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The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences

THE FACTS about the life of John Ryland are well known. Born in 1753, the son of John Collett Ryland, he assisted his father from 1770 in the work of the Baptist Meeting at College Lane at Northampton and of the school, became sole pastor in 1785, and in 1793 moved to Bristol, where he served until his death in 1825 as pastor of the Broadmead Church and as President of the College. He was a founder of the Baptist Missionary Society, maintaining a close friendship with both Andrew Fuller and William Carey and consistently advocating the claims of the Society. He was an influential preacher travelling many hundreds of miles each year and visiting churches in all parts of Britain.

What is not so well known is the theological significance of Ryland. It is the purpose of this article therefore to examine Ryland's theology and to justify the assertion that he exerted determinative influences upon a number of individuals and movements during one of the most important eras both in the story of Baptists and of evangelicals in general. To achieve this purpose we shall consider the sources of Ryland's theology and then the nature or content of his theology, thus enabling us to discern the places and strength of its influence.

The sources of Ryland's theology

Ryland grew up in a Calvinistic home dominated by the strong convictions and vigorous judgments of his father. J. C. Ryland was trained for the ministry at Bristol College but became stricter than his tutors, adopting a higher Calvinist position under the influence not only of John Brine and John Gill, but also of Dutch theology as formulated at the Synod of Dort and expressed in the writings of Hermann Witsius whose name he gave to one of his sons. John Ryland lived in the atmosphere of this theology in the home, in his father's school which provided an excellent education with a firm moral foundation¹ and in the church at College Lane listening to his father's preaching.

His relationship with his father was close so that he always felt both respect and affection for him; this was expressed in practical ways when J. C. Ryland went through a period of financial difficulty, for the son planned to give up a considerable part of his salary to support his father.² It meant also that Ryland accepted a Calvinist theology and maintained it as the foundation of his thinking, although he gradually reshaped some of its implications.

In the sermon which he preached at the funeral of Andrew Fuller in 1815 Ryland refers to "Newton and the first Robert Hall who were the counsellors of my youth".³ Hall, who was pastor of the church at Arnesby from 1753 to 1791, held to a Calvinist theology but after the

publication of his book *Help to Zion's Travellers* in 1781 was thought by some "to have been gone off from the Gospel".⁴ Ryland mentions this in an appendix to the sermon which he preached at Hall's funeral and in a long footnote explains that Hall changed in some of his theological emphases while holding fast to his basic Calvinism. In particular he came to see more clearly that all who hear the gospel are under obligation to believe in the gospel. This duty does not alter the fact that saving faith derives from the sovereign grace of God; it is a mode of stressing the obligations which make man accountable in the sight of God. Ryland asserts that "several of his brethren much about the same time were led into the same views" and we may feel sure that he was among those who were discovering the implications of this new emphasis.⁵

The other counsellor of his youth was John Newton who was vicar at Olney from 1764 to 1779 and the rector of St. Mary Woolnoth until his death in 1807. He maintained a regular correspondence with Ryland writing to him two or three times in every year from 1774 until 1807. Newton was one of the small but growing group of evangelicals in the Church of England. His experience made him emphasize the necessity of conversion and the essentially personal nature of religion. He was a firm adherent of his church but he welcomed fellowship with all evangelicals in whatever denomination they might be active. Newton accepted Calvinist doctrines but he interpreted them with a warm, personal piety.

Ryland himself passed through a period of spiritual conflict when he was a lad so that as a young minister he would naturally respond to the emphases made by these two older men, both leading him away from the strict Calvinism in which he had been reared.⁶

All these men lived during the time in which the preaching of Whitefield in America and Britain and of Wesley in Britain was leading to countless awakenings. The Calvinists opposed the Arminian doctrines of Wesley as strenuously as they opposed Socinianism and Deism, but they can hardly have remained entirely unaffected by the happenings which were so widespread, especially in view of Whitefield's Calvinism. Whatever doctrines one held it was plain that many people were responding to the gospel and that preaching to the unconverted was effective.

