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“PROMOTING PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION”:  
JOHN RYLAND, JR. (1753–1825) AND EDWARDSEAN  
EVANGELICAL BIOGRAPHY

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A Dissertation  
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the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Christopher Ryan Griffith  
December 2017

**APPROVAL SHEET**

“PROMOTING PURE AND UNDEFINED RELIGION”:  
JOHN RYLAND, JR. (1753–1825) AND EDWARDSEAN  
EVANGELICAL BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Ryan Griffith

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael A. G. Haykin (Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donald S. Whitney

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gregory A. Wills

Date \_\_\_\_\_

For Chris McGarvey, mentor and friend, who first introduced me to Jonathan Edwards  
and the sanctifying power of Christian biography (Heb 13:7)

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ANF* *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- NPNF<sup>1</sup>* *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989.
- NPNF<sup>2</sup>* *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2*. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. Reprint. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- WAF* *The Works of Andrew Fuller*. Edited by J. Gunton Fuller. 8 vols. New Haven, CT: S. Converse, 1824–1825.
- WJE* *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. Edited by Harry Stout. 26 vols. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957–2009.
- WRH* *Works of Robert Hall, A.M.* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Edited by Olinthus Gregory and John Foster. 4 vols. New York: Harper, 1835–1836.

## PREFACE

When I graduated from Wheaton College in the Spring of 2001, I was confident that my formal educational pursuits had come to a happy close. I was fond of Qoheleth's proverb, "Of the making of books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Eccl 12:12). Thus, when I entered graduate school in 2002, there were many anxious hours when I wondered if I (and the graduate admissions department) had made a mistake. Was I really cut out for this kind of work? Yet, try as I might, I could not get away from a burgeoning love of learning—a love fueled by a growing passion to see the glory of Christ in the holy Scriptures and in a world "charged with the grandeur of God." In those days, God set me in a loving church family where I was challenged to connect doctrine with discipleship. My college pastor, Chris McGarvey, invested deeply in my life through hours of conversation and a regular ministry of book-gifting. I learned from his example and the testimonies of the giants of the Christian faith on whose shoulders we stood, that "to live is Christ and to die, gain!" (Phil 1:21). That season of life captured my affections for the ministry of the local church and profoundly shaped my spirituality, aspirations, and career.

After nearly a decade, I entered the PhD program in biblical spirituality with the hope that further study would again deepen my love for Christ and his church. I quickly found myself surrounded with teachers and fellow students who were eager to "strive side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil 1:27). I vividly remember my first seminar with Dr. Haykin, whose teaching exemplified the wedding of exegetical attentiveness, historical precision, doctrinal faithfulness, and sincere piety. In that moment, I was irretrievably captured by historical theology. The program has continued

to be a source of great encouragement and growth.

I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Michael Haykin for serving as my supervisor. His consistent encouragement, ready aid, and vast knowledge of the eighteenth century have been a great boon. Surely my experience is like that which Bernard of Chartres describes—to the degree that I have seen more and further in John Ryland’s life, it is not on account of my keener vision or greater height, but that I’ve been borne aloft on this patient scholar’s gigantic stature. While his productivity may be inimitable, I hope that my life will be increasingly characterized by the joy that marks his life and teaching. I am honored that Edwardseans Dr. Doug Sweeney, Dr. Don Whitney, and Dr. Greg Wills agreed to serve on my committee. Their lives and scholarship capture what it is, in Edwards’s words, to “represent and recommend true religion and virtue to the world.”

I am deeply indebted to librarians Emilee Smith of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Michael Brealey of Bristol Baptist College, and Emma Walsh of Regents Park College, Oxford, for their patient help in tracking down hundreds of documents. Because of them, I regularly remind my students that the most important resource in the library is the *librarian*. Thank you.

I engaged this project with a view towards serving Bethlehem College & Seminary and the church (Bethlehem Baptist) to which we belong. The work would simply not have been done without their faithful prayer and support. I am grateful to my faculty colleagues for their encouragement and the willingness to take on many of my responsibilities to free me for study. My students have been patient with grading delays and absences, cheering me on from one semester to the next as we often sat in coffee shops and libraries studying *together*. I’m especially grateful to my teaching assistants, Scott Hubbard and Keith Kresge, who transcribed and puzzled with me over handwriting in dozens of letters. Pastor John Piper has been a particular blessing from the Lord. His sermon connecting Hebrews 13:7 and Christian biography first sparked my love for

reading the lives of God's people years ago, and his encouragement in study and life over the last decade at Bethlehem have been a kind providence from God.

Perhaps the most surprising blessing of this program has been the companionship of so many faithful brothers. It has been a joy to study, debate, pray, and worship with like-minded scholars and churchmen. I'm particularly grateful for the friendship of Jared Longshore, Eric Smith, and Nathan Tarr. It is my sincere hope that our partnership in gospel ministry will echo the great joint labors of Ryland, Fuller, and Sutcliff.

This project is dedicated to my friend and mentor Chris McGarvey, whose discipleship in my college years first put me on to evangelical biography and whose personal piety and gospel ambition have had profound impact on my life and the lives of many others (1Tim 6:11-16).

C. Ryan Griffith

Minneapolis, Minnesota  
December 2017

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**Introduction**

Few men in the eighteenth century left a greater impact on the minds and hearts of English Baptists than John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825). So remarkable was his activity that nineteenth-century historian J. C. Carlile could remark, “Ryland is a household name among Baptists.”<sup>1</sup> As a founding member of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), he traveled over 36,000 miles in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland between 1792 and 1824 enrolling support and advocating its advancement.<sup>2</sup> His passion for global evangelization and his remarkable gift for building strong friendships across denominational lines meant that he would be the only man of his era involved in the formation of two missions societies, having also strongly influenced the founding of the London Missionary Society in 1794.<sup>3</sup> Between his missions advocacy, his passion for theological training, his love for the exposition of Scripture, his zeal for church planting and strengthening, and the invitations from students he impacted at Bristol Academy, Ryland preached no less than 8,691 sermons in 286 different locations.<sup>4</sup> During his tenure as Principal at Bristol Academy, twenty-six of his students became missionaries with the

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<sup>1</sup>J. C. Carlile, *The Story of the English Baptists* (London: J. Clarke, 1905), 162.

<sup>2</sup>Grant Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” in *The British Particular Baptists, 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MA: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 2:85.

<sup>3</sup>Ryland invited two prominent congregationalists to hear the reading of William Carey’s first letters from India, one of whom, David Bogue (1750–1825), took steps to form the London Missions Society in 1795. See Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” 91.

