert that the mysterie of the blessed Trinity of Hypostases or Persons is no other than this uncontroverted Trinity of Essential Principles.¹³³

Here we are reminded again of both the catechetical and scriptural orientation of Baxter’s doctrine. Furthermore we see clearly Baxter’s view that neither reason nor faith is able to say anything further about the relation between the ‘natural Trinity’ of the divine principles and that revealed in Scripture. Indeed to attempt to comment further on this relation or to equate these two Trinities would for Baxter be trespassing beyond ‘God’s own light’.

Baxter therefore continues:

All that I endeavour is but as aforesaid, to shew that this doctrine is neither contradictory, incredible, nor unlikely, by shewing the *vestigia* or image of it, and that which is as liable to exception, and yet of unquestionable truth. And if the three hypostases be not the same with the Trinity of Principles aforesaid, yet no man can give a sufficient reason, why Three in One should not be truly credible and probable in the one instance, when common natural reason is fully satisfied of it in the other. He must better understand the difference between a person and such an essential principle *in divinis*, than any mortal man doth, who will undertake to prove from the title of a person that one is incredible or unlikely, when the other is so clear and sure: or rather, he understandeth it not at all, that so imagineth. For my part, I again from my heart profess, that the image or *vestigia* of Trinity in Unity through the most notable parts of nature and morality, do increase my estimation of the Christian Religion, because of the admirable congruity and harmony.¹³⁴

¹³² Baxter, *Reasons*, 377.

¹³³ Baxter, *Reasons*, 377.

¹³⁴ Baxter, *Reasons*, 377-8.

Importantly we see from this that for Baxter it goes beyond the scope of mortal minds to characterise the difference between a divine person and an essential principle. In this one assertion of impossibility is comprehended Baxter's entire critique of the scholastic descriptions of divine persons and relations that he lays out so laboriously in the *Methodus*.

While Baxter believed the existence of God to be demonstrable by reason,¹³⁵ he did not think it possible formally to prove God's Triunity. In this he differed considerably from Ramon Lull especially, but also from Campanella, who offered a detailed explanation of the relation between the divine primalities and persons.¹³⁶ At most he thought it possible to persuade a doubter of the truth and coherence of the doctrine by an appeal to the manifold *vestigia* seen throughout the natural order. For Baxter then we can only affirm the Trinity of Persons through faith and through Scripture, even though through reason we can detect their 'footsteps' everywhere in the created order. However even from Scripture while we can certainly know that God is Triune we cannot know *how* he is Triune. In this way Baxter's ambivalence about the precise relation between the Trinity of Principles and the Trinity of Persons can be seen to function as an important safeguard of the divine ineffability.

This calls into question a significant aspect of Carl Trueman's evaluation of Baxter's Trinitarian thought. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Trueman suggests that Baxter's resort to the Campanellan Primalities not only brings the Trinity within the sphere of natural theology but also breaks down the traditional divide between faith and reason.¹³⁷ Yet, as we have suggested, it is Baxter's very refusal to make such an equation between the Trinity of Principles and the Trinity of Persons that prevents any such merging of the categories of faith and reason. For while it is undoubtedly true that Baxter goes further than many of his Reformed contemporaries in his use of the *vestigia* and the *analogia entis* to construct theological doctrine, it remains equally true that he stops short of the kind of detailed characterisation of the divine persons and relations that many of them were willing to engage with. Indeed

¹³⁵ Baxter, *Reasons*, 9-32.

¹³⁶ For Campanella's detailed characterisation of the divine persons by the primalities see throughout his *Monotriade*. It should be noted that this text was not known to Baxter as indicated above.

¹³⁷ Trueman, 'Small Step', 194. Trueman, however, does stop short of suggesting that Baxter was trying to prove the doctrine of the Trinity by reason alone (*Claims of Truth*, 99).

anyone coming to the *Methodus* for the first time would be much more likely to regard Baxter as cautious and hesitant concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than speculative or overconfident.

It is also untrue that Baxter's advocacy of a Trinity of Principles places him outside the pale of Reformed orthodoxy. Not only did Baxter regard the existence and character of the divine principles as an entirely biblical idea, but he also affirmed their long history in the mainstream of Trinitarian discussion.¹³⁸ Furthermore although many of the Reformed Orthodox distanced themselves from the kind of rational argumentation employed by Baxter, making use of analogies and similes only to expound the doctrine of the Trinity once received, there were also a number willing to give at least some credence to the concept of the *vestigia Trinitatis* and of divine principles. Two prominent examples, both of whom go beyond Baxter in their assertion that the reflexive acts of intellect and will entirely constitute the divine persons, are Keckermann and Burman.¹³⁹ Another example closer to Baxter's own exposition may be found in the work of the impeccably orthodox Francis Cheynell who posited an analogy between the transcendent 'affections of being' and the subsistence of the divine persons and even went so far as to suggest that the relation of the affections mirrored the procession of intellect and will in the Trinity.¹⁴⁰

It is also wrong to characterise Baxter's theology as modalistic. For Baxter always remained uncompromising in his assertion of God's essential threeness, affirming the Athanasian Creed, that most strident expression of orthodox Trinitarianism, as the most perfect statement of the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁴¹ However to be fair to Packer (as well as to Nye!) it is easy to see how Baxter's doctrine could be misread in this way, especially in his assertion that the persons should be distinguished by extrinsic or connotative denomination. At first sight this looks suspiciously as though Baxter holds the divine persons to be manifest only economically as modes of the divine presence in the world. Likewise Baxter's uncertainty about *how* the persons are Three could easily be misinterpreted as doubting that they truly *are* Three.

¹³⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.95-117.

¹³⁹ *PRRD*, 4.162-5.

¹⁴⁰ Cheynell, *Divine Triunity*, 102-11.

¹⁴¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.123; *Reasons*, 377.

Nevertheless both in characterising the persons in terms of absolute properties and distinct immanent acts as well as in holding that the extrinsic denomination of the persons is *somehow* formally rooted *ex natura rei* Baxter belies the dual charges of modalism and Unitarianism, accusations which would indeed have horrified him. That Baxter cannot characterise God's threeness further than this is not a problem either for him or for his doctrine, since according to the logic of faith this must of necessity transcend all of our attempts to logically grasp it.

One final question of great relevance is how Baxter's Trinitarian thought relates to scholastic discussions of the Trinity. From all that we have said it is very clear that Baxter strongly dissents from Thomism here. Following Posewitz he sees a contradiction at the heart of Aquinas' doctrine of the Trinity, recognised most clearly in the incommensurability of divine person and relation. In fact, as we also saw, in Baxter's opinion such a failure was unavoidable under the Augustinian scheme of memory, understanding and will, and was only compounded by Aquinas' doctrine that the powers of the soul are merely accidental, a view that effectively undercuts Baxter's desire for an *analogia entis* between the soul and the Trinity.

By contrast there is a definite Scotist accent to Baxter's Trinitarian theology. Indeed as Packer suggests Scotist ideas lay at the very heart of the faculty analysis which underpinned what we have called Baxter's *analogia entis*.¹⁴² Taking this further it is Scotus' univocal and equivocal concepts which form the mirror in which Baxter seeks to perceive God's essence, however dimly. In this way the Scotist doctrine of univocity allows the kind of inferences necessary for Baxter's own doctrine of analogy to thrive. There is also a considerable congruence between Baxter's and Scotus' approach to God's Triune being. In general terms this may be seen from Baxter's strong recommendation of Meurisse's *Tractatus de S.S. Trinitate* which draws heavily on Scotus and Scotist ideas.¹⁴³ More specifically it may be seen in the fact that Scotus, unlike Aquinas, thinks it possible to have natural knowledge of the Trinity. Although he does not think such knowledge is strictly probative (in a technical sense) he still deems it highly persuasive. Under this account the *vestigia*

¹⁴² Packer, *Redemption*, 114-5.

¹⁴³ Baxter recommends Meurisse in *Methodus*, I.123.

provide convincing, although not conclusive, evidence of the existence of a Triune God.¹⁴⁴ This view is similar to that of Baxter in which the existence of the Trinity of Principles is intended to persuade people of the existence of a corresponding Trinity of Persons. With regards to God's Triune being *ad intra*, Baxter, as we have seen, shared Scotus' uncertainty about the language of divine relations. This is evidenced particularly by his appropriation of de Ripa's suggestion that divine persons are constituted by absolute properties, which had its origin in Scotus' own deliberations on the question. Furthermore in modelling the Trinity Baxter draws on the distinctively Scotist analogy with the 'affections of being'.

Yet having said all this Baxter also departs from Scotus in a number of important ways in his description of the intra-Trinitarian relations. Thus, for example, he does not commit himself to Scotus' description of the formal distinction between the persons and the essence and the persons themselves (although he does suggest an intrinsic distinction quite similar to that of Scotus). Nor does he make extensive use of the elaborate Scotist form of the psychological analogy, preferring to talk instead in his own terms of the Trinity of Principles. However the greatest difference between the two undoubtedly lies in Baxter's professed agnosticism about so many features of God's Triune being and his avoidance of the kind of scholastic subtleties which earned Scotus his sobriquet of the 'Subtle Doctor'.

For this reason Baxter's Scotism is best viewed, once again, as having been reinterpreted through a Nominalist perspective. This seems particularly true of his understanding of Posewitz's virtual distinction as a Scotist formal distinction envisioned in terms of a Nominalist connotative distinction. The suggestion that Baxter often employs a Nominalist logic in theological discussion has already been made by Trueman. However he did not follow up the further ramifications of this for Baxter's doctrine of God.¹⁴⁵ As noted above this period of late scholasticism was characterised by a considerable scepticism about the possibility of giving precise logical expression to the doctrine of the Trinity. Such scepticism however did not indicate any diminution of faith but rather a new and dawning awareness of the utter

¹⁴⁴ Cross, *Duns Scotus on God*, 127-30.

¹⁴⁵ Trueman, 'Small Step', 184-5.

inability of human concepts to penetrate the divine nature. This note of caution may be found for example in the work of Thomas Bradwardine, a fifteenth-century Nominalist and Augustinian, whose discourse on man's little knowledge of God was greatly admired by Baxter and held up as an example to follow.¹⁴⁶ As Heiko Oberman has noted, the theme of the incomprehensibility of God is an important one in Bradwardine's theology and certainly we find many echoes of this idea in Baxter's own work.¹⁴⁷ What we have in Baxter is therefore best described as a kind of Trinitarian agnosticism.

In this regard Baxter's approval of Robert Holkot is especially telling. For Holkot's assertion of a transcendent logic of faith is itself an attempt not only to move beyond the impasse of scholastic debate on the intra-Trinitarian distinctions but also, more importantly, to articulate a theological vision in which the ineffability of God's Triune Majesty is given its rightful place. From all we have discussed it is clear that Baxter's own theology resonates with this same concern and that this best explains his reticence in describing the inner workings of God's being; a reticence otherwise surprising in one who chooses to index his theology on self-knowledge and the *vestigia Trinitatis*. This is also a further reminder of the practical nature of Baxter's Trinitarian theology, rooted as it is in catechetical norms and not scholastic speculation, in which it is man's duty to glorify the Triune God and not pry into things he has not chosen to reveal. Yet having said this we must not forget that Baxter was also motivated by apologetic needs. Ultimately then we might say that Baxter's resort to an analogy of being grounded on the primalities marks an attempt to preserve the divine transcendence and inscrutability while at the same time giving a rationally defensible account of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

¹⁴⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.7.

¹⁴⁷ Heiko Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine a Fourteenth Century Augustinian: A Study of his Theology in its Historical Context* (Utrecht: Kemink and Zoon, 1957), 52-3.

Chapter Six: Theo-Politics

1. Introduction

At the very beginning of the *Methodus* Baxter issues the following stark warning to his readers: ‘*Qui methodum theologiae politicam nolunt, cum atheistis ad mere physicam ut confugiant necesse habent*’.¹ Clearly, for Baxter, there could be no alternative between wholeheartedly endorsing a political method of theology and descending into a sub-theological, purely mechanistic account of God’s relations with man. This is not of course to suggest that Baxter sought to denigrate physics in any way – far from it – but rather to acknowledge that for Baxter man’s special dignity as created in the image of God, and thus as being himself triune in nature, made him a subject both capable and befitting of moral government.

It is no surprise then to find this sentiment echoed elsewhere in Baxter’s works. Thus writing for students in his *Christian Directory* he has the following memorable advice to offer:

The doctrine of politicks, especially of the nature of government and laws in general, is of great use to all that will ever understand the nature of God’s government and laws, that is, of religion... And it is a preposterous course, and the way of ignorance and error, for a divine to study God’s laws, and a lawyer man’s laws, before either of them know, in general what a law is, or what government is, as nature notifieth it to us.²

At the start of his tome on *Politicks*, in the fourth part of this work, Baxter reiterates this, indicating his judgement that ‘much more of the doctrine of politicks or civil government belongeth to theology, than those men understand, who make kings and laws to be meer humane creatures’.³ For Baxter indeed the theologian must be a ‘*iurisconsultus Christianus*’.⁴

¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.3.

² Baxter, *CD*, III.920.

³ Baxter, *CD*, IV.4.

⁴ Packer, *Redemption*, 215.

In Chapter Two we examined the roots of Baxter's Trinitarian theo-political method; now we shall consider Baxter's theo-politics in detail as it directs his account of the threefold Kingdom of God. Here our focus will be on the temporal outworking of the Kingdom of God throughout salvation history, and particularly on the Triune Baptismal Covenant as governing the relationship between God and man, whether globally and objectively or personally and subjectively. However it must always be remembered that for Baxter this itself is rooted in God's eternal counsel and decree, which Baxter expresses in terms of the mutual intrinsic conditioning of God's Power, Wisdom and Love.⁵ In particular it is important to emphasise that the perichoretic relation of law and love which we shall discern as a major dynamic of Baxter's soteriology, while rooted proximately in the governmental Trinity of Owner, Rector and Benefactor, is grounded ultimately in the Trinity of Persons and Principles.⁶

In light of this, this chapter will begin in the second and third sections with a detailed analysis of the Kingdom of God in Baxter's thought and especially its threefold character of Nature, Grace and Glory. This will demonstrate conclusively my claim that the *Methodus* represents the methodological unfolding of the Triune Baptismal Covenant. In the fourth section we shall turn to the operation of God upon man's soul. Here we shall first consider Baxter's account of divine concurrence and pre-motion, showing him to fit into a Scotist and Durandist mould, and then of the working of grace in the soul according to its psychological and habitual mechanisms. This will demonstrate the central importance of the Triune Baptismal Covenant in the life of the individual believer, affirming it as the cardinal doctrine of Baxter's theology and the hinge between theory and praxis. In the fifth and sixth sections we shall consider the Trinitarian dynamic of faith, hope and love and show finally that Baxter's theology is an important exemplar of the Scotist primacy of love.

2. Baxter's Doctrine of the *Regnum Dei*

Foundational to Baxter's theo-political method is his doctrine of the *Regnum Dei*. Indeed, as we have seen, theology itself he defined as *scientia-affectiva-practica* of

⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.7-16.

⁶ For a detailed account of this see 'Appendix Three – The Eternal Foundation of Divine Government'.

the Kingdom of God among man.⁷ Baxter came to understand this Kingdom according to a threefold division into the successive eras of Nature, Grace and Glory, together spanning the whole of salvation history. In this section we shall consider this doctrine of the threefold Kingdom and its Trinitarian grounding. This will reveal the centrality of the Triune Baptismal Covenant as encapsulating the salvific actions of the Trinity and man's response, and establish a global, objective framework – the works God has wrought and the laws and covenants he has established – for Baxter's full account of the interrelation of God and man.

Baxter's doctrine of the *Regnum Dei* encompasses the whole of the *Methodus* and so here we can only give an overview of its main features. Perhaps its most striking feature is the sophisticated coordination which Baxter attempts between three different 'aspects' or representations of the one Triune God: the biblical description of him as a Trinity of Persons, the metaphysical description of him as a Trinity of Principles and the political description of him as a Trinity of Governmental Relations:

Mark how wisely God hath ordered it, that the three essentialities in the Divine Nature, Power, Intellection and Will, Omnipotency, Wisdom and Goodness, and the three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Word and the Spirit; and the three Causalities of God, as the Efficient, Directive and Final Cause (of whom, and through whom and to whom are all things) should have the three most eminent specimina or impressions in the world, or three most conspicuous works to declare and glorifie them; viz, Nature, Grace and Glory, And that God should accordingly stand related to men in three answerable Relations, viz, as our Creatour, our Redeemer, and our Perfecter (by Holiness initially, and Glory finally).⁸

Indeed evidence for this coordination permeates much of Baxter's developed work and may be seen as a hallmark of his theology.

Baxter's Trinitarian division of the Kingdom of God into the Kingdoms of Nature, Grace and Glory draws on his theology of attribution:

Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa: but so that each hath an eminency in his own work, though not as separated or a solitary principle or cause.

⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.3.

⁸ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, II.99-100.

The Father and Divine Vital Active Power, was eminently glorified in the creation; the Son and Divine Wisdom is eminently glorified in the making of the remedying medicine; And the Divine Love and Spirit is eminently glorified in the operation of it, to the health and salvation of the soul. The Son, and the Wisdom or Word doth not finish all the work himself, but with the Father and Divine Power, sendeth the Holy Spirit, and communicateth to man the Love of God. And all together will be glorified in our glorification.⁹

Such eminent ascription was intended to capture the biblical dynamic in which *by* the Spirit and *in* and *through* the Son we come *to* the Father.¹⁰ Indeed without it, it is difficult to see how the intra-Trinitarian relations could be regarded as having any meaningful impact *ad extra*, an eventuality which would truly reduce the persons to mere modal principles.¹¹ Significantly then the account of the Kingdoms assumes an intimate link between Baxter's Trinitarian metaphysics and his economic, covenantal perspective. In this he affirmed both that 'there is no salvation but by the whole Trinity conjunct' and the determinative pattern of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification.¹²

3. The Threefold Kingdom of Nature, Grace and Glory

The Kingdom of Nature is the realm of Creation and of the eminence of the Father and Power. Yet Creation is also of course the work of the Trinity entire and so according to his pattern of attribution, grounded on the ordering of the internal processions, Baxter ascribes different roles to each of the persons in creating. Thus the Father according to Power is assigned the eminency as Creator and origin of all things, the Son according to Wisdom the ordination of all things and the Spirit according to Love the perfection of all things.¹³

From Creation stems the Trinity of Governmental Relations, alluded to above, which plays such a vital role in Baxter's theology. These it is clear are simply the economic and theo-political correlates of the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love:

⁹ Baxter, *More Reasons*, 97-8.

¹⁰ Baxter, *Christian Concord*, 'Explication', 23-4.

¹¹ Lawson offers a convincing explanation of this eminent ascription (*Theo-Politica*, 38).

¹² Richard Baxter, *The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ* (London, 1658), 23.

¹³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.124. This is identical to the scheme of Efficient, Constitutive and Final Cause identified earlier.

Consider next, in what relation such a creature must needs stand to such a Creatour. If he made us of nothing, it is not possible, but that he must be our Owner, and we and all things absolutely his own. And if he be our Maker and Owner, and be infinitely powerful, wise and good; and we be reasonable free-agents, made to be guided by laws or moral means unto our end; it is not possible but that we should stand related to him, as subjects to their rightful Governour. And if he be our Creatour, Owner and Ruler, and also infinitely good, and the grand Benefactor of the world: and if the nature of our souls be to love good as good; it cannot be possible, that he should not be our End, who is our Creatour; and that we should not be related to him as to the Chiefest Good, both originally as our Benefactor, and finally as our End.¹⁴

The Governmental Relations therefore result from God and man as compared, yet as the *Methodus* explicitly adds their deepest foundation lies in the divine essence itself.¹⁵ In this way the Governmental Relations mirror the Trinity, with the relation of Dominus the source of the others, and Creation affirmed as the ground of all government.¹⁶

Baxter holds that man, as a moral subject, is capable of the highest form of government – that according to laws. Significantly Baxter frames his own understanding of law in a Trinitarian context, resonating with his mitigated voluntarism. Thus he defines law in a voluntarist fashion as a sign revealing the Rector's will rather than in an intellectualist fashion as an immanent expression of the Rector's intellect. Furthermore, in a move worthy of both Scotus and Ockham, he upholds God as Legislator as being above his own laws, able to abrogate or change them at will.¹⁷ Nevertheless he tempers his definite voluntarism in two crucial ways. Firstly he adds that God cannot change the law lightly and certainly not in way which contradicts his own essential nature. Baxter can thus speak in a Thomistic vein of certain laws as 'images of his imperant nature' and unalterable as

¹⁴ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, II.82-3.

¹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.245.

¹⁶ Just as Power is the *principium* of Wisdom and Love and the Father of the Son and Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ God's power to abrogate his own law hinges on the distinction between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* first given prominence by Scotus (see Scotus, *Will and Morality*, 191-4). Scotus suggests that according to his *potentia absoluta* God can do anything which does not entail a contradiction, which includes changing the law where fitting. Baxter places the distinction between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* within the Trinitarian context of his divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love (*Catholick Theologie*, I.i.6) tempering his own voluntarism in this respect.

flowing from divine perfection.¹⁸ Secondly Baxter insists that without in any way disrupting the structure of the law it can be made to serve ends other than the purely legal. Thus although rectorally law's prescriptive aspect is considered primary and its executive aspect secondary, in the regimen of the Benefactor this can be turned completely on its head. Here then is manifest a 'wonderful concordance' of divine principles and relations, which we may describe as a kind of perichoresis of law and love.¹⁹ As we shall see, it is this distinctive Trinitarian characterisation of law which entirely shapes Baxter's understanding of the covenanting between God and man.

Baxter held that in the Kingdom of Nature God governed according to what was often called the Covenant of Nature or of Works. This was that binding covenant made between God and Adam which Baxter understood as consisting in the law of nature, obliging man to due obedience to God as his Owner, Rector and Benefactor, and the supernatural added law (the command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge).²⁰ Viewed from this perspective human sin was a covenant violation which ruptured the intimate bond between God and man, causing him to forfeit all but the natural remnant of the image of God, and incurred his necessary punishment. Yet in enacting this God punishes not only as Owner and Rector but also as Benefactor. Here then, already, we find an 'inseparable twist' of God's law and love founded on his Trinitarian character.²¹ For as Legislator above the law God chooses to save some from their deserved punishment of eternal death and in doing so relaxes the strict obligation of the law. Yet because his law is grounded on his essential nature, and so cannot be changed lightly, he does this only upon consideration of his future satisfaction through Christ.²²

All of this is encapsulated by the prophecy of the *protoevangelium* – the promise that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head – which inaugurates the Covenant of Grace.²³ Following both Reformed covenantal thought and a scriptural

¹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.262-3.

¹⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.262. See further 'Appendix Three – The Eternal Foundation of Divine Government'.

²⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.263-8.

²¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.54.

²² Baxter discusses whether God could save without satisfaction of Christ in *Methodus*, III.26-9 and denies it, showing his tempering of extreme Nominalism.

²³ Baxter, *Methodus*, II.384.

trajectory Baxter identified a total of four editions of the Covenant of Grace before it attained its definitive form in Christ: the universal Adamic, Noachic and Abrahamic covenants made with (or in the case of Abraham with reference to) the whole world and the special Mosaic covenant made only with the people of Israel.²⁴ Baxter gives to each of these covenants an incipient Trinitarian shape, suggesting that Abraham, for example, was saved by his *assensus*, *consensus* and *fiducia* to God as Dominus, Rector and Benefactor exercised through his faculties of intellect, will and executive power, and was justified by dedicating his whole self to God by the grace and gift of the Holy Spirit and by obeying God the Redeemer.²⁵

With the advent of Christ, the promised seed, the Covenant of Grace reaches its fullness and perfection. Following Creation's pattern Baxter attributes the work of Redemption eminently to the Son as well as to the whole Trinity conjunct:

*Sicut potentia fuit eminentissima in regno naturae, et Pater Creator ibi Rex: ita sapientia est eminentissima in regno gratiae, et ibi logos filius specialiter Rex; at non sapientia separate vel in se tantum considerata; sed ut est amoris et ad amorem; et ita Regnum Gratiae sapientialis est via ad Regnum Gloriam, ubi amor (non ut hic obnubilatus, sed) eminentissime et gloriose regnat.*²⁶

The Kingdom of Grace thus marks the transition between the foundational Kingdom of Nature and the perfecting Kingdom of Glory, manifesting again Baxter's coordinate Trinitarian account of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of Grace is itself founded on the mediatorial work of Christ in reuniting God and man, which Baxter describes as being rooted in eternity in the desire of the whole Trinity to save and redeem the elect.²⁷ Its enacting in time begins with the Incarnation which, following the lead of the Gospels, Baxter interpreted in Trinitarian fashion. Thus we have the Father sending the Son, the Son as the eternal Wisdom of God taking flesh and the Holy Spirit accomplishing his miraculous conception, fashioning for him a body and soul and communicating to Christ the man

²⁴ For Baxter's discussion of each of these see *Methodus*, II.390-450.

²⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, II.397, 414-5.

²⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, II.384-5.

²⁷ Strikingly Baxter describes this mediation according to the psychological analogy (*Methodus*, III.34).

the perfection of God's image.²⁸ Building on this, Baxter shaped his entire Christology around the conjunct action of the Trinity, holding that both the hypostatic union and the pattern of Christ's life as very man and very God could only be fully grasped when placed in a Trinitarian dynamic. As he says quite explicitly:

*Quamvis enim non Spiritus Sanctus, sed Filius, unione hypostatica naturae humanae fuit adunatus, operatio tamen in naturam humanam est operatio ad extra; ideoque omnium personarum S. Trinitatis; et ita ut in aliis operationibus ad extra, perfectio seu ultima instantia Sp. Sancto attribuitur.*²⁹

Furthermore as the true Image of God the person of Christ is said to be luminous to the Trinity, revealing to the world God's nature and radiating his divine Power, Wisdom and Love. In this way Christ is able to enact the obedience which should have been Adam's. Through his full endowment with the Holy Spirit, concurrent with his own divine nature, he is therefore said to be perfected (though never not perfect) in his three human faculties of intellect, will and executive power. As habitually and actually holy he exercises perfect resignation, obedience and love to God as Owner, Rector and Benefactor, so qualifying himself for the work of mediation, which is thus seen as being accomplished throughout his whole life as well as in the pivotal events of his death and Resurrection.³⁰

In Baxter's doctrine of Christ's satisfaction he once again invokes his own Trinitarian account. Through the Son's full submission to his Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit he steps into the breach, interposing between man and the just wrath of God. He takes upon himself the punishments for the sins of the world, although not the sins themselves, and thus satisfies not the letter of the law but God himself, the lawgiver.³¹ The alternative, upheld by many of Baxter's Reformed brethren, that Christ became sin or was reputed a sinner in our stead, he regarded as philosophically untenable and theologically dubious. Specifically Baxter held that this, combined with the doctrine that Christ satisfied the exact requirements of the law, was the straight road to his feared Antinomianism and a blasphemous sully

²⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.1-6, 35.

²⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.214.

³⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.1-6.

³¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.36-42, 46-50; *Universal Redemption*, 24.

of God's holiness.³² It was these considerations particularly which lay behind his much-vaunted Grotian doctrine of *solutio tantidem* rather than *solutio eiusdem* – that is of Christ's sacrifice as an equivalent and not exact payment of the debt of sin – as well as his denial of the strict imputation of Christ's righteousness.³³

For Baxter, then, Christ satisfied for our sins not through fulfilling the law but by enabling it to be relaxed on our behalf. While this doctrine of 'relaxation' is often viewed in a negative light, as a kind of watering down or externalising of God's justice along Grotian lines,³⁴ in fact Baxter views Christ's act of representation or 'sponson', his taking upon himself the punishments for our sin, as the very essence of this relaxation. Since the initial stipulations of the law made no mention of the possibility of substitutionary satisfaction,³⁵ Christ's death on our behalf must be seen as an act of pure mercy and benefaction:

Et qui legibus obediens est, non eo inobedientem aliquem reddit praemiabilem. At Benefactor sua natura benignissimus, et Rector sapientissimus paterno affectu regens, dum ad ignoscendum et benefaciendum maxime propensus est, alterius bonitatem et obedientiam potest accipere, ut medium ad iustitiae suae demonstrationem et satisfactionem sufficiens, et ad omnia veniae incommoda devitanda idoneum: praecipue si mediator promerens, sit modo aliquo peccatorum Dominus (id est, Proprietarius), ita ut recte suos vocare eos possit; quia quod suis datur, sibi-ipsi quodammodo datur: ideoque qui sibi aliquid meretur, et suis sui-ipsius gratia meretur.³⁶

It is in this very doctrine of relaxation, then, that the Trinitarian dimension of the atonement becomes fully explicit. Here once again the barrier between law and love is shown to be artificially erected, since both together are expressions of God's eternal, unchanging, simple Triune nature.

³² Baxter, *Methodus*, III.39-42; *Aphorismes*, 134; Richard Baxter, *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness* (London, 1676), I.91.

³³ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.39-46; *Universal Redemption*, 25, 78-84; cf. Hugo Grotius, *Opera Theologica: De Satisfactione*, ed. Edwin Rabbie and tr. Hotze Mulder (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 204-5.

³⁴ Packer, *Quest*, 157-60.

³⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.44.

³⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.10.

At the heart of Baxter's theology of atonement is the Cross. This he says is the 'truest ladder, by which you may ascend from earth to heaven',³⁷ and as we shall see below it is the believer's subjective participation in the work of the Cross that is the gateway to the new life in Christ. In this way Baxter seeks to combine an Anselmian emphasis on objective satisfaction (according to a voluntarist account of relaxation) with an Abelardian perspective of the Cross as the true pattern of the Christian life.³⁸ In explaining the work of the Cross Baxter thus draws on the whole tradition, integrating the doctrines of *satisfactio*, *imitatio Christi* and *Christus victor* into a coherent theo-political unity.³⁹ Baxter is clear as well that the transaction of the Cross involves the whole Trinity conjunct.⁴⁰ Once again then Baxter's Christology is only fully understood when placed in front of its Trinitarian backdrop.

Baxter is also fully aware that Christ's Death on the Cross cannot be separated from his subsequent Resurrection and Exaltation. Both events are not only inseparable but are together foundational to the Kingdom of Grace. For it is the central thesis of Baxter's soteriology that by Redemption Christ has won a new right as Owner, Rector and Benefactor over the entire human race.⁴¹ This he says is not something openly displayed while Christ is hanging on the Cross, but is demonstrated in his Resurrection and Ascension, his intercession with the Father and his subsequent pouring out of the Holy Spirit. The whole Trinity is thus involved in the establishing of Christ's Kingdom of Grace, but it is Christ himself in his glorified human nature who is the political head of both Church and world and who therefore has the eminency.⁴²

Christ then, analogously to the Father in the Kingdom of Nature, is established as Owner, Rector and Benefactor by right of Redemption. Since Baxter understands redemption as universal in scope it follows that Christ's rule must also be universal, for he is insistent that unless Christ died for all he cannot possibly be said to rule

³⁷ Baxter, *Crucifying of the World*, 150.

³⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.15.

³⁹ Baxter, *Crucifying of the World*, 51-4.

⁴⁰ Baxter, *Crucifying of the World*, 243-4.

⁴¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.62-8.

⁴² Baxter, *Methodus*, III.64.

over all in the new dispensation of grace.⁴³ As Owner Christ has the right of disposing with all as he chooses and distributing his benefits unequally; as Rector he has the right of governing and judging all according to the laws and conditions that he establishes and as Benefactor he gives freely to all the offer of the universal remission of sins, reconciliation with God, the heavenly Kingdom and the Holy Spirit (confirming this specially and efficiently for his elect) and thus has the right to the love, gratitude and obedience of all.⁴⁴

Baxter expresses exactly these same truths according to the paradigmatic Protestant language of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. Thus as Prophet Christ proclaims his doctrine and confirms it by testimony of his Holy Spirit, as Priest he satisfies and intercedes with the Father and as King he issues the new law and sends down the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Furthermore there is evidence that Baxter viewed Christ's threefold office as itself structured in a Trinitarian fashion. For not only does he suggest that the prophetic, priestly and kingly work of Christ, as continued in the Church's ministry, may be connected to the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love but he also asserts that 'it is more proper to call them three parts of one office, than three offices'⁴⁶ and that their operation is 'so woven and twisted together by infinite wisdom, that all do harmoniously concur to the attainment of the ends of each one; and if you lay by one, you lay by all'.⁴⁷

As King, Christ is also lawgiver, and so following his Resurrection and Ascension he issues a new law, revealed by his Holy Spirit and his Apostles in Scripture, superseding both the old Covenant of Nature and the previous editions of the Covenant of Grace. Having merited the relaxation of the law, through his fulfilment of the old law and the special mediatorial law of sacrifice, Christ as Owner, Rector and Benefactor (with the Father and Holy Spirit) is entirely free to change the law. This he does, declaring that anyone who believes in him, and wholeheartedly and sincerely takes him for his Lord and Saviour, will be released from the punishments

⁴³ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.67.

⁴⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.62-3, 67.

⁴⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.67-75.

⁴⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.229, 232-3; *Life of Faith*, III.191.

⁴⁷ Richard Baxter, *Of Justification: Four Disputations* (London, 1658), 60.

due them for violating the Covenant of Nature and will freely receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and eternal life.⁴⁸

The Covenant of Grace, like the former Covenant of Nature, is a conditional covenant. Baxter holds that the particular condition which God establishes as the *sine qua non* of the conferral of covenant benefits is faith. His reasons for doing this are twofold: firstly because of his freedom to change the law and the conditions which meet that law as he chooses, and secondly due to faith itself having a natural and moral aptitude for the role that God assigns it. On the one hand then we have what Richard Sibbes called an ‘evangelical mitigation’ of the law, with God accepting faith and sincerity in the place of perfection,⁴⁹ and on the other hand faith itself involves a full submission to God and therefore establishes the grounds upon which a new relationship with him is able to flourish. Faith thus invites a real participation in Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰

Faith, as we shall see below, Baxter describes as a triple motion of the soul initiated by and directed towards the triple object of the Triune God. Faith, including the faith that justifies, is therefore faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For this reason he suggests that the fullest description of the Covenant of Grace is in fact the Triune Baptismal Covenant itself.⁵¹ This, we have seen, he viewed as the essence of the Christian religion itself and it therefore makes sense that he should view the faith which defines the Christian as a heart covenanting and fellowshiping with all three persons of the Trinity.

It is no exaggeration then to suggest that this Trinitarian definition of faith, reconfigured around the Triune Baptismal Covenant, is the cornerstone of Baxter’s theology. Its most immediate implications are in the territory of justification. Here Baxter differed markedly from the Protestant consensus of forensic justification and

⁴⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.78-83; *Aphorismes*, 159-81.

⁴⁹ See Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reede and Smoaking Flax* (London, 1630), 98.

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.311-4, 330; *Aphorismes*, 147.

⁵¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.325-9, 333; *Justifying Righteousness*, I.61, 162, 177-8 and Richard Baxter, *The Scripture Gospel Defended* (London, 1690), 1-6, 10. Richard Muller also makes this point in ‘Covenant and Conscience in English Reformed Theology: Three Variations on a 17th Century Theme’, *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1980), 328.

imputation of Christ's righteousness. By contrast, firstly, Baxter defined the object of justifying faith not only as being Christ, in all three of his offices, and not just his priestly office, but as being all three persons of the Trinity in all the Governmental relations.⁵² Secondly he denied the strict imputation of Christ's righteousness, instead holding that believers must have their own personal, inherent righteousness, which he called evangelical righteousness, in order to fulfil the Covenant of Grace and merit its benefits.⁵³ Thirdly and finally he strenuously denied that faith was an instrument of justification and instead asserted it as merely a condition *sine qua non* of the conferral of covenant benefits.⁵⁴

The outline of Baxter's doctrine of justification is well-known but what has not before been noticed is that each of these three features can be related in his mature thought to his Trinitarian conception of faith. Thus the first follows from Baxter's understanding of faith as a motion of the whole soul, through assent, consent and obedience, to the whole Trinity in all the governmental relations. To be justified through sincere faith now required not only assent and consent to Christ's priestly work, as for other Protestants, but obedience to him and to the whole Trinity as King. This, as we shall see below, had far reaching implications.

The second follows from this, for Baxter defines evangelical righteousness as a personal, inherent righteousness which is not 'without us in Christ' but consists in our own actions of faith and obedience as fulfilling the conditions of the Covenant of Grace.⁵⁵ This he explains in his notorious analogy of the peppercorn rent, holding that in the same way that a landlord requires the annual giving of a peppercorn to secure the possession of a property so God as Rector requires our evangelical righteousness, something which like the peppercorn is valueless in itself, as necessary for securing salvation.⁵⁶ This is another example of Baxter's mitigated

⁵² Baxter, *Methodus*, III.325-9, 333; *Aphorismes*, 159-66; *Scripture Gospel Defended*, 42; *Of Justification*, 24.

⁵³ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.308-9; *Aphorismes*, 62-75; Richard Baxter, *An Account of my Considerations of the Friendly, Modest, Learned Animadversions of Mr Chr. Cartwright* (London, 1675), 100-5. For more on Baxter's qualified doctrine of imputation see Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 231-43.

⁵⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.320, 330-2; *Aphorismes*, 135-43; *Scripture Gospel Defended*, 11-20.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 70.

⁵⁶ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 82-4, 99-100; *Account*, 118.

voluntarism, for the ‘acceptation’ of our evangelical righteousness is an act of mercy and a relaxation of the law.

Reaction against Baxter has been very strong, with some viewing the idea of evangelical righteousness as tantamount to blasphemy.⁵⁷ Without wishing to wholly defend Baxter’s views we would suggest that his critics have been too harsh. Baxter himself views this notion as entirely scriptural, deriving it especially from his exegesis of Matthew 25 – foundational to his entire theo-political method – and his distinctive harmonisation of Paul and James.⁵⁸ He is also insistent that ‘we cannot perform these conditions without grace (for without Christ we can do nothing) and he enableth us to perform them ourselves’.⁵⁹ Christ therefore works this evangelical righteousness within us, although, as we shall consider below, not without our subordinate cooperation.

Baxter’s denial of faith’s instrumentality also tempers his view of evangelical righteousness. For him, to hold that faith is an instrument over-exalts its nature as a human action and he therefore denies that it can have any efficiency in procuring justification.⁶⁰ He holds instead that the only instrument of conferring covenant benefits is the covenant itself and regards faith as simply a condition *sine qua non*; that is as a necessary condition established according to a prior agreement or covenant. This is another clear indication of Baxter’s Nominalist sympathies.⁶¹ Furthermore as a condition faith, and therefore we must say evangelical righteousness, is enacted by God himself and falls under the unconditional benefits of his ownership and benefaction.⁶² Far then from being exclusive or independent of grace, Baxter’s concept of evangelical righteousness is itself entirely graced.

⁵⁷ John Crandon, *Mr Baxters Aphorisms Exorcized* (London, 1654), I.178: ‘If we magnifie one grain of our own pepper to that height that we make it a part of that righteousness by which to stand at Gods tribunall this one grain will sink us down to hell, so hot a poison is Mr. Brs pepper-corn’.

⁵⁸ Baxter, *Account*, 214-20.

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 75-7.

⁶⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.327.

⁶¹ For discussion of *sine qua non* causality and its importance in Nominalist soteriology see William Courtenay, ‘The King and the Leaden Coin: The Economic Background of ‘Sine qua Non’ Causality’; ‘Covenant and Causality in Pierre d’Ailly’ both in *Covenant and Causality in Medieval Thought: Studies in Philosophy, Theology and Economic Practice* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), 94-119 and 185-209. Baxter employs the classic Nominalist example of the ascribed value of a coin saying ‘the Gospell-promise is as the Kings stamp which maketh it currant for justifying’ (*Aphorismes*, 147).

⁶² Baxter, *Methodus*, III.311-2, 319; *Catholick Theologie*, I.ii.45-6.

Extending his own analogy we might say that not only does God require a peppercorn but that he himself actually gives us the peppercorn with which we pay the rent.

Combining these three aspects it becomes possible to see the full scope of Baxter's Trinitarian and covenantal reconfiguration of justification. In particular it is apparent that this entails a distinctive dual understanding of justification. Thus on the one hand justification can be described as being by faith and loving obedience so that Gospel works were viewed not only as a necessary sign of true and sincere faith, as most Protestants held, but as themselves necessary for covenantal fulfilment.⁶³ Yet on the other hand Baxter can still maintain that justification was by faith alone, holding that faith as the principal condition includes everything necessary for sincere covenanting.⁶⁴

The seeming contradiction in this position can be reconciled on two levels, by recourse firstly to Baxter's Trinitarian reconceptualisation of faith and secondly to his covenantal understanding of justification. Admittedly the outlines of this first change are somewhat implicit in Baxter's thought. They will however become even clearer below when we examine the Trinitarian dynamic of faith, hope and love. It seems therefore that Baxter can hold quite consistently that we are justified by faith alone according to a contracted and unified definition in which faith as *principium* inseparably and virtually contains its following acts of obedience, and that we are justified by faith and obedience according to an expanded definition in which faith itself is spread out in threefold fashion spanning acts of assent, consent and fiducial obedience.⁶⁵ Expressing this a different way Baxter says 'we are not said in Scripture to be justified by hope or by charity, but by faith: but it is such a faith as hath *aliquid spei et amoris* in it and will operate by these graces'.⁶⁶ In his *Aphorismes* he therefore affirms that we are justified by faith working through love.⁶⁷

⁶³ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 149-55.

⁶⁴ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 88-9, 151-55.

⁶⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.397.

⁶⁶ Richard Baxter, *Of Saving Faith* (London, 1658), 85.

⁶⁷ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 171.

This simple picture is further complicated by the fact that Baxter stretches the traditional notion of justifying faith not only conceptually, to include love and obedience as its inseparable (triune) conjuncts, but also temporally. Initial justification requires only faith as a condition but continuing and final justification (at the last judgement) also require love and obedience, manifested through Gospel works.⁶⁸ In posing such a division between initial and final justification Baxter was motivated by two important factors. The first was the famous parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25 – the scriptural *locus* of Baxter’s political method. For Baxter this conclusively demonstrated that salvation, and thus final justification, was not through faith alone but through faith and works conjunct. Further reflection on Scripture undertaken over many years only confirmed him in his view that this passage was merely the tip of the exegetical iceberg.⁶⁹ The second was Baxter’s pronounced covenantal perspective. Baxter often explained the relation between Christ and the believer using the both political and intimate analogy of a marriage alliance between a Prince and a beggar-woman. The act of marriage itself is analogous to faith in that all that is required is the *making* of the marital vow of fidelity. Yet to remain married, Baxter says, the making of the vow alone is not enough but the *keeping* of the vow is also necessary. In the same way faith and actual obedience must be held necessary for continued justification.⁷⁰ In Baxter’s covenantal reconfiguring of soteriology, faith therefore becomes full and sustained adherence to the Covenant of Grace.

Baxter’s distinctive doctrine of justification draws on a number of diverse sources and, as Boersma suggests, his soteriology can often appear as a pastiche taken from a whole array of Reformed theologians.⁷¹ This is true even of his more distinctive doctrines such as that of justification by faith working through love, which had precedent in Maccovius’ doctrine that faith must include the love of complacency,

⁶⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.336; cf. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 299-316.

⁶⁹ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 204-5. For a selection of scriptural references see *Confession*, 57-64. Baxter says that there are ‘many score or hundred’ references to this in Scripture (*Scripture Gospel Defended*, 57).

⁷⁰ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 167-78.

⁷¹ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 322-3.

and his discussion of faith and works which echoes that to be found in Davenant and Twisse among others.⁷²

Also evident in Baxter's doctrine of justification is a strong scholastic influence. This is particularly apparent in his doctrine of merit. Certainly Baxter never attributed any causal or efficient role to works in procuring justification, regarding them, like faith, as merely a condition *sine qua non* of conferral of covenant benefits.⁷³ Nevertheless it is striking that he was willing to give his consent to almost the whole of the Tridentine doctrine of justification.⁷⁴ Furthermore, although Baxter sometimes sought to eschew the term merit itself as unhelpful,⁷⁵ his own view of merits, save for his denial of their instrumental efficiency, seems to have been that of Scotus himself.⁷⁶ He believed that acts are meritorious as relating to God's covenant or promise to reward them and in no way make God a debtor.⁷⁷

In his espousal of a Catholic doctrine of merit Baxter even went so far as to accept the common scholastic distinction between congruous and condign merits. Merit of congruity, he held, conformed to the Puritan doctrine of preparation for grace, in that both make the person a more congruous receiver of grace without obliging God to give them grace as a reward. Merit of condignity he equated to the scriptural sense of worthy, suggesting a Scotist interpretation of this as '*ex pacto*', with its meritorious nature resulting from God's decree and free acceptance.⁷⁸ Baxter was also adamant that the scholastic doctrine of merits he adhered to denied any form of merit from commutative justice, making all human merit subordinate to that of Christ. As he put it, and here he did differ considerably from Trent, without the gracious pardoning acceptance of Christ any one of man's 'good' works would be enough to send him down to hell.⁷⁹

⁷² Baxter, *Saving Faith*, 84; cf. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 327-8.

⁷³ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 290-2.

⁷⁴ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.266-70.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *Confession*, 70-4.

⁷⁶ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 327; cf. Baxter, *Scripture Gospel Defended*, 296-7. Interestingly Heiko Oberman points to the Scotist influence on the Tridentine doctrine of justification ('Duns Scotus, Nominalism and the Council of Trent', in Bonansea and Ryan, *Duns Scotus*, 311-44).

⁷⁷ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.276-7; cf. Ingham, 'Letting Scotus Speak for Himself', 200-3.

⁷⁸ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.267.

⁷⁹ Baxter, *Confession*, 72; cf. *Catholick Theologie*, II.270.

Prominent then in Baxter's reordering of the doctrine of justification is his Scotist and Nominalist account of the covenant and of God's merciful acceptance of human works.⁸⁰ This he quite naturally seeks to place within a Trinitarian context. Thus in his *Catholick Theologie* Baxter points out that the standard Aristotelian division between commutative and distributive justice is 'narrow, ambiguous' and 'inept' and that the 'true distribution of justice is from the three grand moral relations' (i.e. Owner, Rector and Benefactor). Thus God is said to have a right to ourselves, our obedience and our love and gratitude, and our merits and demerits are denominated variously and *ex pacto* with respect to these relations.⁸¹ Here again then we find a subtle combination of Baxter's Nominalised Scotism and his Trinitarian perspective. Finally, and in a similar vein, it is notable that although Baxter's doctrine of justification is in some respects highly eclectic, in his mature thought the whole is given coherence through his Trinitarian perspective. In particular it may be viewed according to both a temporal and conceptual unfolding of faith's internal dynamic.⁸²

This brings us to sanctification and the breaking-in of the Kingdom of Glory upon the Kingdom of Grace. Although strictly the Kingdom of Glory has an eschatological referent, to apply such a rigid division would belie Baxter's Trinitarian framework of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification and have the effect of pushing the principal work of the Holy Spirit out of the sphere of this world, something entirely contrary to Scripture:

*Regnum NATURAE CREATORIS fuit Regnum POTENTIAE eminentis, sed cum coequali Sapientia, et Amore conjunctae. Regnum GRATIAE REDEMPTORIS fuit Regnum Sapientiae (Medicinalis) cum coequali Potentia et Amore. Et ante Christum Incarnatum Sapientia regulativa cum Potentia terribili magis eminebat. At postea magis Sapientia cum Amore. Quia post Spiritus Sancti effusionem Regnum Gratiae et Sapientiae fuit quasi propolis, crepusculam, arrhabo Regni Gloruae. Sed REGNUM GLORIAE est REGNUM AMORIS eminentissimi, etiamsi cum coequali Potentia et Sapientia. Eius Regimen ergo est opus AMORIS EMINENTISSIMI.*⁸³

⁸⁰ Cf. Muller, 'Covenant and Conscience', 331.

⁸¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.274.

⁸² Baxter thus says obedience is present in faith virtually or '*in semine*' but faith is in obedience as 'the life of the tree is in the fruit' (*Confession*, 54).

⁸³ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.375.

There is, then, a substantial overlap between the Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory, effected by the Holy Spirit.

Within the Kingdom of Grace, the work of the Holy Spirit is carried out under the eminency of the Son, a point which Baxter stresses in his discussion of sanctification.⁸⁴ It is Jesus, rising from the dead and ascending to glory, who attains the right from the Father of sending the Holy Spirit and with the Father pours out the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit therefore, of course, includes the work of the whole Trinity:

*Sicut operatio Filii non excludit, sed includit operationem Patris; ita et operatio (et honor itidem) Spiritus Sancti includit operationem Patris et Filii (et eorum operandi gloriam): A Patre enim et Filio etiam in operando ad extra procedit vel datur Spiritus Sanctus.*⁸⁵

While the Holy Spirit is therefore active in all of God's works inseparably from the Father and the Son, it is sanctification in which he has a special role.

Within Baxter's theology, justification and sanctification are almost two sides of the same coin. Almost, but not quite, for Baxter is clear that along with considerable overlap there are also significant differences between the two:

*At in negotio sanctificationis, res longe aliter se habet. Ibi enim fidei actus operatur iuxta naturam objecti. Ad sanctificationem fides operatur per propriam efficientiam, etiam in ipsum intellectum fere per modum naturae, et in voluntatem per modum objecta ostendentis, moraliter et metaphorice saltem. Cum credo Dei bonitatem, fides amorem suscitatur, cum fidelitatem fiduciam, cum majestatem obedientiam, etc. At non ita in jure beneficiorum obtinendo, ubi fides solum conditio est sine qua non, et foedus seu testamentum instrumentum efficiens est; et Deus omnia beneficia sua donavit quoad jus, sub integra una conditione fidei in Christum qua Christum: et ex una hac indivisa fide, per unam promissionem seu foedus, jus ad plurima beneficia, modis plurimis per Christum procurata, conceduntur.*⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.216.

⁸⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.213.

⁸⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.329-30.

However, while both differ according to the efficiency of faith, it is clear that they are extremely tightly interwoven in Baxter's theology, with both ultimately stemming from faith's Trinitarian nature and ground.

Sanctification as holiness, whether active, habitual or relative, is thus described by Baxter with reference to the Trinity:

*Est activa, dispositiva, et relativa separatio (dedicatio, devotio) hominis ad Deum ut Patrem nostrum, id est, ad Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, ut sui ad Dominum, ut subditi ad Regem, ut amici et beneficiarii ad Amatorem, Benefactorem et summe Amabilem; in sancta vitalitate, lumine, et amore, per Spiritus Sancti vivificationem, illuminationem et conversionem in nobis operatis; aversionem itidem a carne, mundo et diabolo, ut Dei et sanctitatis adversariis, includens.*⁸⁷

Simplifying this even further, Baxter refers in biblical fashion to loving God with one's whole mind, heart and strength as the true description of sanctification.⁸⁸ Sanctification is therefore nothing less than that complete submission to the Triune God according to which the whole Trinity comes to inhabit and indwell the soul of the believer. It is the perfecting of the image of God lost and almost completely effaced in the traumatic events of the Fall. As Baxter summarises, 'the Gracious Redeemer hath his standing witness in the sanctified, even his Holy Spirit, the divine nature, the new creature, the image of God, the Father, Son and Spirit dwelling in them, by divine Life, Light and Love, so as shall keep up a Church of holy ones to Christ, in despite of all the powers of Hell'.⁸⁹ Sanctification, in other words, represents the highest possible earthly fulfilment of the Triune Baptismal Covenant.

By its very nature, sanctification establishes the Church as a community in fellowship with the Triune God. The life of the sanctified Church is thus thoroughly Trinitarian, constituted by the evangelical law given by the Father, administered by the Son and dispensed by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, in subordination to its Head, its ministers fulfil Christ's prophetic, priestly and kingly ministries by participating in the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love and manifesting these both

⁸⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.215.

⁸⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.195.

