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HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Richard Baxter
and the
Mechanical Philosophers



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Richard Baxter as Philosophical Theologian

RICHARD BAXTER DESERVES to be better known as a philosophical theologian. In 1852, George Park Fisher wrote, “We feel bound to enter a protest against the extraordinary liberty which has been taken with the writings of this great divine. While Baxter is regarded by the multitude as a man of saintly piety, his intellectual traits are poorly appreciated.”¹ Over a century and a half after Fisher penned these words, they have lost little of their force. Baxter is still one of the most famous Puritans, but he is almost exclusively known as a practical theologian or Pietist.² With few exceptions, Baxter’s major theological works, *Catholick Theologie* (1675) and *Methodus theologiae christianae* (1681), which by his own account “expressed my maturest, calmest thoughts,”³ remain little studied.⁴ One recent study contrasts

1. George Park Fisher, “The Writings of Richard Baxter,” *Bibliotheca Sacra and American Biblical Repository* 9 (1852): 324.

2. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 88–96; N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 39–41; Carl Trueman, “Lewis Bayly (d. 1631) and Richard Baxter (1615–1691),” in *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 52–67. Baxter was the “most important writer of British devotional books” in German translation for the period 1651–1700, during the birth of German Pietism. See Edgar C. McKenzie, “British Devotional Literature and the Rise of German Pietism” (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1984), 228.

3. Richard Baxter, *The True History of Councils Enlarged and Defended* (London: T. Parkhurst, 1682), 240.

4. Notable exceptions include George Park Fisher, “The Theology of Richard Baxter,” *Bibliotheca Sacra and American Biblical Repository* 9 (1852): 135–69; J. I. Packer, “The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter” (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1954), published as *The Redemption & Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003); Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter’s Doctrine of Justification in Its*

Baxter's practical orientation with his "scorn for scholastic quibbling," but makes no reference to Baxter's *Methodus theologiae*.⁵ Such scholarly neglect puts asunder what Baxter himself joined together. Baxter intended his *Methodus theologiae* and *Christian Directory* (1673), on the model of William Ames's *Medulla theologiae* and *Cases of Conscience*, as "one Compleat Body of Theology, The Latin one the Theory, and the English one the Practical part."⁶ Neglect of Baxter's theoretical works also obscures the quality of his intellect. Baxter's impressive nine-hundred-page *Methodus theologiae* rivals contemporary theological systems such as Francis Turretin's *Institutio theologiae elencticae* (1679–1685) in scholastic subtlety and erudition, and arguably surpasses Turretin's grasp of the patristic and medieval tradition with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity.⁷ Furthermore, despite the fact that Baxter's *Methodus theologiae* and other works contain extensive philosophical argumentation, among theological studies little attention has been given to Baxter's engagement with early modern philosophy.⁸

In his own lifetime and for at least a generation after his death, Baxter was not valued merely as a practical or devotional theologian. Much modern scholarship, often citing Baxter's autobiographical remark that "most lay [the *Methodus theologiae*] by as too hard for them, as over Scholastical and exact,"⁹ has assumed that Baxter's scholastic theology fell on deaf ears. As Frederick Powicke wrote, "Overdone books like his *Catholic Theology*, and *Methodus Theologiae* were not read at all."¹⁰ Such assertions, which have reinforced the perceived irrelevance

Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1993); Carl R. Trueman, "A Small Step Towards Rationalism: The Impact of the Metaphysics of Tommaso Campanella on the Theology of Richard Baxter," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 181–95; and Simon J. G. Burton, *The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter's Methodus Theologiae* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

5. Dewey D. Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660–1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 177. Baxter's *Methodus theologiae* does not appear in the bibliography.

6. *Rel. Bax.*, III.190. Cf. *CD*, fol. A2r.

7. *MT*, I.79–123. Cf. Burton, *Hallowing of Logic*, 201–52. This is the best treatment of Baxter's scholastic theology.

8. Except for Trueman, "Small Step," 181–95; Burton, *Hallowing of Logic*, 95–200.

9. *Rel. Bax.*, III.190.

10. Frederick J. Powicke, *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross (1662–1691)* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), 253, also 62–64. Cf. Hugh Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 128; James McJunkin Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law: The Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615–1691)" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1958), 106; Packer, *Redemption*, 85. Baxter's *Catholic Theologie* and *Methodus theologiae* are not mentioned in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965).

of Baxter's scholastic theology, cannot withstand historical scrutiny. Baxter's *Methodus theologiae* was cited by theologians from both the British Isles and the Continent well into the eighteenth century.¹¹ The *Methodus theologiae* was also used at many nonconformist academies, where tutors and students, in the estimation of Herbert McLachlan, "both read and admired it."¹² Among the tutors known to have used the *Methodus theologiae* are John Woodhouse (c. 1627–1700), John Ker (c. 1639–1713), Thomas Doolittle (1630/1633–1707), Benjamin Robinson (1666–1724), and Stephen James (c. 1676–1725).¹³ The *Methodus theologiae* is also listed in a

11. Thomas Doolittle, *The Lord's Last-Sufferings Shewed in the Lords Supper* (London: John Dunton, 1682), fol. C3v; Willem Salden, *Otia theologica* (Amsterdam: H. & T. Boom, 1684), 373, 480; Willem Salden, *De libris, varioque eorum usu et abusu libri duo* (Amsterdam: H. & T. Boom, 1688), 328–29; Paul Anton, *De autoritate ecclesiae, qua mater est, positiones theologicae* (Leipzig: Christopher Gunther, 1690), §LIX (E2r); Timothy Manlove, *The Immortality of the Soul Asserted and Practically Improved* (London: R. Roberts, 1697), 9, 108, 116–17; Vincent Alsop, *A Vindication of the Faithful Rebuke to a False Report* (London: John Lawrence, 1698), 147; Thomas Edwards, *The Paraselene Dismantled of her Cloud. Or, Baxterianism Barefac'd* (London: Will. Marshal, 1699), passim; Thomas Gipps, *Tentamen novum continuatum* (London: Tho. Warren, 1699), 55; Daniel Williams, *An End to Discord* (London: John Lawrence and Tho. Cockeril, 1699), 67–68; Samuel Clifford, *An Account of the Judgment of the Late Reverend Mr. Baxter* (London: John Lawrence, 1701), 8; Friedrich Ernst Kettner, *Exercitationes historico-theologicae de religione prudentum* ([Jenae]: Bielke, 1701), 23; Stephen Nye, *The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the Manner of our Saviour's Divinity* (London: Andrew Bell, 1701), 19; Nye, *Institutions, Concerning the Holy Trinity, and the Manner of our Saviour's Divinity* (London: J. Nutt, 1703), 6; Nye, *The Explication of the Articles of the Divine Unity, the Trinity, and Incarnation* (London: John Darby, 1703), 12–13, 86–87, 93, 162; Edmund Elys, *Animadversiones in aliqua C. Jansenii, Guillielmi Twissi, Richardi Baxteri, et Gerardi de Vries, dogmata* (London: E. P., 1706), 27–29; Barthold Holzfus, *Dissertatio theologica, de libero hominis arbitrio . . . praeside Bartholdo Holtzfus* (Frankfurt: Christopher Zeitler, 1707), 9, 16, 23–24; John Maxwell, *A Discourse Concerning God* (London: W. Taylor, 1715), 41; Johan Henrich Reitz, *Historie der Wiedergeborenen*, vol. 3 ([Itzstein]: [Haug], 1717), 78, 87, 89, 91, 94, 96; William Staunton, *An Epistolary Conference with the Reverend Dr. Waterland*, 2nd ed. (London: E. Curll, 1724), 31; Isaac Watts, *Dissertations Relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity, The Second Part* (London: J. Clark and R. Hett, 1725), 66–67, 103–4; Francis Iredell, *Remarks upon some Passages* (Dublin: S. Powell, 1726), 25; John Anderson, *A Dialogue between a Curat and a Country-Man* (Edinburgh, 1728), 14; John Enty, *A Preservative Against Several Abuses and Corruptions of Reveald Religion* (Exon: Andrew Brice, 1730), 95–96; John Brine, *A Vindication of some Truths of Natural and Revealed Religion* (London: Aaron Ward, 1746), 307, 328–29, 351, 354, 355, 359; Daniel Williams, *Discourses on Several Important Subjects* (London: James Waugh, 1750), 5:79–82; John Fletcher, *A Vindication of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Last Minutes* (Bristol: W. Pine, 1771), 78–79.