<sup>4</sup>Norman S. Moon, *Education for Ministry: Bristol Baptist College, 1679–1979* (Bristol, England: Bristol Baptist College, 1979), 35.

Baptist Missionary Society—even more remarkable given that an average of only twelve students were enrolled at Bristol at a time.<sup>5</sup> Ryland maintained extensive correspondence with evangelical pastors at home and abroad, wrote circular letters on behalf of two Baptist Associations, contributed to widely-circulated evangelical publications, wrote and published numerous hymns, advocated for the abolition of slavery with members of Parliament, oversaw the administration of Bristol Academy (and the BMS for a time), taught Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and the classics, and published several influential doctrinal and pastoral works.

Ryland contributed in another important way by introducing many in English Baptist circles to the works of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). Ryland had come across the works of Edwards early in his preparation for ministry at College Lane church in Northampton and found them pivotal in overcoming the high-Calvinist assumptions that had paralyzed evangelism in many British Particular Baptist churches. Edwards’s *Life of David Brainerd* (1749) fueled Ryland’s pursuit of deep personal piety and the missionary experience of both Brainerd (1718–1747) and Edwards informed his thinking regarding the evangelization of the heathen. Ryland introduced Edwards’s works to his friends (particularly Andrew Fuller [1754–1815]), cooperated with Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), Jonathan Edwards Jr. (1745–1801), and Scottish divine John Erskine (1721–1803) in their transcription and publication of the senior Edwards’s work, and consciously modeled his own work in the light of Edwards’s influence. Ryland’s advocacy of Edwards’s works helped to forge a new Calvinistic Baptist scheme and shaped the distinctive impact of eighteenth-century Baptist theology on missions and evangelism.

Despite these diverse and unflagging efforts for the cause of Christ, fellow Baptist pastor and essayist John Foster (1770–1843) wrote that Ryland possessed “a zeal remarkably clear of everything like egotism and display and so free from the acrid taint

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<sup>5</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 35.

of bigotry, that he commanded the respect and a still kinder feeling of persons of all sects and denominations.”<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Ryland’s characteristic meekness or the stature of the giants among whom he walked has contributed to the way in which his life has been obscured by the shadows of history. At the turn of the twentieth century, only three generations after the death of Ryland’s equally impressive father, Baptist historian and biographer James Culross lamented that the name of John Collett Ryland “is little known.”<sup>7</sup> Now, nearly two hundred years after the death of “the Doctor,” the traces of his influence, too, have nearly faded.

### Thesis

One fruit of Ryland’s labors, however, has been appreciated afresh—his biography of intimate friend and colleague, Andrew Fuller. Fuller, perhaps the most prominent Particular Baptist of the eighteenth century, has been the subject of much scholarly interest in recent years. No comparative study, however, has been done on the two biographies that give us much of our knowledge of Fuller’s life. The emerging genre of evangelical biography, itself taking its first doddering steps in the eighteenth century, has also been a subject of meager attention.

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to examine the impact of Jonathan Edwards on John Ryland’s *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of Andrew Fuller* (1816/1818). A cluster of related questions must be addressed: How was the genre of biography developing among evangelicals in the long eighteenth century?<sup>8</sup> Is it possible to identify the influence of

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<sup>6</sup>Daniel Sedgwick includes John Foster’s comments at the end of his own biographical sketch in Daniel Sedgwick, ed., *Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects: The Greater Part of Which Are Now Published for the First Time from the Originals* (London: Daniel Sedgwick, 1862), x.

<sup>7</sup>James Culross, *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service* (London: Elliot Stock, 1897), 11.

<sup>8</sup>Historians typically identify the English “long eighteenth century” as the period stretching from the Glorious Revolution of 1688 through the Battle of Waterloo (1815) or, more recently, to the Reform Act of 1832. See Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social*

Jonathan Edwards on later biographies written by his theological heirs? Specifically, is it possible to trace influences of Edwards's *Life of Brainerd* to Ryland's biography of Fuller? Additionally, what were the circumstances that caused two close friends of Fuller (Ryland and John Webster Morris [1763–1836]), each acquainted with the other, to produce competing biographies (Ryland's *The Work of Faith* and Morris's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*) within the same year? What are the differences between their portraits of Fuller and what historical, theological, and didactic concerns do these differences belie? A secondary purpose is to revive the legacy of Ryland as one of the most significant figures of eighteenth-century Baptist history.

The thesis of this dissertation is that John Ryland consciously adopted the biographical aims of Jonathan Edwards in his biography of Andrew Fuller. In the preface to the 1749 publication of *The Life of David Brainerd*, Jonathan Edwards begins by explaining the benefit of exemplary lives: “There are two ways of representing and recommending true religion and virtue to the world, which God hath made use of: the one is by doctrine and precept; the other is by instance and example.”<sup>9</sup> Ryland similarly wrote the life of his friend Fuller “with the hope of promoting pure and undefiled religion, founded on truly scriptural and evangelical principles.”<sup>10</sup> The burden of this thesis is to prove that Ryland, following Edwards, understood the importance of depicting “lives” through the dual emphases of doctrine and piety.

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*History, 1688–1832* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 3.

<sup>9</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Petit, vol. 7 of *Works of Jonathan Edwards*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 89.

<sup>10</sup>John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from Its Commencement, in 1792*. (London: Button & Son, 1816), v.



## Personal Interest

This project is the happy intersection of long-standing and relatively recent personal interests. Since my college days, I have been both intrigued and shaped by reading the lives of eminent saints. My copy of *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, the first spiritual biography I read as a Christian, is one of the most marked and precious volumes in my library. Tens of biographies now sit alongside: William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, William Carey, John Paton, George Müller, Jim Elliot. Biography, in surprising ways, has helped me consider the gospel afresh—undoubtedly resonant of the author to the Hebrews's exhortation, “remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Heb 13:7). Over the years, I have found that spiritual biography has profound power to fortify those in adversity, comfort the suffering, exhort the flagging, provoke the stubborn, and humble the proud.

I came to appreciate biography in the same way that I came to appreciate Jonathan Edwards and Reformed theology—through the preaching of John Piper. In my college years, I wrestled profoundly with the nature of faith, the status of unreached millions, and the purposes of God in redemptive history. In God's mercy, I fell into a loving, Christ-centered local church where the Bible was faithfully preached. My college pastor patiently met with me and fed me resources, introducing me in a back-door way to Reformed thought through Piper's *Pleasures of God*. Piper did not solve my problems—in fact, he made me see how deep they went. But he also led me to pick up the Bible and read like I never had before. Along the way, I met Jonathan Edwards who helped me understand in new ways what the Bible taught regarding God's purposes for the world. Edwards introduced me to David Brainerd, and the confluence of these teachers fueled my love for the centrality of Christ, the local church, Reformed doctrine, and the evangelization of the lost.