The strongest influence on the young Ryland was undoubtedly that of the writings of the American preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards. On the inside cover of his copy of *The Life and Character of Jonathan Edwards* (Boston 1765) Ryland called it in 1773 "an inestimable one" containing "the life of the greatest, humblest and holiest of uninspired men". A short time later he possessed *An Account of the Life of David Brainerd* written by Jonathan Edwards and on the inside cover he wrote "John Ryland junr. his book which he prizes above almost all others".⁷ In his published sermons Ryland makes frequent reference to the writings of Edwards and in a postscript to the sermon which he preached at Fuller's funeral in 1815 he wrote⁸

“ . . . if I knew that I should be with Sutcliff and Fuller tomorrow, instead of regretting that I had endeavoured to promote that religion delineated by Jonathan Edwards in his *Treatise of Religious Affections* and in his life of David Brainerd I would recommend his writings . . . with the last effort I could make to guide a pen”.⁹

So strong was the influence of Edwards upon Ryland and upon some of his friends that Fuller in a letter to Ryland written in April 1815 states: “We have some who have been giving out of late that if Sutcliff and some others had preached more of Christ and less of Jonathan Edwards, they would have been more useful”. To this criticism Fuller immediately made the robust reply: “If those who talk thus preached Christ half as much as Jonathan Edwards did, and were half as useful as he was, their usefulness would be double what it is”.¹⁰ Testimony of a different kind is offered by the name given to the son born to Ryland and his second wife in 1798, Jonathan Edwards Ryland.

Edwards who was “probably the greatest theologian America has produced”¹¹ stood firmly in the tradition of Calvinism, but was influenced philosophically by the writings of Locke and experientially by the events known as the Great Awakening which began in 1734 in his church at Northampton, Massachusetts and which were repeated a few years later in the work of Whitefield. If it is true that “theologically Jonathan Edwards represents the revitalisation of Calvinism under the new conditions”¹² this does not imply that Edwards propagated certain doctrines; it means that he interpreted Calvinist doctrines in such a manner as to validate the profound spiritual changes and personal awareness of God which many were experiencing. And the work of Eliot and Brainerd among the Indians of America showed that people outside the realm of civilisation had a capacity for responding to God and His grace in Christ. In his numerous writings Edwards provided a powerful justification both for preaching to the unconverted in the expectation of a response and for the validity of a warm and personal type of piety which avoided any superficial sentimentality by its acceptance of moral obligations.

Ryland appears to have read carefully most of Edwards’ writings and to have responded wholeheartedly to his interpretation of Calvinism. It will be useful now to give a brief summary of the position which Ryland reached in his early years and which his printed sermons suggest he maintained largely unchanged throughout his ministry.

The nature of Ryland’s theology

The foundation of Ryland’s theology is the Calvinist emphasis on the sovereignty of divine grace. Against the Socinian position which allowed for the activity of the human will in the process of salvation Ryland always maintains that man’s salvation is entirely the work of God. In a sermon preached to a gathering of ministers in Kettering in 1780 with the theme “God’s experimental probation of intelligent

agents" Ryland emphasizes the absolute nature of the divine sovereignty and choice. He certainly allows for an appeal to be made to sinners but any response made will be due to "efficacious grace".¹³ Again in a sermon on "the harmony of the divine perfections in the work of redemption" preached to the Western Association in 1811 he wrestles strenuously with the problem of combining the righteousness which condemns sin and the mercy which forgives the sinner into a credible apprehension of the divine nature. It is a piece of solid thinking about the sovereignty of God in His relationship with sinful man.

It is in the death of Christ that Ryland discerns both the judgment and mercy of God, and he has much to say about Christ. He upholds the deity of Christ against the Deists and Unitarians and he explores the meaning of the atonement which he will relate to all mankind. His funeral sermon for Robert Hall under the title *Salvation Finished* is a statement about Christ's death as the completion of God's work, and it describes the fulfilment among all mankind of this finished work as the gospel is taken to every part of the habitable globe.¹⁴ On Christmas Day 1781 he preached in Northampton on "Christ manifested and Satan frustrated" giving a long account of Satan's works and then of the salvation effected through Christ and making a plea for sinners to accept this salvation. More forcible was a sermon preached to the Western Association in 1813 on "the necessity of the trumpets giving a certain sound" in which he summarises the doctrines of sin, of atonement and of the deity of Christ and then makes a strong plea for ministers to offer this gospel to sinners, for parents to teach their children this faith and for more missionaries to communicate it to the heathen.