12. Herbert McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts: Being the History of the Non-conformist Academies 1662–1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931), 303.

13. Mark Burden, "Academical Learning in the Dissenters' Private Academies" (PhD diss., University of London, 2012), 232–33, 238–39; Burden, "A Biographical Dictionary of Tutors at the Dissenters' Private Academies, 1660–1729" (London: Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, 2013), 290, 536, <http://www.qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/bd.pdf>; McLachlan, *English Education*, 46–47, 88, 303; [Benjamin Robinson], *A Plea for the Late Accurate and Excellent Mr. Baxter* (London: [John] Lawrence,

catalogue of books used under Richard Frankland (1630–1698), who trained at least three hundred students.¹⁴ The numerous students who possibly came into contact with Baxter’s works would have been impressed not only by his practical works, but also his works of a scholastic and theoretical nature. Doolittle recommended Baxter’s *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, *Catholick Theologie*, and *Methodus theologiae* to his students at the private academy in Islington, where “near thirty pupils” were being instructed at one time in the early 1680s.¹⁵ There is a strong likelihood that these books were read by Doolittle’s most famous student, Matthew Henry (1662–1714), who attended Doolittle’s academy with the commendation of Baxter.¹⁶ In 1690, eleven students from Ker’s academy at Bethnal Green, where Baxter’s *Methodus theologiae* was in use, signed a letter to Baxter praising him as the “most sought after supporter of doctrine” (*exquisitissimus doctrinae cultor*) and “patron and pattern of piety” (*pietatis fautor et exemplar*).¹⁷

To a great extent, the neglect of Baxter’s scholastic theology and philosophical thought can be attributed to the practical focus in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nonconformist reception of Baxter’s works, resulting in part from the publication of *The Practical Works* (1707) and in part from a general transition away from older scholastic theology.¹⁸ Philip Doddridge (1702–1751), one of the most influential nonconformists of the eighteenth century, found his heart strangely warmed by the “devotion, good sense, and pathos” of *The Practical Works*.¹⁹ At the same time, Doddridge described Baxter’s *Methodus theologiae* as “unintelligible,”²⁰ thereby registering not only a decline of interest in Baxter’s

1699), 3–11, 73, 108–10, 120, 123. The authorship of Robinson’s work was noted by John Cumming, *A Funeral Sermon on Occasion of the Death of the Late Reverend and Learned Mr. Benjamin Robinson* (London: John Clark, 1724), 52; and Edmund Calamy, *An Historical Account of My Own Life*, ed. John Towill Rutt (London: Henry Colburn, 1830), 1397.

14. McLachlan, *English Education*, 68. Cf. See Burden, “A Biographical Dictionary,” 195.

15. Burden, “Academical Learning,” 72, 236–38.

16. Burden, “Academical Learning,” 273–74; Burden, “A Biographical Dictionary,” 143.

17. [Students at Bethnal Green] to Baxter, 26 Sept. 1690, in *CCRB*, 2:306–7 (no. 1212).

18. Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works*, 4 vols. (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1707). Cf. Trueman, “Small Step,” 185.

19. Philip Doddridge, *The Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge*, ed. J. D. Humphreys (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1829–1831), 1:378 (5 May 1724); cf. 1:345 (3 Mar. 1724), 368 (13 Apr. 1724), 426–27 (22 Oct. 1724), 460 (8 Dec. 1724), 2:58 (5 Aug. 1725), 3:9, 5:275, 282, 291, 293, 296, 298, 306, 320 (1 Jan. 1732).

20. Doddridge, *Correspondence*, 1:397 (29 May 1724). On Doddridge’s reception of Baxter, see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in a Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 17–19; and Robert Strivens, *Philip Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

scholastic theology, but also an important theological and philosophical shift in early eighteenth-century nonconformity. Doddridge regarded himself as in some sense a Baxterian and “in all the most important points, a Calvinist,” but his relation to Baxter’s theology was in fact highly eclectic.²¹ In contrast to the earlier tutors who used and recommended Baxter’s *Methodus theologiae*, the work made no noticeable impact on Doddridge’s mature *Course of Lectures*. Both Doddridge and Baxter interacted heavily with philosophy, particularly on the nature of the soul, but Doddridge took as his point of departure Cartesian and Lockean philosophy.²²

Doddridge’s practical bias toward Baxter’s works was shared and perpetuated into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by his disciples and other nonconformists.²³ Benjamin Fawcett, who has been called “a favourite pupil of Dr. Doddridge,”²⁴ produced a wildly successful abridgement of Baxter’s *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1759), on which most later editions were based.²⁵ In this abridgement, Fawcett removed all of Baxter’s prefaces, excised sections of the work that were heavily philosophical, and replaced Baxter’s extensive marginal apparatus of patristic and scholastic authorities with biblical footnotes.²⁶ For the multitude of nineteenth- and twentieth-century evangelicals who encountered *The Saints Everlasting Rest* through Fawcett’s “mutilated edition,”²⁷ Baxter appeared as an exclusively biblical thinker, devoid of traditional precedent, and free of philosophical assumptions.

21. Strivens, *Philip Doddridge*, 44–45.

22. Philip Doddridge, *A Course of Lectures on the Principle Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics, and Divinity* (London: J. Buckland, et al., 1763), 1–4. Cf. Strivens, *Philip Doddridge*, 67–82 on Locke.

23. Job Orton, *Memoirs of Life, Character and Writings of the Late Reverend Philip Doddridge, D.D. of Northampton* (Salop: J. Cotton and J. Eddowes, 1766), 26, 63, 257; Andrew Kippis, “Doddridge (Philip),” in *Biographia Britannica*, 2nd ed. (London, 1793), 5:266–315, at 271, 274, 314–15; Samuel Palmer, preface to *The Reformed Pastor; A Discourse on the Pastoral Office*, by Richard Baxter (London: J. Buckland, 1766), vi; Robert Philip, “An Essay on the Genius, Works, and Times of Richard Baxter,” in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, ed. Robert Philip (London: George Virtue, 1838), 1:xxi–lx.

24. William Orme, *The Life and Times of Richard Baxter: With a Critical Examination of His Writings* (London: James Duncan, 1830), 1:168.