I stumbled across John Ryland several years ago while exploring the lives of his Anglican contemporaries in the so-called Clapham sect. Ryland's life and impact was difficult to assess, the traces of his influence having nearly faded from historical memory. But, the more I explored, the more I found my own interests in biography, theology, education, and missions converging in Ryland's life: a faithful pastor, friend, itinerant, biographer, hymn-writer, professor, administrator, correspondent, abolitionist, proponent of Edwardsean theology, and missions advocate.

### **History of Research**

Despite John Ryland, Jr.'s sixty years of faithful gospel preaching and exceptional efforts in education, church-planting, missions, theology, and politics, much of his memory has been lost to history. James Culross lamented only three generations after the death of Ryland's equally impressive father that the Ryland name "is little known."<sup>11</sup> Several biographical works on Ryland were produced in the years immediately after his death. On June 5, 1825, Ryland's life-long friend Robert Hall, Jr. (1764–1831) delivered the funeral sermon at Broadmead chapel.<sup>12</sup> Hall had been one of John Collett Ryland's students at Northampton and a member of the church that the Ryland's served together. A graduate of Bristol Academy (1781) and Edinburgh University (1785), Hall later became a tutor in classics under Caleb Evans (1737–1791) at Bristol, where he served until 1790. Upon the death of John Ryland, the Broadmead congregation called Hall as minister, where he served until his death in 1831. His biography addresses Ryland's preaching, his personal piety, his gentleness in dealing with others, his catholicity and deep friendships, his diligent productivity, and his evangelical Calvinism.

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<sup>11</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 11.

<sup>12</sup>For Hall's funeral oration, see Robert Hall, *WRH*, 1:371–414.

In 1828, Ryland's son, Jonathan Edwards Ryland (1797–1866) published his *Memoir &c* in a collection of the elder Ryland's sermons and hymns. This lengthy memorial includes extensive citations from John Ryland's writings, including autobiographical reflections he drew up for a friend in 1807, his correspondence with the Broadmead congregation, and a number of personal reflections on Ryland's ministry and personal piety.<sup>13</sup>

Daniel Sedgwick (1862) produced a volume of Ryland's hymns and poetry entitled *Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects*. The preface includes biographical sketches from both Sedgwick and John Foster (1770–1843). Foster makes a point of disagreeing with Robert Hall over what Hall saw as “passive meekness” in Ryland. Foster argued that what appeared to passivity was actually an extreme sensitivity to harsh conflict. Ryland's amiable character, tenacity of opinion and purpose, quiet but great power of persuasion in communication, and lucid writing compensated for his apparent reluctance to engage.<sup>14</sup>

Nearly forty years would elapse before James Culross's 1897 publication of *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service*, a treatment of the lives of John Collett Ryland, John Ryland Jr., and Jonathan Edwards Ryland. While Culross (1824–1899) makes use of Jonathan Edwards Ryland's memoir, he includes material not addressed in previous publications.<sup>15</sup> Culross describes the controversy between Ryland and Samuel Huntingdon over the antinomianism that was the

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<sup>13</sup>Though published in 1828, the memoir is dated December 21, 1827. See John Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Rev. John Ryland D.D. of Bristol with a Memoir of the Author in Two Volumes* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1828), 2:1–56.

<sup>14</sup>Sedgwick, *Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects*, xi.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Culross's analysis of Ryland's sermons from *Pastoral Memorials* (Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 82). One of particular interest is a letter from the Broadmead congregation describing the church's need and urging Ryland to accept the call (Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 75). Culross was President of Bristol Baptist Academy from 1863–1896.

consequence of the latter's high-Calvinist views.<sup>16</sup> He notes Ryland's popularity as a preacher, his leadership at the Bristol Academy, and his work on behalf of the Baptist Mission Society.<sup>17</sup> Culross's chapter concludes by noting that, beyond Ryland's remarkable productivity, he was largely remembered because of his deep piety and warmth of personality. Apart from the earlier memorial produced by Jonathan Edwards Ryland in 1828, Culross's book contains the only extensive biography of John Ryland, Jr. until Grant Gordon (2000).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, several histories mention Ryland's influence. Carlile's *The Story of the English Baptists* (1905) notes that Ryland "did a work which left an abiding impression upon the religious life of English Baptists."<sup>18</sup> According to Carlile, the degree Ryland received from Brown University in 1792 was given "in recognition of his literary work."<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, Carlile mistakenly attributes the elder Ryland's criticism of William Carey (1761–1834) to "Dr. Ryland," while maintaining that the issue was eschatological, not soteriological.<sup>20</sup> Whitley (1923) notes the significance of Ryland's leadership in the Western Association after the departure of his father to Enfield and briefly mentions his endeavors on behalf of the Baptist Mission Society and the Bristol Academy.<sup>21</sup> Underwood's *A History of English*

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<sup>16</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 80.

<sup>17</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 80, 84–85.

<sup>18</sup>Carlile, *The Story of the English Baptists*, 163.

<sup>19</sup>Carlile, *The Story of the English Baptists*, 163.

<sup>20</sup>Carlile writes, "These were those cheap critics who argued that the gift of tongues must be granted before anything could be attempted" (Carlile, *The Story of the English Baptists*, 177). John Ryland, Jr., however, was in fundamental agreement with Carey against this assertion. The confusion between John Collett Ryland and John Ryland, Jr. was easy to make not only because of their identical first names, but because of their similar educational and publishing attainments. Brown University (Providence, Rhode Island) awarded the senior Ryland a M.A. in 1769. At the urging of his father, the younger was awarded an honorary D.D. by Brown in 1792. To add to the confusion, both were published, on occasion, under the name John Ryland.