This brings us to the elements in Ryland's theology which are in opposition to the hyper-Calvinism in which he had grown up. In his sermons he constantly stresses the obligation upon believers of making the gospel known to all mankind. A sermon preached at Carter Lane in 1800 affirms strongly that all mankind is sinful and that sin leads inevitably to condemnation and death, consequently all men must be told of God's grace in Christ, for men perish apart from Christ. It is true that no one knows who belongs to God's elect; it is equally true that when sinful man is confronted by the gospel he, as a being created by God for Himself, has a duty to respond to the gospel, and thus failure to respond implies that he is responsible for the just condemnation which falls upon him. Therefore those who know the efficacious grace of God in Christ must make every exertion to confront all men with the gospel, calling upon them to recognise what they owe to God and to yield themselves in faith. Speaking to the Western Association in 1794 at Chard, Ryland expresses his confidence in "the increase of the glory and kingdom of Christ", making a strong plea to the Association to pursue the work of Christ because Christ will increase as His church grows.¹⁵

Yet believers have more obligations than that of making Christ

known to all mankind. There are moral obligations in the life of faith, and Ryland has much to say about the disciplines inherent in faith and the kind of life to which they should lead both in personal behaviour and in the conduct of relationships and affairs in the church. In all this he was opposing the tendencies towards anti-nomianism which were sometimes to be discerned in hyper-Calvinist circles. Thus in his last printed sermon preached in 1820 he speaks about "redemption from the curse of the law", making the point that those redeemed thus "will never suppose that Christ has cancelled or lessened their obligations to obedience", and he adds "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law not from the blessing of the law. For surely, it is a blessed thing to have a certain standard of duty, a directory to show us how we ought to walk and please God".¹⁶

It is not being suggested that in Ryland's theology there was anything startlingly new or that a complete summary has been offered. What the summary does give are the main emphases, and about these two important points may be made. First, they represent a conscious and deliberate rejection of some doctrines prevalent in Ryland's day and a reformulation of Calvinism in such a manner as to make its sense of the sovereignty of divine grace both a powerful incentive to evangelism and a guiding light for Christian conduct. Secondly, they constitute an integrated structure of theological thought based firmly in Scripture, related to current thinking and consistently centred in Christ. But the integration was not one simply of thought. The doctrines were the expression of a deeply felt personal faith and received their validation in the new life and the evangelistic outreach experienced in the church. The integration was one of thought, personal experience and corporate activity.

Thus we are brought finally to some consideration of the influence of this theology.

The influence of Ryland's theology

It is proper to begin with the two churches where Ryland ministered, College Lane, Northampton and Broadmead, Bristol. The similarity of these two churches both in their life during Ryland's ministry and in their subsequent experiences and activities is noticeable. Both grew into strong, outward looking communities attracting members with considerable gifts and with abilities for leadership. Both churches constituted focal points for Baptist life in their areas and were responsible for initiating places of Baptist witness and for strengthening Baptist fellowship. Both churches fostered relationships with all evangelical Christians and were concerned about the great issues of their day in the life of the nation. Now it cannot be claimed that all this derives from Ryland, but it seems reasonable to suggest that much of it does show the influence of the kind of Christian message which he steadily shared with his people through many years, for he spent twenty-two years as a preacher in Northampton and thirty-two in Bristol.

We turn now to Ryland's influence upon two individuals whose labours changed the whole story of Baptists, Fuller and Carey.