25. Frederick J. Powicke, “Story and Significance of the Rev. Richard Baxter’s ‘Saints’ Everlasting Rest,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 5 (1920): 473–74.

26. Richard Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, abridged by Benjamin Fawcett (Salop: J. Cotton and J. Eddowes, 1759). Sections that Fawcett excised include the following: “A Premonition” prefacing the entire work; part 2, chap. 6 (“This Rest tryed by nine Rules in Philosophy or Reason, and found by all to be the most excellent state in general”); the preface to part 2 on the relation between reason and faith; and the entirety of part 2 on the authority of Scripture.

27. Fisher, “Writings of Richard Baxter,” 318.

Needless to say, readers of an estimated eighteen thousand copies of the twelve editions of *The Saints Everlasting Rest* that circulated in the seventeenth century encountered a different work, filled with citations to at least 150 authorities, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas, Scotus, and Bradwardine.²⁸

William Orme, who edited a new edition of the *Practical Works* (1830), formed a more balanced evaluation of Baxter's systematic and metaphysical thought than Doddridge, even while perpetuating a practical bias. Unlike Doddridge, Orme did not find Baxter's *Methodus theologiae* to be "unintelligible" but rather as displaying "considerable ingenuity and vast labour." On the one hand, Orme described Baxter's *Methodus theologiae* as containing much that is "fanciful and hypothetical . . . and, taken as a whole, it is more calculated to amuse as a curious speculation or effort of genius, than to answer any important practical purpose."²⁹ On the other hand, Orme judged Baxter's *Methodus theologiae* to be a work of genius. He declared,

The work shows that the author is entitled to rank high among the metaphysico-theological writers of the period. . . . Whatever may be thought of his opinions, Baxter, in point of genius, as a metaphysician, is not unworthy of a place on the same roll with Cudworth, and Leibnitz, and Clarke; and is unquestionably superior to Bramhall and Tenison, Wilkins, Cumberland, and More.³⁰

Despite this praise, Orme still followed Doddridge in encouraging his readers to read Baxter's works through the prism of his practical writings,³¹ while avoiding those aspects of his works that he deemed "disputatious," "scholastic," and "metaphysical."³² Orme revised Baxter's practical works in a new edition, which excluded the *Methodus theologiae* and *Catholick Theologie*.³³ If Fawcett's abridgement perpetuated Baxter's Pietist reputation for a popular audience, Orme's

28. Powicke, "Story and Significance," 468. Given no less than 1,500 copies per edition, Powicke estimated "a circulation of 18,000 copies for the twelve editions" (470).

29. Orme, *Life*, 2:70–71.

30. Orme, *Life*, 2:71.

31. Orme, *Life*, 2:82. Of Doddridge, Orme wrote, "Few men were capable of forming a better or more candid opinion of Baxter than Dr. Doddridge" (Orme, *Life*, 2:448).

32. Orme, *Life*, 2:84.

33. Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, ed. William Orme, 23 vols. (London: James Duncan, 1830).

biography and edition of Baxter's practical works had a similar effect on the scholarly world.³⁴

A bias toward Baxter's practical thought is less evident among historians of philosophy and science. Historians of seventeenth-century philosophy generally have paid more attention to theological context than historians of theology have paid to philosophical context.³⁵ This is also true of studies on Baxter. Long ago, Baxter was recognized as an early critic of Herbert of Cherbury's *De Veritate*.³⁶ In the twentieth century, Baxter has been interpreted both as a protagonist and antagonist to the rise of early modern science. In his influential thesis arguing for the Puritan origins of early modern science, Robert Merton followed Max Weber in utilizing Baxter's *Christian Directory* as "a typical presentation of the leading elements in the Puritan ethos."³⁷ In contrast to Merton, others have noted Baxter's negative response to mechanical philosophy and his place as one of the earliest contributors to the controversial literature at the beginning of the Royal Society.³⁸

34. See, e.g., Stoeffler, *Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 88–96, who relied on Orme's biography.

35. Richard A. Muller, "Thomas Barlow on the Liabilities of 'New Philosophy'. Perceptions of a Rebellious *Ancilla* in the Era of Protestant Orthodoxy," in *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honour of Willem J. van Asselt*, ed. Maarten Wisse, Marcel Sarot, and Willemien Otten (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 179–95, at 179.

36. Charles de Rémusat, *Histoire de la philosophie en Angleterre depuis Bacon jusqu'à Locke*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Didier et cie, 1875), 1:371–89. More recently, see Richard Serjeanston, "Herbert of Cherbury before Deism: The Early Reception of the *De veritate*," *The Seventeenth Century* 16, no. 2 (2001): 217–38.

37. Robert K. Merton, "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England," *Osiris* 4 (1938): 360–632, at 418–19. This foundational monograph-length article was later reprinted with a new preface as *Science, Technology & Society in Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970). Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 155–83, which draws heavily on Baxter's *Christian Directory* (cf. 224–25n30, 229n47, 236n84, etc.). Merton's reading of Baxter was followed by John Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 129–30, 132, among others. For an introduction to this literature, see John Henry, "The Scientific Revolution in England," in *The Scientific Revolutions in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 178–209; and Joseph W. Dauben, "Merton Thesis," in *Reader's Guide to the History of Science*, ed. Arne Hessenbruch (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), 469–71.

38. Richard Foster Jones, *Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Washington University, 1961), 229, 322–23n2; Richard S. Westfall, *Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1958), 22; Michael R. G. Spiller, "Concerning *Natural Experimental Philosophie*": Meric Casaubon and the Royal Society (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), 23–25; Spiller, "Die Opposition gegen die Royal Society," in *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Jean-Pierre Schobinger (Basel: Schwabe, 1988), vol. 3, bk. 2, *England*, 444; Howard Jones, *The Epicurean Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1980), 206–7; Michael Hunter, *Science and Society in Restoration England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 173–74; B. C. Southgate, "'Forgotten and Lost': Some Reactions to Autonomous

Baxter's polemical correspondence with Henry More is now taken seriously for illustrating the importance not only of differing theological assumptions for philosophy, but also for the significance of medical philosophy, including vitalist matter theories, in philosophical and theological debate.³⁹

Despite the importance attributed to Baxter by these studies, he remains underappreciated in the wider literature on the early Enlightenment.⁴⁰ In this respect, he has shared a similar fate as other early modern theologians and philosophers deemed "outsiders" from a modern canonical standpoint.⁴¹ English theologians such as Thomas Barlow, Edward Stillingfleet, and John Howe, or philosophers such as Alexander Ross, Sir Kenelm Digby, and Theophilus Gale, although famous in their own day for their learning, have been "barely mentioned or dismissed as less than cognizant of the demands of modernity, whether scientific or cultural."⁴² Yet an accurate historical assessment of theological and philosophical change requires attention to such figures, who provide a valuable contemporary index by which to evaluate both controversial figures and ideas. Among seventeenth-century theologians concerned with the impact that new philosophy would have on theology, Baxter deserves special attention for a number of reasons.

Science in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50, no. 2 (1989): 258–60, 262–63; Richard W. F. Kroll, *The Material Word: Literate Culture in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 46–47, 96, 125; and Jon Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England: Richard Cumberland's De legibus naturae* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 123–27.

