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Article:
Charlton, T and Searle, A (2018) Manuscript and Print in the Late Seventeenth Century: The Case of Morgan Library, MS MA 4431, British Library, MS Egerton 2570, and Richard Baxter's An end of doctrinal controversies (1691). The Library, 19 (3). pp. 368-375. ISSN: 0024-2160

https://doi.org/10.1093/library/19.3.368

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Manuscript and print in the late seventeenth century: the case of Morgan MA 4431, British Library MS Egerton 2570 and Richard Baxter's *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* (1691)

Abstract: The leading Puritan divine, Richard Baxter (1615-1691), left behind a complex range of manuscripts at his death. Preparatory work for the forthcoming Oxford University Press editions of his autobiography, *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, and of his complete correspondence has uncovered a lacuna in this manuscript collection and its subsequent cataloguing. This has implications for our understanding of Baxter's manuscript legacy, his intellectual interests, and his writing and publishing practices in the final decades of his life. It also provides a glimpse into authorial and press practice in the late seventeenth century, enriching our understanding of book history and the relationship between manuscript and print at that time.

Manuscript and print in the late seventeenth century: the case of Morgan MA 4431, British Library MS Egerton 2570 and Richard Baxter's *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* (1691)

A manuscript by the leading Puritan divine, Richard Baxter (1615-1691), is held in the Morgan Library, New York. Written in the indefatigable preacher and polemicist's distinctive hand, MA 4431 brings to light a tale that touches upon the complex story of the manuscripts Baxter left behind him at his death, revealing the difficulty of cataloguing manuscript material that has been separated from its original provenance. It represents both an interesting instance of Baxter's well-documented practice of continually revising his work for the press, and a noteworthy example of a much rarer phenomenon in Baxter's authorial career: the non-publication of material in which his manuscripts, and his printed output, show a continuing interest up until his death. This article identifies a set of relationships between MA 4431, BL MS Egerton 2570 and the published *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* (1691), currently unmentioned in existing Baxter scholarship, and seeks to elucidate their implications for both Baxter studies and our understanding of the interface between manuscript and print cultures in the late seventeenth century.

I

The text of MA 4431 comprises three-quarters of a page of paper in folio, and is transcribed below:

> Reader I added here three Chapters more, viz the 28th of Our Communion with Christs Glorifyed humanity, & with Angels & the glorifyed spirits of the just.

Ch. 29th of the state of *Separated Soules*, Their Immortality proved 1° That they are spirituall substances not annihilated 2° That they lose not their specifike forme or essence. 3° That they lose not their essential powers of Vitality, Intellection & Volition. Objections answered, about Infants, Paralitikes, Bruits, cessation of sense &c. 4° That they cease not their acting & become not dormant powers. Objections answered 5° That they lose not their Individuation. And if they did it were no losse, nor to be feared. Proofes from supernaturall revelation, apparitions &c

Ch. 30 Of the Resurrection & Everlasting Life. Difficulties considered.

Ch. 31. Corollaries. 1° How to conceive of God 2° How to conceive of the Celestiall glory 3° How to conceive of mans soule & spirits.

An Appendix vindicating the soules Immortality 1° In an answer to Pomponatius. 2° In answer to another, & a full & cleare proofe that 1° The mere Probability of a Life of Retribution maketh it the duty of all men, to seeke it as the very end & use of their Life & Reason in this world: 2° & & that what a man by his very Naturall Reason is so bound to make his end & seeke, is certainly true & to be obtained; & that God made not mans nature in vaine, nor for mere deceit, that the most rationall & obedient should be the most deluded & unhappy.

But the Chapter of the soules Immortality, is so large & unproportionable to the rest, that I am perswaded to cut these off, lest they too much lengthen this Breviate, & either to cast it away because I haue written so much on that subject already, or els to publish it by itself, with the addition of some Histories of Apparitions, & witches which confirme it.

In a note attached to the document, the Morgan Library describes it as:

> The manuscript of an *Address to the Reader*, which a search of the 23 volumes of Baxter's works for a work with the chapters 28-31 and appendix described, has failed to identify. The chapter described at the end of the text appeared as *The Certainty of the World of Spirits*, London, 1691.