When Fuller settled at Kettering in 1783 Ryland preached the sermon and at Fuller's funeral in 1815 Ryland again gave the sermon, as Fuller had specially requested before he died. In 1816 he published an account of the life and death of Fuller, a tribute to their long and close friendship. "I always considered him, Brother Sutcliff and myself as more closely united to each other than either of us was to anyone else".¹⁷ When he wrote his book he had before him some 300 letters which Fuller had written to him during the years when one was in Kettering and the other in Bristol. Ryland calls him "my oldest and most intimate friend" and adds "to me, at least it seemed a tedious interval if more than a fortnight elapsed without my receiving a letter from him".¹⁸

This friendship began in 1776 when Fuller became acquainted with both Sutcliff and Ryland finding in them "familiar and faithful brethren who partly by reflection and partly by reading the writings of Edwards, Bellamy, Brainerd, etc. had begun to doubt the system of False Calvinism . . ." ¹⁹ Robert Hall sen. had already suggested to Fuller that he should read Edwards' *On the Will* but Fuller obtained a book by Dr. John Edwards of Cambridge. It was only in 1777 that he discovered his mistake. Was it Ryland who directed him to the right book?

Certainly through the years Ryland lent Fuller more than one of Edwards' writings. In a letter dated 26th February 1783, Fuller writes: "I return you Edwards on Original Sin and thank you for the use of it"²⁰ and a letter of 21st April 1794, mentions that Ryland had sent him Edwards on Free Grace and Atonement which he read "with great pleasure". On 9th October 1795, he acknowledges "your parcel containing several American publications".²¹

Many further illustrations of the close friendship between these two men and of their identity of thinking could be given. When Ryland decided in 1793 to move to Bristol Fuller wrote to him: "Your views of divine truth I consider as of great importance in the Christian ministry. Go then, my Brother, pour them into the minds of the rising generation of ministers".²² Fuller's small daughter had stayed with the Rylands before her death. "She loved Mr. and Mrs. Ryland and wanted to go to see them".²³ Ryland composed some verses for her and kept in close touch with her parents in their sorrow so that Fuller had "some encouragement from conversation with dear Brother Ryland".²⁴ In his last letter to Ryland 28th April 1815 (dictated because of weakness) Fuller writes: "We have enjoyed much together which I hope will prove an earnest of greater enjoyment in another world. We have also wrought together in the Lord's vineyard and he has given us to reap together in His vintage".²⁵

Fuller was of course a much more vigorous writer and controversialist than Ryland but the evidence seems to suggest that in certain areas Fuller's interpretation of the Christian faith was influenced by

Ryland's emphasis on the writings of Edwards and by his understanding of Calvinism mediated through the mutual response and affection of their friendship.

The second person we consider is Carey who was baptized by Ryland in 1783. Was that a momentary act? Or is it not more likely that they were already acquainted and that Ryland as the older man and as a pastor of College Lane Church talked with Carey about the faith? Many years later Carey wrote in a letter dated 14th June 1821: "My dear Brother, I have always loved you since I knew you and my love I am sure continues undiminished", and again on 4th July 1822, "You are the only one left of all my brethren in the ministry with whom I enjoyed sweet communion in England".²⁶ Nearly thirty years in India had not decreased the strong affection.

Before Carey went to India he had experienced the practical concern of Ryland. When he was pastor at Moulton, Carey needed money for the meeting house and Ryland wrote to his friend John Newton, who was a leader of the evangelical group in London, hoping that among his prosperous friends some financial help might be found. Again when Carey moved to Leicester he seems to have experienced some financial difficulties so that once more Ryland wrote to Newton asking for help.²⁷

Within this kind of friendship Carey could not have been indifferent to the theological emphasis of Ryland which may well have strengthened him in his sense of obligation to take the gospel to the heathen. Ryland certainly believed that "God himself infused into the mind of Carey that solicitude for the salvation of the heathen which cannot fairly be traced to any other source".²⁸ He considers "the Mission is originating absolutely with Carey".²⁹

Yet he can also assert that the Baptist Mission "more remotely originated in Brother Carey's conversation with Brother Fuller, Brother Sutcliff and myself in my study at Northampton though the Society was actually formed long afterwards Oct. 2. 1792".³⁰ Here is a distinction between the concept of mission and the formation of a Society and the hint that the concept was brought to clear and conscious expression in that discussion in Ryland's study. Carey was on his way back from Birmingham where he had been collecting money for the meeting house at Moulton and where he had mentioned the possibility of a mission, but in the conversation in Ryland's study he urged upon his friends the necessity of writing about it. They approved but were not willing to undertake the work; they urged Carey to prepare a manuscript and this resulted in his *Enquiry*.³¹

This relationship between Ryland and Carey and the events which have been briefly narrated suggest that Ryland's presentation of Calvinism was among the influences which caused the concept of mission to arise in the mind of Carey. The long, continuing friendship between the two is further evidence that Carey found Ryland's theology congenial; they strengthened one another in their evangelical faith.