39. John Henry, "Medicine and Pneumatology: Henry More, Richard Baxter, and Francis Glisson's *Treatise on the Energetic Nature of Substance*," *Medical History* 31 (1987): 15–42, at 17. See also John Henry, "A Cambridge Platonist's Materialism: Henry More and the Concept of Soul," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986): 172–95, at 183–89; and John Henry, "The Matter of Souls: Medical Theory and Theology in Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Roger French and Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 87–113, at 93, 109–110.

40. Baxter is not mentioned in Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

41. Cf. G. A. J. Rogers, Tom Sorell, and Jill Kraye, eds., *Insiders and Outsiders in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

42. Muller, "Thomas Barlow," 179. On Stillingfleet and Howe, see Richard H. Popkin, "The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9, no. 3 (1971): 303–19; Sarah Hutton, "Edward Stillingfleet and Spinoza," in *Disguised and Overt Spinozism around 1700*, ed. Wiep van Bunge and Wim Klever (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 261–74; Reita Yazawa, "John Howe on Divine Simplicity: A Debate Over Spinozism," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor, David S. Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 629–40. On Digby and Gale, see Rogers et al., eds., *Insiders and Outsiders*.

Along with John Owen, Baxter was one of the most famous and influential Puritans of the second half of the seventeenth century. At the Restoration, Baxter was offered the bishopric of Hereford, and although he declined it, he exercised a comparable spiritual leadership among the nonconformists. Shortly after Baxter's death, Stephen Nye wrote somewhat hyperbolically, "[Baxter] found himself *Archbishop* of a whole Party, and therefore (I think) cared not to be *Bishop* only of a *Diocess*."⁴³ This reputation is well deserved, for Baxter was easily the most prolific Puritan of the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ In just over forty years, he published at least 135 works and left behind a mass of manuscripts for posterity. His unpublished correspondence alone fills six folio volumes of manuscripts, while his various other unpublished tracts and treatises fill some twenty-two volumes.⁴⁵

Due to his prominent place in the history of Puritanism and nonconformity, Baxter is also one of the most important figures to consider (as Merton recognized long ago) on the larger question of the relation of Puritanism to the rise of modern science.⁴⁶ Beginning in the 1680s, some tutors at nonconformist academies started to incorporate Cartesian logic and physics alongside an Aristotelian course of study, and by the early eighteenth century many (though not all) tutors were adopting Lockean and Newtonian philosophy.⁴⁷ At the same time, Baxter's works were well read at dissenting academies until the beginning of the eighteenth century. As such, Baxter's thoughts on philosophy provide a point of comparison by which change within Puritanism and nonconformity can be evaluated in a more historically accurate way.

Furthermore, despite his lack of university training, as an autodidact Baxter was unusually well read by comparison with contemporary Puritans. Baxter himself remarked that in his youth, "in order to the Knowledge of *Divinity* my inclination was most to *Logick* and *Metaphysicks*, with that part *Physicks* which treateth of

43. Nye, *Explication of the Articles*, 86.

44. Cf. Orme, *Life*, 2:466: "Baxter was beyond comparison the most voluminous of all his contemporaries."

45. A list of his published works is found in N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 157–69. For manuscripts, see *CCRB*; and Roger Thomas, *The Baxter Treatises: A Catalogue of the Richard Baxter Papers (Other than the Letters) in Dr. Williams's Library*, Dr. Williams's Library Occasional Paper 8 (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1959).

46. Merton, "Science, Technology and Society," 418–19.

47. Burden, "Academical Learning," 144–93; David L. Wykes, "The Contribution of the Dissenting Academy to the Emergence of Rational Dissent," in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 99–139, at 111–21; Alan P. F. Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2004), ch. 2; Strivens, *Philip Doddridge*, ch. 3.

the Soul, contenting my self at first with a slighter study of the rest: And these had my *Labour* and *Delight*." This led him "to read all the School men I could get; (for next *Practical Divinity*, no Books so suited with my Disposition as *Aquinas*, *Scotus*, *Durandus*, *Ockam*, and their Disciples."⁴⁸ Despite downplaying the relative importance of such scholastic learning in comparison to the essentials of catechetical doctrine,⁴⁹ Baxter consistently employed such a wide array of scholastic authors and distinctions that readers of his works from the seventeenth century to the present have expressed admiration for his erudition. In 1654, the elderly Puritan scholar Thomas Gataker (1574–1654), whose own works were praised "for the rare extraction of all manner of knowledge from almost all Authors,"⁵⁰ remarked to Baxter, "Sir, I stand amazed, when I consider, how amidst such continual infirmities & pains as you complain of, you should be <able> to <read> so manie (Autors that I never heard of but by reading of them in your works) & write so much as you have done, & do stil."⁵¹ Recently, Baxter's knowledge of the medieval scholastics has been called "remarkable, possibly second to no other Protestant in the seventeenth century."⁵² According to his biographer, "though lacking in formal qualifications and without the benefit of educational supervision, through omnivorous reading Baxter became one of the most learned of seventeenth-century divines."⁵³

Baxter not only read widely in medieval and early modern scholasticism; he also kept current with new philosophical trends. The remains of his personal library of some 1,400 books (representing only a fraction of his acquisitions) and the books recommended in his *Christian Directory* demonstrate familiarity with a broad range of modern authors on logic, physics, metaphysics, the soul, and anatomy.⁵⁴ His knowledge extended beyond familiar names to include a host of less familiar works (still rarely studied today), such as Honoré Fabri's *Tractatus physicus de motu locali* (1646), Jean-François Le Grand's *Dissertationes philosophicae et criticae* (1657), and Samuel Parker's *Tentamina de Deo* (1665).⁵⁵ Moreover, Baxter acquired his

48. *Rel. Bax.*, I.6. Cf. *Rel. Bax.*, I.126; *TKL*, 9.

49. See, e.g., *Rel. Bax.*, I.126.

50. Simeon Ashe, "The Narrative of the Life and Death of Mr Gataker," in *Gray Hayres Crowned with Grace* (London: A. M., 1655), 55.

51. Gataker to Baxter, 1 Mar. 1654, cited in *CCRB*, 1:129–30 (no. 166).

52. Trueman, "Small Step," 184.

53. N. H. Keeble, "Richard Baxter," in *ODNB*.

54. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue: A Bibliographical Note," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2, no. 2 (1951): 207–21 and 3, no. 1 (1952): 74–100; *CD*, III.195, 198 (q. 173).

55. *RCR*, 516 (Le Grand), 519 (Fabri, cited as Mousnerius), 579 (Parker). Fabri is discussed in chapter 5 below. On the complete neglect of Parker's *Tentamina*, see Dmitri Levitin,

knowledge rapidly, often responding to new works within a year of publication. He was corresponding about Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) by February of 1652. As Baxter communicated to Robert Boyle, he had read Boyle's *Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy* (1663) and *Occasional Reflections* (1665) in June of 1665.⁵⁶ He was also writing about John Wallis's *Mechanica* (1670) and Henry More's *Enchiridion metaphysicum* (1671) around 1671–1672, Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670), and Thomas Willis's *De anima brutorum* (1672) in 1672, and Francis Glisson's *De natura substantiae energetica* (1672) and Robert Boyle's *Essays of the Strange Subtilty, Great Efficacy, Determinate Nature of Effluviiums* (1673) in 1673.⁵⁷ Early in his career, while confessing to a youthful infatuation with philosophy, Baxter declared, "I love philosophy lesse & Scr[ipture] more, yⁿ ev[er] I did."⁵⁸ If Baxter's subsequent rapid acquisition of philosophical knowledge represents diminished love for philosophy, his love for Scripture must have been great indeed!