⁸⁹ Baxter, *More Reasons*, 33-4.

within and without.⁹⁰ This is true also of the Church's sacraments, with Baptism representing the initial covenanting with the Triune God and Holy Communion its enriching and deepening.⁹¹ This Trinitarian order extends from the microscopic to the macroscopic scale and thus from individual families, in which the father is subordinate Dominus, Rector and Benefactor, to the level of Church councils and the universal Church.⁹² The impact of the Church is seen outside its walls in the political structures of Christendom, with the engines of government themselves reflecting both the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love and the Governmental relations of Owner, Rector and Benefactor.⁹³ This gives the mission of the Church a pronounced Trinitarian thrust – the conversion and baptism of society for the glory of the Triune God.⁹⁴

Entering the fullness of the Kingdom of Glory, here the Holy Spirit is truly eminent, although of course his work is inseparable from that of the Father and the Son.⁹⁵ This is therefore the consummation of the reign of the Trinity, marking the very peak of divine government. With all God's enemies vanquished God the Father as Omnipotent Dominus is free perfectly to enjoy his own, wholly purified from sin, in whom shines the image and glory of his own omnipotence. God the Son, as Most Wise Rector, sees the work of reparation and salvation completed, yet retains the honour in his bought works. He will always shine on the City of God as its most perfect Sun and in his light the blessed will live for eternity with the greatest delight as the image and glory of his wisdom. Finally, God the Holy Spirit, the Most Loved Benefactor, communicates fervours of love to the blessed, filling them to the utmost with beatitude and revealing to them the divine goodness. By the magnetic attraction of his love he compels them to give back the same love, so that they become the image and glory of his goodness.⁹⁶ In this way God takes complacency in his own Power, Wisdom and Love.

⁹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.228-9.

⁹¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.97-107.

⁹² Baxter, *Methodus*, III.224-7, 230-9.

⁹³ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.240-7; *A Holy Commonwealth*, c. 1-6.

⁹⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.228-30.

⁹⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.371-5.

⁹⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.377.

The state of the blessed in the Kingdom of Glory is therefore to behold in final complacency the glory of the Triune God and of his Power, Wisdom and Love. As such they enjoy unimpaired fellowship with God, receiving from him by the Holy Spirit the most perfect communication of his Power, Wisdom and Love through vital energy, illumination and holy love. Through this ineffable communion the threefold faculties of their souls and consequently their relation to God as Dominus, Rector and Benefactor are now finally made whole, rendered free from all impediments of sin and imperfection. Likewise their body, now glorified, is no longer in rebellion and works in perfect harmony with its regent triune soul.⁹⁷ Perfectly beholding the face of God they perfectly know his will:

Leges ibi erunt radii divini luminis, amoris et potentiae activae, ad mentem et voluntatem pertingentes, et ibi se communicando, divinam voluntatem inscribentes; et magis operationes efficaces erunt, quam signa tantum moraliter agentia, ut in Regno Sapientiae...leges hae mentibus insculptae, erunt natura sancta et obediens.

Such a nature Baxter says will be love itself but conjoined with vital power and wisdom in the greatest perfection, allowing the greatest possible communion with divine Power, Wisdom and Love. Furthermore the dictates of this nature will be such that freedom and happiness will perfectly co-exist, so that any sin or violation of this law of love will be morally impossible. As Baxter summarises, ‘*AMARE et AMARI erunt Regni Gloriam et LEX et OPUS et Finis perpetuo fruendus*’.⁹⁸ In this we see the true passing over of law into love, the intimations of which we have seen throughout our discussion of the threefold Kingdom, as well as the eschatological fulfilment of the Triune Baptismal Covenant, revealing this as both *finis* and *initium* of the Christian life.

4. God’s Operations on Man’s Soul

So far we have only considered the global and objective side of Baxter’s soteriology. For as rich and complex as we have seen his doctrine of the *Regnum Dei* to be we have not yet described the personal, and, to use the word very carefully, subjective

⁹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.372.

⁹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.375.

side of his soteriology.⁹⁹ This final section will therefore be something of a recapitulation of all that we have just discussed, as seen from the perspective of the individual believer rather than the Kingdom of God. In this we shall see fully the interaction of the Triune God and the triune believer, as founded solely on the divine prevenient initiative.

Here then we see all the elements of Baxter's worldview coming together into one coherent whole. Tracing the shape of this powerful synthesis will allow us finally to rebut the charge of moralism levelled against Baxter. For we shall see that all the emphasis he places on merit and the role of works in justification is radically undercut by his Trinitarian and Augustinian account of grace. Furthermore this allows us to establish a new paradigm for our understanding of Baxter's theology, building on, but in its Trinitarian scope going beyond, earlier perspectives. This, especially, refocuses our attention on the centrality of the Triune Baptismal Covenant and the shape of the Christian life of faith, hope and love as it is lived in the prospect of glory. Finally, passing beyond the shores of this world into the realm of glory itself, we see the Christian transfigured, gazing on the Triune God. Through this Beatific Vision, or more aptly Beatific embrace – which Baxter construes in a wholly Scotist fashion – love becomes the primary dynamic of eternal life, as it represents the convergence and profoundly ineffable union of the Holy God and sanctified man.

4.1. Divine Concurrence and Premotion

Baxter's understanding of God's operation on man's soul begins with his account of divine concurrence and premotion. Concurrence refers to God's participation in his creatures' actions not only so as to conserve them and all relevant features of their action in existence but so as to make a genuine causal contribution to their acts so that they may be said in some sense to be produced immediately by both God and creatures. It is to be distinguished on the one hand from occasionalism, which holds that God alone causes effects in nature with no causal contribution from the creature, and on the other hand from conservationism, which holds that the creature alone

⁹⁹ I use the word 'subjective' simply to indicate the relationship with God as viewed from the subject's perspective rather than from that of salvation history.

causes effects in nature with God acting only to conserve them and their powers in existence. Concurrence itself was usually further divided into general concurrence, referring to God's concurrence with all things, and special concurrence, referring only to his concurrence with acts of salvific value.¹⁰⁰

Divine premotion is a particular species of concurrence signifying 'a divine motion by which our will is reduced from the potency of willing to the act of willing'.¹⁰¹ More specifically it is a motion passively received in the secondary cause by which this is induced to act according to its nature, and is not to be confused either with the divine uncreated action or the action of the secondary cause itself. In the case of man's free will it is divine premotion which causes him to act freely. Premotion was considered to be causally prior to the action of the secondary cause although simultaneous with it. According to the Thomists this premotion was both physical and predetermining. In it, therefore, God moved the will physically according to its own inclination, not morally by way of 'objective attraction', and in an irresistible fashion, causing the created will to enact freely but infallibly God's eternal purposes and decrees.¹⁰²

Throughout his works Baxter is vehement in his opposition to a physical account of premotion, a doctrine he lays at the door of both the Dominicans and the Hobbists. At first sight these make unlikely bedfellows. However, although recognising their very different motivations, Baxter is adamant that both espouse an account in which all human actions are regarded as being physically necessitated, whether by God in the case of the Dominicans or a prior chain of causes in the case of Hobbes.¹⁰³ Here we shall focus mainly on the Dominican and Thomist doctrine which Baxter refutes at length in the *Catholick Theologie* and elsewhere.¹⁰⁴ For since the cruder Hobbist version of physical premotion was more obviously beyond the pale, Baxter tends to concentrate his attention on its subtler companion.

¹⁰⁰ Sleight et al., 'Determinism', 1200-1; Alfred Freddoso, 'God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Why Conservation is not Enough', *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991), 553-4.

¹⁰¹ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination: The Meaning of Predestination in Scripture and the Church* (London: B. Herder, 1946), 259.

¹⁰² Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 256-92.

¹⁰³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.21, 26-9, 84; I.iii.18, 31, 37-42, 80-100.

¹⁰⁴ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.80 ff.

For Baxter the doctrine of ‘divine physical efficient predetermination’ – to give it its full title – brings with it two consequences entirely destructive of morality and the Christian faith. The first, and without doubt most serious, is that it makes God responsible for sin and thus blasphemously contravenes his holiness. In his own theology Baxter was particularly exercised to avoid this pitfall.¹⁰⁵ To his mind, however, the Dominicans became unavoidably snared by their doctrine of physical premotion. For if God physically determines every human act then it becomes impossible to say that God is not the author of sin.¹⁰⁶

An almost equally devastating corollary of physical premotion was the complete undercutting of any notion of free will. For, even if such premotion is only taken as applying with respect to good or salvific acts, it still exerts unacceptable pressure on the will, squeezing out any viable notion of human freedom. The result is that man is reduced to a machine, his dignity and responsibility utterly stripped from him.¹⁰⁷ This is seen particularly clearly in Hobbes’s thought of course, and indeed was recognised as one of its chief dangers by his contemporary opponents, but Baxter also maintains it as a consequence, however unwitting, of the Dominican doctrine. As he says, if it is asserted to be naturally impossible for the will to determine itself without physical predetermination from God, then this clearly destroys the will’s freedom to will contraries, reducing the free act of the will to nothing more than the ‘natural motion of the will caused by the necessitating cause of nature’. This, he says, is identical to the ‘doctrine of infamous Hobbes’.¹⁰⁸

Instead of acting by physical premotion Baxter holds that God operates on the human soul morally. By this he does not mean the ‘mere moral suasion’ of the Arminians, but rather God’s ability to render a future act infallibly certain through moral means without physical predetermination or any violation of man’s free will. Here Baxter stresses that the power of determining itself as immediate efficient cause is essential to the will itself. By contrast the intellect and the object of the will are said to

¹⁰⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.62-72, 270-8; *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.84-115; I.iii.57-62.

¹⁰⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.29.

¹⁰⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.284.

¹⁰⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.272.

determine it only morally and finally.¹⁰⁹ It seems likely therefore that the essential difference between moral and physical premotion is that between the efficiency of power (God's direct action on the will) and the efficiency of wisdom and love conjoined with the operation of final causation. Indeed we noted above the mystical nature of such causation for Baxter, operating as if by magnetic attraction, through love drawing the will to its goal.¹¹⁰ Baxter does not enlarge further on any mechanisms for this but he did believe it possible for a habit to be strong enough to determine the will without absolutely necessitating it, so that by conferring such gracious habits God is able to determine the will morally and infallibly.¹¹¹

By his own confession Baxter's doctrine of moral concurrence mirrors that of Scotus and the Scotists.¹¹² Scotus held that through his love God can infallibly draw us to act and yet still preserve our freedom, since such an act is simply the will acting according to its own nature and highest end.¹¹³ Indeed, like Scotus, Baxter believed that God's moral predetermining action perfected the will's liberty.¹¹⁴ This he placed in stark contrast to the physical predetermination of the Dominicans which according to Baxter's Scotist understanding could only be a violation of the will's liberty. Overall, therefore, it might be said that for Baxter the Dominican doctrine of physical premotion represented the category mistake of applying physical causation to moral processes.¹¹⁵

Baxter further develops this account in terms of two kinds of divine causation: natural causation by universal concourse and special causation through grace or miraculous intervention, which clearly correspond to the general and special concurrence highlighted above. Through natural causation Baxter held that God as the first cause of nature only concurs to the act as act and does not cause its moral species, whereas through special causation God causes holy acts in the regenerate, determining their moral species. By separating these two kinds of causation Baxter

¹⁰⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.312.

¹¹⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.7-9.

¹¹¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.32.

¹¹² Baxter, *Methodus*, III.273-4.

¹¹³ Garrigou-Lagrangé, *Predestination*, 113-4.

¹¹⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.304.

¹¹⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.15.

was therefore able to claim quite consistently that God is not the cause of evil moral actions.¹¹⁶

Baxter understood such natural causation as God's conservation of the substances, formal natures, powers, natural qualities, objects, concauses and necessary circumstances of all agents by continuous sustaining and active influx, describing this as the universal concourse sufficient to act. It was his view, contrary to the Thomists,¹¹⁷ that powers are naturally inclined to action and therefore they are able to act without any further influence. However this did not mean that the will exercised its power of self-determination independently from God. For universal divine concourse remained a necessary (but not sufficient) requirement for the will's self-determination. Moving from natural divine to special divine causation we find that here God not only enables the action of the will but also efficaciously and infallibly determines its moral specifying act. Indeed to deny infallible special divine causation would call into question both divine providence and divine power, since for Baxter it is axiomatic that the scope of God's omnipotence extends to anything which does not entail a logical contradiction.¹¹⁸

Here, as he explicitly admits, Baxter draws his doctrine from both Durandus and Scotus. His view of general concourse is therefore in all essentials the same as Durandus' conservationism.¹¹⁹ While most theologians were opposed to this, viewing it as inconsistent with the theory of concurrence, Baxter considers Durandus' view as entirely consonant with Scotist and other forms of concurrentism. He therefore interprets God's continual conservation of man's powers and being in Durandus' account as equivalent to Scotus' doctrine that God is a partial (although superior) concause of all human actions.¹²⁰ According to this God accommodates himself to the nature of the free will that he has created, coordinating his action with his creature's such that both are partial, but not total, causes of any act of the creature. A common and picturesque analogy used to explain this was that of two

¹¹⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.310-11.

¹¹⁷ Sleight et al., 'Determinism', 1200.

¹¹⁸ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.51, 72.

¹¹⁹ For this see Durandus of St. Pourçain, *In Sententias Theologicas Petri Lombardi* (Lyon, 1556), 2 d. 1, q. 5.

¹²⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.312-3.

men drawing a boat out of the water, in which the coordinated action of both is necessary for the desired effect. The failure of a beneficial action to obtain may then be described as a deficiency in the inferior human cause, and a negative action may be ascribed to God only as partial, conserving cause.¹²¹

In summary Baxter's combination of Scotist and Durandist tenets had the advantage of allowing God to infallibly determine the will without violating its integrity as a self-determining power. Here the difference between moral and efficient causation was vital and this we have already seen to be rooted in Baxter's Trinitarian reflections.¹²² Baxter's discussion of moral concurrence therefore represents a powerful synthesis of Scotist-Durandist concepts with his own Trinitarian metaphysics.

4.2. Grace and Habitual Mechanisms

God's operation on the soul through moral means is the cornerstone of Baxter's doctrine of grace. As the complement of divine predestination God's prevenient grace represents the enacting in time of his sovereign will to save those he has chosen. While objectively, through the death of Christ upon the Cross, God's offer of salvation is universal, Baxter is always clear that only the elect will be finally saved and that they alone receive grace which works infallibly. In this way Baxter retains a strongly Augustinian framework to his soteriology, stressing always God's prevenient initiative and the utter impossibility of earning salvation.

Baxter describes this using the scholastic language of habits and habitual mechanisms. His understanding of these, as we have seen, reconfigures the conventional account in a way conforming to his metaphysics of the divine principles, conferring on habits a Trinitarian structure and dynamic. This is crucial, for it provides the necessary connection between the divine operations and the soul's response. Baxter's language of habits thus fleshes out his broader account of moral causation.

¹²¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.79-80; cf. Scotus, *Ord.* 2 d. 37, q. 2.

¹²² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.304, 312.

It is axiomatic to Baxter's metaphysics to suggest both that threefold agents act on threefold subjects in a threefold manner,¹²³ and that the higher nature always acts on the lower. Nowhere is the conjunction of these two principles seen more clearly or more significantly than in the interaction of the Triune God and triune man. God is of course the highest cause, compared to whose perfect activity everything else is to be considered passive. As such he also acts through a variety of threefold causes and instruments. Firstly, he acts directly on the human soul according to his divine essence.¹²⁴ This action Baxter considers either in scriptural terms, according to the Trinity of Persons working in the life of the believer, or metaphysically, according to the Trinity of Principles, through their contact with man's own threefold faculties and habits, enacting and ennobling human activity. However any separation between these two perspectives is entirely artificial. For when Baxter describes the action of Christ and the Holy Spirit on the believer, he not only describes the intimate connection between the work of Christ and the Spirit – with Christ as the mediator between God and man obtaining the benefit of the Spirit and pouring him out on those whom he chooses – but he also characterises the activity of both according to the Trinity of Principles so that both Christ and the Spirit are seen to be essential Power, Wisdom and Love acting on the human soul.¹²⁵

Likewise Baxter places the conjunction of Word and Spirit in the believer's heart within a similar framework of Triune causes. Thus the Word or Gospel is God's primary instrument, bearing the inherent stamp of his Power, Wisdom and Love, operating in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, who works through the Word to bring the truth to bear:

No other doctrine could it self bear Gods image of Power, Wisdome and Goodness so exactly, nor make such an impresse of the same image on the souls of men: Nay, though this same doctrine by the Spirit of God be adopted to such an effect, yet would it not do it for want of powerfull application, if God by the same Spirit did not set it home: so that the sanctification and renovation of souls, is a divine attestation of this sacred Gospel. And besides all the past testimonies (of Christs and his Apostles miracles) here is a double testimony from God still vouchsafed

¹²³ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.117.

¹²⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.127-8.

¹²⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.10-12.

to all true believers to the end of the world; the one is Gods image on the holy Scriptures; the other is, the same image by this Scripture (and the Spirit that indited it) printed on all true Christians souls. Divine Power, Wisdome and Goodnesse, hath imprinted it self first upon the sacred word, or doctrine, and by that produceth unimitably, holy Life, Light and Love in holy souls.¹²⁶

Here then we see clearly God's Triune action in the Holy Spirit, through the Word as both instrumental and intrinsically dynamic, communicating itself to the soul of the believer and engendering life, light and love in man's threefold faculties of vital-active-power, intellect and will. This action, as we shall see below, is conceived of by Baxter as a holy, indwelling nature and in biblical terms represents the fellowshiping of man with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Baxter is clear that a necessary precondition to any discussion of divine operations on the soul is a proper understanding of the nature of grace. As a new power given to the soul Baxter holds that the grace must be of a different species to the soul's own powers, and cannot be any kind of created substance or spirit but rather a kind of accident.¹²⁷ Importantly grace's accidental character is indicative of man's entire dependence on God, and not on his own natural resources, for spiritual life.

Although he considers the nature and operation of grace as a spiritual accident, thoroughly mysterious, Baxter nevertheless attempts to capture something of it by analogy to physical motion. Following a broadly Aristotelian understanding he believes that motion was communicated from one body to another through contact and through the active impression of a formal virtue, which when transferred becomes inherent in the second body. Extending the analogy, Baxter suggests that spiritual operation also occurs through transcendent contact and motion, and especially by the communication of a 'spiritual *vis impressa*'. This he describes as a passive excitation from which action follows, or in technical language an '*excitatio facultatum excitata*' as distinct from an '*excitatio Dei excitans*'.¹²⁸ This concept of spiritual impress is as far as Baxter will go in seeking to describe God's primary operation on man's soul, but it is enough, at least, to demonstrate the absolute

¹²⁶ Baxter, *More Reasons*, 30-1.

¹²⁷ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.87-8.

¹²⁸ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.88-9.

prevenience of divine grace. It is enough also, as we shall now see, to lay the foundation for Baxter's subsequent account of the complex internal dynamic of the habits arising from grace.

For Baxter, spiritual impress is itself threefold in character, as befits the triple formal virtue of active natures. Therefore the Spirit of God, through excitation, communicates to the three faculties of the soul an impressed force for vital-activity, intellection and volition, through which the faculties are 'suscitated to holy activity, knowledge and love; the habit of which is holy life, and light, and love abiding'. In this way sanctifying grace is said to repair each of the three faculties damaged by the effects of human sin, with the Holy Spirit quickening, illuminating and converting the soul with love.¹²⁹

The first effect of the divine spiritual impress on the soul is the excitation of action. This excitation differs in degree and is constrained by a whole variety of factors. Here Baxter's integrated psychology especially comes into play, so that the motions of the faculties are inseparably linked to the motions of the igneous spirits within man, with the faculties stirring up the spirits and the spirits facilitating the smooth excitation and action of the faculties. Baxter therefore attributes a significant share to the sensitive faculties, namely the emotions and passions, in all effectual operation or conversion.¹³⁰ It seems that the impress of grace triggers a kind of chain reaction moving down from man's intellectual faculties and rippling through his sensitive faculties to encompass the whole of his being.

According to Baxter's understanding, the exciting of acts within man's soul precedes the formation of any habits. However, holding this view did not prevent him from using the traditional scholastic language of acquired and infused habits. He simply modifies this so that an infused act or acts – those excited by the spiritual impress we have been discussing – goes before the subsequent establishing of an infused habit. Yet it must also be said that in Baxter's usage the distinction between acquired and infused habits is pared down to a minimum. For as he insists infused habits (usually)

¹²⁹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.89-90.

¹³⁰ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.90-91.

have the same mode of acquisition as acquired habits and are certainly of the same species.¹³¹

This common mode of acquisition he describes as follows:

Motion tendeth to further motion. One act of the soul disposeth it to or furthereth another. And as water that hath got a chanel, is set in motion, floweth still the same way, and fire by burning, the more forcibly proceedeth to burn; so the soul by acting, the more readily holdeth on that course of action.¹³²

Here it is the igneous spirits particularly which become the channel for the active intellect and will to flow in. In these terms the soul's inbuilt inclination towards the true and the good act is a kind of natural gravity or *pondus*, enabling the very spiritual 'flux' necessary for habit formation.¹³³

Beyond this however Baxter is clear that habit formation is complex and operates on a number of levels. In fact he distinguishes as many as ten different excitations and propensities likely to be involved. Thus while the essence of a habit stems from the cumulative reinforcing (to various degrees) of the soul's natural inclination to act, Baxter also makes a fascinating distinction between its surface manifestation and its motivational depths. Thus in any generic act of understanding and will, directed towards an end and including the election of means, Baxter suggests that one of these (generally the will *ad finem*) is usually deep and most of the time goes unobserved sensibly, while the other is uppermost and attended by motions of the spirits, senses and phantasy. Yet it is the underlying tidal tug of this 'deep insensible action', rather than the unstable, surface froth of sensible motions, which predominates in the habit. This primary action Baxter describes as the soul 'knowing it self, loving it self, intending its own felicity, deeply, secretly, insensibly, without using the memory and imagination'. It is such, he says, 'that a man may doubt whether it be not the very thing which we call a habit'.

Significantly the metaphysical root of a habit may be found in the continuous reflexive act of a soul knowing and loving itself. For an infused habit this immanent,

¹³¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.202.

¹³² Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.91.

¹³³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.92.

reflexive act is that excited and sustained by God and continually directed towards him as ultimate goal and is undoubtedly the operation of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁴ We might add that the habit's reflexive nature is again suggestive of its intrinsic Trinitarian form, and goes some considerable way to explaining the mediation of action between God and man.

Now returning to his original question concerning the nature of grace Baxter describes both God's received influx and the habits of grace in the soul as a moral or analogical power 'necessary to the natural powers performance of the act', although not of the same species as man's own natural powers. Such moral power falls short of both act and habit, for as a potency it determines only the *a priori* possibility of action and not the enacting of the action itself. It is thus perfectly possible to be morally potent towards a salvific action and yet never perform it. Yet if the imparting of moral power should eventually lead to sustained salvific action then it surely represents the necessary, although insufficient, predisposition to that infallible moral premotion which we have already seen Baxter espouse. To emphasise it once again, therefore, grace is but the excitation of man's own power and only morally and analogically a power in its own right. Similarly a habit is less than man's own natural powers in point of substantiality since it is merely an accident, but is more than both natural and moral power in order of perfection to the act, since it ensures prompt action and not just action itself or its mere possibility.¹³⁵

Baxter's complex account of divine operation affirms two important theological principles. Firstly he makes it clear that his discussion of the difference between natural and moral power, grounded as we have seen on habitual mechanisms, is, in his view, sufficient to establish an Augustinian rather than Pelagian soteriology. Thus to the question of whether every man is able to believe and love God, he answers that every man has a natural faculty with sufficient natural power to do so supposing the presence of necessary concurrents. Yet he also insists that although an unwilling will has natural power to act otherwise than it does, since it is morally indisposed it cannot do so unless God assists it or turns it by his grace. Since all

¹³⁴ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.92.

¹³⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.92-9.

human wills are habitually indisposed through original sin it follows that no one can believe salvifically without God's grace. The advantage of this conception of natural and moral power, Baxter suggests, is therefore that it allows a proper Augustinian distinction to be made between power and will, with the will itself said to have a proper and natural power to act but its habits and acts better known by the name of willingness and unwillingness than of power. For Baxter this conception exposes the weakness of the extreme Calvinist and Arminian positions on this question. Thus on the one hand the Calvinists say that no wicked man has the power to repent and so by calling grace a power say that God damns man for not doing what he is utterly unable to do, making God unjust. On the other hand the Arminians do not make grace a determiner of the will, but, by saying it gives man a power, affirm that by his own free will man is able to decide to make use of it or not as he chooses. In this way Baxter says they reduce grace to a common thing like nature and open the door to Pelagianism.¹³⁶

Secondly the habitual mechanisms that Baxter proposes are vital for his conception of the divine nature. Although from the part of man grace appears as an accident or an analogical superadded power, Baxter makes it clear that '*ex parte Dei*' this divine influx is commonly thought to be 'nothing but God himself'.¹³⁷ This follows both from the doctrine of divine simplicity and from his denial of Aureolus' claim that the divine operations are intermediate between the Creator and created.¹³⁸ Grace is therefore not only the action of God but God himself indwelling and empowering the soul. In this light the network of interconnecting habits excited and sustained by God, yet intrinsic to the soul, constitute the divine nature given to man as a gift. The habits therefore characterise the manner in which the Trinity is said to indwell man's soul.

With this realisation we return to what we have proposed as the central theme of Baxter's theology: the Triune Baptismal Covenant. Again and again in his later writings Baxter makes it clear that the central Christian act is the heart covenant between the believer and the Triune God secured in man's three faculties of

¹³⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.96-9.

¹³⁷ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.93.