<sup>21</sup>William Thomas Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: C. Griffin & Co., 1923), 246. Regarding the state of theological education among Baptists of the eighteenth century, Whitley remarks, "Undoubtedly Baptists had been very slow to realise the value of education, and in the dark ages of the eighteenth century, there were not ten learned men by whose reputation the denomination might be

*Baptists* (1956) does not comment extensively on Ryland, but does note his influence on churches in the Western Association. In theology, Ryland was “a Calvinist but devoted to Jonathan Edwards,” a combination which Underwood argues allowed him to exercise a wide influence in the West, carrying there “the principles which had been so effective in reviving the churches of the Midlands, using the letters he received from Serampore to inflame their zeal.”<sup>22</sup>

A resurgence of interest in Ryland seems to have begun around the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Bristol Education Society. In 1970, the Society produced a thirty-six-page pamphlet briefly describing the foundation and aim of the Society, a broad assessment of Bristol Academy’s contribution between 1770 and 1970, and future challenges for theological training. While none of the three chapters substantively mention Ryland’s specific contributions during his thirty-two years as Principal, significant attention is given to the importance of the society and institution.<sup>23</sup>

While Ryland’s autobiographical conversion narrative had been published in *The Baptist Quarterly* in 1928, it was not until this resurgence of historical interest in the Bristol Academy that articles examining his life and ministry began to appear.<sup>24</sup> In 1977, L. G. Champion produced an article describing the correspondence between Ryland and John Newton (1725–1807). He notes that the friendship, which began in earnest in 1774, stretched until nearly the end of Newton’s life. It is evident from the extracts of

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redeemed” (Whitley, *A History of British Baptists*, 258).

<sup>22</sup>A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists, With a Foreword* (London: Kingsgate, 1956), 168.

<sup>23</sup>See Norman S. Moon, Leonard G. Champion, and H. Mowvley, *The Bristol Education Society, 1770-1970* (Bristol, England: Bristol Baptist College, 1970).

<sup>24</sup>In a prefatory note, Robinson states that while James Culross drew on this document in preparing his *The Three Rylands*, it had not been published before. The document itself comes from a manuscript bound up with several other items bearing the name William Button, one of Ryland’s schoolmates and fellow member of the Boy’s Society they convened while at John Collette Ryland’s boarding school. See H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (January 1928): 17–26.

correspondence that Newton kept, that Ryland frequently mentioned his friends Andrew Fuller, Samuel Pearce, and William Carey. The correspondence also demonstrates the shared concern they had for missions and their common love for hymnody.

In 1979, Champion published another significant article on John Ryland's theology. Champion argues that Ryland "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."<sup>25</sup> Champion goes on to trace the major sources for John Ryland's theological development. Champion argues that by far the strongest influence on Ryland's thought was that of Jonathan Edwards. Ryland "appears to have read carefully most of Edwards's writings, and to have responded wholeheartedly to his interpretation of Calvinism."<sup>26</sup> Champion notes that his survey of Ryland's thought, though not exhaustive, demonstrates that Ryland deliberately rejected some of the doctrines prevalent in his day and reformulated Calvinism to make sense of "the sovereignty of divine grace both [as] a powerful incentive to evangelism and a guiding light for Christian conduct."<sup>27</sup> Finally, Champion traces the influence of Ryland's theology on through his preaching ministry (twenty-two years in Northampton and thirty-two in Bristol), his influence on Andrew Fuller and William Carey, his leadership of the Bristol Academy and the broader evangelical movement. Champion demonstrates that Ryland's biblical spirituality and evangelical Calvinism also fueled his teaching at Bristol Academy, which, under his leadership, sent numerous pastors to the unreached. Champion's important article is, perhaps, the most thorough and significant piece in print on both the sources that influenced John Ryland's theology and Ryland's ministerial impact.

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<sup>25</sup>Leonard G. Champion, "The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences," *The Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (January 1979): 17.

<sup>26</sup>Champion, "The Theology of John Ryland," 19.

<sup>27</sup>Champion, "The Theology of John Ryland," 21.

Raymond Brown's *English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (1986) only briefly mentions Ryland in connection to his involvement with the Baptist Mission Society, Andrew Fuller, and the Bristol Academy. He does, however, note Ryland's wider involvement in the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews (1809), something missing in earlier twentieth-century histories.<sup>28</sup>

In connection with his work on English Particular Baptist Andrew Fuller, Michael Haykin published two essays on Ryland in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In "The Sum of all Good': John Ryland Jr. and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit" (1989), Haykin examines several perspectives on the Holy Spirit evident through John Ryland's sermons. He notes how Ryland's understanding of the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit's work in salvation not only guarded against the erroneous system of Arminianism, but also against the high-Calvinist argument that people are under no obligation to believe in God until the Spirit creates faith within them. Haykin also notes Ryland's efforts to combat the error of Antinomianism. Antinomianism, by stressing the completion of the work of Christ, argued that preaching obedience to the law of God was a subversion of the gospel. Finally, Haykin notes that Ryland's remarkable network of evangelical friendships, expanding widely beyond Baptist connections, are evidence of his understanding of the unity brought about by the Spirit of God among Christians under the Lordship of Christ.

In "John Ryland Jr. and Theological Education" (1990), Haykin briefly introduces the Bristol Baptist Academy and the diverse opinions regarding the necessity and content of ministerial training among Baptists. He argues that Ryland came to share the convictions of the early leaders of the Bristol Academy, largely because of his childhood experience of intellectually vibrant and earnestly pious Calvinism. While Haykin notes the tenure and activity of Ryland's presidency at Bristol, he devotes most of

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<sup>28</sup>Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 138.

the article to examining a sermon Ryland preached on June 25, 1812 entitled “Advice to Young Ministers, Respecting Their Preparatory Studies.” Here Ryland articulated his vision for theological education, focusing on the desires that should be present in the life of a student of divinity, the importance of a period of life fully devoted to training, and the importance of a comprehensive course of study that would deepen spiritual wisdom.

Two additional articles on John Ryland appeared in *The Baptist Quarterly* in the early 1990s. Geoffrey Nutall (1991) briefly describes a collection of thirty-nine letters from Robert Hall to John Ryland between 1791 and 1894, many of which dealt with the controversies facing the Baptist Mission Society.<sup>29</sup> Later Brian Stanley more thoroughly addressed this correspondence in his *The History of the Baptist Mission Society, 1792–1992* (1994), including a brief treatment of Ryland’s leadership.<sup>30</sup> The second article, “The Call of John Ryland, Jr.” (1992) examines the correspondence between Ryland and the congregation at Broadmead over the agonizing two-year period between the church’s call and Ryland’s installation. Gordon also notes the significant role of John Newton in Ryland’s decision-making.<sup>31</sup>

Haykin’s publication of *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff, His Friends, and His Times* (1994) also includes a brief chapter on John Ryland. Ultimately, the chapter serves to illustrate the broader theological and ministerial context for the friendship between Ryland and Sutcliff, rather than give an extensive biographical sketch of Ryland’s life. Significant space in the chapter is devoted to the conversion and life of John Collett Ryland and the impact of the senior Ryland’s catholic friendships and

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<sup>29</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “Letters from Robert Hall to John Ryland 1791–1824,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (July 1991): 127–31.