Baxter was also both well placed and well connected in relation to individuals involved with new philosophical trends. With a life spanning most of the seventeenth century (1615–1691), Baxter lived through the decline of Aristotelian philosophy and the rise of mechanical philosophy. At the Restoration in 1660, he moved to London just as English scientific circles were coalescing around the foundation of the Royal Society in London (Nov. 1660–1663). Baxter's correspondents included Robert Boyle, John Beale, Henry More, Joseph Glanvill, Edward Stillingfleet, and Matthew Hale. He developed a close relationship with Hale, with whom he carried on conversations about philosophy and exchanged manuscripts on the nature of the soul.⁵⁹ Baxter remained engaged with others about philosophy to the end of his life. In the early 1680s, he reported, "I have met lately with University-men, that cry'd up *Cartesius* as if they had been quite above *Aristotle* and *Plato*; and when I tryed them, I found that they knew not what *Aristotle* or *Plato* said (nor what *Cartesius* neither)."⁶⁰ Around the same time, Baxter told More, "I

"Rethinking English Physico-theology: Samuel Parker's *Tentamina de Deo* (1665)," *Early Science and Medicine* 19 (2014): 28–75, at 30.

56. CCRB, 1:74 (Hobbes); Baxter to Boyle, 14 June 1665, in Robert Boyle, *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter and Antonio Clericuzio (Burlington, VT: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), 2:473; CCRB, 2:43–45.

57. DWL BT XIX.351, fols. 125r–143r (Willis), 143v (More); LPL MS 3499, fols. 92v, 100v, 105v (Glisson), 96v (Boyle); CD, III.923 (Wallis), 925 (More); TKL, 20, 28 (Glisson), 47, 66 (Spinoza). For dates of these works, see Appendix A.

58. Baxter to Thomas Hill, 8 Mar. 1652 (DWL BC III.272v).

59. See chapter 2 below.

60. Richard Baxter, *Catholick Communion Defended against both Extreams* (London: Tho. Parkhurst, 1684), 15.

have talkt with divers high pretenders to Philosophy here of the new strain, and askt them their judgment of Dr Glissons Book [*Tractatus de natura substantiae energetica* (1672)], and I found that none of them understood it, but neglected it as too hard for them and yet contemned it.”⁶¹

Finally and most importantly, while other major Puritan theologians of his generation such as John Owen remained largely silent about philosophical transition, Baxter directly addressed ideas of the most influential and controversial mechanical philosophers of the seventeenth century, including René Descartes, Pierre Gassendi, Robert Boyle, Thomas Hobbes, and Benedict de Spinoza. Mechanical philosophy was the most successful anti-Aristotelian natural philosophy in the seventeenth century—ultimately winning out over other alternatives to Christian Aristotelian philosophy such as chymical philosophy and Italian naturalism.⁶² Although a transhistorical definition of mechanical philosophy still eludes consensus and is fraught with difficulties,⁶³ when the term was first popularized in the 1660s by Robert Boyle (and so understood by Baxter), he used it synonymously with “corpuscular” philosophy to describe the ideal shared by the major parties, Cartesians and atomists, “in deducing all the Phaenomena of Nature from Matter and local Motion” (rather than the substantial forms and qualities of scholastic Aristotelian philosophy). Because “Motion and other Affections of the minute Particles of Matter” are “obvious and very powerfull in Mechanical Engines,” wrote Boyle, “I sometimes also term it the Mechanical Hypothesis or

61. Richard Baxter, *Of the Nature of Spirits; Especially Mans Soul. In a Placid Collation with the Learned Dr. Henry More* (London: B. Simmons, 1682), 6. John Henry sees this remark as indicative of a wider trend “that mechanical philosophers—particularly the less serious minded of them—were constitutionally unable to understand the older ways of philosophizing” (Henry, “Matter of Souls,” 93n17).

62. Daniel Garber, “Physics and Foundations,” in *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed. Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston, vol. 3, *Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21–69.

63. William R. Newman, *Atoms and Alchemy: Chymistry and the Experimental Origins of the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 175–80. For recent discussion, see Daniel Garber, “Remarks on the Pre-history of the Mechanical Philosophy,” in *The Mechanization of Natural Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Sophie Roux (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 3–26; and Alan Gabbey, “What Was ‘Mechanical’ about ‘The Mechanical Philosophy’?,” in *The Reception of the Galilean Science of Motion in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. Carla Rita Palmerino and J. M. M. H. Thijssen (Springer: Kluwer Academic, 2004), 11–23. Most scholars have viewed Newton as moving beyond mechanical philosophy, since he incorporates action at a distance, but there are also good arguments for continuity, on which see Hylarie Kochiras, “The Mechanical Philosophy and Newton’s Mechanical Force,” *Philosophy of Science* 80, no. 4 (2013): 557–78; and Peter Hans Reill, “The Legacy of the ‘Scientific Revolution’: Science and the Enlightenment,” in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 4, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23–43, at 26–28.

Philosophy.”⁶⁴ Thus, as Boyle used the term mechanical philosophy, it denoted the explanatory reduction of nature to material particles characterized by size, shape, local motion, and texture (ordering of the parts), and the use of mechanical devices such as clocks and levers as analogues for understanding nature.⁶⁵

Some scholars have argued that Gassendi and Boyle were not strictly mechanical since they retained explanations involving seminal and chymical powers.⁶⁶ Against this, William R. Newman has countered that Boyle himself “spent the better part of his life trying to justify a set of scientific beliefs that he himself dubbed ‘the mechanical philosophy,’” so that such terminological revisionism is historically unwarranted and reveals an implicit Cartesian bias.⁶⁷ Moreover, Boyle described the powers of aggregate material particles as “mechanical affections” or “textures,” so that his understanding of mechanical philosophy includes compound corpuscles that admit of intermediate chymical explanations.⁶⁸ Others have persuasively argued that various mechanical philosophers, including Boyle and Robert Hooke, retained traditional terminology such as “occult qualities” and “seminal principles,” while replacing Aristotelian explanations of such qualities and principles with alternative mechanical explanations. Accordingly, the retention of traditional terminology was entirely compatible with profound theoretical change.⁶⁹ It should also be observed that Gassendi himself said of his *semina* that “each one of them is a little machine [*machinula*] within which are enclosed in a way incomprehensible almost innumerable [other] little machines [*machinulae*], each with its own little motions.”⁷⁰ Gassendi’s willingness to refer to life as

64. Robert Boyle, Preface to “Some Specimens of an Attempt to make Chymical Experiments Usefull to Illustrate the Notions of the Corpuscular Philosophy,” in *Certain Physiological Essays* (London: Henry Herringman, 1661), fol. P4v.

65. Peter R. Anstey, *The Philosophy of Robert Boyle* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–4; Newman, *Atoms and Alchemy*, 181–89.

66. See especially Antonio Clericuzio, “A Redefinition of Boyle’s Chemistry and Corpuscular Philosophy,” *Annals of Science* 47 (1990): 561–89; Clericuzio, *Elements, Principles and Corpuscles: A Study of Atomism and Chemistry in the Seventeenth Century* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2000), 63–71, 103–48.