¹³⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.128.

understanding, will and practice. This he says must be a ‘delivering up of yourself to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost’. Its practical expression is ‘a resolution for obedience’ which is ‘absolute and peremptory’, ‘an unchangeable everlasting covenant’, a ‘reliance on the sufficiency of Christ’ and ‘a habitual resolution to prove you have a new nature inclined and habituated to God’.¹³⁹ It involves particularly the habitual consent of the Christian to all the relations and duties owed to God the Trinity as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier and Owner, Rector and Benefactor. It is formed only when a habitual predominant love of God and Christ over self is established.¹⁴⁰ This is the tipping-point, if you will, when not only is man’s natural power converted to moral power, but when this moral power is itself activated by grace to form the habitual and, by God’s sovereignty for the elect, unbreakable filial bond between the Triune God and triune man. In this way the habit of holiness formed through grace, rooted as it is in the threefold habits of vital-active power, intellect and will, may be viewed as the experiential and subjective aspect of the Triune Baptismal Covenant. In other words Baxter’s language of habits and habitual mechanisms is simply the metaphysical expression of the Christian’s union and fellowship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5. The Trinitarian Dynamic of Faith, Hope and Love

In the course of his discussion of the manner of God’s working by spiritual impress and habits Baxter alludes to the scholastic controversy over whether grace and the theological virtues really differ. Here Baxter firmly repudiates the Thomist view that grace is a gift of the Holy Spirit implanted immediately into the essence of the soul and therefore to be really distinguished from the accidental virtues. In his opinion, supported by the Thomist Malderus, Aquinas’ account of a real distinction between grace and the theological virtues correlates with his prior assumption of a real distinction between the soul and its powers. Unsurprisingly Baxter is much more sympathetic to the Scotist-Durandist account which held that man’s (infused) holy

¹³⁹ Richard Baxter, *Directions for a Sound Conversion* in William Orme, *The Practical Works of the Rev Richard Baxter* (London, 1830), VIII.460.

¹⁴⁰ Baxter, *CD*, I.188-91.

nature, the prior habit of grace, is identical to, and at most formally distinct from, the theological virtues of faith, hope and love themselves.¹⁴¹

Such an intimate connection between the Trinitarian habitual mechanism of grace and the theological virtues strongly implies that Baxter's account of the latter will also be found amenable to a Trinitarian analysis. He confirms this explicitly in his *Reasons* saying:

He that will give you a scheme of divinity in the true method, will but shew you how all God's works and laws flow from these three essentialities or principles; and the three great relations founded in them... And how all our duty is branch'd out accordingly in our correlations: He will shew you the Trinity of Graces, faith, hope and love; and the three summary rules, the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue; and, in a word, would shew you, that the Trinity revealeth it self through the whole frame of true Theology or Morality.¹⁴²

In theological history it was by no means uncommon to treat the theological virtues as wholly interconnected and mutually conditioning. As alluded to in the first chapter, a prominent example of this is to be found in Augustine's *Enchiridion*. It was also not entirely unprecedented to suggest a link between them and the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love, as may be seen from the *De Statu Domus Dei* of the twelfth-century Benedictine Potho Prumiensis.¹⁴³ An even more striking example may be found in Comenius whose *Consultatio Catholica* correlates man's *posse*, *scire* and *velle* with faith, hope and love, in a one-to-one correspondence with hope linked to *posse*, faith to *scire* and love to *velle*.¹⁴⁴

Aquinas' and Scotus' scholastic reflections on the theological virtues, both rooted in the Augustinian tradition, provide an important base of comparison for Baxter. Aquinas offers a threefold definition of the theological virtues as those virtues which i) have God as their object, in that they direct us aright to him, ii) are infused by God

¹⁴¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.90.

¹⁴² Baxter, *Reasons*, 374.

¹⁴³ See Baxter, *Methodus*, I.103.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Dagmar Čapková, 'Comenius and his Ideals: Escape from the Labyrinth', in Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (ed.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 90.

alone and iii) are revealed only by divine revelation.¹⁴⁵ Their purpose, he says, is to direct man to supernatural happiness by perfecting his intellect and will. For this, one habit (faith) is required in the intellect and two in the will: hope, according to which the will is directed towards the end as something attainable and love, according to which the will is joined by spiritual union with the end and even transformed into it.¹⁴⁶ Aquinas further distinguishes the theological virtues according to their order of generation and order of perfection. In the order of generation, according to their acts, faith precedes hope and hope precedes love but in the order of perfection love is the foremost, quickening and perfecting both faith and hope.¹⁴⁷

Scotus also begins his discussion of the theological virtues from a recognition of their connection to man's essential powers. He rejects the position, not even raised by Aquinas, that faith, hope and love could each be habits of individual powers, since hope is manifestly neither an intellectual habit nor a habit of the memory specifically. Significantly, like Aquinas, Scotus also distributes the theological virtues unequally, assigning faith to the intellect and hope and love to the will. In fact he regards hope and love as supernatural habits of the formally distinct *affectio commodi* and *affectio iustitiae*.¹⁴⁸ This is, in fact, similar to Aquinas who also regarded love as the principle by which we adhere to God for his own sake and hope and faith as principles by which we adhere to God for our own benefit.¹⁴⁹

Baxter, as we shall see, like both Aquinas and Scotus rejects a simplistic account of the connection between the powers and the theological virtues, in which the virtues are simply regarded as habits of individual powers. Arguably however his own discussion is even further complicated by the fact that he sees all three of the soul's powers as involved in the act of faith rather than just those of intellect and will. The same is true for his account of hope which cannot, as with Scotus, be simply reduced to a habit of the *affectio commodi*. Nevertheless his own account definitely takes inspiration from these much earlier scholastic discussions and particularly from their

¹⁴⁵ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a2ae62 art. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a2ae62 art. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a2ae62 art. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Scotus, *Rep.* 3 d. 26.

¹⁴⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, 2a2ae17 art. 6, 8.

recognition of an intimate connection between the essential powers and the theological virtues.

For Baxter the treatment of faith, hope and love marks the terminus of his theological system and the fulfilment of his ambitious project.¹⁵⁰ This is fitting for, as we have seen, the habits of faith, hope and love *are* the divine nature itself, the indwelling of the Trinity in man.¹⁵¹ They are therefore not only the terminus of his *Methodus* but its crown and culmination, the rubric under which the whole of the Christian life is encompassed. Having come full circle it is thus apparent that faith, hope and love are the supreme expression of the Triune Baptismal Covenant. As we have intimated, Baxter's attention to them demonstrates perfectly the catechetical shape of his theology. It also justifies our assertion that the Triune Baptismal Covenant is the cardinal doctrine of Baxter's theology, both in its surpassing importance and in its role as 'hinge' between theory and praxis. Furthermore, having now descended a little from the lofty, theoretical heights of Baxter's Trinitarian metaphysics, his claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is the fount of all practical theology is rendered much more perspicuous.

We now turn therefore finally to consider faith, hope and love both separately and in their relation to each other. The result will be a cumulative picture of the theological virtues in their triune interaction. It should be noted that while Baxter was uncertain what role would remain for faith and hope in the Kingdom of Glory, he inclined to William Pemble's view that these virtues would not cease but have their analogues even in heaven.¹⁵² He was certain however that in glory man's own triune faculties will be perfected through his union with the Triune God.

5.1. Faith

Faith according to the epistle to the Hebrews is the 'substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'.¹⁵³ The very essence of faith Baxter suggests is therefore found in the opposition between hope and presence. It is therefore a kind

¹⁵⁰ His treatment of the theological virtues occupy the last chapters of his *Methodus*.

¹⁵¹ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, I.5.

¹⁵² Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.405-7. This is contrary to Aquinas for example (*ST*, 2a2ae18 art. 2).

¹⁵³ Hebrews 11:1 (KJV).

of sight elevating the soul above the way things are or appear, to the way they could be and will be according to the certain promise of God. In this way faith transcends sense and is seen to purify reason.¹⁵⁴ Faith itself rests on divine veracity and gives to man's soul an infallible apprehension and knowledge which is such as to determine the will to its necessary consent and choice, to move the affections and to rule in our lives. As Baxter succinctly puts it, 'faith by beholding this glorious end, doth move all the faculties of the soul'.¹⁵⁵ True faith is therefore 'an effectual spring of a holy life'.¹⁵⁶

It is apparent that faith is not to be thought of as a single act or apprehension, but rather as a principle and way of life sourced in the actions of the Holy Spirit. Baxter suggests that in its capacity to make the invisible and future glory present to the mind faith thus enables their affective and attractive forces to be exerted on the believer's heart. In this way the dignity and power of faith stems principally from its final object, the love and fruition of God.¹⁵⁷ It is already evident then that faith involves a dynamic as it empowers hope and moves through to the fulfilment of love. Likewise since the object of faith, hope and love is things unseen, it follows that faith is the motivating force of the other theological virtues.¹⁵⁸ In both these ways faith is numbered first among the 'Trinity of Graces'. Yet as we shall see faith itself can also be considered in some sense as actuated by hope and love, especially as both are contained in the desire to participate in the glory of the Triune God.

For Baxter, as we alluded to above, faith is the threefold motion of the soul initiated by and directed towards the Triune God as its object. There are hints of this as early as the *Aphorismes* where Baxter describes faith as the 'compleat entire motion of the whole soule, to Christ its object'. Here likewise he held that faith does not involve any partitioning of the offices or work of Christ, but instead is exercised towards Christ as Prophet, Priest and King conjunct, and therefore as both Lord and Saviour.¹⁵⁹ While partially implicit in the holistic perspective of the *Aphorismes*,

¹⁵⁴ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, I.1-3.

¹⁵⁵ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, I.2-4.

¹⁵⁶ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, I.24.

¹⁵⁷ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, I.2-3.

¹⁵⁸ Baxter, *Life of Faith*, I.5.

¹⁵⁹ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 159-66.

especially in the idea of faith as a covenanting with God in Christ, Baxter's full Trinitarian conception of faith is fully seen in his *Methodus*, where he defines it in the following terms:

*Quoniam in omni actu humano seu morali proprie et plene sic dicto, tres facultates semper conjunctim, nulla autem sola operatur, fides igitur in Christum qui dicimur iustificari non unice, sed triplicis facultatis actus aestimandus est; activa, scilicet, intellectualis et voluntaria fiducia.*¹⁶⁰

The very formal nature of faith is thus Trinitarian, involving the threefold action of man's faculties in the assent of intellect, the consent of will and the fiducial obedience of executive power. Likewise faith's object is also Trinitarian: assent, consent and fiducia to the Triune God in all three of the Governmental relations.¹⁶¹ Faith for Baxter is therefore always faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This 'deep structure' of faith, seen especially in its Trinitarian scope and its Triune object, we have already suggested is the result of its covenantal reconfiguring along the lines of the Triune Baptismal Covenant. What is important here is that Baxter's mature redefinition of faith in Trinitarian terms throws particular light on the relation of faith, hope and love. As early as the *Aphorismes* Baxter described the link between faith and other virtues using language and analogies redolent with Trinitarian associations:

Affiance and sincere obedience, and works of love, are the necessary immediate, inseparable products of faith; as heat and light are of fire; or rather as reasoning is the product of reason: or yet rather as actions most properly conjugall, are the effects of conjugall contract.¹⁶²

In this way affiance, love and obedience may be described both as essential to faith and as its (Trinitarian) fruits. Since, as we shall see below, affiance and obedience are intimately linked to hope and love respectively we begin to see implicitly the triune inseparability of faith, hope and love.

We may see further evidence for this in Baxter's discussion of the relation between faith and love. Put briefly Baxter suggests that we must here distinguish between

¹⁶⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.222.

¹⁶¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.258, IV.397.

¹⁶² Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 153-4.

faith taken narrowly or in a larger sense. In narrow terms (as in James 2) faith is often taken as the bare assent of the intellect. If this is so then (narrow) faith differs formally from love as the act of the intellect does from volition. However faith taken in a larger and proper sense conforms, as we have seen, to the Triune Baptismal Covenant. In these terms faith contains the consent of the will and so ‘must needs have some initial love in it as it acteth in desire’. Faith in God contains both desire and volition of God, and thus, as we shall see below, contains both hope and love as well. Nevertheless although faith contains love Baxter is clear that they are distinct virtues and should not be seen as identical. He therefore maintains that formally speaking love presupposes faith rather than contains it. For this reason faith and love may be held to differ according to *ratio formalis*. As Baxter says:

It is eminently called faith, when giving up our souls to Christ to be saved in practical affiance is the great work of the soul, though it have something of love essential to it. And it is eminently called love (morally) when the complacency of the soul in Christ thus trusted, and in God our end, is the great work or business of the soul.¹⁶³

This offers us grounds for suggesting that there might be something like a formal distinction between faith and love, at least in their core significations. If so then conceivably Baxter might consider the relation between faith, hope and love to parallel the Scotist model of the Trinity. This is a point we shall take up further below.

It is apparent therefore that in Baxter’s reconceptualisation of faith we have as many as four different Trinitarian ‘layers’. Firstly, we have his account of faith as relating to all three faculties of man as assent, consent and fiducia. Secondly, beyond this we now have faith as necessarily productive of the formally distinct ‘Trinity of Graces’. Thirdly, we also have a definition of faith which, in its understanding of faith as the sight of things hoped for or desired, implicitly contains this triune dynamic of faith, hope and love. Finally, we have the Triune God as both the object of faith and its final and efficient cause. Furthermore as the *Methodus* suggests faith exists and is

¹⁶³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.ii.83-4.

nourished within a complex network of subordinate triune agents.¹⁶⁴ In these terms it would be hard to imagine a richer Trinitarian understanding of faith.

5.2. Hope

Hope according to Baxter is the anchor of the soul.¹⁶⁵ His writings are saturated with references to the hope of heaven and it is clear that hope is a major theme of his personal faith. Thus although there are few explicit discussions of hope *per se*, in comparison to those concerning faith and love, this does not mean that hope plays a lesser role in Baxter's thought. Indeed, as we shall see, hope is intimately connected to both faith and love as their mutual bond.

In his *Aphorismes*, as we have seen, Baxter holds that some degree of love must be a part of justifying faith and not simply its fruit. For Baxter hope is essentially the love of an object as absent, or in other words the expression of desire for that object. He therefore defines it in the *Methodus* as a composite affection consisting of desire, expectation and inchoate joy or complacency.¹⁶⁶ It follows that hope is inseparably linked to both faith and love. For on the one hand faith is the 'substance of things hoped for', while on the other hope is itself a desire or love for God as in some way absent. Hope is thus the necessary connective between faith and love, binding them inseparably together.

While as we have said it is too simplistic to consider Baxter as correlating the theological virtues to individual powers of the soul, he makes it clear in the *Methodus* that there is a sense in which hope may be regarded as empowering the other virtues. Thus after God has begun to cleanse the soul and to reveal to man the probability of divine things, Baxter suggests he causes a fear of punishment and a desire to evade it. Through these he then excites a certain measure of hope, preceding his gift to the soul of an inclined power of believing as a 'seed of faith'. Hope and the 'seed of faith' excite an act of faith and through frequent acts and the influx of the Holy Spirit a habit of faith, hope and love is effected, increased and

¹⁶⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.397-8.

¹⁶⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.405.

¹⁶⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.401, 5.

confirmed in the soul of the believer.¹⁶⁷ Two things are particularly fascinating about this portrayal of hope: firstly the suggestion that hope is a kind of quasi-power that together with the supernatural seed of faith is sufficient to excite its act and secondly the link that Baxter proposes between hope and fear, which echoes the scholastic tradition.¹⁶⁸ In this way hope is properly viewed as a kind of holy fear.

The link between faith and hope, as well as between both of these and love, is further explored by Baxter under the rubric of affiance. This term, often rendered in Latin as *fiducia*, is used by Baxter in subtly different senses to refer to the ‘essence of faith’, the ‘substance of hope’ and a ‘special volition’.¹⁶⁹ Although this is confusing it at least serves to indicate the intimate connection between the three theological virtues and here especially between faith and hope. Affiance itself is best described as a practical trust in God, whether taken as essential to faith or consequent to faith but inseparably connected to it. Baxter seems to understand it especially as that act of the will which serves to distinguish salvific, heartfelt faith from merely intellectual faith.¹⁷⁰ However he also carefully distinguishes, with Ames and Chamier, between the ‘affiance of faith’ which respects God as present and the ‘affiance of hope’ which respects him as absent. Here therefore the dialectic between presence and absence conditions the relation between faith and hope, preventing them from collapsing into an amorphous identity.¹⁷¹

In his *Life of Faith* Baxter further links affiance to man’s three faculties, so that affiance in the understanding is an assent to the fidelity of the one promising, affiance in the will is an act of election or choice and affiance in the vital power is fortitude or venturing all.¹⁷² It is significant, then, that in his *Right Method* Baxter should remark:

Indeed the schoolmen say that affiance is nothing but strengthened hope. Affiance in the properest sense is the same in substance with hope; only

¹⁶⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.292.

¹⁶⁸ See Aquinas, *ST*, 2a2ae19, 22.

¹⁶⁹ Baxter, *Saving Faith*, 73-6; Richard Baxter, *The Right Method for Settled Peace of Conscience* (London, 1657), 151.

¹⁷⁰ Baxter, *Saving Faith*, 73-7.

¹⁷¹ Baxter, *Saving Faith*, 80-1.

¹⁷² Baxter, *Life of Faith*, III.259; cf. *Saving Faith*, 75.

it more expresseth a respect to the promise, and indeed is faith and hope exprest both together in one word.¹⁷³

Affiance then as practical trust is the blending of faith and hope and yet substantially is hope itself. This indicates a kind of identity between faith and hope and hints at the possibility of a formal distinction between the two in their different referents. Speculating further it seems likely that Baxter may have thought hope itself to have a Trinitarian structure and thus also to be a ‘compleat entire motion of the whole soule’.

Baxter’s reflections on hope give his theology a necessary eschatological thrust. In particular they help to make sense of the providential movement from the Kingdom of Nature through the Kingdom of Grace to the Kingdom of Glory. Hope, like faith and love, is basic and essential to the Christian life. As Baxter suggests, hope both presupposes faith, since nothing can be hoped for unless sincerely believed, and is constrained by it, unable to transcend the degree of faith from which it arises.¹⁷⁴ Likewise hope also presupposes love, for it is ‘nothing but a desirous expectation of the good so promised and believed’.¹⁷⁵ Unlike faith (save through affiance) Baxter never makes the Trinitarian structure of hope explicit. Yet the chapter on hope in the *Methodus* makes clear that hope is also sustained by a complex network of triune connections.¹⁷⁶ Chief among which is the action of the Triune God himself:

*Quantum Spiritus Sancti motu, lumine et calore pleni sumus, tantum coelestium spe iucunda et sitiante pleni erimus. Idem enim est spiritus fidei, spei et amoris, et per influxum suum coelestem, naturam, intellectum et appetitum nobis impertit, et animos ad coelestia semper elevat et attrahit.*¹⁷⁷

There is a beautiful image from a French poem which captures at least something of Baxter’s understanding of hope, whether as connective between faith and love or as their joint empowerer or even its seemingly diminutive status. This is of faith, hope and love as three sisters walking hand in hand. Faith and love are the two elder

¹⁷³ Baxter, *Right Method*, 151.

¹⁷⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.405.

¹⁷⁵ Baxter, *Right Method*, 150.

¹⁷⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.401-5.

¹⁷⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, IV.406.

sisters with hope walking between them. At first it looks like faith and love are pulling their little sister along, but when we look closely it is actually hope as the smallest of the three running ahead and pulling faith and love along with her.¹⁷⁸

5.3. Love

Love according to Baxter is ‘the complacencie of the appetite in apprehended good’ and can be either sensitive or rational depending on the mode of apprehension. As we have seen, the human soul has a natural God-given inclination for self-love and self-preservation. This, we may suspect, corresponds to the deepest foundation of a habit in the soul’s immanent reflexive acts of self-knowledge and self-love. In any case for man this self-love is not merely instinctive but subject to both intellect and will. He is therefore capable of transcending this self-love and acting for the higher good.¹⁷⁹

It is clear from all our previous discussion that man’s love of God is caused by God himself. Just as God uses the fears of punishment and the knowledge of heavenly things to excite hope, so he uses man’s own self-love and desire to avoid harm as a means of exciting love of God, first in order to achieve his own felicity and then as the highest end in itself. It seems that such self-love is something like a ‘seed of love’ which through God’s (threefold) influx is able to blossom into true love of God.¹⁸⁰ Baxter holds that almost all of God’s preparing grace consists in exercising and improving this principle of natural self-love in man.¹⁸¹ In fact even in its highest form love of God does not exclude love of self, for Baxter says God never allows the two to be separated.¹⁸² Here then it seems that something of the fruitful Scotist tension between the *affectio commodi* and the *affectio iustitiae* enters definitively into Baxter’s account of the theological virtues.

¹⁷⁸ Raniero Cantalamessa, *Life in Christ: A Spiritual Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990), 81 citing Péguy.

¹⁷⁹ Baxter, *CD*, I.183.

¹⁸⁰ Baxter, *CD*, I.186. Baxter does speak of a *semen amoris* although he does not identify this explicitly with self-love (I.189).

¹⁸¹ Baxter, *CD*, I.188.

¹⁸² Baxter, *CD*, I.187.

Having seen something of what love is in itself we may now turn once again to that ‘great...and tender’ matter of the relation between faith and love. The resolution of this is in fact contained in the dynamic between self-love and love of God that we have been considering. Baxter is clear that love is unable to exceed knowledge.¹⁸³ For this reason love obviously comes after faith, even though it is also somehow included within faith ‘*in fieri*’ or, as we have suggested, through triune inseparability. The first motion of the soul in conversion then is intellectual and is the apprehension that there is a God. Following this, as we have described, man gains the hope of another world and of salvation, and at last having attained sincere faith commits himself to Father, Son and Holy Spirit in his baptismal vows. It would seem that with this we have reached the end point of conversion (although not of course of sanctification). According to Baxter however this is not so. While the understanding acknowledges God to be God and to be loved above oneself, the will (usually) has not yet attained this love save in desire.¹⁸⁴ Such a desire, characterised as *volo velle*, is not direct love of God. Put plainly it is apparent that the will has not yet caught up with the understanding.

It is important that we not be misled here. The faith that we have been describing is truly sincere and justifying faith and is the beginning of the work of regeneration. It is not a mere ‘seed of faith’. Yet all the same this faith is imperfect for it is characterised by predominant love of self rather than of God. Likewise it is not yet (it seems) a proper union with God but only the promise and relative right to Christ and the Holy Spirit. Such faith therefore brings the divine nature only in an embryonic form, as the first sproutings of the ‘seed of love’¹⁸⁵. Once again the influx of the Holy Spirit, concurring with the believer putting his own faith into practice, is required to produce the fullness of love. Through this divine cooperation, so characteristic of Baxter’s theology, the believer’s love for God increases. In Baxter’s picturesque language faith is itself the ‘bellows of love’ and the obedient exercise of faith inflames love all the more. Yet only when the soul rises to a habitual and

¹⁸³ Baxter, *CD*, I.184. This is consistent with the Augustinian dictum that we cannot love what we do not know.

¹⁸⁴ Baxter takes it to be a psychological and empirical fact that in general the believer’s first faith in God has predominant self-love rather than predominant love of God (*CD*, I.190).

¹⁸⁵ Baxter, *CD*, I.189-90.

predominant love of God and holiness for their own intrinsic worth, rather than its own self-benefit, is the Christian said to receive the Spirit of adoption. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit is said to constitute a new nature, for it inclines us to love God for himself just as the old nature inclined us to love ourselves. Therefore strikingly love and not faith is the essence and crown of the divine nature.¹⁸⁶

Throughout our discussion of faith, hope and love we have seen strong intimations of their Trinitarian structure. This, it is apparent, is highly complex and is certainly not reducible to the Trinitarian structure of the soul's faculties, although it remains intimately connected to this. The reason for this is that faith, hope and love encompass the soul's three powers not only *ad intra* in their mutual interrelation but also as directed *ad extra* in their differing relations to the Triune God. In this life, at least, they also operate according to a dialectical pattern of presence and absence as well as between the two poles of the *affectio commodi* and *affectio iustitiae*. In the conclusion to his *Of Saving Faith* Baxter includes a helpful summary of the relation and distinction of the three theological virtues:

I suppose that as there is (as aforesaid) *aliquid dilectionis* in desire, and yet it is to be called desire and not love; and *aliquid dilectionis* in hope essentially, and yet hope is not love, nor so to be denominated; every grace being denominated not from all that is in it, but from that which is eminent and special in it, as to the object; even so there is *aliquid fidei in spe*, and *aliquid spei in fide*, and *aliquid amoris in fide et spe*, and yet faith is not hope, nor hope faith, nor love faith.¹⁸⁷

From this it is apparent that faith, hope and love all share an essential core but are distinguished according to their eminent features and formal object. In this way they mirror the pattern of attribution by which the divine principles are distinguished according to their eminency in conjunct action. Furthermore, from what we have seen, it seems likely that the theological virtues may also be distinguished by relations of origin with faith generating hope and faith and hope together producing love which completes and perfects them in perfect triune closure. In this way faith, hope and love together may be seen to form the 'Trinity of Graces', characterising the indwelling presence of the Triune God in the triune soul of man.

¹⁸⁶ Baxter, *CD*, I.190-95.

¹⁸⁷ Baxter, *Saving Faith*, 85.

6. The Primacy of Love

For Baxter it is clear that love is the highest of the three theological virtues.¹⁸⁸ Such an understanding is of course biblical, for in a famous passage in 1 Corinthians, cited by Baxter at the very end of the *Methodus*, Paul says ‘and now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity’.¹⁸⁹ However, as we shall now consider, it is also indicative of Baxter’s position in an important scholastic controversy as to whether the act of the intellect or the act of the will was to be considered superior, both in general and specifically with reference to the state of beatitude. As may be imagined the Thomists and Scotists had markedly different opinions on these questions. Aquinas held that the intellect was superior to the will and that the intellectual vision of God was formally man’s perfection, while Scotus by contrast held that the will was superior to the intellect and that its act formally marked the perfection of man in the state of beatitude.¹⁹⁰

In Baxter’s writings it is possible to find two contrasting opinions on this controversy. Thus on the one hand we have him saying in the *Methodus*:

*Frustra inter scholasticos disputatur, utrum actus intellectus an voluntatis, Dei scilicet visio, an amor sit praecipuus, et hominis perfectio et faelicitas. Sicut enim non ex unica sed triplici facultate seu virtute, animae forma consistit, vitali-activa scilicet, intellectiva et volitiva, ita in triplici harum perfectione habituali et activa, perfectio et faelicitas animae consistit.*¹⁹¹

Here Baxter echoes Campanella, who in his *Metaphysics* included a passionate plea for the Thomists and Scotists to end their quarrel about the primacy of the intellect and the will.¹⁹² This shows Baxter’s conviction, which endured through his own uncertainty on this question, that his own Trinitarian psychology had decisively altered the terms of the debate. On the other hand, in his *Catholic Theologie* Baxter

¹⁸⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.222.