The 23-volume edition of Baxter's *Practical Works,* brought to the press in 1830 by the Scottish Congregational minister William Orme, and referred to by the Morgan Library cataloguer above, did not include 'the chapters 28-31 and appendix'. However, the contents of the chapters thus described are mentioned in detail in one of Baxter's published works: *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* (1691).

An End of Doctrinal Controversies is a work with a complicated history of composition. It comprises a Preface and Contents list (sigs. A2-A6), five introductory chapters numbered in Arabic numerals with pages numbered in roman numerals (pp. i-xxxiv) and twenty-seven subsequent chapters, numbered in roman numerals with the pages numbered in Arabic (pp. 1-320). The most comprehensive and persuasive attempt to date the material in *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* has been made by Hans Boersma, who identifies five separate stages in its composition, and ascribes the bulk of Chapters I to XXVII to the period 1674-77, whilst dating the introductory preface and chapters to shortly before the tract's publication, in 1691.[1] Boersma's work is as attentive an analysis as has yet been made of the tract. More typical is the conclusion drawn by Orme, who observes that *An End of Doctrinal*

Controversies 'does not contain much that is new or original. It consists of twenty-five chapters on most of the topics on which he had treated often and largely before; particularly on the points embraced in the Arminian and Calvinistic controversy'.[2] Such a cursory approach to the contents of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* has meant that a lacuna within the tract has gone unnoticed since it was first published. The discovery of this omission – outlined below – and the text that was omitted has implications for scholarly understandings of Baxter's writing and publishing practice and his differing deployment of manuscript and print.

Within the broad scope of his project to 'reconcile' those 'that are engaged in Faction and malicious strife', Baxter uses Chapter II of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* to enumerate the chief 'causes of Divisions [which] do operate among Christians' (pp. 22-3). The list is twenty-eight points long, ranging from controversies about God's 'Foreknowledge' to those about 'Election in particular', 'About his Providence and Predetermination' and – one of the recurring themes of Baxter's polemical career – 'About the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Believers'. Baxter promises a chapter on 'each of these' points, in which 'I shall shew the pacifick Truth which must unite us, and shew how far all the Reformed Churches are therein agreed' (pp. 23-4).

Baxter's list of controversial doctrines had twenty-eight points, however, and this particular section of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* has only twenty-seven chapters. Furthermore, Baxter does not even begin to enumerate his twenty-eight points until he is in the second chapter itself. At the very least, a reader should expect twenty-eight further chapters after Chapter II; that is, a work of thirty chapters, not twenty-seven. That three chapters have been omitted is confirmed by Baxter's list of controversial doctrines in Chapter II, and the end of the tract itself. Baxter writes that he will 'shew the pacific Truth'

> 23. Of Good works and Merits, and how far we may trust to any thing in our selves. 24. Of Confirmation, Perseverance, and of danger and falling away. 25. Of Repentance, late Repentance and the Day of Grace, and the unpardonable Sin. 26. Of our Communion with Christ's Glorified Humanity, and with Angels and glorified Souls. 27. Of the state of separated Souls. 28. Of the Resurrection and Everlasting Life (p. 23).

As their titles in the contents page indicate, the final three chapters of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* in fact explore

> *CHAP. XXV.* Of good Works and Merit, and trusting to any thing of our own.
> *CHAP. XXVI.* Of Confirmation, Perseverance, and Danger of falling away.
> *CHAP. XXVII.* Of Repentance; late Repentance; the time of Grace, and of the unpardonable Sin.