<sup>30</sup>Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).

<sup>31</sup>Grant Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland Jr.,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (January 1992): 214–27.



theological convictions on the formation of his son.<sup>32</sup> After tracing the younger Ryland's conversion, Haykin demonstrates how Anglican pastor John Newton takes on a fatherly role in Ryland's life, encouraging him towards greater circumspection and a more careful evaluation of the high-Calvinist authors with whom he had become acquainted.<sup>33</sup> Haykin also notes how, for Ryland, the preaching of Rowland Hill demonstrated the way in which vibrant evangelism and Calvinism worked together in practice.<sup>34</sup>

Grant Gordon's chapter on John Ryland, Jr. in *The British Particular Baptists, 1638–1910* (2000) briefly sketches Ryland's early life, conversion, and ministry in Northampton and Bristol. Gordon notes several characteristics mentioned in Haykin's work on Ryland, including the influence of John Collett Ryland on his son's intellectual rigor, Calvinistic theology, and catholic friendships. He also argues that Ryland's father, undoubtedly contributed to the son's openness to meaningful friendships with older men because of the elder Ryland's relational distance with his son. Gordon notes that Robert Hall, Jr. attributed Ryland's "extreme gentleness of his character" as, in part, a reaction against John Collett Ryland's "excess of vehemence."<sup>35</sup>

Though Ryland was not trained at Bristol Academy, Roger Hayden's *Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism among 18<sup>th</sup> Century Baptist Ministers Trained at Bristol Academy, 1690-1791* (2006) briefly mentions the significance of Ryland's Edwardseanism for Particular Baptist thought.<sup>36</sup> Robert Oliver (2006) gives

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<sup>32</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 73.

<sup>33</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 79.

<sup>34</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 82.

<sup>35</sup>Grant Gordon, "John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825)," in *The British Particular Baptists, 1638-1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MA: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 2:83.

<sup>36</sup>Roger Hayden, *Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism among Eighteenth-Century Baptist Ministers Trained at Bristol Academy, 1690–1791* (Chipping Norton, UK: Nigel Lynn, 2006), 77–79.

more attention to Edwards's influence on Ryland, particularly Ryland's response to the Antinomianism of William Huntingdon.<sup>37</sup>

In the last decade, aspects of Ryland's life and ministry have been noted in several significant works. Bruce Hindmarsh's magisterial *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (2008) gives an overview of Ryland's upbringing and theological context, particularly the influence of his father, John Collett Ryland. He then analyzes John Ryland's conversion narrative, noting the clear influence of Puritan works on conversion as well as the way in which Ryland's own theological background stimulated and explained his conversion experience. Ryland's narrative reflects the "oscillating piety" characteristic of the "Puritan introspective quest for assurance and for evidence of effectual calling."<sup>38</sup>

In 2009, Grant Gordon published a collection of letters between John Newton and Ryland, representing their nearly four-decade friendship. The letters reveal the way in which Newton became a trusted counselor, encourager, and ministry partner for Ryland, despite the thirty-year difference in age. The letters also indicate a shared passion for hymnody, evangelical doctrine, experimental preaching, missions, and the end of the slave trade.<sup>39</sup> Finally, Keith Tillman's "'He Worked Out His Salvation with Fear and Trembling': The Spirituality of John Ryland, Jr." (2014) provides a fresh look at Ryland's spirituality through Ryland's controversy with William Huntingdon and a number of Ryland's sermons and theological works.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771–1892: From John Gill to C.H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 112–45.

<sup>38</sup>D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 312.

<sup>39</sup>Grant Gordon, *Wise Counsel: John Newton's Letters to John Ryland, Jr.* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009).

<sup>40</sup>Keith Alan Tillman, "'He Worked Out His Salvation with Fear and Trembling': The Spirituality of John Ryland, Jr." (master's thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

As this literature review demonstrates, comparatively little research has been done on John Ryland and his influence on the evangelical movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. While a number of authors have noted the influence of Jonathan Edwards in Ryland's theology, little attention has been paid to whether or not Edwardsean theology had a distinct impact on Ryland's biographical writings. This is a significant omission given Ryland's specific mention of the impact of Edwards's biography of Brainerd on his own writing.<sup>41</sup>

### Method

The primary methodology of this dissertation is a comparative analysis of several key late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century biographies, beginning with Jonathan Edwards's 1749 *Life of David Brainerd* and ending with the second edition (1818) of Ryland's biography of Andrew Fuller. Special attention will be paid to a comparison of the two contrasting biographies of Fuller; Ryland's and that of J. W. Morris (1816). With the exception of Samuel Hopkins's biography of Sarah Osborne (1799), none of these works have received significant scholarly attention, especially with reference to the work of Jonathan Edwards.<sup>42</sup> Ryland's other works (sermons, treatises, and correspondence) will also be examined in light of the influence of Jonathan Edwards for further comparison between the former and latter's biographical publications.

Various secondary sources have been examined as well. Works on literary

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<sup>41</sup>In the preface to the publication of his funeral message for Andrew Fuller, Ryland wrote, "My highest ambition is, like the biographer of David Brainerd, to show what manner of man my friend was, and to excite others to follow him, so far as he followed Christ" (John Ryland and Andrew Fuller, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from Its Commencement, in 1792* [London: Button & Son, Paternoster Row, 1816], vi). In a footnote to the 1815 publication, Ryland wrote, "If I knew that I should be with Sutcliff and Fuller tomorrow, instead of regretting that I had endeavored 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" (quoted in Champion, "The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences," 19).

<sup>42</sup> See Catherine A. Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

history serve to situate the development of evangelical biography and its contemporary influence. Neither Edwards nor Ryland produced their biographical works simply for the sake of their subject's memory or as a historical service. Instead, Christian doctrine was to be taught and exemplified in the retelling of godly men's lives.