67. Newman, *Atoms and Alchemy*, 175–89, at 178.

68. Newman, *Atoms and Alchemy*, 180–89.

69. Peter R. Anstey, “Boyle on Seminal Principles,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 33 (2002): 597–630; Anstey, *Philosophy of Robert Boyle*, 21–24; Mark E. Ehrlich, “Mechanism and Activity in the Scientific Revolution: The Case of Robert Hooke,” *Annals of Science* 52, no. 2 (1995): 127–51; Cees Leijenhorst, *The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism: The Late Aristotelian Setting of Thomas Hobbes’ Natural Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2–3, et passim.

70. Pierre Gassendi, *Opera omnia* (Lyon: Laurentius Anisson & Joan. Bapt. Devenet, 1658), 2:267a, with trans. in Howard B. Adelman, *Marcello Malpighi and the Evolution of*

a complex of “little machines” ought to caution us from overly rigid definitions of mechanical philosophy that would exclude Gassendi’s active atoms and seeds as imperfectly mechanical. This study will refer to mechanical philosophy in the historically warranted sense given by Boyle, broadly inclusive of Gassendi and Descartes, with the ideal of replacing Aristotelian forms and qualities with alternative reductionist explanations.

The introduction of a philosophy that aimed to reduce “all the Phaenomena of Nature,” as Boyle put it, to mechanical explanation at the expense of Aristotelian forms and powers naturally raised serious concerns for theologians whose discipline used concepts of substance and causality. When Cartesian philosophy arose in the Netherlands, some of the most important debates surrounded conceptions of substance, secondary causality, and the soul.⁷¹ Baxter was certainly concerned with similar issues. Yet although Baxter agreed with his Reformed brethren in the Netherlands on the largely problematic nature of Descartes’s philosophy, particularly his laws of motion, Baxter showed a relatively greater concern with Gassendi’s Christian Epicurean philosophy, particularly as it pertained to the nature and immortality of the soul. Thus, Baxter illustrates the relatively greater importance of Gassendi and Christian Epicureanism in England by comparison with the Dutch Reformed response to Cartesianism.

As will be shown in the present book, for Baxter the chief problem of mechanical philosophy involved the reduction of motion to local motion and the corresponding evacuation of intrinsic principles of motion from active natures and principally living forms. Baxter could not accept the reduction of activity in nature to explanations of matter in motion, however complex such explanations might be. This issue framed both his critique of mechanical philosophy and the extent of his willingness to accommodate it within his philosophical theology. The present study identifies three major areas on which Baxter focused his objections to mechanical philosophy: the nature of motion and its relation to God, the nature of the soul and the threat of materialism, and the potentially radical implications for ethics as exemplified by Hobbes and Spinoza. Although Baxter reacted strongly against mechanical philosophy in these areas, his critique was not simply based on a conservative Aristotelian reaction to the new philosophy. Rather, Baxter was attuned to recent experimental discoveries and open to philosophical change at a theoretical level. He developed a highly original Trinitarian natural philosophy as an alternative to the mechanization of the living world. This Trinitarian natural

Embryology (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 2:806. Cf. Antonia LoLordo, *Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 201.

71. Aza Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy, 1625–1750: Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus van Mastricht, and Anthonius Driessen* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 113–25, 143–44, 233–59.

philosophy incorporated an eclectic blend of philosophical concepts, and, while drawing on Aristotelian accounts of the soul and its faculties, it also accommodated mechanical and atomist notions. Baxter's response to mechanical philosophy thus represents a targeted critique by a theologian conversant with old and new philosophies.

Baxter's eclectic, yet largely negative, response to mechanical philosophy has implications for various larger theses on the relation of Protestantism—or more narrowly Reformed (Calvinist) and Puritan theological traditions—to the rise of early modern science and philosophy. There are many theses that posit some form of strong link between new philosophy and one of these theological traditions, as if the theology of Protestantism or Puritanism was intrinsically supportive of new philosophy, and in particular mechanical philosophy. One author argues that Protestant Reformers' "radical sovereignty of God" paved the way for mechanical philosophy in that "the Reformers' view of God rendered Aristotelian essentialism pointless by denying that essences contribute causality or purpose to nature."⁷² Another similarly states, "[T]he Calvinist God in His remote majesty resembles the watchmaker God of the mechanical universe, suggesting that the Calvinist tenor of English theology helped to make the mechanical hypothesis congenial to English scientists."⁷³ Others posit a "happy marriage" and "intrinsic compatibility" between "Puritanism and New Philosophy,"⁷⁴ or state, "Puritans as a whole felt that the 'new philosophy' was consistent with the reformed Christian faith."⁷⁵ Still others argue that "univocal metaphysical assumptions" of Protestants likely contributed to the "disenchanted natural world" brought about by modern science,⁷⁶ or likewise, that Protestant literalist hermeneutics "entailed a new,

72. Gary B. Deason, "Reformation Theology and the Mechanistic Conception of Nature," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 167–91, at 177–78.

73. Westfall, *Science and Religion*, 5.

74. Reijer Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1972), 143, in agreement with Merton, "Science, Technology and Society," 495.

75. Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626–1660* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976), 498. Similarly, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 217–23; and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 437–38; Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought*, 128–32.

76. Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 41. This was suggested by Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 70–72, on whom Gregory relies (*Unintended Reformation*, 5, 39, 55).

non-symbolic conception of the nature of things,” and this loss of symbolism in nature allowed for a “new scheme of things, [where] objects were related mathematically, mechanically, causally, or ordered and classified according to categories other than those of resemblance.”⁷⁷

Baxter’s critique of mechanical philosophy casts doubt on such sweeping theories. It renders problematic the argument for an intrinsic compatibility between Puritanism and the theoretical direction toward mechanical philosophy taken by the English scientific movement after the Restoration. Here a distinction between empirical and theoretical developments is important. Although it is certainly the case that Baxter, along with many other Puritans, kept an open mind with respect to new experimental discoveries,⁷⁸ this should not be confused with a general acceptance of the theoretical underpinnings of mechanical philosophy. Indeed, acceptance of experimental discoveries did not necessarily correlate with the acceptance of mechanical philosophy, as can be seen in the contrast between the discoveries of the earth’s magnetism and circulation of the blood, which were made independently of mechanical theories, and the subsequent mechanical explanations given to these discoveries.⁷⁹ In response to the above claims, it should be observed that Baxter found the denial of the causal efficacy of secondary formal causes to be among the most problematic aspects of mechanical philosophy, and his retention of the causal efficacy of forms constitutes a point of continuity with John Calvin and the eclectic yet predominately Aristotelian character of Reformed philosophical education that flourished well into the seventeenth century.⁸⁰

77. Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 114–15.

78. See the discussion of Copernicanism in chapter 5 below.

79. Thomas Fuchs, *The Mechanization of the Heart: Harvey and Descartes*, trans. Marjorie Grene (Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press, 2001); Roger French, *William Harvey’s Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robert G. Frank Jr., *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Stephen Pumfrey, “Mechanizing Magnetism in Restoration England—the Decline of Magnetic Philosophy,” *Annals of Science* 44 (1987): 1–22.