¹⁸⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:13 (KJV) cited by Baxter in *Methodus*, IV.439.

¹⁹⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a82 art. 3; Scotus, *Rep.* 4 d. 49, q. 1-4; cf. Bonansea, ‘Voluntarism’, 113-21. It should be noted that the question at issue here, as Bonansea indicates, concerned the formal or ‘intensive’ nature of beatitude rather than its wider ‘extensive’ description as an act of intellect and will conjunct.

¹⁹¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.220.

¹⁹² Campanella, *Metaphysicarum*, II.6.11.6.

contradicts this first opinion, stating that ‘undoubtedly the Thomists err in placing it chiefly in the intellect...and the Scotists (of whom Rada well handleth it) are far righter’. Here he also cites approvingly an argument from Giles of Rome (no Scotist of course) that if beatitude is considered as finally in the will then it must also reside there formally.¹⁹³

What is interesting here is not so much Baxter’s change of mind but rather his evident realisation of a tension between his voluntarism and his own Trinitarian account of the human faculties as coequal and coinherent. Fascinatingly his *Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared*, published later than both the *Catholick Theologie* and the *Methodus* although probably written around the same time as both,¹⁹⁴ includes a resolution of just this issue:

Aquinas and some other schoolmen make the vision or knowledge of God, to be the highest part of mans felicity: And I deny not but that the three faculties of mans soul, (vital activity, intellect and will) as the image of the Divine Trinity, have a kind of inseparability and coequality. And therefore each of their perfections and perfect receptions from God, and operations on God, is the ultimate end of man: But yet they are distinguishable, though not divisible; and there is such an order among them, as that one may in some respects be called the inceptor and another the perfecter of humane operations; and so the acts of one be called a means to the acts of the other. And thus though the vision or knowledge of God be one inadequate conception (if not a part) of our ultimate end; yet the love of God, and living to God, are also other conceptions or parts of it: yea and the more complete perfect parts, which we call *finis ultimate ultimus*.¹⁹⁵

Not only does this add important confirmation to our own thesis that Baxter’s voluntarism is mitigated by his concern to give a Trinitarian account of the human soul, but it also shows Baxter’s employment of a (formal) distinction between the faculties of the soul in order to solve the dilemma he faces and reconcile his Scotist and Trinitarian accounts of beatitude.

¹⁹³ Marginal note in Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.12-13.

¹⁹⁴ Baxter, *KL*, 167 refers to the death of Gott as recent, suggesting that it was written around 1671.

¹⁹⁵ Baxter, *KL*, 211.

Baxter develops his view of love as the perfecter of all other acts, offering four different proofs, some of which echo Scotus' own,¹⁹⁶ for the primacy of love over faith and the other graces. The first proof stems from the order and use of the faculties of the soul. Baxter holds that our souls are not satisfied with 'bare knowing' if delight or complacency in that knowledge does not follow. This means that the acts of the intellect 'meerly as such, without their respect to some will (either of God or man) are not so much as formally amiable, desirable or good'. Following Ockham, Baxter holds in true voluntarist fashion that the act of the will completes that of the understanding by conferring on it moral dignity (as well as freedom).¹⁹⁷ The second proof is from the objects of intellect and will. For Baxter holds that it is not 'meer intelligibility' that blesses a man but that goodness which is the formal object of the will although the material object of the understanding. It is therefore the goodness of God which is the 'ultimately ultimate object of mans soul, to which his intelligibility is supposed'.¹⁹⁸ The third proof is from the constitution of the acts. Baxter reminds us that knowledge, as an 'introductive act', does not suppose love, but that love includes knowledge. Therefore 'both together must needs be perfecter than one alone'.¹⁹⁹

Baxter buttresses these three metaphysical proofs by marshalling a long but by no means exhaustive set of Scripture references. This demonstrates again his abiding concern that his metaphysics should be regulated by biblical principles.²⁰⁰ Together these show that love is a precondition for the indwelling of God and that love is God's very essence. Of decisive importance are 1 Corinthians 13:13 ('the greatest of these is charity') and 1 John 4:8 ('he that loveth not, knoweth not God').²⁰¹ Baxter's conclusion is that 'the knowledge of creatures is not desirable ultimately for it self, but as it leadeth up the soul to God. And the knowledge of God, though desirable ultimately for it self, yet not as the perfect, but the initial part of our ultimate act or

¹⁹⁶ For an exhaustive list of these see Scotus, *Rep.* 4 d. 49 q. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Baxter, *KL*, 211-5.

¹⁹⁸ Baxter, *KL*, 215.

¹⁹⁹ Baxter, *KL*, 215.

²⁰⁰ This is also a concern of Scotus who refutes the Aristotelian and Thomist argument that the habit of the intellect is more perfect than the habit of the will by an appeal to the 'philosopher Paul' (*Rep.* 4 d. 49, q. 2 n. 7-14).

²⁰¹ Baxter, *KL*, 216-7.

end, and as the means or cause of that love of God, which is the more perfect part of that ultimate perfection'.²⁰²

Love for Baxter as well as for the scholastics is the 'form of every grace'. His own interpretation of this general statement however is very specific: love is the form of all the other graces as they may be considered means to a single end of loving God. In this way the 'mediate acts of grace, as mediate, are essentially animated by the love of the end, and participate of it'. Interpreted in this way, Baxter says, the scholastic doctrine of love informing the other graces is 'not only true, but of very great weight, and giveth light to many other points'. Once again this is a Scotist point, and Baxter cites Rada in support of it.²⁰³ Fittingly then Baxter again uses Scotist tools to help forge an enduring connection between his voluntarism and his Trinitarian perspective.

Love then is the final principle of the universe and the fulfilment of faith and hope, yet not in a way that compromises the triune character of this 'Trinity of Graces'.²⁰⁴ Love is the 'heart of the new creature', that by which he is 'morally to be reputed or denominated' and the 'final grace which animateth or informeth the rest as means'. If any grace is taken to be sincere and saving it must be proven to participate in the love of God and goodness.²⁰⁵ Love is also fertile: just as faith is the 'bellows of love' so 'love kindleth love, and is a kind of generative principle of grace'.²⁰⁶ In this way not only does faith move through hope to love but love perfects both faith and hope (casting out fear)²⁰⁷ and brings everything full circle. The vitality of this whole process, the very life of the new creature, is from God himself, in fact *is* God himself.

Our love for God is a love of friendship, a 'desire of a kind of union, communion or adherence', although not the union between equals but between those who are infinitely disproportionate. Once again demonstrating its centrality in Baxter's thought, the ground and *initium* of this loving relationship is the Triune Baptismal

²⁰² Baxter, *KL*, 217.

²⁰³ Richard Baxter, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* in Orme, *Works*, XXIII.477-8.

²⁰⁴ This point is reiterated by Baxter in *KL*, 303-4.

²⁰⁵ Baxter, *KL*, 218-9.

²⁰⁶ Baxter, *KL*, 294.

²⁰⁷ 1 John 4:18 (KJV).

Covenant itself.²⁰⁸ In all of this the initiative is God's. The fruition of love between himself and man is entirely an unmerited gift of his grace. Likewise the final purpose, the driving force for everything in all creation as it moves towards its teleological fulfilment, is God's. The end of all things, which is also their new and everlasting beginning, is the complacency of God's will in his creation. For man this is the Beatific vision, or more properly the Scotist Beatific embrace – his ineffable participation in the inmost life of the Trinity. For the rest of creation, which in its activity bears the impress of the Triune God, this is the full and resplendent manifestation of his glory. In this, love – the love of the Triune God for himself and his creation – reigns supreme. 'All the good of the whole creation is as the heat of this infinite, eternal fire of love'.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Baxter, *CD*, I.187, 189.

²⁰⁹ Baxter, *KL*, 315.

Conclusion

The Ramistic picture of theology with which we opened – as a tree branching out from the Divine Unity into the Trinity and thence onwards in trichotomous fashion – provides a fitting and fertile depiction of Baxter’s Trinitarian method.¹ For it brings to life the static charts of the *Methodus*, revealing not only their Trinitarian structure but also their Trinitarian dynamic, something impossible to capture in the pages of a book.² It reminds us also, that as well as being an affective and practical science, Baxter’s theology is a living science, rooted in God’s Word and watered by his Spirit, the very sap and lifeblood of which is the Trinity itself.³

In this thesis we have considered extensively Baxter’s hallowing of logic. In providing a Trinitarian method applicable to all disciplines this has been seen to have had implications much broader than the scope of pure dialectics, setting in train a Trinitarian reformation spanning the entire field of Baxter’s thought. From the vantage point of the *Methodus* this marks a significant change in perspective, the wider consequences of which have hitherto gone largely unnoticed, and to a degree (retrospectively) justifies posing a distinction between Baxter’s early and mature works. While it may be true that the contours of Baxter’s soteriology remained relatively fixed after the completion of the *Aphorismes*, the *Methodus* represents a significant innovation of theological context, forcing us to reassess our understanding of Baxter’s theology and to reorient it around the twin poles of the Triune Baptismal Covenant and the Trinitarian metaphysics of divine principles.

The account of Baxter’s rich and complex Trinitarian method that we have sought to give also belies its common caricature as unfortunate and extravagant window-dressing on Baxter’s theology. By contrast it has emerged as a carefully thought-out construct of Ramist and Lullist principles erected on the dual foundations of the Triune Baptismal Covenant and divine principles. Above all, we have suggested, it

¹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 411-2.

² Comenius, for example, compares the relation between the (Ramistic) Encyclopaedias of his own day and his own *pansophia* to that between neatly arranged blocks of wood and a living tree. He believed his pansophic method to have an ‘inbred vertue’ (*Reformation*, 24).

³ Baxter also captures this dynamic character in his metaphor of circulation employed in *Reasons*, 411-2 as well as *Life of Faith*, III.384 and elsewhere. He is clear that the true method is circular beginning in God, orbiting around him and finally returning to him.

was Baxter's desire for an exemplaristic logic of first intentions, adequate to the Triune nature of God, that prompted his distinctive logic of the *vestigia Trinitatis*. Baxter may therefore be seen as a paramount example of the sanctifying of logic that we traced, in outline, from the beginnings of Protestant Scholasticism through to the start of the Enlightenment. In particular Baxter's Trinitarian exemplarism places him near the end of an important philosophical and theological tradition with deep patristic and medieval roots, which attained profound contemporary expression in the thought of Campanella, Comenius, Bisterfeld and Leibniz himself. This gives us a much broader context than has hitherto been available within which to understand and evaluate Baxter's own theological system. It also highlights the often complex three-way interaction taking place in Baxter's thought between the old and new scholasticism, and both of these and contemporary philosophical and scientific developments.

Baxter's scholasticism itself has been a major theme of this thesis and we have traced its profound influence in almost every area of his thought. While Baxter could often be critical of scholastic speculation, this should not be allowed to mask his enormous debt to the medieval and early modern scholastic doctors. Indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that much of the *Methodus*' doctrine is grounded on the insights of more than five centuries of scholastic reflection, as well as on the rich contemporary storehouse of Reformation and Protestant Scholastic theology. Thus although Scripture continued to occupy the paramount place in Baxter's theology, scholastic reflections often provided an important heuristic for its interpretation.

While it would be thoroughly anachronistic, as well as alien to the character of both Protestant Scholasticism and Baxter's own intentions, to assign him a school allegiance, it remains undeniable that much of his thought has a distinctive Nominalised Scotist character. Despite its cumbersome nature the term 'Nominalised Scotist' is not to be despised, for it provides a convenient and reliable key to the often-complex terrain of Baxter's theology. Indeed although Baxter's thought generally displays a pronounced Scotist accent, it often proves impossible to disentangle its Scotist and Nominalist aspects. A case in point is the Scotist formal distinction which, despite some misgivings, Baxter retains as a crucial aspect of his

thought, although significantly reinterpreting it in the context of Nominalist extrinsicism. Precisely the same could be said of Baxter's ubiquitous metaphysics of inadequate concepts which he interprets in terms of both Scotist formalities and Nominalist external connotations. However in accepting an intrinsic ground *in re* for both the formal distinction and the logical universal Baxter departs from strict Nominalism, which justifies our placing him finally in the Scotist tradition.⁴

Having said this it is perhaps possible to make a useful distinction between Baxter's psychology and his soteriology which, by his own confession, have a Scotist orientation, and his Trinitarian theology in which his Scotism passes into a Nominalistic logic of faith. Here indeed Baxter fits well into the late medieval tradition of the search for simplicity, paring down Scotus' elaborate Trinitarian reflections to their absolute minimum and definitively eschewing Aquinas' relational account. Baxter was therefore a Trinitarian minimalist, even an agnostic, and his thought stands in stark contrast to the robust Trinitarianism of high scholasticism which had its apogee in Scotus.⁵ He was not, however, a Trinitarian sceptic, for in his eyes one of the chief merits of his Trinitarian metaphysics of divine principle was its apologetic potential to render the Trinity credible to Socinian doubters. Nor was he a rationalist, except insofar as anyone affirming the scholastic ideal of *fides quaerens intellectum* should be tarred with this brush. Instead his thought exists within the fruitful dialectic of divine immanence and transcendence. In this light it could even be said that Baxter's distinctive Trinitarian doctrine serves at one and the same time both to reveal and hide the ineffable mystery of the Triune God. In expressing this in terms of the *logica fidei* Baxter took the hallowing of logic to new heights.

Another contemporary advocate of the logic of faith was Baxter's friend George Lawson, whose thought also significantly reveals the theo-political dimensions to the hallowing of logic. Baxter, as we have seen, rated Lawson's *Theo-Politica* above all the systems of the 'exactest dichotomizers'. For Lawson employed a political method, focussing on the exposition of the Kingdom of God, its constitution and

⁴ See further 'Appendix Two – Baxter, Glisson and Inadequate Concepts'.

⁵ Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*, 112.

administration, according to Scripture. Even more importantly Lawson encompassed this political method within the rubric of the Triune Baptismal Covenant. He focussed therefore on the threefold Kingdom of the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier and in this way set an important precedent for Baxter's own Trinitarian method. In fact it seems apparent that the *Theo-Politica* was an important methodological paradigm for the *Methodus* itself. Certainly, by Baxter's own confession, his Trinitarian method was inspired by both Campanella's primalities and Lawson's theo-politics. Indeed his synthesis of the two was intended to correct the one major defect that he saw in Lawson's methodology – its lack of a method of the *vestigia Trinitatis*.

In the past Baxter's political method has caused a considerable degree of confusion and occasionally come in for particular opprobrium. While the term political method, coined by Packer but clearly rooted in Baxter's own writings, has an important use, we should not allow ourselves to be misled by it. In particular it would be wrong to conceive of the political method as something external, artificially imposed on Scripture – a kind of political 'straitjacket' as Packer tendentiously puts it.⁶ Rather, on the whole, the political method emerged out of a close and canonical reading of Scripture. Certainly this is true of Lawson, who although thoroughly versed in politics, shows an overwhelming desire in his *Theo-Politica* to regulate everything according to biblical principles. Likewise it is true of Baxter, whose political method, we must not forget, was birthed in his wrestling with the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25. Similarly Baxter said himself to be capable of marshalling hundreds of biblical passages in favour of his controversial 'hot pepper corn' – the doctrine of evangelical righteousness.⁷ To cite just one further example, although of great importance, I am particularly struck by the biblical arguments Baxter provides in favour of the doctrine of the relaxation or 'evangelical mitigation' of the law, that mainstay of voluntarist soteriology.⁸ This alone raises a welter of important questions about the connections between Baxter's

⁶ Packer, *Quest*, 159.

⁷ Baxter, *Scripture Gospel Defended*, 57.

⁸ See concisely Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 24.

Nominalised Scotism and his exegesis of Scripture which cannot, unfortunately, be pursued further here.

Baxter's mature theo-political method then should be characterised as a methodological unfolding of the Triune Baptismal Covenant within the context of the Trinitarian metaphysics of divine principles. Significantly this Trinitarian perspective offers us a new approach to the somewhat vexed issue of Baxter's soteriology. Certainly the categories given us by Packer and Boersma – the Grotian political method and the Twissian method of the twofold will – remain indispensable for any correct interpretation of Baxter. Arguably however these may themselves be enclosed within a broader Trinitarian movement in Baxter's theology and especially within that perichoresis of law and love that we have sought to highlight.⁹ In this God's love transcends his law and his law can only be understood as it is an expression of his love – the two are therefore inseparable within a Trinitarian dynamic. Indeed in focussing on the Owner-Rector context of Baxter's thought, God's role as loving Benefactor, turning the law on its head for his own purposes, has been largely neglected. Again this is perhaps an innovation of context more than explicit content, yet nevertheless it is of great significance. For it places Baxter's soteriology within an overarching framework of grace, providing a necessary counterbalance to those accounts which have focussed solely on his evident interest in duty.

In this way it also helps deflect the charge of moralism often levelled against Baxter. For Baxter certainly did not think one could earn salvation – for him this would be rank Pelagianism – but instead always retained a thoroughly Augustinian emphasis on God's prevenient grace, interpreted within the framework of his Scotist doctrine of moral concurrence. This allowed him to claim that it was God who worked in us that which he required, without going down the, for Baxter, inadmissible route of asserting an efficient physical premotion. In particular he suggests that it is God who fulfils the conditions of his own covenants both universally in Christ's atoning death and Resurrection and specifically through the Holy Spirit working in the elect. Turning to Baxter's controversial doctrine of justification it seems to me that the

⁹ See also 'Appendix Three – The Eternal Foundation of Divine Government'.

understanding of evangelical righteousness as itself graced at least blunts the edge of the accusations. Likewise Baxter's mature Trinitarian and covenantal reconfiguration of faith – a consequence of course of his full-blooded Trinitarian method – reveals the intimate connection in Baxter's thought between faith, love and obedience. True faith cannot help but be productive of love and thus, like the late medieval Augustinians, justification is said to be by faith working through love. Similarly faith itself, taken over a lifetime of pilgrimage and not just as one 'event', represents the fulfilment of covenantal obligations. Here though, through an act of benefaction and relaxation, sincerity is accepted instead of perfection.¹⁰

Furthermore the reconstruction of the habitual mechanisms and the 'Trinity of Graces' that we have offered gives an important context for this inevitable movement from faith through to love that takes place in the heart of a believer. Baxter expresses this biblically in terms of the restoration of the image of God and the indwelling presence of the Triune God, revealing yet another important link between his scriptural worldview and scholasticism. Likewise Baxter's carefully worked out Trinitarian psychology illuminates considerably the 'subjective' aspect of the Triune Baptismal Covenant. It is an axiom of his that a threefold agent works on a threefold object in a threefold manner, and nowhere is this more evident or important than in his account of the relation between the Triune God and the triune soul of man. This is particularly conditioned by what I have called Baxter's mitigated voluntarism, which functioned both to create room for the Trinitarian interaction of the faculties and to buttress his Scotist assertion of the primacy of love. For it was Baxter's conviction, borne out of years of intensive scriptural and metaphysical reflection, that man's highest endeavour and purpose could be found in the life of faith, hope and love exercised in the prospect of glory and the eager expectation of the full disclosure of the Triune God of Love.

This brings us full circle, back to Baxter's assertion of the faculties of the soul as the methodological 'index of theology', and his reflections on the soul as *imago Trinitatis*, which first motivated his analogical ascent toward the Triune God. It has been the claim of this thesis that this Trinitarian method constitutes the key to

¹⁰ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 178.

Baxter's mature thought. Indeed, while initially alien to us, this scriptural metaphysics without doubt repays careful consideration. For it is this same Trinitarian method which is the ultimate expression of Baxter's desire to sanctify every field of knowledge to the Triune God, which while in this life always an unattainable goal remains a noble ambition and an enduring challenge. For it was this which fired Baxter's own lifelong quest for method and which is the true hallowing of logic.

Appendix One – The Creed, Lord’s Prayer and Decalogue

The Creed

The Creed begins with the words ‘I believe’ and so Baxter first discusses the concept of ‘believing’ and what exactly it signifies in the Creed. To believe he says means to believe something as true. In the same way, to believe what someone says is to believe that they are trustworthy. In more technical language we may say that the material objects of faith are the things that must be believed and the testifier’s trustworthiness is the formal object of faith. For this reason Baxter says ‘the matter is as the body of faith, and the form as if its soul’. Divine faith rests thus rests on God’s reliability and since God cannot lie must be completely certain. The formal act of faith can therefore properly be called trust. Since faith concerns the ‘whole man’ it must extend to the three powers of man’s soul: the understanding, the will and the executive:

And so it is in one, an assenting trust, a consenting trust, and a practical trust. By the first, we believe the word to be true, because we trust the fidelity of God. By the second, we consent to God’s Covenant and accept his gifts, by trusting to the truth and goodness of the promise. By the third, we trustingly venture on the costliest duty.

Faith then has a Triune form: things to be believed are inseparably related from things to be desired and things to be practiced. As Baxter suggests ‘trust then, or affiance, is the vital or formal act of faith. And assenting, consenting and practice, are the inseparable effects, in which as it is a saving grace it is always found.’¹

Importantly the object of faith is also Triune, being God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is to all the persons therefore that Baxter says assent, consent and practice are to be directed. Consequently Baxter says it is by this comprehensively Triune faith that we are justified and not just by believing in Christ’s righteousness imputed to us. This is an important point, for it shows Baxter’s soteriology to be deeply embedded in his Trinitarian thought. Having established the nature of belief Baxter proceeds to a lengthy analysis of the Creed according to each article. In what

¹ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 79-80.

follows we shall simply highlight those features which reveal the Trinitarian character of his ideas.

The first section of the Creed begins ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty...’ It is here that Baxter chooses to expound on God’s Triunity and attributes. This he presents as a truly scriptural doctrine, although his discussion of it hinges almost entirely on the divine primalities. However although, as in the ‘Short Catechism’, his discussion is technical, Baxter eschews taking an absolute stance on matters of Trinitarian dogma. For example concerning the important question of the persons of the Trinity – which he says has caused a great deal of confusion – he seems to take as preliminary truth the scholastic idea that God’s reflexive Power, Wisdom and Love constitute the Trinity as ‘immanent’ while the same attributes outwardly directed constitute it as ‘economic’, seen especially as operative in the salvific economy of nature, grace and glory.² However he also makes it clear that to believe this concerning the notion of ‘person’ is not necessary to salvation. Instead he says that it is vitally important that belief in the Trinity must be thoroughly practical. ‘It is the Trinity as related to us, and operative, and therein notified, that we must necessarily understand and believe, even as Our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, that the Love of God the Father, and the Grace of the Son, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, may be believed, received and enjoyed.’³ Such a practical focus is as we have seen characteristic of his theology.

Within this ‘economic’ or operative Trinity Baxter suggests that it is possible to distinguish the persons from each other by their own distinctive attributes. Thus Power is ‘eminently’ ascribed to the Father, Wisdom to the Son and Love to the Holy Spirit. However to say this is not to isolate each attribute or person from the other. Therefore just as the Father is Almighty, so also are the Son and the Holy Spirit. By implication all three persons must also be all-wise and all-loving.⁴ Exactly the same can be said concerning God’s acts of salvation:

Though the persons are undivided in their works on the creature, yet creation is eminently ascribed to the Father, Incarnation and Redemption

² Baxter, *Catechizing*, 84-8.

³ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 85-6.

⁴ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 89-92.

to the Son, and Sanctification to the Holy Ghost. The Sun's power of motion, light and heat are inseparable. And yet it is as the light as such that with our eye doth cause the same act of sight, as united to it.⁵

What emerges from this is that all three persons participate fully in each attribute and work, it is the 'eminence' of their participation which therefore offers grounds for any distinction to be made.

For Baxter the Trinitarian dynamic at work in the Creed can therefore be seen in terms of Creation, Redemption and Sanctification both as appropriated to each person of the Trinity and in their indivisible operation. Thus although the Father is called Almighty and Creator in the Creed he only gives all things their being by the 'Power of his Will and Word', which indicates the involvement of the Son and Spirit in the work of Creation as well. In the same way God's sustaining of the Universe may also be seen as a co-operation of his Power, Wisdom and Love, expressed for his creatures in the triad of Owner, Rector and Benefactor. Thus although Creation is eminently the work of the Father, this certainly does not exclude the other two persons of the Trinity.⁶

The work of redemption is seen in the Son as Redeemer, which is expounded in the second section of the Creed. Here the Trinitarian pattern can be seen, whether implicitly or explicitly, throughout the pattern of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Parousia. As mediator between God and man Baxter says that Christ must be both God and man by an inexpressible union of natures. This is the ground for the incarnation in which Baxter says the Holy Ghost did not act on the second person of the Trinity or the whole Godhead but instead miraculously caused a soul and body to develop in Mary's womb united to the eternal Word. However the operation of the Holy Ghost in the incarnation of the Word can still properly be expressed as an action of the whole Trinity since although 'Gods perfecting operations are usually ascribed to the Holy Ghost... the Father and Son, are still supposed operating by the Holy Spirit'.⁷

⁵ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 98-9.

⁶ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 90-2.

⁷ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 92-100.

A similar Triune pattern can be seen in the other great Redemptive events. Thus Baxter holds that although the Godhead itself cannot suffer, Christ as both God and man was able to suffer in body and soul on the Cross. In fact he endured the pains of Hell which are God's punishment of man for sin. However Baxter does not think that he can be considered in any way hated of God or forsaken by his Holy Spirit. This allowed him both to be an expiatory sacrifice for sin while at the same time preserving the integrity of his Godhead particularly from any stain of sin.⁸ A solution which is only possible due to the unique Trinitarian dynamic at work in Christ's crucifixion and death. Following the Crucifixion is of course the Resurrection which Baxter calls the vindication of Christ's divine Sonship. Combined with his Ascension it provided the grounds for the 'great executive parts' of his saving work which Baxter suggests particularly lay in his interceding with the Father and his sending of the Holy Spirit. It also sets the stage for the dramatic future foreclosing of history with his Second Coming when he will judge the world according to the conditional covenant that he has secured.⁹ In Baxter's understanding this covenant is of course the Triune Covenant entered into by Baptism.