## CHAPTER 2

### PIETY WAS HIS DISTINGUISHED CHARACTERISTIC: THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF JOHN RYLAND

#### **Introduction**

It was late summer, 1825, and the Robert Hall, Jr. of Leicester was in turmoil. Similar to the earlier experience of his friend Andrew Fuller, Hall was torn between a congregation whom he had faithfully served and the urgent call of a distant congregation eager for his leadership. It was, at once, a problem of his own making. Hall had mentioned his discouragement over conflict in his Leicester church to friends at Broadmead in Bristol where he had been summoned to preach the funeral of his close friend, John Ryland Jr., in May of 1825. The Broadmead congregation seized the apparent opportunity with haste, formally inviting Hall as Ryland's successor only weeks after his return to Leicester. But unlike Fuller, Hall's reluctance was less the potential loss the move might entail than the enormity of the shoes he was being called to fill. After months of vacillation, Hall finally wrote to Broadmead in December, 1825 to accept the call, but stipulating that he would serve only for a year; upon the completion of which he would evaluate whether or not to remain as pastor.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously, he dashed off a letter to his brother-in-law Isaac James (1759–1828), a prominent member of the Broadmead congregation and tutor at Bristol Academy, stating the heart of his concern:

I feel, my dear brother, an awful sense of the importance of the step I have taken, and of the weighty responsibility with which it is fraught. When I consider the eminent character of that man of God which I am to succeed, no words can express the sense of deficiency I feel.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Angus Hamilton Macleod, "The Life and Teaching of Robert Hall, 1764–1831" (PhD diss., Durham University, 1958), 326–27.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Macleod, "The Life and Teaching of Robert Hall, 1764–1831," 328.

By 1825, there were few of Ryland's generation left alive who knew "the Doctor" as well as Hall. Ryland's close friend, John Sutcliff of Olney (b. 1752) had died in 1814, Fuller a year later. Hall had preached at both funerals. In his tribute to Ryland, Hall inquired, "where will you look for another whose whole life is a luminous commentary on his doctrine, and who can invite you to no heights of piety but what you are conscious he has himself attained?"<sup>3</sup> He continued,

though the faithful dispensers of evangelical instruction may now be reckoned by thousands, how few are left who can sustain a comparison with him, in all the qualities which adorn the gospel, and give the possessor power with God.<sup>4</sup>

This was, in Hall's estimation, because no one he knew could match the earnest, sincere, humble piety that characterized the life of John Ryland, Jr.—an astonishing statement from a man who, concluding eighteen years of ministry at Leicester, was nearly sixty-two. Of Ryland, Hall said, "his religion appeared in its fruits; in gentleness, humility, and benevolence; in a steady, conscientious performance of every duty; and a careful abstinence from every appearance of evil."<sup>5</sup> Though Ryland's efforts had been prodigious (his preaching alone entailed no fewer than 8,691 different sermons in 286 locations) the effect of his life "was prodigiously heightened by the veneration universally felt for his character, and the just and high estimation entertained of his piety." As Hall had underscored, "piety, indeed, was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably beyond the level of ordinary Christians."<sup>6</sup>

Ryland's piety took its shape from a number of vital influences. He came from strong, non-conformist stock. For hundreds of years Rylands had counted the cost of Reformation doctrine and, amidst suffering, they handed down a vibrant, sorrowful-yet-

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<sup>3</sup>*WRH*, 5:406.

<sup>4</sup>*WRH*, 5:409.

<sup>5</sup>*WRH*, 5:392.

<sup>6</sup>*WRH*, 5:392.

rejoicing Protestantism from one generation to the next. Ryland's family, especially his father John Collett Ryland, placed a high value on the life of the mind, convinced that sincere affection flowed from solid doctrine. Ryland benefited too from a network of ecumenical friendships who stimulated him to bring the best of the Protestant tradition to bear in the life of faith. He came of age in a period both fraught with the challenges of modernity and luminescent with the Spirit's power in gospel advance. He was a man who was both shaped by his times, and one who profoundly shaped those times himself.

### **Family and Early Life**

John Ryland, Jr. was born on January 29, 1753, in the small town of Warwick, nestled against the river Avon in Warwickshire. Eldest of five children born to John Collett Ryland (1723–1792) and Elizabeth Frith (d. 1779), only John Jr., his sister Elizabeth (1754–1820), and brother Hermann Witsius (1760–1838) survived to adulthood.<sup>7</sup> John Collett Ryland was pastor of the Baptist church in Warwick and schoolmaster of the boys' boarding school he founded soon after his arrival in 1745.<sup>8</sup>

As a family, the Rylands stood in a long line of strong non-conformist Christianity. John Ryland's great-grandfather, John (d. 1718) had been a member of the Baptist church in Hook Norton and, sometime after November 1694, of the Baptist congregation in Alcester.<sup>9</sup> On account of his Dissenting convictions, John had been

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<sup>7</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 24–25. Another brother, James Ryland, was baptized as a believer in 1773. The youngest sister, Rebecca, died suddenly at the age of five, in 1768 when Ryland was fifteen (John Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences: Memoirs of His Family and Autobiographical Material," 1807, 32).

<sup>8</sup>Grant Gordon, "John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825)," in *The British Particular Baptists, 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MA: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 2:77.

<sup>9</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 6. Beginning on December 13, 1766, Ryland began keeping a diary of his spiritual life—a practice which he continued in a number of volumes over many years (vol. 1: December 13, 1766–February 2, 1768; vol. 2: March 12, 1768–March 4, 1769). Around 1807, he set out to review the volumes, consolidating the material into an account which is in the possession of Bristol Baptist College under the title "Autograph Reminiscences: Memoirs of His Family and Autobiographical Material." On the first page of his memoirs, Ryland writes, "It is now more than forty years since I first made a public profession of Religion, and above forty-one since I began to feel some abiding concern after salvation by Christ Jesus. It may be profitable to myself to look back, and review all the way which the Lord my God hath led me in this wilderness. I did, for many years, keep a brief diary; in

forced into periodic hiding during the reigns of Charles II (r. 1660–1685) and James II (r. 1685–1688). As a result of his failure to heed the Clarendon Code’s demands to attend the parish church, he also paid nearly £1,200 in fines.<sup>10</sup> In a fascinating historical providence, John Ryland, Jr. recounts that his great-grandfather was also sent as a representative from Alcester to the Midland Association meeting with John Beddome (d. 1757) and Bernard Foskett (1685–1758) in 1712.<sup>11</sup> Beddome and Foskett would later be largely responsible for the establishment of the Bristol Academy, where John Collett Ryland would be trained and John Ryland, Jr. would serve as President.<sup>12</sup>

John Collett Ryland and his wife raised at least eight children, six sons and two daughters. In his biographical remembrances, Ryland Jr. highlights his extended family’s piety and faithful service in Baptist churches. His grandfather, Joseph, and his great-uncle Thomas (Joseph’s twin), were born at Seasoncote around 1700. As a young man, Joseph lived as a bailiff with a widow whom he later married. She died, childless, and Joseph married Freelove Collett (1695–1728?), of Upper Slaughter in 1722. Freelove was a

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the former volumes of which are doubtless many childish things, which tho’ they may have an humbling effect, when I survey them myself, yet could be of no use to another: in the latter, there may be some things relative to persons with whom I have been connected, which ought to be kept private, and all reference to them should die with me. I have long had occasional purposes, therefore, of looking over them before I die, & of extracting a few things which my nearest relatives may account worth reading over, when I am no more with them; but I wish them to be seen by no one else, unless it should be some very intimate friend” (Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 1). Ryland goes on to request that his wife or children burn his old diaries “without fail, if I should not had done it myself.” Later in the document, it is apparent that Ryland had, in fact, burned some of his old journals in the process of composing this autobiographical work (Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 2, 33).