80. See, e.g., John Calvin, *Treatises against the Anabaptists and against the Libertines*, ed. and trans. Benjamin Farley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 243: “Nevertheless, this universal operation of God’s does not prevent each creature, heavenly or earthly, from having and retaining its own quality and nature and from following its own inclination.” Contra Deason, “Reformation Theology,” 177–78. On Calvin and Aristotelianism, see PRRD, 1:365–66; Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Formation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 156–57; Muller, “Scholasticism, Reformation, Orthodoxy, and the Persistence of Christian Aristotelianism,” *Trinity Journal* NS 19, no. 1 (1998): 81–96, at 92–93; Christopher Kaiser, “Calvin’s Understanding of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy: Its Extent and Possible Origins,” in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1988), 77–92; A. N. S. Lane, introduction to *The Bondage and Liberation*

Baxter also forms a counterexample to the claim that Protestant “univocal metaphysical assumptions” or a Protestant nonsymbolic view of nature contributed to a disenchanting modern world. At least among Reformed theologians, there was widespread rejection of Scotist univocity in favor of a Thomistic doctrine of analogy with respect to the creator-creature relation,⁸¹ and Protestants continued to employ allegory, with many drawing directly on Aquinas’s hermeneutics by the end of the sixteenth century.⁸² Although Baxter’s doctrine of analogy is somewhat more eclectic and he favored Scotus in many respects,⁸³ he shared with his Reformed contemporaries an analogical understanding of the relation of God and creatures, and this doctrine of analogy forms an important doctrinal component to his objection to mechanical philosophy.⁸⁴

The present study also highlights the highly variegated nature of the response to the new philosophy within the English Reformed tradition, including

of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius, by John Calvin, ed. A. N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), xxiv–xxvi. On Aristotle and the wider Reformed tradition, see *PRRD*, 1:360–82; David S. Sytsma, “As a Dwarf set upon a Gyants shoulders’: John Weemes (ca. 1579–1636) on the Place of Philosophy and Scholasticism in Reformed Theology,” in *Die Philosophie der Reformierten*, ed. Günter Frank and Herman J. Selderhuis (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2012), 299–321, at 303–4; Luca Baschera, “Aristotle and Scholasticism,” in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. T. Kirby, E. Campi, and F. A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 133–59; Donald Sinnema, “Aristotle and Early Reformed Orthodoxy: Moments of Accommodation and Antithesis,” in *Christianity and the Classics: The Acceptance of a Heritage*, ed. Wendy Helleman (New York: University Press of America, 1990), 119–48; Joseph Prost, *La philosophie à l’académie protestante de Saumur (1606–1685)* (Paris: Paulin, 1907); M. J. Petry, “Burgersdijk’s Physics,” in *Franco Burgersdijk (1590–1635): Neo-Aristotelianism in Leiden*, ed. E. P. Bos and H. A. Krop (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 83–118; Sarah Hutton, “Thomas Jackson, Oxford Platonist, and William Twisse, Aristotelian,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39, no. 4 (1978): 635–52.

81. Richard A. Muller, “Not Scotist: Understandings of Being, Univocity, and Analogy in Early-Modern Reformed Thought,” *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 14, no. 2 (2012): 127–50.

82. Jitse M. van der Meer and Richard J. Oosterhoff, “God, Scripture, and the Rise of Modern Science (1200–1700): Notes in the Margin of Harrison’s Hypothesis,” in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 2:363–96; *PRRD*, 2:477–82; David S. Sytsma, “Thomas Aquinas and Reformed Biblical Interpretation: The Contribution of William Whitaker,” in *Aquinas among the Protestants*, ed. David VanDrunen and Manfred Svensson (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell), forthcoming.

83. Baxter to Thomas Hill, 8 Mar. 1652: “To yo[u]’ Quest[io]nⁿ ‘who I like best of Concourse, Contingency, Attributes &c’ I answe[r]. None Satisfyeth me: w^{ch} I speake in Accusation of my owne Incapacity. I like Scotus well in much. And I thinke Durandus is offer chidd<en> yⁿ well confuted” (DWL BC III.272r). On Scotistic aspects, see Burton, *Hallowing of Logic*, 11–12, 275–77, 308, 322, 326, 349–52, 357.

84. See chapters 4 and 5 below.

Puritanism.⁸⁵ That the advent of Cartesianism in the Netherlands produced varying reactions among Reformed theologians ranging from strong rejection to enthusiastic adoption is well known.⁸⁶ The introduction of the new philosophy in England generated a similar diversity of opinion. On the one side, there were a variety of theologians, especially early Latitudinarians, but also Puritans and Reformed Anglicans, who were intimately involved in the promotion of the new philosophy both during the interregnum and the Restoration.⁸⁷ Even though John Wilkins shared characteristics with the Latitudinarians, both he and Robert Boyle, who were among the leaders of the mid-century experimental community and early Royal Society, held distinctly Reformed theological beliefs.⁸⁸ On the other side, it was also reported that the introduction of the new philosophy during the interregnum “was as great a bug-bear to the Presbyterians as a Crosse or Surplisse,” and that Presbyterians had argued that “*Philosophy and Divinity* are so inter-woven by the School-men, that it cannot be safe to separate them; *new Philosophy* will bring in *new Divinity*; and freedom in the one will make men desire a liberty in the other.”⁸⁹ After the Restoration, a variety of theologians—including the Arminian conformist Peter Gunning, Reformed conformists Robert Crosse, Thomas Barlow,

85. On diversity in general, see Richard A. Muller, “Diversity in the Reformed Tradition: A Historiographical Introduction,” in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 11–30.

86. Aza Goudriaan, “Theology and Philosophy,” in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 27–63, at 43–53; Yoshiyuki Kato, “*Deus sine Natura*: The Dutch Controversy over the Radical Concept of God, 1660–1690” (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2013); Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992); Ernst Bizer, “Die reformierte Orthodoxie und der Cartesianismus,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 55 (1958): 306–72; Bizer, “Reformed Orthodoxy and Cartesianism,” trans. Chalmers MacCormick, *Journal for Theology and the Church* 11 (1965): 20–82; Thomas A. McGahagan, “Cartesianism in the Netherlands, 1639–1676: The New Science and the Calvinist Counter Reformation” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976).

87. Latitudinarians are discussed in chapter 2. For others, see Christoph J. Scriba, “The Autobiography of John Wallis,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 25 (1970): 17–46; Theodore Hornberger, “Samuel Lee (1625–1691), a Clerical Channel for the Flow of New Ideas to Seventeenth-Century New England,” *Osiris* 1 (1936): 341–55; Rick Kennedy, “Thomas Brattle and the Scientific Provincialism of New England, 1680–1713,” *New England Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (1990): 584–600; Kennedy, “The Alliance between Puritanism and Cartesian Logic at Harvard, 1687–1735,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51, no. 4 (1990): 549–72; Arthur Daniel Kaledin, “The Mind of John Leverett” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1965).

88. Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16–18, 122–23.