In summary, it may be stated that Ryland, largely under the influence of the writings of Jonathan Edwards, provided an integrated reinterpretation of Calvinism which provided a strong foundation for a concept of the obligation of mission to all mankind. His was the work and outlook of a diligent, thoughtful reader with scholarly inclinations. Fuller took up these ideas into his own thinking and became the vigorous, forthright exponent in speech and writing, arguing with opponents, propagating his doctrines and their implications and thus giving rise to "Fullerism". Carey perceived the practical outcome of such doctrines in the obligation to take the gospel where it was not hitherto known and then took steps to formulate a project by which the mission could be fulfilled. These three men, bound together in evangelical faith and friendship, brought different gifts and experiences, all of which were needed to bring the concept of mission to life. The significance of Fuller and Carey in all this has been generally and frequently acknowledged, but without diminishing that significance the important contribution made by Ryland must also be stressed.

Another realm in which the influence of Ryland and his theology may be discerned is represented by the College in Bristol over which Ryland presided for thirty-two years. Already in 1770 the Bristol Education Society had been formed with the purpose of enlarging the work of training for the ministry and its prospectus emphasized the need for preparing able and evangelical ministers. Ryland must have given wholehearted assent to this emphasis upon a ministry which is both evangelical and educated. He was still involved in the long continuing debate among Baptists about the validity and necessity for education for ministers. A number of Baptists held that the inner work of the Spirit illuminating the word of Scripture was altogether adequate for the tasks of ministry. In more than one letter to Ryland John Newton also made known his judgment that an education in an academy was unnecessary for a minister. Ryland stood out against his friend Newton as well as against his Baptist brethren. His theological understanding made him aware that in the work of spreading the gospel the preacher needed to be equipped both with the intellectual ability to present the message in cogent and effective manner and with some knowledge of interpretations of the faith which distorted or denied the truth. Well educated himself, he valued learning as a means of serving the gospel and this position he advocated in a number of sermons.

In a sermon preached in June 1812 to the subscribers to "the academical institution at Stepney" Ryland sets out his understanding of the nature of the ministry and the kind of preparation needed for its due fulfilment. The minister must "be influenced by an ardent desire to know, enjoy, resemble, serve and glorify God himself; and to bring others to unite with him in the same exalted purpose". This evangelical aim of glorifying God by making known his grace in Christ so that sinners may be brought to faith occupies a considerable part of

the sermon but Ryland also suggests that it is "highly expedient that every large body of Christians should possess some learned ministers; and the greater their number and attainments the better" and he sets out at some length the subjects which he considers proper for a theological course. He believes that the institution was not formed "with a design to make men ministers, but to make young ministers better scholars". His own work at Bristol exemplified this point of view. A number of his students continued their studies at the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh or Glasgow and then went on to occupy positions of influence among Baptists.³²

With this emphasis on sound learning Ryland combined the other implication of his theology, an interest in world-wide evangelism in general and the work of the Baptist Missionary Society in particular. He was responsible for sending a number of men to the mission field, including John Marshman whom he baptized at Broadmead in 1794. Three of his students, Eustace Carey the nephew of William, William Pearce the son of Samuel, and William Yates were among the younger brethren in Calcutta who were critical of the policies of the Serampore community, so creating a situation of some difficulty for Ryland in view of his close ties with Carey and Marshman. But John Mack, another of his students, aided the process of reconciliation. Work in Jamaica was developed by two other students, John Rowe and Thomas Burchell.