The work of sanctification expounded in the third section of the Creed is the province of the Holy Spirit. It is his work to illuminate the understandings of the elect, convert their wills to God and strengthen them and quicken them to do their duty. He is to be in them 'a Spirit of power and love, and a sound mind'. For this reason Baxter says the 'Holy Ghost is an intercessor within us to communicate LIFE, LIGHT and LOVE, from the Father and the Son, and excite in us those holy desires, thanks and praise, which are meet for Gods acceptance'.¹⁰ Again therefore we see the way that the other two persons of the Trinity also participate in the eminent work of the Spirit.

Baxter also suggests that belief in the Holy Ghost is included in the article 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church...' It is through the Holy Spirit that the Church is called Holy for it is his role to work in people the 'same essentiating qualifications'. These

⁸ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 100-6.

⁹ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 106-22.

¹⁰ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 124-5.

Baxter lists as the seven unities of Ephesians: One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.¹¹ However once again all three members of the Trinity are brought into the equation, for the Church is Christ's Kingdom and he gathers it to himself, it is also for the Father 'who will be sanctified in all that draw near to him...and will have all his children holy as he is holy. Baxter himself puts it this way 'formally their common union with and relation to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that is, to Jesus Christ their head, bringing them home to God the Father by the Spirit'. In the same way the articles on the 'Communion of Saints' and 'Forgiveness of Sin' are both expressions of the Trinitarian character of the Church which has its eschatological consummation in the 'Resurrection of the Dead', the last judgement and the eternal presence of the Triune God with his people.

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer, Baxter says, is 'holy desires expressed or actuated to God'. It is commanded by God and made the condition on which his mercies are to be received. It also disposes the soul for receiving God's grace. Due to its importance Christ therefore instituted a specific pattern of prayer as standard:

The Lord's Prayer is the Summary and Rule of mans love and just desires. It directeth him what to will, ask and seek. And therefore must needs contain that duty of love which is the heart of the new creature, and the fulfilling of the Law. The will is the man. And love is the will. What a man wills and loves, that he is in Gods account or that he shall attain.¹²

Its use Baxter says is to form the 'acts and habits of the heart itself' according to this formula and its material and manner. For this reason he says that unless the desires of the heart are formed habitually to this method they will be impious. It is therefore 'as if the heart of organic and objective religion' in comparison to which the Creed and Decalogue are its eyes and its hands.¹³ We may therefore think of the Lord's Prayer as the 'heart-consent' of faith, which logically must follow assent to the Creed and is also presupposed in the practice of the Decalogue.

¹¹ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 130.

¹² Baxter, *Catechizing*, 181-2.

¹³ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.137.

The method of the Lord's Prayer Baxter says is 'more perfect than any of the Philosophers writings'.¹⁴ The nature of this method he says in the *Methodus* is circular, like the circulation of blood in the veins and arteries. It is also characterised as partly synthetic and partly analytic. It therefore begins from God and is defined by God in God. It also begins in God's praises and ends in the same. Having descended 'according to the order of intention, beginning at the highest notion of the ultimate end, and descending to the lowest', it then ascends again 'according to the order of execution and assecution, beginning at the lowest means, and ascending to the highest'.¹⁵ The first part of the prayer (the descent) therefore contains what we must desire as end and the second part (the ascent) what we must desire as means.

Importantly Baxter also notes that the tenor of the whole prayer is Trinitarian. It therefore supposes faith in God as omnipotent, most wise and most excellent and assumes reconciliation to the Father by the Son and effected through the Spirit of adoption.¹⁶ This pattern can be seen throughout each of the six petitions as well as in the preface and conclusion to the prayer. As with the Creed where it is not explicit we may, and indeed must, take it as implicit.

The opening words of the Lord's Prayer act as a prolegomenon to the whole. In saying 'Our Father' Baxter says we address God as our ultimate end. It invokes him particularly 'as our reconciled Father in Christ, described in his attributes, by the words 'which art in Heaven' which signifie the perfection of his Power, Knowledge and Goodness, and the Word Father, 'which' signifieth that he is Supream Owner, Ruler and Benefactor'. We see therefore that as in the Creed Baxter has a Trinitarian interpretation of the word Father: 'As the word Father signifieth God as God, it comprehendeth the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and as it signifieth the first Person in the Trinity, it excludeth not but implyeth the second and the third'. Likewise Baxter also grounds his 'governmental' Trinity in an 'eminent and transcendent' conception of the word Father as being Owner, Ruler and Benefactor to his children. Thus God can be called Father to all men by creation, to all lapsed men by sufficient

¹⁴ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 176.

¹⁵ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 175. Baxter compares the descent and ascent in these two forms of petition to the Two Tables of the Decalogue which deal with the Love of God and the Love of neighbour.

¹⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.137.

redemption and to the regenerate by adoption and effective redemption. Implicitly then we have also in the Lord's Prayer the schema of Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier so central to the Creed.¹⁷

As indicated by the quote above Baxter also gives an explicitly Trinitarian exegesis to the second part of the opening, the clause 'which art in Heaven'. He suggests that these words refer firstly to God's real substantiality and secondly to his 'incomprehensible perfection in power, knowledge and goodness'. The heavens he says by their vastness and sublimity show forth God as omnipotent. Heaven, which is called God's dwelling place, is therefore 'that most perfect region, whence all good floweth down to earth'. It contains all of our life, light and good and is therefore the place to which all our prayers must be directed. Every prayer then must be the 'souls aspiring and ascending towards Heaven, and the believing exercise of a heavenly mind, and desire'.¹⁸

Baxter suggests that the first petition of the Lord's Prayer 'Hallowed be thy name' contains the highest notion of our ultimate end. God's name he defines as his 'proper notices or appearances'. He suggests it is manifested in objective signs such as words or works, by inward conceptions received by these signs and finally by God's own self-revelation. To hallow God's name means to use it 'holily'. It is thus to imprint his name and his holiness on every faculty of the soul. As Baxter says 'the Spirit of God moveth on the Soul, to actuate all his graces; and plead for God and our Redeemer, and bring him to our remembrance, to our affection, and to subject us wholly to his will and love'. Ultimately then hallowing God's name means to love him as dwelling in our souls and to live in habitual communion and conversation with him. This demonstrates very clearly the Trinitarian nature of Baxter's affective theology.

In his exposition of the second petition, 'Thy Kingdom come', Baxter manifests the thoroughly political nature of his theology. This must be he says the second thing in our desires, positioned below the hallowing of God's name. It refers to that in which God's grace and glory shine most eminently – his Kingdom. The administration of

¹⁷ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 175.

¹⁸ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 180.

this Kingdom is such that God himself is absolutely supreme and Jesus Christ is the vice-gerent and administrator. These acts of administration can be defined as legislative, judicial and executive. In this capacity Christ also publishes the final edition of the Covenant of Grace secured by his death and resurrection. ‘And he commandeth all believers to devote themselves thus to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, by a solemn vow in baptism, and live in the communion of saints, in his Church, and holy worship, and the frequent celebration of the memorial of his death in the sacrament of his body and blood.’¹⁹

The third petition ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ Baxter says fulfils the third of our desires. It represents the effect of God’s Kingdom on earth. It is also a prayer against self-will. In praying this Baxter suggests man seeks to conform himself to God’s will. Again there is a Trinitarian pattern to this as God’s will is that of owner, rector and benefactor.²⁰

In the final three petitions Baxter says means ascend to the order of execution. For this reason we first pray ‘Give us this day, our daily bread’ for in order to live to God our lives must be sustained. Then we need to pray ‘And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us’. This is because with our lives supposed we next require deliverance from the sin and guilt that we have contracted. This petition therefore reminds us of Christ’s sacrifice and the Covenant of Grace that he has secured. Finally we pray ‘And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil’. This is a prayer against the temptations of the devil which Baxter says can deceive the understanding, pervert the will and corrupt our practice.

The conclusion of the prayer is ‘For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory for ever Amen’. This Baxter says ascends from the lowest to the highest by means of praise. It is put last in the prayer ‘because the praise of God is the highest step next heaven’.²¹ This can be seen in the ordering of the triad Kingdom, Power and Glory. Kingdom means that it belongs to God to rule and dispose all things, Power means that he is able to accomplish this and Glory refers to the future consummation when

¹⁹ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 197.

²⁰ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 211.

²¹ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 227.

all things will be ordered as he wills 'for ever'. Finally we say 'Amen' Baxter says in order 'to express both our desire, and our faith and hope, that God will hear the desires which his Spirit giveth us through the mediation of Jesus Christ'. The conclusion of the prayer like the beginning is therefore thoroughly Trinitarian.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments or the Decalogue are the third and final element of Baxter's catechetical theology. They provide a rule for practice and therefore correspond to the executive faculty of man – the first of the triad of life, understanding and will. Baxter suggests that the original authority of the Commandments was due to their having been conveyed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. In this dispensation they also acted as a summary of the Law of Nature. Later they were confirmed and re-issued by Christ and so have a double authority for Christians as 'God's own transcript of the law of nature' and as the comprehensive Law of Christ.²²

Like the Creed and the Lord's Prayer the Decalogue also follows a Trinitarian pattern. Its nature is such Baxter argues that it may be contracted into the law of love:

God who as absolute Lord, owneth, moveth and disposeth of all, doth as Sovereign Ruler give us Laws and execute them, and as Love and Benefactor giveth us all, and is the most amiable object and end of all. So that as to love and give is more than to command, so to be loved is more than as a commander to be obeyd. But ever includeth it, though it be eminently in its nature above it. So that 1. Objectively, love to God, our selves and others in that measure that is exercised wisely, is obedience eminently and somewhat higher. 2. And love as the principle in man, is the most powerful cause of obedience, supposing the reverence of authority and the fear of punishment, but is somewhat more excellent than they... In that measure that you love God, you will heartily and delightfully do all your duty to him...²³

The Decalogue therefore concerns obedience to God as Owner, Rector and Benefactor. Coupled with sincerity obedience is an important principle of Baxter's

²² Baxter, *Catechizing*, 229-30.

²³ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 232.

theology. Here it reflects the practical outworking of faith, where the assent of the Creed and the consent of the Lord's Prayer are presupposed.

Baxter divides the Decalogue into three parts which represent he says three species of duty. The first he says is public and therefore wholly of piety and directed directly at God the Supreme Rector. The second he says is mixed, partly public and partly private, it therefore concerns both piety and humanity and particularly divine officials and societies. The third type is private and so concerns humanity.²⁴ This tripartite division also assumes the traditional division into the Two Tables of the Law. Where the first table is concerned with duty to God and the second table duty to neighbour. Baxter modifies this suggesting that the first four precepts are the first table, the fifth precept the hinge between the two tables and the last five precepts the second table. In our discussion we shall not therefore give a detailed discussion of each precept. Instead we shall focus on the first, fifth and tenth precepts respectively which Baxter sees as amply expressing the whole tenor of the Law.

Coming before any of the precepts of the Decalogue is what Baxter calls the preface: 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'. This he says expresses the Constitution of the Kingdom of God, which precedes its Administration as portrayed in the Decalogue itself. This means it describes the nature of God's Sovereignty. In relation to him Baxter says we are his own, his subjects and his beneficiaries. Thus the Decalogue considers the Kingdom of God in its Triune nature. The words 'that brought thee out of Egypt' indicate an obligation of Redemption to the Lord as well as the prior obligation of Creation. As the Decalogue is the Law of Christ Baxter interprets them Christologically as 'I am the Lord thy God who redeemed thee from sin and misery by Jesus Christ'. Furthermore God's Kingdom is also paternal and so the relation of Benefaction is also entailed.

Baxter puts particular weight on the first precept of the Decalogue: 'Thou shalt have no other Gods before me'. In this precept he says the consent and faithful observance of the Covenant are commanded to men. For this reason he says the first

²⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.159.

precept is the foundation of all the others and like the soul of the Decalogue. It gives a general obligation to all duties for which the other precepts are specific enumerations. It also establishes the relation of subject and orders the duty of this relation in general. Once again this is of Trinitarian import for the duty of subjection is according to the assent of the intellect, the love of the will and the deeds of the executive power. It thus acknowledges God in the true nature of his deity as greatest, wisest and excellent; in the Trinity of persons and fundamental relations as Father and Creator, Son and Redeemer and Spirit and Regenerator; and in his formal relations as Proprietor, Rector and Friend.²⁵ This is therefore the ‘summary of all’ and the fulfilment of the first and greatest commandment of the law which Christ says is ‘to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and might’.²⁶

The fifth precept ‘Honour thy father and mother’ Baxter refers to as the hinge of both tables of the law, belonging partly to one and partly to the other. As referring to both it provides the link between divine and human government. For this reason it obliges both to natural governors like parents as well as to human governors who rule by contract. It is also in this commandment that Baxter places familial duties as forming the vital link between public and private piety. Here also he places the obligation for parents to catechise their children. As he says Christian families are Christian societies and ‘all Christian societies must be sanctified to God’. We see again Baxter’s ideal of the ‘Holy Commonwealth’.

The tenth and final precept Baxter regards as a summary of the second table of the law. It comprehends therefore Christ’s command ‘to love thy neighbour as thyself’. In this way it is the ‘summe of all mortification’ and in obedience to it lies the ‘greatest victory in the world’. As the first precept models an ordinate love of God, so the tenth precept models an ordinate love of self and neighbour. Thus like the first commandment it is particularly concerned to root out idolatry and the selfishness which lies at the root of every idol. It also teaches that to love others is essentially to love the image of God in them. Therefore in exactly the same all-encompassing arc as we saw in the Lord’s Prayer, everything is finally brought back to the love of God.

²⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.160; *Catechizing*, 240.

²⁶ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 250.

For love is the fulfilling of the preceptive part of the Law.²⁷ It is also the final end of humanity. As Baxter stresses again and again in his writing ‘faith is but the bellows to kindle love to God’.

²⁷ Baxter, *Catechizing*, 366-74.

Appendix Two – Baxter, Glisson and Inadequate Concepts

In the *Methodus* Baxter's metaphysics is grounded on the notion of inadequate concepts. This Baxter derived from Francis Glisson, a noted anatomist and a Fellow of the Royal Society, who was also physician to Baxter's friend Sir Matthew Hale.¹ We know from Baxter's *Additional Notes* that Glisson tended Hale in his final illness,² and it is therefore not impossible that Baxter met Glisson then or even perhaps on one of his own frequent trips to London for medical consultations earlier in his life.³ Whether or not this was so, Baxter would surely have been very familiar with Glisson's ideas through Hale, well before the publication in 1672 of Glisson's *De Vita Naturae*.⁴ Thus even though this work was published after Baxter had already completed the charts and most of the written sections of the *Methodus*, this does not necessarily mean, as Packer holds, that Glisson exerted no major influence on Baxter's ideas.⁵ In fact Baxter's works demonstrate a very strong interest in Glisson. In his *Christian Directory*, for example, he recommends Glisson's *De Rachtide* of 1650 and his *Anatomia Hepatis* of 1654. His most extensive discussion of Glisson is to be found in his *Of the Immortality of Mans Soul* where he defends Glisson's ideas against Henry More's accusations.⁶ Finally in the *Methodus* itself Glisson is cited with Campanella as an important exemplar of a triadic view of the world and, as we have seen, Baxter makes extensive use of Glisson's metaphysics of inadequate concepts.⁷

Glisson discusses inadequate concepts at length in his unpublished *Tractatus de Inadaequatis Rerum Conceptibus* as well as in the *De Vita Naturae*. While Baxter

¹ For Baxter's indebtedness to Glisson for his metaphysics of inadequate concepts see throughout his *Immortality* especially I.92-3. For more on Baxter's relation to Glisson's thought see John Henry, 'Medicine and Pneumatology: Henry More, Richard Baxter and Francis Glisson's *Treatise on the Energetic Nature of Substance*', *Medical History* 31 (1987), 15-40.

² Baxter, *Additional Notes*, Preface. Baxter records that Glisson administered 'oximel squilliticum' to Hale in his final illness.

³ John Henry also suggests this possibility based on the *Additional Notes* ('Medicine and Pneumatology', 38 n. 95). In the *Reliquiae* Baxter records having seen 36 physicians including Sir Theodore Mayerne, who was doctor to Charles I (I.9-11).

⁴ Henry More notes that the language of inadequate concepts is very prominent in Hale's own works (*Answer*, 196).

⁵ Packer, *Redemption*, 83 n. 78.

⁶ Baxter, *Christian Directory*, III.917; *Immortality*, 6-7, 20, 25, 28, 33, 37, 39, 92-3; cf. Henry, 'Medicine and Pneumatology'.

⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, 'Praefatio'.

was unlikely to have been familiar with the first, it is quite possible that he would have been aware of its concepts through Hale. Many of these in any case are to be found in the preface to the *De Vita Naturae* and scattered throughout its pages. First therefore we shall review the ideas of both before going on to consider Baxter's own understanding of inadequate concepts in comparison with Glisson and the Thomist, Scotist and Nominalist schools. This will also allow us, as far as possible, to answer the important related question of whether Baxter was a realist or Nominalist in his epistemology.

Following the later scholastics Glisson divided natural intellection into intuitive and abstractive knowledge. He denied however their understanding of intuitive cognition as knowledge of a present object and defined it instead as a kind of analogous vision. Glisson regarded intuitive cognition as the 'door of the intellect' through which the first rudiments of all higher knowledge enter, and held that it was intimately connected to sense perception. He believed that due to their immediate presence in the mind, intuitive ideas were clearer and more vivid than abstractive ones. However Glisson also highlighted a number of imperfections of intuitive cognition, especially its narrow scope, its concern only with sensible singular objects, and its inability to penetrate the metaphysical structure of things themselves.⁸

Glisson suggested that the role of abstractive cognition was to remedy the defects of intuitive cognition, providing knowledge of universals and a whole array of quidditative metaphysical concepts. Imperfect or confused abstractive cognition did this in a preliminary way by abstracting only from the presence of the object and from its extrinsic circumstances and not penetrating to the intrinsic, entitative or essential part of the object. This gave only an imperfect universal concept, to be refined later by further abstraction and comparison to yield a perfect universal.⁹ Genuine abstractive knowledge on the other hand yielded the true inadequate concepts. This considered an object as divided into different objective metaphysical parts or reasons (*rationes*). These Glisson divided into two groups: inadequate concepts of presence and similarity, called kinships (*communitates*), and inadequate

⁸ Glisson, *Philosophical Papers*, 54-64.

⁹ Glisson, *Philosophical Papers*, 65-7.

concepts of absence and dissimilarity, called differences (*differentias*). True to his profession Glisson described the process of abstracting these inadequate concepts as analogous to anatomy. In this the intellect acts as an anatomist, separating parts from parts, elements from mixed bodies, accidents from essence, *supposita* from natures, essence from existence, potency from act and penetrating right down even to the finest distinctions of all (those that obtain within things which are really (*realiter*) identical). This anatomy he says is the subtlest of all.¹⁰

Glisson is insistent that his inadequate concepts are not mere ‘beings of reason’ but have a foundation in things themselves. He therefore immediately denies the Nominalist position that these are entirely mind-dependent realities. Beyond this however he is not entirely explicit as to whether he interprets the objective reasons in things or the inadequate concepts resulting from them in a Thomist or Scotist fashion. As far as possible this must therefore be inferred from his writings. Certainly Glisson had a high regard for Aquinas, to whom he refers as ‘divus Thomas’ in the *De Vita Naturae*.¹¹ Likewise in his discussion of how these inadequate concepts apply to simple natures Glisson holds that these are not composed really (*realiter*) nor ‘*ex parte rei*’, but have these only ‘*ratione sola cum fundamento in re*’.¹² The latter term is standard Thomist terminology for the distinction *rationis ratiocinatae* while the former is usually used to refer to some kind of Scotist formal (or modal) distinction. In the preface to the *De Vita Naturae* Glisson describes his inadequate concepts as existing in a kind of spectrum ranging at one extreme from the distinction only of reason (he does not say whether this is the Thomist distinction *rationis ratiocinatae* or the Nominalist *rationis ratiocinans*, but we may suspect the former) to at the other extreme the real distinction. In between these he refers to a middle distinction ‘*ex parte rei*’ although he does not indicate precisely what kind of distinction this might be.¹³

¹⁰ Glisson, *Philosophical Papers*, 67-76.

¹¹ Glisson, *De Vita Naturae*, 30.

¹² Glisson, *De Vita Naturae*, 188

¹³ Glisson, *De Vita Naturae*, ‘*Ad Lectorem*’. Here the reference to a distinction ‘*ex parte rei*’ could refer to a modal distinction between substance and accidents or different accidents inhering in the same substance which Glisson asserts in the *Tractatus*.

Glisson's most detailed discussion of the founding of inadequate concepts in reality occurs in his *Tractatus*. Here Glisson, in denying that his inadequate concepts are merely 'beings of reason', admits that all things have a certain aptitude to be understood by a perfect intellect through a single adequate concept, at once and distinctly. However due to the imperfection of the human intellect we perceive whole things in a '*mancus*' and confused fashion through inadequate concepts. He adds that all things also have a propensity, inasmuch as they relate to our intellect, to be conceived inadequately according to their different objective reasons (*rationes*). In this way the intellect is not free to make arbitrary inadequate concepts, but instead the reasons of each must be founded in nature (*in natura fundari*).¹⁴ Returning to the test case of simple things Glisson suggests that these may be resolved by our intellect into diverse inadequate concepts through 'extrinsic habitudes' as far as they are compared to other things present or absent, similar or dissimilar. While these habitudes themselves are 'beings of reason' Glisson is adamant that the intrinsic objective reasons that they are grounded upon are real features of the object ('*res ipsas ut per istas habitudes distinctas*') distinguished from each other '*ratione cum fundamento in re*'.¹⁵ What Glisson seems to be referring to here is the Nominalist extrinsic denomination used to indicate intrinsic features of an object distinguished from each other through the operation of the human intellect by the Thomist distinction *rationis ratiocinatae* rather than the Scotist distinction '*ex parte rei*'.

Glisson expounds further on this distinction *rationis ratiocinatae* in a later chapter of the *Tractatus*. Here he suggests that it obtains '*inter diversas incompletas objectivas rationes, nempe inter similitudines et dissimilitudines eiusdem rei inter se collatas*' adding that '*inadaequati conceptus in intellectu hisce objectivis rationibus respondententes dicantur proprio sensu formaliter inter se differre; et verisimile forte est, eodem sensu, Scotum suam formalem distinctionem inter objectivas rationes asseruisse*'. Such concepts, he says, are called in the intellect formal concepts, since they are distinct from each other as diverse forms or ideas. Thus although outside the intellect they differ only as diverse objective reasons of the same thing, in the intellect they differ as ideas or forms fully diverse. This is because these inadequate

¹⁴ Glisson, *Philosophical Papers*, 67-9.

¹⁵ Glisson, *Philosophical Papers*, 73-4.

concepts as they are abstractive prescind from that consideration in which the objective reasons themselves coincide. This the intellect only perceives when it reflexively compares its own inadequate concepts with their objects as they exist outside the mind. For then it understands these diverse objective reasons and their formal concepts to be in nature one and the same thing, which on account of their various similitudes and dissimilitudes with other things put forth various objective reasons concerning themselves and therefore are represented by fully distinct formal concepts. Thus, he concludes, it is easy to see why these concepts do not differ *in re* but '*ratione tantum cum fundamento in re*'.¹⁶ From this it may be seen that in this crucial case where the inadequate concepts are those of one and the same thing, Glisson metaphysically follows Aquinas in denying a distinction '*ex parte rei*' between the various objective reasons and upholding one of reason (ratiocinated) alone, while epistemologically he holds that these inadequate concepts may be formally distinct in the intellect.

Baxter's most extensive discussion of the relation of inadequate concepts to human cognition is to be found in the *Methodus*. Unlike Glisson he has no *Tractatus de Inadaequatis Conceptibus* and so the rest of his theory must be gleaned from references elsewhere. Baxter holds that humans are born with their intellect as a *tabula rasa*. The intellect is said to possess connate principles according to its natural disposition for knowing principles of things but not according to its actual knowledge of them. Baxter holds that all intellection is of singulars and that the first object of cognition is '*ens reale incomplexum*' and the second object is the *cogitatio* itself.¹⁷ As discussed in Chapter Four Baxter follows the Nominalists in denying sensible and intelligible species any role in cognition. Like the Nominalists as well he accepts both intuitive and abstractive cognition, although he restricts intuitive cognition to the soul's knowledge of its own acts.

For Baxter all intellection is of singulars and he holds that the knowledge we have of them is confused and partial due to the imperfection of the human intellect. We know things therefore through what he calls 'partial inadequate concepts', which are

¹⁶ Glisson, *Philosophical Papers*, 101.

¹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.189-90.

clearly his analogues of Glisson's inadequate concepts. Like Glisson Baxter suggests that a universal concept may be understood in a twofold way:

Conceptus universalis est, vel conceptus inadequatus partialis de re singulari; vel notio secunda, seu ens rationis, seu mentis instrumentum, ut ad plura eiusmodi singularia adaptatum.

In the first sense Baxter says a universal is '*nihil reale*' save as it is discovered in an existing individual ('*nisi ut reperitur in existente individuo*'). In this rather negative sense to know a universal is merely to know an individual thing partially or inadequately. In the second sense however Baxter understands a universal as *realiter* an act or operation of the mind *ad intra* which has its expression *ad extra* in a '*nomen instrumentale logicum*'. Baxter also has two different opinions concerning the value of universals. On the one hand he says so far as a universal is inadequate or '*mancus*' concerning singular things it is a concept that comes forth from the imperfection of intellect. It is as though he says one were to catch sight of a man walking and recognise only an animal or a body. On the other hand so far as a universal expresses something processed by the intellect, which has been collected from the cognition of singulars, then universals may rightly be viewed as an effect of a nobler faculty than sense.¹⁸

It is clear from the context that these inadequate concepts are very similar to those of Glisson. In fact Baxter's first and second universals closely resemble the confused and distinct universals of Glisson's two kinds of abstractive cognition. In his *Of the Immortality of the Soul* Baxter confirms that his use of inadequate concepts derives from Glisson.¹⁹ Here he also highlights his own Scotist interpretation of Glisson:

As I have oft said, Dr Glisson after others most subtilly laboureth to prove it of every simple substance, that its matter and form are not compounding parts, but *conceptus inadaequati*. If the intellect compound and divide its own conceptions that maketh not a real composition of two substances in the objects, but as the Scotists call it of

¹⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.190.