<sup>10</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 11. John Taylor records that John Ryland was “possessed of remarkably strong passions and prejudices” who “almost killed an old woman by beating her for her witchcraft” (John Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton: With Biographies of Pastors, Missionaries, and Preachers; and Notes of Sunday Schools, Branch Churches, and Workers* [Northampton, England: Taylor & Son, Dryden Press, 1897], 34).

<sup>11</sup>Both John Beddome and Bernard Foskett served as pastors of the Baptist congregation at Alcester (1697–1724 and 1711–1719, respectively). The congregation was one of seven churches (Warwick, Morton, Bourton on the Water, Alcester, Tewkesbury, Hook Norton, Derby) that formed the Midland Baptist Association at Warwick in 1655. Both J. C. Ryland and John Ryland, Jr. would also participate in meetings of the Midland Association while pastoring at Warwick.

<sup>12</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 6. William Thomas Whitley, “J. C. Ryland as Schoolmaster,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (July 1930): 141. See Roger Hayden, *Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism among Eighteenth-Century Baptist Ministers Trained at Bristol Academy, 1690–1791* (Chipping Norton, UK: Nigel Lynn, 2006).



distant relative of John Colet (1467–1519), a renaissance humanist, Dean of St. Paul’s cathedral in London, and early reformer.<sup>13</sup> Joseph and Freelove had two sons and a daughter. Their youngest, a daughter named after her mother, died in infancy. Their second son, Joseph (b. 1727), served in the British army and, after a profligate youth, became a “truly good man” and a member of the Baptist church in Eagle Street, London. John Collett Ryland (hereafter, J. C.), their eldest son, was born on October 12, 1723.<sup>14</sup>

Freelove died when J. C., was only five years old. Joseph, a relatively prosperous farmer, never remarried, and J. C. both grew up without a mother’s supervision and was much surrendered to the “follies of youth common at the period.”<sup>15</sup> He was duly converted during a remarkable awakening that swept through Bourton-on-the-Water in 1741 under the ministry of Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795).<sup>16</sup> On October 2, Ryland was baptized and admitted to the membership of the church, just before the completion of his eighteenth year.<sup>17</sup> At the encouragement of Beddome, J. C. Ryland studied at Bristol Academy under Bernard Foskett from 1744–1745, at that time the center of the evangelical revival. Here he came into contact with Charles Wesley (1707–1788), James Hervey (1714–1758), and George Whitfield (1714–1717) — rising figures in the evangelical movement. Ryland thrived under Foskett’s training, becoming “an acceptable preacher, an excellent classical scholar, a better mathematician, and a very good Hebraist.”<sup>18</sup> Central to what would become his own practice of training in the boarding schools he established, Ryland “read widely in all directions and laid a solid

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<sup>13</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 11–12.

<sup>14</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 11.

<sup>15</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 13.

<sup>16</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 70.

<sup>17</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 13.

<sup>18</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 16.

foundation for his after acquisitions.” Culross notes that Ryland later listed more than one hundred books “devotional, theological, poetical and historical” which Ryland consulted during his training at Bristol. “He forgot nothing,” Culross writes, “‘All his brains,’ (to use his own phrase), ‘were fish-hooks.’”<sup>19</sup> This wasn’t, however, learning for learning’s sake. Ryland was captured by a vision of God’s grandeur in all of reality—in language, history, and nature. At the top of a journal entry for June 24, 1744, Ryland wrote, “I read for Eternity.”<sup>20</sup> This unblushing pursuit of truth would fundamentally shape his namesake, John Ryland Jr.

During his time at Bristol, J. C. Ryland was also significantly influenced by the writings of Particular Baptist theologians John Gill (1697–1771) and John Brine (1703–1765).<sup>21</sup> When, on July 26, 1750, he was ordained as pastor of the Baptist church in Warwick, it was John Brine who delivered the installation charge.<sup>22</sup> The enduring legacy of both Gill and Brine is reflected in Ryland’s strong commitment to preaching Reformed doctrine, especially a focus on the grace of God, the glory of Christ, and the holiness that characterizes true Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

Early in his time at Warwick, J. C. met and married Elizabeth Frith (d. 1779), the only child of Samuel and Anna Frith.<sup>24</sup> Ministry at Warwick was often difficult, and J. C. Ryland saw little spiritual fruit in his congregation. Ryland Jr. writes that, soon after his parents’ marriage, a sickness nearly claimed his father’s life. “At that time,” Ryland writes, “his constitution seem’d feeble, and tending to a consumption. But having the

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<sup>19</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 16.

<sup>20</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 16.

<sup>21</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 71.

<sup>22</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 71.

<sup>23</sup>Strikingly, the themes that seem to characterize John Collett Ryland’s preaching were sounded in Brine’s 1750 ordination charge. See Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 22.

<sup>24</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 13.

small pox very severely, tho' he was in the utmost danger of death, yet he was not only restored, but seemed to have his general habit of body greatly improved after his recovery." Elizabeth attributed this remarkable turnaround to "the extraordinary spirit of prayer which then prevailed among the people of his charge, & the great concern expressed for his life by the inhabitants of the town, even the most profane, who had shewn no regard to his ministry before."<sup>25</sup>

Amidst the difficulty, however, the couple welcomed their first child, John Jr., into the world on January 29, 1753, in the parsonage they rented from St. Mary's Church in Warwick—where they both lived and ran a boarding school.<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth devoted herself to John Jr.'s instruction, teaching him to recognize the alphabet before he could speak. She was also diligent to bring him up in the Reformed faith, recounting Bible stories using the Dutch-tiled chimney in the parlor and making use of Isaac Watts's children's catechisms.<sup>27</sup> Ryland recalls being unwilling to repeat the answers to the questions concerning the misery of the wicked, bursting into tears "if ever it came to my turn to say them."<sup>28</sup> In addition to this early exposure to Reformed tradition, Ryland's parents also fed him literature from the Baptist theologian, John Bunyan (1628–1688). "I was very fond of reading Bunyan's *Holy War* when I was very young," Ryland wrote in 1807, "long before we came to Northampton."<sup>29</sup> Ryland's unusual intellectual abilities

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<sup>25</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 12.