The double emphasis upon evangelism and education was given visible, material expression in the erection of a new building which was begun in 1806 and completed in 1812. Previously the work had been accommodated in two large houses where a small number of students were gathered around their president. Now the new and more commodious building expresses what we might term a college concept. There were student rooms, lecture rooms, a library with its books and its growing number of objects representing non-Christian religions known to missionaries and new scientific knowledge.³³ In a letter to a friend Ryland sketched the ground plan of the "college" and described its facilities; there is an unusual note of excitement in the letter as if he perceived the significance embodied in the building.³⁴ It was an expanding work with a greater variety of students, a community of learning with principal and tutors all devoted to the great end of furthering man's salvation in the name of Christ.

In this way Ryland released a continuing influence in subsequent generations of Baptist life. He based on a firm theological foundation both the work of evangelism and the process of Christian learning by which men called of God are more fitted for that work. Many of his students came to share this position, carrying it into the thought of the churches and into the formation and development of other institutions to the very real benefit and blessing of the denomination.

Finally we consider the effect of Ryland's theology upon his relationships with other evangelical Christians. His influence among Particular Baptists was obviously strong. He was in constant demand

as a preacher and was the special preacher at numerous funerals, ordinations and special occasions; several sermons were also given to associations, particularly the Northampton and the Western Associations.³⁵ Always he advocated his evangelistic Calvinism and by this means he helped to prepare the way for the spread of Baptists during the nineteenth century.

In 1814 he published his *Candid Statement of the Reasons which induce the Baptists to differ in Opinion and Practice from so many of their Christian Brothers*. It is a powerful plea for the acceptance of the baptism of believers by immersion as the scriptural and proper mode of Christian baptism and it must have been influential both in guiding the thought of many Baptists and in offering to other Christians a scholarly and fair presentation of the Baptist position. But Ryland was really more concerned at all times to stress the fundamental truths about which all evangelicals could find agreement. In a preface to his statement on baptism he writes: "I think I can safely affirm that I have ever endeavoured to promote a spirit of unfeigned love towards all real Christians"³⁶ and he confesses that "very few of my own Denomination have ever had more of my affection and esteem than several of the ministers of the Establishment; and as far as opportunity of intercourse would admit, I have felt much the same disposition towards many in the Church of Scotland".³⁷ This statement is confirmed by his correspondence. Early in life he was in touch with Dr. John Erskine of the Church of Scotland from whom he received a copy of the sermon which Carey had translated from the Dutch. Later Erskine enabled him to begin communication with the son of Jonathan Edwards and that led to correspondence with a number of New England divines.³⁸ When Ryland received his first news from Carey in India he shared it at once with two leading Independent ministers, Dr. Bogue and Mr. Stephen who were in Bristol at the time; this led them to initiate discussions which led to the formation of the London Missionary Society.³⁹

But his closest ties were with the evangelicals in the Anglican Church. He maintained a regular correspondence with John Newton from his youth until the time of Newton's death in 1807 and the sixty letters from Newton still extant testify to the warmth and affection of this mutual friendship. Another regular correspondent was Thomas Scott the biblical commentator; if his letters are concerned more with business matters they still indicated a genuine friendship with Ryland.⁴⁰ Another member of the group of evangelical Anglicans with whom Ryland corresponded was William Wilberforce.⁴¹ They wrote largely about missionary matters but clearly a mutual esteem developed; Wilberforce refers once to "friendship we mutually profess towards each other".⁴² On another occasion he hoped to call on Ryland in Bristol and although he was unable to do so he is confident that Ryland will understand the situation because "you know well the esteem and regard I entertain for you".⁴³ Wilberforce is always grateful for Ryland's letters and in his last extant letter he tells Ryland: "I

welcome and I trust I can truly say I return your Catholic Christian sentiments and feelings. . . . They seem to unite us more closely than if ones opinions were in all points the same".⁴⁴

Ryland's theological position thus enabled him to respond openly and warmly to association with evangelicals of all denominations; he was not alone in this attitude for others like Robert Hall jun. shared it. But Ryland was outstanding in his regular correspondence with numerous individuals and in the closeness of his friendships with them. It may well be that these friendships promoted among the evangelicals a better understanding of the Baptist position, bringing more respect for Baptist people. That was no mean achievement.