What is missing from *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*, therefore, are the three final doctrinal controversies enumerated in Chapter II - chapters which would have been numbered XXVIII, XXIX and XXX in the printed tract, and which are in fact described as such in the Morgan Library document. Hence, point twenty-six in Chapter II of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* (p. 23) is 'Of our Communion with Christ's Glorified Humanity, and with Angels and glorified Souls': the corresponding chapter description in Morgan MA 4431 is 'the 28th of Our Communion with Christs Glorifyed humanity, & with Angels & the

glorifyed spirits of the just'. Point twenty-seven of the printed tract ('Of the state of separated Souls') tallies with 'Ch. 29th of the state of *Separated Soules*, Their Immortality proved' in MA 4431, while '28. Of the Resurrection and Everlasting Life' in *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*, relates to 'Ch. 30 Of the Resurrection & Everlasting Life. Difficulties considered' in the manuscript.

Baxter was an inveterate tinkerer with, and rewriter of, his works. *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, for example, first published in 1650, found its way to a fourteenth edition by the time of his death in 1691, with a number of major alterations between different editions.[3] MA 4431 shows that this process of revision could occur even whilst his work was in the press. Baxter appears to have intended the text of the autograph manuscript to serve as a cancellans. This explains why the final three doctrines mentioned in Chapter II of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* were not printed in that tract. Whilst Chapter II lists the errant three doctrinal points, they are not included in the Table of Contents (typically part of the prefatory material that is printed towards the end of the publication process to enable page references to be as definitive, and prefatory letters to be as contemporary, as possible): it is reasonable to conclude that MA 4431 was composed whilst the tract was at the printers'.

Baxter suggests within MA 4431 that only Chapter 29, 'of the soules Immortality', is 'so large & unproportionable to the rest', yet he indicates that omitting this chapter would also require him to 'cast away' the other material he describes. It is probable that these chapters were to be omitted because Baxter believed them to be too intimately connected with each other rather than as a result of their distinct, particular, contents. First printed in Bologna in 1516, Pomponatius / Pietro Pomponazzi's *Tractatus de Immortalite Animæ* was not unknown to theorists of the soul in Restoration England, but it belonged to an earlier iteration of European scholastic controversy.[4] Although Baxter was not the type of

polemicist who discarded an argument on the grounds of obscurantism or idiosyncrasy, a more persuasive case for omitting 'An Appendix vindicating the soules Immortality' can be made on the grounds that Baxter did not need to vindicate the arguments of a chapter he had already chosen to remove from *An End of Doctrinal Controversies* due to its length. Though a chapter on '*Separated Soules*' might conceivably stand 'by itself', the chapters (and appendix) around it could not.

II

Listed in the British Library manuscript catalogue entry for Egerton 2570 are 'ORIGINAL papers of Richard Baxter, the Nonconformist . . . 3. " An Appendix vindicating the Soules Immortality," etc.; circ. 1667. (See Beliquiæ [sic] pt. iii., p. 61.) ff. 79-110'. The catalogue entry does not offer a full description of the material contained in those folios, however. The 'Appendix' comes in two parts. The first (fols. 79-82^{r}) addresses 'The Brutists Objections' to immortality, to which Baxter has added in a later hand 'viz. Pomponatius'; the second, some 23 folio pages long (fols. 82^{v}-94^{v}), addresses an 'overwise young man' who expressed doubt that he could ever be brought to the Christian faith by Baxter's syllogisms (f. 83).

Folio 95, however, starts in the middle of paragraph §36, and a 'Chapter 28', which discusses the 'worship' due to Saints and 'Angels'. The following 'Chapter 29' commences on the next page, and is entitled 'Of the State of Separated Soules, & their Im*m*ortality' (fols. 95^{v}-106). At some twenty folio pages of manuscript, running to 104 paragraphs (with a number of interpolations and marginal comments), it is lengthy enough to be considered larger and 'unproportionate' to the material around it. A subsequent 'Chapter 30' (fos 106^{v}-108^{v}) is entitled 'Of the Resurrection & Everlasting Life', and the document concludes with a fourth chapter, '31', which it describes as 'Corollaries' (fols 108^{v}-110). It is clear that the material contained in fols. 79-110 of Egerton 2570 is what is described in Morgan Library

MA 4431, less the initial thirty-five-and-a-half paragraphs of ‘Chapter 28’. Buried within this manuscript and unidentified to date are the four chapters and an Appendix which Baxter had initially intended to publish as part of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*. The evidence adduced here demonstrates that he must have changed his mind over their inclusion in the tract towards the end of the printing process.