89. S[imon] P[atrick], *A Brief Account of the new Sect of Latitude-Men, Together with some reflections upon the New Philosophy. By S. P. of Cambridge. In answer to a Letter from his Friend at Oxford* (London, 1662), 14, 22–23. Cf. John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of*

and Robert South, and Reformed nonconformists Robert Ferguson, Samuel Gott, and Thomas Hill (d. 1677)—continued to oppose the new philosophy associated with Descartes and Gassendi.⁹⁰ There were also a fair number of theologians who attempted eclectic syntheses of old and new philosophy, a point of view reflected in the eclectic choice of textbooks in many early dissenting academies.⁹¹ This diversity of approaches continued until around 1700, when Samuel Palmer remarked, “Some [nonconformist] *Tutors* are more inclin’d to the *Philosophy* of Aristotle, others to the *Cartesian Hypothesis*, while my own had a due Regard for both, but strictly adhered to neither.”⁹² Baxter’s targeted critique of mechanical philosophy, combined with an eclectic appropriation of certain aspects of the new philosophy, places him in continuity with the critics and eclectic synthesizers, but in discontinuity with those characterized by Palmer as “more inclin’d” to Cartesianism.

If theologians exhibited a diverse spectrum ranging from proponents to critics of the new philosophy, the critics themselves admitted of some significant diversity with respect to the subject matter of their criticisms.⁹³ The seventeenth-century philosophical transition challenged prevailing notions of cosmology, epistemology, metaphysics, physics, the soul, and ethics, among other topics. Although it is possible to find theologians reacting to change regarding any one of these topics, Baxter focused on problems pertaining to the soul and related questions in physics, metaphysics, and ethics. There is little indication that Baxter worried much about Copernicanism as a theological problem, and although he clearly

the Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 53.

90. R. H. Sfyret, “Some Early Reactions to the Royal Society,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 7, no. 2 (1950): 207–28, at 219–49; Gascoigne, *Cambridge*, 55–56; Muller, “Thomas Barlow,” 179–95; Robert Ferguson, *The Interest of Reason in Religion* (London: Dorman Newman, 1675), 41–46, 248–67; Samuel Gott, *The Divine History of the Genesis of the World Explicated and Illustrated* (London: E. C. & A. C. for Henry Eversden, 1670), 3–6; Edmund Calamy, *A Continuation of the Account* (London: R. Ford, 1727), 2:856 (on Hill). On the Reformed conformity of Barlow and South, see Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 10–12.

91. M. A. Stewart, *Independency of the Mind in Early Dissent* (London: The Congregational Memorial Trust, 2004), 21–27; McLachlan, *English Education*, 46, 69, 87. For philosophical eclecticism, see also Marjorie Grene, “Aristotelico-Cartesian Themes in Natural Philosophy: Some Seventeenth-Century Cases,” *Perspectives on Science* 1, no. 1 (1993): 66–87; and Christia Mercer, “The Seventeenth-Century Debate between the Moderns and the Aristotelians: Leibniz and *Philosophia Reformata*,” in *Leibniz’ Auseinandersetzung mit Vorgängern und Zeitgenossen*, ed. Ingrid Marchlewitz and Albert Heinekamp (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 18–29.

92. Samuel Palmer, *A Vindication of the Learning, Loyalty, Morals, and Most Christian Behaviour of the Dissenters toward the Church of England* (London: J. Lawrence, 1705), 23–24.

93. Aza Goudriaan, “Introduction,” in *Jacobus Revius: A Theological Examination of Cartesian Philosophy: Early Criticisms (1647)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 10.

disliked Cartesian methodological doubt and distrust of the senses, his sporadic comments on such epistemological issues lacked the sustained attention he gave to the physical and metaphysical aspects of mechanical philosophy.⁹⁴ Baxter thus represents a different emphasis from English and Dutch theologians for whom Copernicanism and Cartesian epistemology remained highly controversial and biblically suspect. Moreover, Baxter's polemical focus on physics and metaphysics rather than epistemology supports the claim of those who have argued that the priority given to epistemology (along with the bifurcation into rationalism and empiricism) in narratives of early modern philosophy is inherently flawed.⁹⁵

The following chapters provide a chronological and topical analysis of Baxter's involvement with mechanical philosophy. Chapter 2 is arranged chronologically and provides context for all of the subsequent chapters. It situates Baxter's writings against the backdrop of the rise of mechanical philosophy with particular attention to the English reception of Gassendi's philosophy and the revival of interest in Epicurean ideas and writings. Here, Baxter's relationship and correspondence with figures such as Glanvill, Boyle, Hale, and More are discussed with attention to their importance for his polemics and positive intellectual development. Both Boyle and Hale contributed positively in different respects to Baxter's mature thought, while Glanvill and More sparked polemical exchanges with Baxter that shed light on his thought by way of contrast.

Chapters 3 and 4 together explain Baxter's own understanding of philosophy and nature, and constitute topical background to his polemics. Chapter 3 addresses Baxter's general approach to philosophy. Here Baxter's explanation of the noetic effects of sin, the interaction of intellect and will, and the relation of reason and revelation are shown to lead to an eclectic and somewhat ambivalent approach to philosophical sects. Chapter 4 discusses Baxter's view of the relation between God and creation that came to expression in his uniquely Trinitarian approach to nature. Baxter's eclectic use of old and new philosophy in his views on substance, causality, and the soul are explained in light of his participation in a Reformed tradition of Mosaic physics and his attribution of God's communicable attributes to the realm of living beings through the notion of *vestigia Trinitatis*.

The remaining three chapters focus on Baxter's specific objections to mechanical philosophy. Chapter 5 addresses Baxter's response to new doctrines of motion.

94. On Copernicanism, see chapter 5. On Cartesian epistemology, see chapter 3.

95. S. P. Lamprecht, "The Role of Descartes in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Studies in the History of Ideas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918–1935), 3:181–240, esp. 183–87; Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility: Science and the Shaping of Modernity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), 155–57; Alberto Vanzo, "Empiricism and Rationalism in Nineteenth-Century Histories of Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77 (2016): 253–82.

Although Baxter recognized advances in astronomy and the study of motion, he raised a series of objections against the philosophies of Descartes, Gassendi, and More. Chapter 6 turns to the doctrine of the soul, where Baxter raised objections to ideas promoted by More, Gassendi, and Thomas Willis, and expressed a suspicion that the mechanical philosophy of Gassendi and Willis would lead to a completely materialistic account of the soul. Chapter 7 focuses on Baxter's criticisms of Hobbes and Spinoza with respect to ethics. Baxter, whose own doctrine of natural law is shown to derive in important ways from Francisco Suárez, viewed the philosophies of Hobbes and Spinoza as an outworking of the principles of mechanical philosophy and therefore as exemplifying its potential danger of overturning traditional Christian morality and leading to philosophical necessitarianism.

Sometime in late 1666 or early 1667, Baxter penned his opening salvo against mechanical philosophy: "The Conclusion [of *The Reasons of the Christian Religion*], Defending the Soul's Immortality against the Somatists or Epicureans, and other Pseudophilosophers."⁹⁶ Near the end of this conclusion, Baxter commented on Bishop Tempier's famous condemnation of philosophical theses in 1277. Baxter disapproved of that manner of "too hastily and peremptorily" condemning as heretics those who hold dangerous philosophical opinions. But he went on to remark, "I think that in this age, it is one of the devils chief designs, to assault Christianity by false Philosophy."⁹⁷ With these reflections, Baxter may have glimpsed that he was living in a unique age of philosophical transition analogous to the reintroduction of Aristotle's complete corpus in thirteenth-century Latin Christendom. For Baxter, this was an age fraught with new challenges and dangers for Christianity. What did Baxter think was so dangerous about the philosophy of his age? What follows is an attempt to answer this question.

96. RCR, 489–604.

97. RCR, 588.