

Preface

It is as the author of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* that Richard Baxter is best known, except by those who are more intimate students of his numerous works. Since the end of the eighteenth century, almost without exception this book has been issued in an abridged form, the last occasion being more than thirty years ago.

The original work consists of some eight hundred thousand words – a clear example of Baxter's prolific pen. To make an abridgement, which at one and the same time should present both the essence of Baxter's writing as to substance and style, and in a compass reasonably suitable for the modern reader of devotional classics has been no easy task. Those who are familiar with the original work may feel that certain passages omitted from the present edition might have been included; conversely, that some of those chosen might have been left out. A sincere attempt has been made, however, to be fair both to Baxter and the modern reader.

A word must be said as to the omissions. Parts II and III of the original work have been left out almost in entirety. These form separate treatises in themselves, and are but elaborate extensions of Baxter's original theme. The numerous digressions, prefaces and dedications, together with material dealing with controversial questions and contemporary allusions, have also been omitted. Wherever omissions occur this has been indicated in the usual way [...], though in a few instances, where a single and usually unimportant word was involved, such indication has hardly seemed necessary.

Having in mind the changed theological concepts of our time, and also that the present work is intended to be used as a manual of Christian devotion, much of Baxter's asseverations regarding the torments of the sinful in the after-life have been excluded; such emphasis belonged to the contemporary thought of the seventeenth century, though in the light of his constant assertions concerning divine, evangelical grace, Baxter would certainly have believed otherwise if he could have done so.

In this abridgement which is based upon the Second Edition (1651) of Baxter's work, no change has been made in the text of the original passages selected. Both capitalization and the spelling have

been modernized, however, and to some measure this also applies to punctuation. It is hoped that the spirit and language of Baxter have been so preserved that the main movement of his thought and style remains not only unimpaired, but stands out even more clearly.

In 1920, Dr F. J. Powicke – by whose friendship I was honoured for more than ten years, until his death in 1935 – published a valuable monograph on *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, and to this I have been much indebted in the writing of my Introductory Essay.

I wish also to express my gratitude to the following. To the Rev. John Foster, M.A., D.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Glasgow, and to Dr Stewart Mechie, M.A., of the same University; to Miss Elizabeth G. Jack, of Glasgow University Library; to Mr David Jenkins, Keeper of Printed Books in the National Library of Wales; to the Trustees and Librarian of Dr Williams's Library, London; to the Corporation of Kidderminster; to my friend and former colleague, The Rev. Owen E. Evans, M.A., B.D.; to my cousin, the Rev. J. T. Hornsby, M.A., Ph.D., with whom I discussed the project; and to Dr J. Alan Kay, M.A., and Dr Frank Cumbers (both of the Epworth Press) who were responsible for the original suggestion that I should undertake this abridgement.

JOHN T. WILKINSON

KNIGHTON
Radnorshire
December 1960

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Plates</i>	x
<i>Abbreviations</i>	x
Introductory Essay	1
I The Text Explained	27
II The Rest Defined	29
III What this Rest Presupposeth	32
IV What this Rest Cotaineth	38
V The Four Great Preparatives to our Rest	48
VI This Rest Most Excellent, Discovered by Reason	55
VII The Excellencies of our Rest	61
VIII The People of God Described	84
IX The Certain Truth of this Rest Proved by Scripture	87
X Reasons Why this Rest Remains, and is not Here Enjoyed	90
XI Whether the Souls Departed Enjoy this Rest Before the Resurrection	94
XII An Exhortation to Help Others to this Rest	97
XIII Motives to a Heavenly Life	107
XIV Containing Some Hindrances of a Heavenly Life	123
XV Some General Helps to a Heavenly Life	132
XVI Containing the Description of the Great Duty of Heavenly Contemplation	140
XVII Concerning the Fittest Time and Place for this Contemplation and the Preparation of the Heart Unto it	146
XVIII Of Consideration as the Instrument of this Work; and What Force it Hath to Move the Soul	153
XIX What Affections Must be Acted, and by What Considerations and Objects, and in What Order	156
XX By What Actings of the Soul to Proceed in this Work of Heavenly Contemplation	163
XXI Some Advantages and Help, For Raising and Affecting the Soul by this Meditation	166
XXII How to Manage and Watch over the Heart, Through the Whole Work	175
XXIII The Abstract, or the Sum of All	179
XXIV The Conclusion	181
<i>Appendix</i>	185

Plates

- 1 Richard Baxter *frontispiece* ii
(From the Dr William's Library portrait, by courtesy of the Trustees)
- 2 MS. Letter from the Mayor and Corporation of Coventry.
(9th June 1651) by courtesy of the Dr William's Library Trustees *facing page* 10
- 3 Title-page of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*
(1st edition, 1650) 22
- 4 The Author's Inscription on the fly-leaf of the copy of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* presented to the Corporation of Kidderminster.
(By courtesy of the Corporation of Kidderminster) 24

Abbreviations

- R.B. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696)
D.N.B. *Dictionary of National Biography*
S.E.R. *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*
Powicke. *Story and Significance of the Rev. Richard Baxter's 'Saints' Everlasting Rest'* (1920)