The catalogue entries made for the manuscripts in the British Library and the Morgan Library partially explain why the existing relationship between these two manuscripts has not been recognized to date. However, the original cause for the relationship between the two documents remaining hidden lies in the history of the manuscripts which Baxter left behind him at his death. No record or catalogue exists of what precisely Baxter bequeathed to his posthumous editor (his friend and colleague Matthew Sylvester), nor what exactly came to be deposited in the mid-eighteenth century in Dr Williams’s Library, subsequently known as ‘The Baxter Treatises’.[5] The Baxter Treatises themselves were broken up in the nineteenth century; parts of them seem never to have returned to Dr Williams’s Library after the antiquarian William Black prepared a hand-written catalogue of them between 1856 and 1862.[6] Missing parts of the Baxter Treatises have intermittently appeared elsewhere. The British Library purchased what was to become Egerton 2570 in 1880 (containing parts of the narrative manuscript of the *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ* and material relating to the Savoy Conference of 1661 as well as to *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*). Not all of the missing material catalogued by Black made its way into Egerton 2570. Another document originally from the Dr. Williams’s Library collection was donated back to the Library by the family of the historian Hugh Martin in November 1965.[7]

MA 4431 was gifted to what was then the Pierrepont Morgan Library in 1969. While we cannot be certain that it was ever in the possession of Dr Williams’s Library, we can now be

sure of its relationship to overlooked material in Egerton 2570. Viewing these two documents as part of a single, fractured manuscript collection provides a greater understanding of each document individually, Baxter's intellectual interests and his writing and publishing practice. The material in Egerton 2570 currently catalogued as 'An Appendix concerning the Immortality of the Soul' should also be identified as including three and a half chapters of material which Baxter had initially intended as part of *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*, and over which he had a last-minute change of mind. Secondly, a more accurate description of the Morgan Library document is now possible, acknowledging that though the material mentioned there did not reach print, it is nonetheless traceable.

A further clarification can also be made. The 'Chapter 29' described in the Morgan Library document is not, in fact, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*. That tract, printed in 1691 (the same year as *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*), provides a 'Collection' of 'Histories of Spirits' as 'an Addition to sufficient Proofs of invisible Powers or Spirits' already published (p. 1). Concentrating upon 'Historical Instances of Apparitions, Witches, and marvellous convincing Works of God's Providence' (p. 17), *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* proffers testimony with which to substantiate the immortality of souls. This had long been a polemical concern of Baxter's: he had published a 'Conclusion, Defending the Soul's Immortality' in *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* in 1667, and two tracts upon the topic in 1682 (*Of the Immortality of Mans Soul* and *The Nature and Immortality of the Soul Proved in Answer to One who Professed Perplexing Doubtfulness*). Baxter claims in Egerton 2570, 'Chapter 29', to have written upon how 'Nature itselfe' reveals the soul's immortality in 'other Treatises (some printed & one yet unprinted)' (f. 95^{v}). The 'one yet unprinted' seems to be the treatise published as *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*. 'Chapter 29' focuses on 'supernaturall revelation' and theoretical debates over the nature of the 'prime mover' and the 'moving principles' of natural matter (fols. 95v, 98). The material in Egerton indicates how frequently Baxter returned to issues concerned with the nature of the soul and the

relationships between natural philosophy, apologetics and evidence, and his ability as a polemicist to do so from a number of different perspectives. However, these manuscripts also demonstrate Baxter's avid engagement with such matters beyond his published record. This sheds new light on an aspect of Baxter's compulsive repetitiveness. His wife, Margaret Charlton, had once suggested to Baxter that he 'had done better to have written fewer Books, and to have done those few better'. Baxter confessed, disarmingly, 'I thought, while I wrote none needlesly, the modall imperfection of two was less evil than the total omission of one'.[8] The relationship between these two manuscripts from the dispersed Baxter archive demonstrates that this maxim was, on occasion, modified by a degree of self-awareness about the logistics of publishing and the polemical context within which he was writing. The relationship between *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* and the rest of Baxter's writings on the immortality of the soul indicates that he thought it was important to address this matter: the new manuscript evidence discussed here suggests that he dwelt more considerably upon the 'modall imperfection' of his published material than either he would publicly admit or has hitherto been understood.