The theological position of Ryland may be summarised as that of an evangelical Calvinism that was both enlightened and ecumenical. He held a deeply rooted faith in a sovereign God upon whose grace sinful man depends absolutely, yet he accepted the validity of intellectual processes and of human learning in widening man's understanding of the nature of life and the purposes of God. He was a convinced Baptist, advocating with firm courtesy the Baptist position, yet he cherished friendships in all parts of the Christian Church, seeking always the fundamental doctrines and experiences in which all Christians share. He was the diligent and faithful pastor of local churches, seeking always to build his people in their faith, yet he held a vision of a world-wide mission by which the non-Christian peoples of the world might be given the blessings of the gospel. His influence through the nineteenth century was considerable. His position is still worthy of consideration today.

NOTES

¹ James Culross calls the school "a nursery of godliness" (*The Three Rylands* (London 1897), p. 37). He quotes also the judgment of Robert Hall jun. who was a pupil there.

² The relationship of John Ryland with his father and the financial help which he gave to him is mentioned by John Newton in letters to Ryland written in 1784, 1786 and 1788, now at Bristol College. See also my article "The letters of John Newton to John Ryland", *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 27 (1977), pp. 157-63.

³ J. Ryland, *The indwelling and righteousness of Christ no security against corporeal death, but the source of spiritual and eternal life . . .* (London 1815), p. 37.

⁴ J. Ryland, *Salvation finished . . .* (London 1791), p. 70: "Thus Mr. Hall who had long been considered among his own denomination as one of their ablest advocates for the doctrines usually called Calvinistic was suspected to have been gone off from the gospel".

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-74. Ryland adds the footnote because, he says, "there are some who indulge an idea that we have strangely altered our principles". This he denies and he refers readers who desire fuller information to Hall's *Help to Zion's travellers* and Fuller's *Gospel worthy of all acceptation*.

⁶ An account of this spiritual conflict is given in the memoir of Ryland by his son J. E. Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials* (Bristol 1826), vol. 1, pp. 5-7. Ryland himself wrote a similar account in 1807 (ms. in Bristol College). See also Ryland's letter of 1770 (*B.Q.*, vol. 4 (1928), p. 17).

⁷ Both books are in Bristol College.

⁸ Sermon at funeral of Fuller, p. 47.

⁹ In *Pastoral Memorials*, vol. 1, p. 15, J. E. Ryland writes "Dr. Ryland's mind was, in some measure, prepared for a change by an extensive acquaintance with the Puritan writers and their immediate successors, who were for nothing more distinguished than their fearless and cogent appeals to the conscience. But Edwards' Treatise on the Freedom of the Will, with which and other works of that writer he became acquainted about the year 1775 rendered him the greatest assistance". J. E. Ryland then comments upon the way in which Fuller, Carey, Hall and Sutcliff were also influenced.

¹⁰ Sermon at funeral of Fuller, p. 34.

¹¹ John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity interpreted through its development* (New York 1954), p. 137.

¹² *Idem.*

¹³ In his sermon *God's Experimental Probation* (Northampton 1780), Ryland makes a strong appeal for sinners to return to God, arguing that they are hindered only "by your own voluntary aversion to him, your love of sin and your attachment to your idols" (p. 31). Consequently "unless the very heart be changed by efficacious grace" sinners have no hope (p. 32). The whole sermon sets out the reality of divine grace.

¹⁴ The sermon is based on the text "It is finished". Ryland argues that the divine work of salvation is complete in the death of Christ, but he then continues by asserting that "it is only of the purchase of salvation that we may say it was finished long ago even by Christ on the cross. Let no one infer from hence that because the purchase is complete the application is not necessary" (p. 22).

¹⁵ Ryland uses Scripture to prove that Christ must increase until He is supreme. He then discerns evidence of this increase in Christ's kingdom in contemporary work on the coast of Africa and in Jamaica as well as in Carey's new venture in India. But the increase of the church will not be just in numbers; it will be "an increase of evangelical light and vital holiness". On this basis he urges believers "to be eager to propagate the Gospel in every part of the globe" and in a vivid phrase he says: "Let the people who do know their God be ambitious to perform exploits".