¹⁹ Baxter, *Immortality*, 6-7, 20, 25, 28, 33, 37, 39, 92-3.

two formalities, or *conceptus objectivi*, which if you will call a logical composition or intellectual, if you explain it, the matter is small.²⁰

In his *End of Doctrinal Controversies* Baxter expands on this further in his discussion of the powers of the human soul:

Not that man's soul is there by three forms, for all are but one form. But man's narrow mind cannot conceive of them but by three conceptions, which yet are not fictions, but as Scotus calls them, FORMALITATES, and as Campanella, Primalities or Essentialities; or as the Nominals extrinsic denominations, and relative by connotation of the objects and effects. He that hath a wit subtile enough to conceive of Scotus his FORMALITIES, as noting only a *fundamentum objectivum distinguendi*, will not wonder that a soul made in God's image, should be of difficult conception.²¹

In both these places then Baxter affirms explicitly, and elsewhere he does so implicitly, that he views inadequate concepts as closely akin to Scotus' formalities.²² It is also evident that like Glisson Baxter characterises these in Nominalist fashion according to their extrinsic denominations or connotations. However Baxter seems to differ from Glisson in grounding these extrinsic habitudes in a Scotist rather than Thomist metaphysics.

Yet the important question remains of how Baxter himself characterises these formalities. Baxter bemoans on more than one occasion the inability of the scholastics to clearly distinguish between their own distinctions.²³ In his *Treatise of Knowledge and Love* he expresses his frustration with the number of divergent accounts of the formalities specifically saying:

And the Scotists may yet write as many more treatises *de formalitatibus*, before men will understand indeed what a *conceptus formalis* with them is, and whether diverse *formalities* be diverse *realities*, or only *ejusdem conceptus inadequati*. But thus learning is become like a poppet play, or the raising of the dust.²⁴

²⁰ Baxter, *Immortality*, 92-3.

²¹ Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, x-xi

²² In his *Account*, 159 Baxter cryptically says that 'Scotus his *formalitates* or *modi*, and *ens rationis*, contain much that now commonly goes under another name'.

²³ See, for example, Baxter, *Methodus*, I.120.

²⁴ Baxter, *Knowledge and Love*, 18.

Likewise in the *Methodus* he says of the formalities that they are so subtle as to flee the understanding. Yet elsewhere in the same work he comments ‘*quamvis cum Scotistarum libros de formalitatibus lego, filum valde subtile et tenue esse percipio, doctrinam tamen eorum negare non audeo*’.²⁵ From this and evidence gathered in the rest of the thesis it seems that while Baxter considered the doctrine of the formalities to be very subtle, even ineffable, he did accept, at least in some cases, the validity of a Scotist formal distinction ‘*ex parte rei*’.

This is confirmed by the discussion in the *Methodus* of his own views on the Trinity:

*Quamvis quae eadem sunt cum uno tertio sunt eadem inter se, et ita hae proprietates et relationes et actus fundamentales immanentes, sunt eadem quod essentia, et inter se in essentiae unitate idem sunt, ab invicem tamen ratione nobis ignota magis distinguuntur, ex natura rei ante actum nostri intellectus.*²⁶

This at least is conclusive in demonstrating that Baxter understood the nature of at least some objective reasons, in this case the intra-divine properties and relations, as being ‘*ex parte rei ante actum intellectus*’. In the seventeenth century this can never be assumed for there were a number of thinkers who, for example, equated Scotus’ formal distinction with the Thomist distinction of reason, as Baxter himself remarks on.²⁷ Furthermore that Baxter accepts such an objective distinction ‘*ex parte rei*’, at least in broad terms, marks him out from Glisson who as we have seen held a formal distinction between the objective reasons to obtain only in the intellect and not in the thing itself. It should be noted however that this does not necessarily mean that all cases of inadequate concepts that we meet in Baxter correspond to Scotist formalities. It is quite possible that some, perhaps the divine attributes for example, map precisely onto Glisson’s understanding of the intrinsic objective reasons as only distinct *rationis ratiocinatae*.

²⁵ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.33, 167.

²⁶ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.121. This can also be seen in his insistence against Aquinas in I.92 that some kind of distinction *ex natura rei* is necessary to ground the distinction between the Trinitarian relations.

²⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.174; cf. Maurice Grajewski, *The Formal Distinction of Duns Scotus: A Study in Metaphysics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1944), 1-10.

Baxter's near equation of the Scotist formal distinction and the Nominalist extrinsic or connotative distinction, remarked on above and very apparent in both his discussion of the soul and the Trinity, deserves further comment. In broad terms the Nominalist connotative distinction sought to assign distinct features to one absolutely simple thing 'on account of the different ways that this one simple thing relates to or connotes various things that are, in one way or another, extrinsic to it'. Thus for example the divine intellect and the divine will may be distinguished through the different acts that they connote.²⁸ Baxter suggested that in making such an extrinsic distinction the Nominals accepted a 'sufficient ground for the denomination, which some call virtual, and some relative'.²⁹ Baxter would therefore have agreed with his contemporary the Scotist Bartolomeo Mastri who maintained that the connotative distinction must be preceded by some kind of intrinsic distinction whether this might be the strict Scotist formal distinction or the (Thomist) virtual distinction.³⁰ Yet this also suggests Baxter's sympathy with a Nominalist extrinsicist view in which metaphysical aspects of things are characterised not as with Scotus' formalities as parts to whole but rather as parts to external reality.³¹ It must be admitted then that there is a fundamental tension in Baxter's thought between a Scotist and Nominalist position. On the one hand Baxter portrays himself as exasperated at the number of Scotist treatises on the formalities and eschews detailed analysis of metaphysical distinctions, often preferring like the Nominalists to characterise such things extrinsically and connotatively, while on the other hand he confesses that he does not dare to reject Scotus' formalities and cannot therefore simply deny the possibility of a distinction '*ex parte rei*'.³² Overall then it would seem safest to characterise Baxter's position neither as pure Scotism nor Nominalism, but rather as a kind of 'Nominalised Scotism'.

²⁸ Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*, 116-7.

²⁹ Baxter, *Reasons*, 375-6; cf. *Methodus*, I.118.

³⁰ Michael Renemann, 'Mastri on "*Praecisio Objectiva*"', in M. Forlivesi (ed.), *Rem in Seipsa Cernere. Saggi sul Pensiero Filosofico di Bartolomeo Mastrius (1602-1673)* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2006), 411. It was also the opinion of Suarez that an extrinsic distinction always supposes something intrinsic as its ground, see Scheibler, *Metaphysica*, II c. 2. n. 92.

³¹ S. Y. Watson, 'A Problem for Realism: Our Multiple Concepts of Individual Things and the Solution of Duns Scotus', in Bonansea and Ryan (ed.), *Duns Scotus*, 64-9, 75-81.

³² Baxter, *Knowledge and Love*, 18; *Methodus*, I.33, 167.

That in the case of his metaphysical epistemology the accent should fall on Baxter's Scotism rather than his Nominalism is apparent from his view of universals. By Baxter's account, as we have seen, there are two kinds of universals those founded on immediate intuition/confused abstraction (he does not allow us to distinguish) which are imperfect, and those grounded on further comparison and abstraction which are more perfect. Of this first type Baxter adds, as we saw, that they are 'nothing real except as they are discovered in the existing individual'. In his *Treatise of Justifying Righteousness* Baxter helpfully clarifies this further saying:

And as nothing can be defined but a species, so a species, or any universal, is nothing but a notion or *ens rationis*, save as it existeth in the said individual. And in the individuals it is nothing but their being as partially, or inadequately taken, or a *conceptus objectivus partialis* (whether it be of a thing really, or only intellectually partible, or any thing which our narrow minds cannot conceive of, *uno et simplici conceptu activo*).³³

The provisos suggest, contrary to a Nominalist like Ockham, that universals do have a real existence outside the mind.³⁴ This is further confirmed by Baxter's acceptance of the Scotist 'haecceity' as a principle of individuation, which may be seen from the following two examples:

- i) Do you think any dust, or drop, any atome of earth or water, loseth any thing of it self, by its union with the rest? Is any substance lost? Is the simple nature changed? Is it not earth and water still? Is not the haecceity, as they call it, continued? Doth not God know every dust, and every drop from the rest? Can he not separate them when he will?³⁵
- ii) That the parts are the same in union with the whole, as when they are all separated. Their nature is the same, and as Epicurus and Democritus say of their atoms, they are still distinguishable, and are truly parts, and may be intellectually separated. The same individual water which you cast out of your bottle into the sea, is somewhere in the sea still; and though contiguous to other parts, is discernable from them all by God. The haecceity, as they say, remaineth.³⁶

³³ Richard Baxter, *An Answer to Dr. Tullies Angry Letter* (London, 1675), 40.

³⁴ The contrast with Ockham's opinion may be clearly seen from Baxter's citation of him as saying that '*universale* is *qualitas mentis*, and is nothing else; nor any where else existent' (*Catholick Theologie*, I.i.75).

³⁵ Baxter, *Immortality*, II.56-7.

³⁶ Baxter, *Reasons*, 573.

For Baxter, as for Scotus, then we may infer that the haecceity is that which individuates the common nature. It thus makes, for example, a dog with the common nature of dogginess to be *this* individual dog. Scotus held that the haecceity was distinguished from the common nature by a formal distinction.³⁷ Baxter remains undecided on this question, seemingly leaving open a wide spectrum of realist opinion.³⁸ Yet that he holds to any kind of haecceity at all distinguishes him markedly from a Nominalist position and suggests he is a moderate realist something akin to Scotus.³⁹

³⁷ Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 149.

³⁸ Baxter, *Answer to Dr. Tullies Angry Letter*, 40.

³⁹ Adams says that a moderate realist perspective consists in holding that particulars have at least two metaphysical constituents – a common nature and an individuating principle (*William Ockham*, I.16). Scotus and Ockham's complex discussion of universals may be found in Paul Spade (ed.), *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals: Porphyry, Boethius, Abelard, Duns Scotus, Ockham* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1994), 57 ff. It should be noted that there also existed weaker forms of realism than that espoused by Scotus such as the view of Henry of Harclay that a universal and individual are distinguished only by reason (Spade, *Five Texts*, xiv).

Appendix Three – The Eternal Foundation of Divine Government

For Richard Baxter the foundation of God's government lay in his enacting in time his eternal and thus timeless counsels.¹ His discussion of this, comprehended in his doctrine of divine power, intellect and will, both draws on scholastic norms and attempts to refine them in light of his own Trinitarian metaphysics. True to his epistemological principles Baxter insists that all of our notions concerning God's intellect and will are but 'inadequate analogical conceptions'.² He therefore warns that:

It is a dreadful thing to be over-bold, rash and presumptuous in speaking and asserting any thing without clear proof, of Gods knowledge and will; especially to reduce them all to the modes and methods of a man, even as to the order of his acts: seeing we are forced to confess, that even intellection and volition are spoken of God with exceeding great impropriety, and mans acts which are the *prius significatum*, are further below Gods, than a worm is below a man.

Baxter emphasises therefore that it is only scholastic presumption in these matters that have forced him into giving his own account in defence of the truth.³ Elsewhere he remarks in a fascinating aside that only concerning the Trinity has the schoolmen's 'profane curiosity and audacity' been equal to their discussion of the order of intention and execution in divine decrees. As Baxter rightly recognised Scotus was responsible for many of these innovations.⁴ Unsurprisingly Baxter eschewed these Scotist (and Thomist) innovations completely, holding instead to a simplified Nominalist account grounded on his Trinitarian metaphysics and the principle of extrinsic or connotative denomination.

i) Divine Power

Among the scholastics, as Baxter indicates, it was a source of major controversy as to whether God's power was to be considered in any way distinct from his intellect

¹ This perspective may be seen clearly in the *Methodus* and *Catholick Theologie*.

² Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.2. The same of course could be said about our own souls of which we have no one adequate conception (I.i.3).

³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.6.

⁴ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.44.

or will. While Vasquez denied this Baxter, following Durandus and Suarez, affirmed that power was a distinct ‘inadequate concept’ in God. He pointed out that the reason some denied this was largely because of their ‘misconceiving of the *potentia vitalis* in man, as if it were only *executive ad extra*, or in the inferior faculties’ and their subsequent analogical extension of this to God.⁵ By contrast, as we have seen, Baxter considered active power to be the *fundamentum Trinitatis* in both God and man and therefore to be co-equal in dignity to both intellect and will.

Baxter’s own conception of power makes a distinction between power considered on its own, sometimes called nude power, and power considered with respect to the other two divine principles. For this reason he suggests that God’s power may be denominated omnipotency in relation to three different objects. Firstly as to ‘all things which belong to power’ according to which God can do all things called possible. Secondly as to ‘all things meet or congruous to the divine intellect to be willed and done’ so that God can do all things which are meet to do and nothing which is unmeet. Thirdly and finally as to ‘all things which he willeth to do’, which is of course the actual realm of our experience of divine power and action.⁶

In holding this Baxter significantly encompasses the standard scholastic distinction between God’s *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* within the framework of his divine principles. In scholastic usage it generally referred to the conceptual divide between what God is able to do hypothetically and absolutely, i.e. anything which does not violate the principle of non-contradiction, and what he chooses and ordains to do actually. While this distinction had its roots in early medieval discussions it became prevalent in late medieval discussions, establishing itself as a cornerstone of the Nominalist and voluntarist worldview. It has often been held responsible for the speculative character of much of late medieval thought, with its endless exploration of hypothetical and often outlandish questions such as the notorious examples of

⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.4.

⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.6.

whether God could have become incarnate as an ass or whether he could command someone to hate him.⁷

Among the Reformed we find two differing responses to this distinction. The first, generally early, response was a complete rejection of any division between God's absolute and ordained power. This is exemplified by Calvin who was horrified by the speculative excesses that this distinction had led theologians into and therefore excised it from his theology. The second, later and more moderate, response was to retain the distinction but seek to mitigate its use. Even Calvin seems to have recognised some scriptural validity to the basic idea underlying this distinction and it was natural therefore that his Protestant Scholastic successors should have sought to restore its theological credibility. In the seventeenth century it therefore became common currency in theological discussion and is to be found in theologians of all confessional backgrounds.⁸

Following his Reformed contemporaries Baxter's own account of divine power should likewise be considered an attempt to domesticate this distinction between God's absolute and ordained power. Unsurprisingly Baxter disapproved strongly of the use of this distinction to buttress any theologically questionable implications. He also maintains that no one should speculate on the power of God antecedent to his constitution of things, in this way limiting the scope of any discussion of God's absolute power.⁹ Baxter's own discussion of divine power significantly prevents the separation of God's absolute and ordained power. This is because power is never treated alone, as nude power, but only according to the conditioning of the other two divine principles. While the Nominalists may not have intended to separate absolute and ordained power from each other¹⁰ their (perceived) abuses of this distinction were often traced to their extreme voluntarism in detaching the divine will from its

⁷ For an in-depth discussion of this distinction and its changing use in medieval and early modern times see Francis Oakley, *Omnipotence, Covenant and Order: An Excursion in the History of Ideas from Abelard to Leibniz* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁸ David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 40-50; *PRRD*, 3.532-7.

⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, III.27.

¹⁰ Heiko Oberman notes that the Nominalist insistence on God's actions *ad extra* being undivided and on the divine simplicity meant that acts of divine will were also acts of divine wisdom (*The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 36-8, 98-103).

proper mooring in the other divine attributes.¹¹ This was not a problem for Baxter's mitigated voluntarism, which allowed him to retain those aspects of the Nominalist synthesis he saw as theologically valid – such as God's power to dispense with his own law – while ruling out of court any excesses of 'nude power' transgressing the divine intellect or will. Such a solution hinged, of course, on his Trinitarian metaphysics and his account of the coinherence of the divine principles.

ii) Divine Understanding

Baxter's threefold division of divine power is mirrored by a corresponding division in the realm of understanding. Thus in the first instant God 'knoweth all possible, in his own omnipotence: for to know things to be possible, is but to know what he can do'. Secondly God knows all things as 'congruous, eligible and *volenda*: and this out of the perfection of his own wisdom: which is but to be perfectly wise, and to know what perfect wisdom should offer as eligible to the will'. Finally God knows 'all things willed by him as such (as *volita*): which is but to know his own will, and so that they will be'. In making these distinctions Baxter is clear that we are referring to God's knowledge as being eternally rooted and therefore in a situation where the objects of his knowledge do not yet have any being. In fact Baxter says properly the object of God's knowledge is God himself and his own Power, Wisdom and Will.¹² Once again therefore it is important for Baxter that God's knowledge should be reflexively defined and always considered only as it participates in the other two primalities. In this light the different (logical) instants of divine understanding can be correlated with God's understanding of his own power, his own wisdom and his own will.

Such a reflexive, even Trinitarian, account of divine knowledge was not of course unique to Baxter but was in fact common among scholastic theologians, both medieval and early modern. All God's knowledge was therefore considered as grounded upon his self-knowledge. This could be considered either in respect to the mutual knowledge of the divine persons or to the way in which God's understanding

¹¹ Stephen Strehle, *Calvinism, Federalism and Scholasticism: A Study of the Reformed Doctrine of Covenant* (Bern: P. Lang, 1988), 42-82.

¹² Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.6-7.

stood in relation to his power and his will, both of which could be backed up with scriptural citation. Furthermore, in knowing himself God also knows the possibility and actuality of all things and in this way could be considered to know everything which is knowable and so be omniscient.¹³ A further refinement to the scholastic account of divine knowledge was expressed in the common distinction between the *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* and the *scientia visionis*. These referred respectively to God's knowledge of the entire realm of possibility and his corresponding knowledge of the entire realm of actuality. In other words they referred to a kind of knowledge antecedent and consequent (in order of nature) to the action of divine power and will.¹⁴

Here once again we see how Baxter's own Trinitarian account enfolds the traditional distinction between the knowledge of simple intelligence and knowledge of vision. However, although clearly drawing on this heritage, Baxter is in fact quite critical of this fundamental division remarking:

From what is said, you may see, that the common school distinction of all God's knowledge, into *scientia simplicis intelligentiae et purae visionis*, is not accurate, and the terms are too arbitrary and dark to notifie the thing intended...and that a fitter distinction is plain and obvious.¹⁵

Baxter expands further on this evident distaste in his *Apology*, pointing out that this distinction was intended to mirror that in the human intellect between abstractive and intuitive knowledge. This he holds to imply a prior and posterior within the divine act and therefore he rejects it.¹⁶ Elsewhere in discussing God's knowledge of future contingents he admits that this scheme has a certain merit and subtlety to it but again rejects it, presumably for a similar reason, that it assumes too near an analogy between divine and human understanding.¹⁷ In the *Catholick Theologie* Baxter further suggests that its effect is to 'mince' God's knowledge into 'scraps' of

¹³ *PRRD*, 3.397-402.

¹⁴ *PRRD*, 3.406-8.

¹⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.7.

¹⁶ Richard Baxter, *The Reduction of a Digressor* (London, 1654), 19.

¹⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.78.

objective propositions and that it does not do justice to God's act of knowing all things '*uno intuitu*'.¹⁸

One may suspect also, especially given the revisionist tenor of the *Methodus* and *Catholick Theologie*, that Baxter viewed his own account as being more explicitly Trinitarian than those of his Reformed contemporaries. In particular, Baxter may have felt that the standard twofold division, in subsuming his own category of eligible knowledge into an essentially amorphous possible knowledge, failed to do proper justice to God's moral character. As Trueman points out Baxter's use of Trinitarian metaphysics to structure his account of the divine understanding represents more than a mere difference in organisation from other Reformed systems.¹⁹ We should remember that Baxter's account of divine action, both immanent and transient, is wholly grounded on the mutual conditioning of the divine principles. His developed Trinitarian understanding thus saw the whole realm of God's knowledge as captured intuitively within the eternal, perichoretic motion of these selfsame principles. This prevented him from espousing any account of the intra-divine based on analogies with man's intellectual processes, including that employing any distinction between the knowledge of simple intelligence and vision. Thus here, just as with their positing of the intra-Trinitarian *pactum salutis*, Baxter regarded his Reformed colleagues as overly speculative.

Another area in which Baxter was highly critical of the scholastic consensus was in respect to the doctrine of the divine ideas. Here Baxter notes the existence of two divergent traditions. The first tradition was that of Aquinas and the Thomists who considered the divine ideas as eternal separate forms according to the likeness of which God created all things and which also act as the ground of his understanding of all things. He did not see the multiplicity of such ideas as contravening divine simplicity, for he held that an idea is simply God's essence as it is necessarily the likeness of all things. An idea is therefore 'that which' is known and not a species 'by which' knowledge is attained or which informs the divine mind.²⁰ As Baxter

¹⁸ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, II.27.

¹⁹ Trueman, 'Small Step', 190-1.

²⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a15 art. 1, 2.

summarises it for Aquinas ‘*essentia divina cognita ut imitabilis a creatura per modum exemplaris est idea*’.²¹

The second tradition was that of the Scotists. Scotus agreed with Aquinas that the divine ideas were formal exemplars according to the pattern of which all things are created, but rejected the concept of ideas as the ground of divine understanding. As Harris summarises it for Scotus the idea is ‘simply the creature itself as known, the product, not the condition of the divine cognition’.²² In order to explain the inherence of the ideas within the divine essence Scotus introduced a new category of *esse cognitum* which he defined as ‘*esse formale et proprium quod creatura habet distinctum ab esse sua causa; in quo in divino intellectu creaturae ipsae per intellectionem producuntur*’. Scotus was clear that this *esse cognitum* was in no way real or intermediate being but was instead ‘*ens rationis purum*’. For this reason ideas as *esse cognita* could be held entirely consistent with divine simplicity. Taken together this yielded Scotus’ own definition of a divine idea as ‘*ratio aeterna et incommutabilis in mente divina, secundum quam aliquid est formabile extra tanquam secundam propriam rationem eius*’.²³ Furthermore building on this account of the divine ideas Scotus hypothesised a complex doctrine of divine understanding largely based on analogy with human intellectual processes.²⁴

Despite their impressive intellectual pedigrees Baxter was however critical of both these conceptions of divine ideas. Although he does not quarrel with other divines for using the term ‘idea’ he himself admits to being ‘afraid of presumption’.²⁵ Scotus, in particular, comes in for attack. Describing the Scotist division of God’s intellect into his essence as the primary, immediate and motive object by virtue of which all things are known and the creature known in his essence as his secondary, mediate and terminative object, Baxter simply says ‘here they are at the greatest loss’. Similarly he regards the whole concept of *esse cognitum* as a ‘dance and

²¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.18. Baxter’s summary of Aquinas is taken from Rada, *Controversiae Theologicae*.

²² Harris, *Duns Scotus*, II.197.

²³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.17-19. Baxter’s references to Scotus are mostly cited from Rada, *Controversiae Theologicae*.

²⁴ For an excellent summary of this see Cross, *Duns Scotus on God*, 63-9.

²⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.7.

shew...of meer words' in which 'a creature that is no creature is said to have an *esse* which is no *esse*'. Finally he also denies the Scotist view that God knows creatures only in themselves (as products of divine cognition) and not in his own essence holding that creatures must at least virtually – presumably that is as effects are in their cause – be in God's essence. Although Aquinas does not come in for such direct attack, in the same place Baxter denies the equivalent Thomist proposition that God knows creatures only in his own essence and not in themselves, suggesting that by reason of his perfection God must know creatures in themselves as well as in his essence.²⁶

Behind these critiques lay Baxter's conviction that 'intellection in God both in the form and mode doth so infinitely transcend and differ from humane intellection, as that it is not the same thing; so we are very unfit in this woful darkness to talk so peremptorily of things unknown, and to conclude that God hath not a more perfect knowledge of things, than by ideas, or any thing fitly so called'.²⁷ Thus it may be said that while Baxter was more than happy to posit an analogy between the *faculties* of the human soul and the Godhead, he rejected the extension of this analogy into discussing the interior *processes* of divine operation. For this reason he refuses to characterise the working of divine intellection beyond the points circumscribed by his own framework of the divine principles, just as we saw him refusing to speculate on the intra-Trinitarian relations.

Baxter's own position on divine knowledge represents a considerable simplification in comparison to the Thomist and especially Scotist doctrine of divine ideas. It hinges especially on his Nominalist account of relations and extrinsic denomination. In his *Catholick Theologie* Baxter affirms both Peter Hurtado de Mendoza's doctrine that God is able to have real relations with his creation and Ockham's view that a relation has no real being but is simply an external denomination.²⁸ Both these principles give Baxter's doctrine of divine knowledge a distinct Nominalist slant, as he freely admits at the start of his discussion of this in the *Methodus*. In particular

²⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.15-19.

²⁷ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.19.

²⁸ Baxter affirms Peter Hurtado de Mendoza's position in a marginal note of *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.14. He mentions Ockham's view in *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.10.

they gave him the freedom to denominate divine acts of intellection according to their diverse respects. Thus, for example, when something comes into existence it is quite correct to say that a new relation arises in the divine intellect since it now has a new object as terminus. Since relations have no real being it follows that Baxter does not here impugn a classical theist position. As he succinctly puts it:

Sicut Deo intellectionum diversitatem adscribimus, sine injuria adversus divinam simplicitatem et unitatem, pari ratione intellectionum novitatem et cessationem ei adscribimus sine injuria adversus eius immutabilitatem.

Baxter summarises his position saying divine acts may be called incipient and mutable not really ‘*ex parte Dei*’ but only relatively, connotatively and by extrinsic denomination.²⁹

Nevertheless Baxter is very clear that the ground of these temporally denominated divine acts is in eternity. Thus he says that if God’s acts are denominated not as terminated in temporal objects and these objects are not considered as measured by time – that is if both time and the objects themselves are considered in ‘indivisible eternity’ – then it is quite correct to say that God always sees all things as really existing in eternity. Thus God both most perfectly knows our instants of time and space by distinguishing and also comprehends our time and space in his eternity and immensity.³⁰ In the *Catholick Theologie* Baxter expands further on his views of time and eternity. Time he holds to be no ‘real being’ but simply the ‘duration of beings, which is nothing but their existence not ceasing’. Eternity likewise he says is nothing really distinct from God himself but is ‘Gods existence considered as having no measure of duration, no beginning, no middle, no parts of duration and no end’. However although properly and in it self indivisible eternity may be regarded as intellectually divisible according to inadequate concepts. In terms of the co-existence of time and eternity this means both that all of eternity co-exists with any one instant of time and, according to our intellectual conceptions of the matter, one

²⁹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.40-1. For discussion of this in relation to Baxter’s controversy with George Kendall see Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 98-102.

³⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.41.

moment of time may be mapped onto one ‘moment’ of eternity, allowing eternity in some ways to be treated as an analogous timestream.³¹

Baxter clarifies this with reference to the scholastic quandary of the co-existence of creatures with God in eternity. He himself affirms the Augustinian line that ‘fore-knowledge in God, is the same with the knowledge of things present’ so that past, present and future are all seen by God in one, undivided, eternal, present intuition. Yet as this matter is not ‘digested’ by Scotus, Durandus, Gabriel Biel, Gregory of Rimini and many others, he also gives his own ‘reconciling’ solution to the problem. Following the principles of his Nominalist logic Baxter therefore argues that the eternal God may be denominated by extrinsic denomination as the terminus of a relation to temporary creatures. Since he also considers this to be a reciprocal relation, contrary to Aquinas and Scotus, it follows for Baxter that eternity may communicate ‘somewhat of its name to the multifarious fluid creature, as its terminus’. Furthermore since eternity is not partible it may even be held that ‘as indivisible eternity co-existeth with the creature, so the creature co-existeth with an indivisible eternity, and so with all eternity, and not with a part’. The essence of Baxter’s position then is that there is a relation between the temporal and eternal which means that although the temporal comes into existence at a particular instant of time, this instant is itself comprehended in God’s undivided eternity, which of course admits of no succession of moments. This means that both seemingly contradictory positions of the controversy can be affirmed as true: eternity both ever co-exists with creatures and it also *de novo* begins to co-exist with creatures.³²

The relation of time and eternity also shapes Baxter’s doctrine of futurity. According to Baxter both the possibility and futurity of things are not accidents or relations but are instead ‘*termini diminuentes*’ and so ‘are spoken of nothing’. As he says ‘to say that a thing may be, or will be, which now is not, is to say that now it is nothing’. Since they are nothing this implies that they can have no cause whether temporal or eternal so Baxter can conclude that ‘God is no cause of any eternal possibility or futurity’. However although he holds futurity to be a nothing and

³¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.15.

³² Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.13-15; cf. *Methodus*, I.47-9.

therefore a mere being of reason, Baxter does not say the same about propositions involving the futurity of things. He holds instead that a proposition concerning futurity is in fact something and so ‘to know the futurity of a thing, is most properly to know the truth of that proposition *it will be*’. Furthermore although God’s knowledge is not by means of propositions he certainly knows propositions as and when they are existent and so must know the truth of all true propositions of futurity. Baxter does not make the next steps of his logic altogether clear but from the hypothetical that if there were such propositions in eternity God would know their truth he argues that in a transcendent and incomprehensible way God knows the truth of all true propositions of futurity even though such propositions are not themselves eternally existent.³³ Certainly ‘God knoweth that every thing will be, which will be’.³⁴

Baxter’s argument is essentially an extrapolation back from God’s ‘temporal’ knowledge of the truth of all propositions, crucially including propositions of futurity, to his necessary eternal knowledge of this truth. Importantly therefore Baxter is able to expose what he sees as the inherent contradictions in the notion of futurity as presently existing without jeopardising in any way God’s knowledge of future events. Of course this extrapolation is not the only way that Baxter is able to argue for God’s knowledge of the future. He is also able to conclude this much more simply from his own account of God’s possible, eligible and volitional knowledge.³⁵ However by denying futurity Baxter is able to detach God’s eternal knowledge of the future – something which he like all orthodox divines wants to affirm – from his causation of events. It is only this further move which for Baxter fully safeguards God from the accusation of being the author of sin. As he summarises this ‘Gods mere fore-knowledge, nor his meer will without efficient power or action causeth not the thing future, and therefore is not the cause that it will be. But where knowledge and will with active power cooperate, they are true causes of the thing’.³⁶ God is therefore only said to be a cause of something in the full conjunction of the divine principles (here presented in their order as to transient and not immanent acts) and in

³³ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.8-11.

³⁴ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.9.

³⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.9.

³⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.11.

this we may begin to discern how Baxter's Trinitarian approach to God's knowledge has important ramifications for his account of divine government.

Finally we may discern a similar pattern of argumentation in Baxter's discussion of future contingents. Thus Baxter says 'that God knoweth the truth of all conditional propositions that are true, is past all doubt, if we may suppose that God had eternal propositions'. He adds that there is no doubt that he knows their truth now as they are present in the human mind. The controversy, as before, concerns whether there are such things as eternal propositions. If not then Baxter argues that from eternity God had the foreknowledge of his creatures' conditional propositions, although of course in a transcendent and non-propositional manner. While this may be so, he here adds an important stipulation to this argument: 'if we say or must say that God from eternity fore-knew our propositions of future contingents, which are conditional, yet we must not say or think that his knowledge *quoad actum* is conditional'. In fact God's knowledge may only be denominated as conditional by extrinsic denomination, not of course in itself. He emphasises therefore that God's knowledge is in no way dependent on the creature but is simply terminated on the creature as its object.³⁷

The *Methodus* seeks to relate Baxter's own solution to this problem with the various scholastic opinions concerning this matter. In particular he identifies four proposals as to how God may know future contingents. The first is the proposal of the Thomists that God may know them through the coexistence of future things with him in eternity. The second is that adopted by the Scotists that God knows them '*in esse volito*', that is through his knowledge of his own decree of predetermination or permission. Although Baxter recognises these as ingenious solutions he does not accept either of them in full.³⁸

The Thomist argument, in particular, is susceptible to all the controversies concerning the co-existence of creatures with God in eternity. Baxter does not say this explicitly but it seems likely that his own resolution of this issue according to extrinsic denomination will not help the Thomists here, since this says nothing about

³⁷ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.42.

³⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.47, 77.

the *cause* of God's knowledge but only about how time and eternity may be properly related. The Thomist position was often illustrated by an analogy in which God's knowledge of all of time is compared to a man whose prospect from a very high tower gives him a view of everything at once in all directions, hidden to those on the ground by their restricted perspective. Therefore although the man travelling on a road does not see those who come after him the man on the tower sees all those travelling on the road and their position relative to each other. In the same way God beholds at once all instants of time and their relations.³⁹ Baxter however says that by this similitude they only grasp something different from the infinity and perfection of God's knowledge.⁴⁰

The Scotist position of course avoids all the problems involved with the co-existence of creatures with God in eternity but according to Baxter runs into other equally formidable problems. Citing Pierre d'Ailly Baxter argues that Scotus falls into the trap of attributing priority and posteriority to God in his complex theory of different instants of understanding and willing. In particular in making one act the *medium* of another Scotus reduces divine intellection to the temporal processes of human understanding. Furthermore Baxter objects that even if God knew other things '*in esse volito*' he could not know evil or the existence of sin in this way since, as he argues elsewhere, such things are not said in any way to be willed by God.⁴¹

The third solution that Baxter analyses is that of the middle knowledge of the Molinists. This was the proposal that through God's perfect knowledge of both the disposition of the human will and its attendant circumstances God is able to foresee its ultimate decision. Baxter however is highly critical of this approach holding that it creates more problems than it solves. For if the Molinists are speaking of causes of divine foreknowledge then he says they are blaspheming for there are no causes of God's knowledge. Likewise if they argue that futurity in itself is not intelligible to God but only in its causes – which is of course the whole function of middle knowledge – and further that these causes are means of knowledge, then this also is

³⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, 1a14 art. 13. The analogy can be improved if the tower is placed on top of a hill with the road winding round it so that the contours of the hill hide the travellers from each other as well.

⁴⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.48.

⁴¹ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.48; cf. *Catholic Theologie*, I.i.44.

blasphemously suggesting that God does not know conclusions except through means. Furthermore they are also presented with the problem that they cannot ascribe necessity to any cause of the futurity, whether its attendant circumstances or the habitual inclination of the will, for if they were to do so this would entirely destroy the conditional nature of the futurity. So if God only has middle knowledge they are still left with the insoluble problem of how God can know the result of an entirely free act of the human will. In other words as Baxter says middle knowledge solves nothing.⁴²

This leaves only the final proposal, that of the Nominalists, that God is able to know things ‘*in sola perfectione intellectus divini cum futurorum intelligibilitate*’. As we might expect it is with this one alone that Baxter wholly agrees and he thinks that to say anything else is to risk reducing divine intellection to the level of human processes.⁴³ To explain this opinion further he cites again the Nominalist d’Ailly who argues very simply that since the divine intellect is infinite and most perfect it must know all intelligible things. Future events, whether contingent or not, are themselves intelligible and so must be known to God. Finally, since cause and effect do not apply to God, it follows that we cannot speak at all of the cause of divine intellection (as the Thomists, Scotists and Molinists do in their various ways) but *only* of the cause of the relative denomination of any act of the divine intellect.⁴⁴ Here we see that Baxter’s resort to the Nominalist tool of extrinsic denomination rests ultimately on his view of God and his ways as transcending all human understanding and modes of intellection.

iii) Divine Will

Unsurprisingly as with his discussion of divine power and intellect, we find a similar threefold division in Baxter’s account of the divine will. Concerning things not yet existent the first object is therefore ‘the possibility of things, which God is said to will, in willing his own power as respecting them’. The second object is ‘the congruity, goodness and eligibility of things, as in his own knowledge; which is but

⁴² Baxter, *Methodus*, I.76-7.

⁴³ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.47.

⁴⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.76.

to will the perfection of his own understanding'. Finally as third object God wills 'the future existence of things good and eligible, to be produced in their fittest season'. Once again we must stress, as Baxter himself does, that in separating out logical objects of the divine will he is simply speaking 'as we may conceive of God after the manner of men' and thus not in any way implying priority and posteriority within the divine will, nor any kind of volitional process.⁴⁵

Here again then we find a clear Trinitarian pattern, as God wills his own Power, Wisdom and Will he comprehends eternally the whole field of possible and actual reality. Now also with this account of the divine will in place we gain a complete picture of the working of the divine faculties and in particular of how each divine act, whether immanent or transient, itself involves the cooperation and coinherence of all three divine principles. This must be understood with the proviso that the identification of separate intrinsic moments of divine action is always understood not only logically (which is common to all the Reformed orthodox) but beyond this according to the stringent Nominalist principle of relative denomination. In denominating God's acts according to their various objects and effects Baxter says it is possible to talk of his intellections and volitions in a 'certain order of nature, as one being before and one after another'. However unlike, for example, the logical instants of the Scotists, this does not correspond to any kind of (logical) process within God.⁴⁶ This is indeed the chief distinction between Baxter and those, such as many other Protestant scholastics, willing to countenance the language of process within God so long as this is understood in logical terms.

Once again then the principle of extrinsic denomination appears at the forefront of Baxter's discussion of divine action. At the beginning of the discussion in his *Methodus* of divine volitions and decrees he therefore stresses the following point:

Quamvis, ex parte sui, Dei decreta omnia sunt unicum (una scilicet volitione vult omnia, sicut una scientia scit omnia;) quia tamen huius

⁴⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.7

⁴⁶ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.47.

*volitionis (ut et scientiae) tantum non infinita sunt positive objecta, tot etiam dici possunt; extrinseca denominatione relative, Dei volitiones.*⁴⁷

As before then the tool of extrinsic denomination serves both to safeguard the divine immutability and simplicity and to allow intelligible discussion of multiple divine volitions and decrees. Yet in interpreting Baxter's doctrine of divine government it is important to hold constantly before one's eyes the unicity of the divine will. As we shall see below this also has further Trinitarian implications.

Furthermore, in parallel to his discussion of futurition, Baxter uses the method of extrinsic denomination as a way of restricting the scope of God's volitional activity. He therefore insists that '*nihil est*' and '*nihil erit*' cannot aptly be termed objects or effects of divine decrees except morally and improperly.⁴⁸ Put bluntly, 'nothing is not a capable terminus of a divine act'.⁴⁹ Baxter therefore suggests that it is foolish to ascribe negative decrees to God concerning the nearly infinite number of atoms, grains of sand and possible worlds that do not exist. Even more significantly for his doctrine of God's relation to man Baxter maintains that '*gratiam aut gloriam non-habere nihil est*' and therefore it is wrong to feign a divine decree of actual reprobation. Baxter is clear that the same logic applies to divine permission, for he views this as essentially '*non-impedire*' and therefore a nothing or non-act. However with regard to divine volitions of evil Baxter holds that these are not nothing, for they can be reinterpreted as positive volitions of good, in the same way that positive impeding of evil is itself a good. There is therefore an important distinction between '*nolle*', as '*velle-non*', and '*non velle*' which is properly nothing. It is in this way therefore that Baxter seeks to make sense of the scriptural ascription of both hate and love to God, something which could otherwise have proved problematic for his doctrine of single predestination.⁵⁰

As well as restricting the scope of the divine will only to positive volitions and volitions Baxter is also adamant that not all of God's volitions are causative. He therefore poses a distinction between God's acts as effectively transient 'which do

⁴⁷ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.49; cf. *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.45-7.

⁴⁸ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.49.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.48.

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.49-51.

cause somewhat without' and his acts as objectively transient 'which cause nothing, but suppose the object'. Baxter is clear then that 'God's knowledge and will effect nothing *ad extra*, but by and with his active power, as efficient'.⁵¹ Arguably Baxter's intention here is to define a sphere of creaturely freedom, bounded from the outside by all those actions of God which are effectively rather than merely objectively transient, which yet is utterly enclosed by and remains subordinate to God's own sovereign will. For Baxter is clear that the fact that God's mere foreknowledge and will are not causative unless joined efficiently with power or his will *de efficiendo*, entails only a logical necessity of the consequence and not a physical necessity of the consequent, which first necessity is entirely consistent with contingency and thus free will.⁵²

Finally Baxter's Trinitarian exposition of the divine will may be seen to encompass the important distinction between God's will of purpose and his will of precept, or between his *voluntas de eventu* and *de debito*. As discussed in the introduction this distinction is pivotal within Boersma's account of Baxter's soteriology. Boersma argues convincingly that Baxter sourced this distinction from his reading of Twisse, which indeed Baxter explicitly states. Its importance in his theology is seen as early as the *Aphorismes* where Baxter says 'the necessity of this distinction is so exceeding great, that but little of the doctrinal part of Scripture can be well understood without it'.⁵³ Later he upheld it as a 'singular key for opening the sence of Scripture'.⁵⁴

Beyond its inception, however, it may be necessary to somewhat qualify Baxter's dependence on Twisse for the outworking of this doctrine in his theology. Thus in his *Aphorismes* Baxter notes its use, by Twisse especially but also by Edward Reynolds in his humiliation day sermons, but adds 'yet is not the exceeding necessity and usefulness of it discerned by many, nor is it improved accordingly by any that I have read'. Here he also distinguishes his own distinction of will of purpose and

⁵¹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.6-7. This could be expressed by saying that such active, causal volitions only occur if God's Power and Wisdom are considered as related to his Will and his Will has itself as its own relative object.

⁵² Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.21. For an explanation of the difference between necessity of consequence and necessity of consequent and the employment of these distinctions in Protestant Scholasticism see van Asselt et al., *Reformed Thought on Freedom*.

⁵³ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 4.

⁵⁴ Baxter, *Universal Redemption*, 28.

precept from the common school distinction *voluntas signi* and *beneplaciti*, accepting that these are ‘near of kin’ but pointing out that *voluntas signi* has a larger (and to his mind looser) scope compared to the preceptive or legislative will. The vagueness of the *voluntas signi* for Baxter was indicated by the common use of five distinguishing signs of this will, described in the old scholastic tag as ‘*praecipit ac prohibet, permittit, consulit, implet*’. Baxter criticises the use of these signs holding that they are ‘uncertain’ and noting that because of this the schoolmen used to designate the *voluntas signi* as God’s will only in a metaphorical sense. By contrast Baxter holds that God’s preceptive will is not merely metaphorically his will but is actually so, ‘it being the effect and revelation of his reall unfeigned will’. Similarly Baxter is also at pains to point out the difference between his own distinction of God’s will of purpose and precept and the more common distinction of God’s hidden and revealed will, often equated with that between the *voluntas beneplaciti* and *signi*. As he points out God’s revealed will contains part of God’s will of purpose and all of his will of precept, so although similar they are not identical.⁵⁵ Significantly in both of these points he differs from Twisse who held firstly that only the *voluntas beneplaciti* could properly be called God’s will and secondly that this distinction equated exactly with that between God’s hidden and revealed will.⁵⁶

Before reviewing Baxter’s developed Trinitarian understanding of this distinction it is worth reviewing one other place where Baxter discusses it. This is in his 1652 reply to Cartwright’s comments on his *Aphorisms*. Here Cartwright maintains that Baxter’s own distinction is in fact identical to the common one between *voluntas beneplaciti* and *signi*. Baxter begins by acknowledging the importance of the distinction between will of purpose and precept in his own theology saying ‘For I confess, I make use of this distinction as a key to my understanding of very many points in divinity, to which it is not commonly applied’. However in explaining his own position he is insistent that it is distinct from that of other divines. Thus his explanation of it begins by warning of the danger of confounding ethics and physics. These he says are distinguished by their proper objects: *ens reale* for physics and *debitum* for ethics. Therefore as God’s will has *ens reale* as its object or product it is

⁵⁵ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 1-5.

⁵⁶ Baxter, *Account*, 10.

referred to as his will of purpose or *voluntas de eventu*, and as *debitum* is its object or product it is called his will of precept or *voluntas de debito*. This distinction in objects Baxter says is made formally, since *debitum* itself seems to be a certain kind of being, therefore the relation between God's will *de debito* and *de eventu* is that between specific and generic. The primary purpose of this distinction is therefore to uphold the difference between nature and morality.⁵⁷

Baxter is also very clear about the ways his own distinction differs from that of *beneplaciti* and *signi*. So he points out that his own doctrine of God's will *de debito* considers both his immanent will *de debito* 'which is as true and eternal an act, as his *velle eventum*' and his signal will *de debito* which is God's law and is therefore called his will metonymically. His full intent in employing this distinction is therefore to distinguish God's law from his other acts and works, where the immanent will *de debito* can be viewed as the 'soul of the law' and the signal will as its body. This is an important clarification of a point he raised in the *Aphorismes*. It also contrasts significantly with the scholastic definition of *voluntas signi* which Baxter says excludes the immanent will *de debito* and thus treats this as only God's metaphorical will. Further to this he adds that the scholastic account does not seek to distinguish God's will by its objects, but only God's will as it is hidden in itself and as it is revealed to us. Thus of their five signs some may be taken as indicative of duty and others of event which leads to still further confusion.⁵⁸

Speaking of his fellow Protestants Baxter notes that the situation improves considerably so that 'divers of our own more clear divines indeed, do come near my meaning in their distinction of *vol. praecepti et propositi*'. Here among a host of others he singles out for special mention Camero who treated of the distinction 'most plainly' and Twisse 'most frequently'. It was these two, he says, who first led him to recognise the difference between his own distinction and that of *beneplaciti* and *signi*. Speaking of Twisse in particular he adds:

Yet it must be acknowledged, that Twiss himself (who makes more use of it than all others that I have read) overlooked (at least usually) the

⁵⁷ Baxter, *Account*, 1-4.

⁵⁸ Baxter, *Account*, 5-7.

immanent will of God *de debito*, and spake only of the precept itself; and therefore called it God's will metaphorically. If I may prefer truth before modesty, I must say, that Dr Twiss saw further into the nature and use of this distinction than others before him had done; but yet his notions were very imperfect of it, and his improvement very short in respect of its desert and use.⁵⁹

Likewise, responding to Cartwright's repeated insistence that his own distinction is identical to that found in Aquinas, Twisse and Rutherford, Baxter acknowledges that he originally received this distinction from Twisse and therefore that it 'is above half the same as mine'. Yet he also clearly differentiates his own distinction from that found in Twisse particularly concerning the immanent will *de debito*.⁶⁰ It is clear then that though indebted to Twisse Baxter is far from dependent on him.

As early as his *Aphorismes* Baxter insisted that the ascription of a will of purpose and a will of precept to God was entirely consistent with the unicity of his will and therefore that to suggest this made two contradictory wills in God was a 'sencelesse objection'. Here he explains that this is because they are to be considered as two distinct acts of one and the same will.⁶¹ Later as we have seen he explains their distinction as rooted in their difference of proper objects and so suggests that they can be differentiated out in terms of generic and specific. However by the time Baxter first drafted his treatise on *Universal Redemption* in the 1650s he had already begun to think of this distinction in the language of God's triadic relation to man as Owner, Rector and Benefactor. So, for example, he brackets separately the gifts given separately by Christ as Legislator upon condition from those he gives unconditionally as Dominus and free Benefactor.⁶² Similarly the distinction between nature and morality, which for Baxter had clearly come to epitomise the account of the 'two wills', is now rendered by him in relation to Christ as Dominus and Rector.⁶³

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Account*, 7-8.

⁶⁰ Baxter, *Account*, 14.

⁶¹ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 4. Baxter was of course hardly unusual in this, for to suggest two wills in God would be to contravene his simplicity.

⁶² Baxter, *Universal Redemption*, 16-19.

⁶³ Baxter, *Universal Redemption*, 29-33.

From here it was but a small step to the explicitly Trinitarian model of the *Methodus* and *Catholick Theologie*. Therefore Baxter notes in the former that:

*Quoad causalitatem moralem igitur recte denominandum, Dei-Rectoris voluntas semper distinguenda est a voluntate eius sub relatione Domini aut Benefactoris; et voluntas Rectoris consequens, id est, executive, ab antecedente, id est, legislativa.*⁶⁴

Although this is precisely the same framework as found in his *Universal Redemption* in this context such a doctrine carries with it a further metaphysical implication. This is that earlier in the *Methodus* Baxter had already made the link between the divine principles of Power, Wisdom and Love and God's relations to man as Owner, Rector and Benefactor respectively. It is clear then that we should interpret his statements here as implying a difference between the actions of God's Power-Love in unconditionally choosing and benefitting his own and the actions of his Wisdom in framing universal, conditional laws.

We may see the same turning to the *Catholick Theologie* where the same link is made between the divine principles and the relational triad.⁶⁵ Here Baxter again explains the distinction of his own *voluntas de eventu* and *de debito* from that employed by the schoolmen and by Twisse in the terms we would expect.⁶⁶ He thus points out that the distinction of the two wills is fetched from that of their objects as between nature and *debitum*. Furthermore he clarifies this, defining law variously as 'the governing will of a Rector signified, constituting or confirming right (or dueness) from and to the subject' or 'the sign of a Rector's will constituting right'. In saying this he seeks to ground law in both God's immanent will and his signal will *de debito* with neither alone being sufficient to establish obligation.⁶⁷

So much we might anticipate, but in seeking to characterise God's will in terms of its Trinitarian shape Baxter clearly goes beyond his pre-*Methodus* formulations:

⁶⁴ Baxter, *Methodus*, I.52.

⁶⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.iii.7-8.

⁶⁶ Although it is worth noting that Baxter here seems more positive about Twisse, noting of his *voluntas beneplaciti et praecepti* that 'his sence is right, but the terms are too narrow' (*Catholick Theologie*, I.i.52).

⁶⁷ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.51-2.

If we will denominate Gods will here *ab origine*, it is 1. antecedent to the creature, (supposed;) and that is his creating will. 2. Supposing the creature in being, and that is, 1. his will as proprietary and actor of all things; and that is his moving and disposing will of events. 2. His will as governour (morally) and that is his morally ruling will. 3. His will *ut amator et finis*; and that is his beneficent and felicitating will.

Here also we begin to see the rigid twofold distinction of Owner-Benefactor and Rector begin to blur into a threefold perichoretic treatment. Thus speaking of law and subjects under the law, clearly the domain of the Rector, Baxter includes the act of the governing Benefactor antecedently to the subjects' merits establishing what shall be due to them.⁶⁸ This is important, for Baxter here distinguishes God's will as Benefactor from his will as Owner where before he did not do this explicitly, suggesting that the earlier twofold distinction is properly enclosed within this broader Trinitarian interaction.

Similarly in his discussion of the distinction between God's effectual and ineffectual will Baxter highlights the inadequacy of various scholastic responses to this question, including those of d'Orbellis and Gregory of Rimini. The 'plain truth' Baxter says is that God's will must be distinguished as it is the first efficient, the chief dirigent and the final cause in which the three principles of Power, Wisdom and Love respectively are eminent. As efficient he says God's will is ever effectual, as chief dirigent it is effectual in making laws and establishing due or right but often violated by human sin and as final it is not effectual so far as it refers to complacency in the being, action or relation of a creature already supposed.⁶⁹

All this leads to an important, hitherto largely unnoticed, feature of Baxter's theology. This is that the law is properly seen as an expression of God's love:

But here is a wonderful inseparable twist; and in the main an identity. God ruleth us as a Father, or Regent Benefactor: All his benefits are free-gifts, as to the thing and value; but given 1. in an order 2. and the rest as means to the ultimate. In which respects they are a reward, or means to it. His very law is a gift and a great benefit. Duty is the means to keep his first gifts and to receive more. The very doing of the duty is a receiving of the reward; the object of duty being felicitating. (As if

⁶⁸ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.52-3.

⁶⁹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.56.

feasting or accepting offered wealth or honour were our work.) Holiness is happiness, in a great part. And in our end or state of perfection all will be one: to love God, rejoice in him and praise him, will be both our duty and felicity, means and end, as it were, in one.⁷⁰

Perfectly captured within this remarkable paragraph is the reciprocal interaction of law and love, grace and duty, so vital to Baxter's developed theology. This we have now seen to be grounded on the mutual conditioning and inherence of the three divine principles. As a consequence we are driven to qualify Boersma's overall thesis that Baxter's Twissian account of God's twofold will was determinative of his theology of justification. In the same way that Boersma affirmed Packer's groundbreaking thesis, that Baxter's political method was the missing key to unlock his theology, with a qualified 'yes, but...' (pointing out that this excluded God's will *de rerum eventu* as Dominus) so we may simultaneously applaud Boersma's research as being of enormous value, while pointing beyond this twofold distinction to Baxter's Trinitarian conception of God as the living, beating heart of his theology.

⁷⁰ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, I.i.54.

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