The question remains as to why the text of Morgan Library MA 4431 itself was not published as part of the preliminary material in *An End of Doctrinal Controversies*, particularly given that the instructions issued in the manuscript were carried out. Any suggestion at this point must be conjectural, but it can be usefully informed by the identification of the material in Egerton 2570 and the Morgan Library as part of a subsequently fractured archive. It seems likely that a simple printshop error was involved: the text of the intended 'cancellans' was inadvertently bundled up with the text that Baxter wished to be cancelled when it was returned to him.

The discovery outlined here primarily traces the implications for our understanding of Baxter's compositional and publishing habits of precisely accounting for the dispersal of Baxter's archive. It has implications, too, beyond the need to re-catalogue parts of the

manuscript collection Baxter left behind him at his death in 1691. Morgan MA 4431 provides a rare glimpse into a particular aspect of the print process in the era of the hand-press: the author continued to write and change his mind about the publication even as the press was in action. It also illustrates the complex inter-relationships between manuscript and print at the end of the seventeenth century. In order properly to be understood the unpublished writings within Morgan MA 4431 and Egerton 2570 must be read not only in conjunction with each other but also with Baxter's published output. A detailed and accurate understanding of print and manuscript cultures in late seventeenth-century England requires an awareness of the contingencies and practical concerns that so often bring them together, as well as, if not more than, the cultural and social paradigms that pull them apart.

The place of publication for all seventeenth-century books quoted in this article is London.

[1] Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy*, 2nd edn (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), Appendix B, pp. 339-41.

[2] *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter, with a Life of the Author, and a Critical Examination of his Writings*, ed. by William Orme, 23 vols (London: James Duncan, 1830), I, p. 473.

[3] On Baxter's revisions to *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650) see F. J. Powicke, 'Story and significance of the Rev. Richard Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest"', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 5 (1920), pp. 445-479, particularly pp. 467-470.

[4] On Pomponazzi / Pomponatius, see Emily Michael, 'Renaissance Theories of Body, Mind and Soul', in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment*, ed. by John P. Wright and Paul Potter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 147-72, especially pp. 153-58, where she notes not only that

Baxter referred to him in *The Reasons of Christian Religion* (1667), but that Kenelm Digby had also sought to refute him in *Two Treatises: In the One of which the Nature of Bodies; in The Other the Nature of Mans Soule is Looked into in the Way of Discovery of the Immortality of Reasonable Soules* (1665).

[5] On the early history of the Dr Williams's Library, see [R. Travers Herford and Stephen Kay Jones], *A Short Account of the Charity & Library Established under the Will of the Late Rev. Daniel Williams, D. D*. (London: Dr Williams's Trust, 1917), and Ernest A. Payne, *A Venerable Dissenting Institution: Dr Williams's Library, 1729-1979* (London: Dr Williams's Trust, 1979).

[6] See Geoffrey Nuttall, 'The MS. of the *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ (1696)*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vi (1955), pp. 73-79.

[7] Dr Williams's Trust Library Committee Minutes, L6518. British Library, Egerton 2570, fols. 50-51 is a folio sheet labelled '1' by Baxter; the three folio sheets in Dr Williams's Library, MS vol. xxii: 363 (4)* are numbered '(2)', '(3)', and '(4)', all in Baxter's hand and with their text in sequence. A note on the Dr Williams's Library documents states that the sheets come 'from Mr Black's coll*ectio*n'; this suggests that both parts of the document (those to be found in Egerton 2570 and in the Baxter Treatises) had been in Black's possession and are clearly part of the same document.

[8] Richard Baxter, *A Breviate of the Life of Margaret* [...] *late Wife of Richard Baxter* (1681), p. 72.