¹⁶ Sermon cited, pp. 35-36.

¹⁷ J. Ryland, *The work of faith, the labour of love and the patience of hope illustrated in the life and death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller . . .*, 2nd edn. (1818), p. ix.

¹⁸ *Idem.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 225-6.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

²⁶ College Street Baptist Church, Northampton possesses 52 letters which Carey wrote from India to Ryland, 1793-1822. Ryland must have cherished and preserved these letters as he did those from other friends, e.g. from John Newton and Thomas Scott, now at Bristol College, and from Joshua Marshman, now in the B.M.S. archives. In the B.M.S. archives are also 21 letters from Carey to Ryland.

²⁷ Those matters are mentioned in letters which Newton wrote to Ryland.

²⁸ *Life and death of Fuller*, p. 148.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁰ Sermon at funeral of Fuller, p. 36.

³¹ *Life and death of Fuller*, pp. 147-8.

³² S. A. Swaine, in *Faithful Men; or Memorials of Bristol Baptist College* (London 1884), mentions the following students under Ryland who studied at Scottish universities. The dates indicate the year of entry into Bristol.

1795 T. Coles, M.A., Aberdeen—pastor of Bourton and founder of

- Association of churches in Oxfordshire.
- 1798 F. A. Cox, M.A., Edinburgh—author and pastor of Hackney.
- 1802 T. C. Edmonds, M.A., Aberdeen—pastor of St. Andrews Street, Cambridge.
- 1811 J. H. Hinton, M.A., Edinburgh—author and secretary to the Baptist Union.
- 1813 Caleb Evans Birt, M.A., Edinburgh—pastor of Broadmead, Bristol, after Robert Hall.
- 1815 Joseph Baynes, Glasgow—pastor of Wellington, Somerset—father of distinguished sons.
- 1817 James Acworth, M.A., Glasgow—president of Rawdon College.
- 1819 Edward Steane, Edinburgh—author, a founder of the Evangelical Alliance—secretary to the Baptist Union.
- ³³ For a long description of the project see Swaine, *Faithful Men*, pp. 213ff.
- ³⁴ Letter to John Sutcliff, 3rd October 1811. A year earlier, on 27th July 1810, Ryland told Sutcliff that “the new building goes on apace”. Both letters are in the B.M.S. archives.
- ³⁵ College Street Baptist Church, Northampton, possesses the book in which Ryland kept a list of the places in which he preached; 286 different places are named. A second list indicates his journeys on behalf of the B.M.S. after 1792 until the last journey in 1824. The total mileage was 36,706.
- ³⁶ *Candid statement*, p. viii.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. ix.
- ³⁸ *Pastoral Memorials*, vol. 1, p. 49.
- ³⁹ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, p. 87.
- ⁴⁰ Bristol College possesses 49 letters from Scott to Ryland written between 1783 and 1819, the year in which Scott died. Some letters from Scott’s sons to Ryland are also preserved. They were written during Scott’s last illness and they testify to the esteem and friendship between Scott and Ryland.
- ⁴¹ Bristol College has 21 letters from Wilberforce to Ryland written between 1807 and 1821.
- ⁴² 7th July 1815.
- ⁴³ 20th Sept. 1819.
- ⁴⁴ 20th Dec. 1821.

L. G. CHAMPION.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

- Philip J. Anderson, M.Div., Th.M., Research Student, Regent’s Park College, Oxford.
- Leonard G. Champion, B.D., D.Th., formerly Principal, Bristol Baptist College.
- Keith W. Clements, M.A., Tutor, Bristol Baptist College.
- Geoffrey F. Nuttall, M.A., D.D., formerly Lecturer, New College, London.
- Eric Sharpe, M.A., formerly Minister, St. Mary’s Baptist Church, Norwich.
- Reviews: A. A. Anderson, J. F. McGregor, K. R. M. Short, Murray Tolmie, B. R. White, W. H. D. Yule.