<sup>26</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 14. Ryland mentions that when the Rector of St. Mary's, Dr. Tate, was criticized by his congregants for letting the house to a Dissenting minister, he replied, "What would you have me do? I have brought the man as near to the church as I can, but I cannot force him into it" (Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 14). John Collett and Elizabeth would go on to have four additional children: Herman Witsius (b. 1759/1760–1838), James, Elizabeth (Dent), and Rebecca (1763–1768).

<sup>27</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 14–15. Ryland remembers his mother recounting that the maid was "proud of taking me into the churchyard to point [the letters] out on the grave stones" (Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 14); see also J. E. Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Rev. John Ryland D.D. of Bristol with a Memoir of the Author in Two Volumes* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1828), 2:4.

<sup>28</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 15.

<sup>29</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 15. Bunyan's *Holy War*, originally published in 1623, is an allegorical novel describing the doctrines of fall and redemption and the process of conversion. See

were manifest almost immediately. When he was four or five years old, Ryland's father invited a young man from nearby Buckingham to lodge with them for several weeks. The lodger, who had "attained very considerable knowledge of Hebrew," began to teach the language to some of the boys at the boarding school. Soon after, John's father gave him Jehuda Stennett's Hebrew grammar, which contained a little vocabulary and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.<sup>30</sup> Ryland writes that he remembers reading the Psalm to the celebrated James Hervey during a visit he made with his parents in the summer of 1758. He was four years old.<sup>31</sup> By the age of eight, Ryland had read and translated the entire Greek New Testament.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that Ryland would write of himself, "I was fond of reading, and generally prefer'd that employment to play."<sup>33</sup> Growing up in this spiritually and intellectually stimulating environment, the younger Ryland wrote, "I not only delighted in History and Poetry, but in my religious Books; especially in the *Family Instructor*, some parts of which I never in my life could read without tears."<sup>34</sup>

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John Bunyan, *The Holy War: Made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, for the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World. Or, the Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Moncur, 1718).

<sup>30</sup>Jehuda Stennett, brother to Joseph Stennett (1663–1713) and great uncle to Samuel Stennett, D.D. (1727–1795), completed his Hebrew grammar at the age of 19. See Joseph Stennett, *The Works of the Late Reverend and Learned Mr. Joseph Stennett* (London: J. Darby, D. Midwinter and A. Ward, 1732), 1:7.

<sup>31</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 15. See also J. E. Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:9. Hervey was born near Northamptonshire and came under the influence of the Wesleys at Oxford as a member of the Holy Club. Wesley encouraged Hervey to study the original languages and, beginning in 1734, Hervey taught himself Hebrew. Hervey, like Whitfield, adopted a Calvinist framework and became well known for his evangelical writings. Like the works of Jonathan Edwards, Hervey's writings (see *Meditations and Contemplations*) expressed an appreciation for natural beauty unusual for his time. Hervey was a close friend to John Collett Ryland who published a remembrance of Hervey in 1791 (John Collett Ryland, *The Character of the Rev. James Hervey, M.A. Late Rector of Weston Favel in Northamptonshire, Considered as a Man of Genius and a Preacher; as a Philosopher and a Christian United; as a Regenerate Man; As a Man Endowed with the Dignity and Prerogatives of a Christian; as a Man of Beautiful Virtue and Holiness* [London: W. Justins, 1791]).

<sup>32</sup>Gordon, "John Ryland, Jr. (1753-1825)," 77.

<sup>33</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 16.

<sup>34</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 16. J. E. Ryland identifies the author of *Family Instructor* as Daniel Defoe (Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:4). *Family Instructor*, a prominent part of Defoe's reform literature, was innovative in setting principles for Christian living in the context of a dialogue between father and son. Though first published in 1718, *Instructor* appeared in various forms in the succeeding decades. See Daniel Defoe, *The Family Instructor: In Two Parts* (London: Emmanuel Matthews, Paternoster Row, 1718).

In October 1759, after nine years at Warwick, J. C. moved his family to Northampton to serve as pastor of the Baptist church at College Lane. In contrast to “small usefulness” at Warwick, Ryland’s ministry at College Lane was more successful and, under his twenty-six-year ministry, the church building was twice expanded in order to accommodate growth in membership.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, it was Ryland’s school-keeping which had the most enduring impact. His teaching reputation was such that several students followed him from Warwick to Northampton. By 1760, he had fourteen students from the Northamptonshire countryside, including one girl.<sup>36</sup> Seven years later, Ryland was taking in as many as thirty new scholars a year. Students came from distinguished families from as far as London and many of his graduates would go on to serve as pastors of Dissenting churches. It was in this unique spiritual and intellectual environment that John Ryland Jr. was first awakened.

### **Conversion**

The church book at Northampton records John Ryland’s baptism and admission into church membership on September 13, 1767. Three days earlier, during the Friday meeting, Ryland came before the congregation to publicly make profession of faith. He was fourteen and a half years old.<sup>37</sup> Two and a half years later, at the request of his friend and schoolmate Thomas Rutt, Ryland wrote an account of his spiritual experience. This document, “The Experience of John Ryland Jun. as wrote by himself in a letter to Thomas Rutt,” recounts that Ryland’s concern for his spiritual condition had begun in September of 1766.<sup>38</sup> Ryland and John Ray, a fellow student at his father’s

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<sup>35</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 72.

<sup>36</sup>This was probably the sister of one of the male boarding students. Given the unpopularity of co-education, Ryland encouraged the opening of a parallel institution under Mrs. Trinder (William Thomas Whitley, “J. C. Ryland as Schoolmaster.” *Baptist Quarterly* 5, no. 3 [July 1930]: 143).

<sup>37</sup>D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 307.

<sup>38</sup>This account, together with “Account of the Rise and Progress of Two Societies at Mr.

school, were engaged in conversation when Ray insisted on leaving to rendezvous with two other boys for their regular but somewhat “secret” meeting. Offended by his friend’s urgent departure, Ryland found Ray the following morning and enquired about the cause. Ray asserted that he had not intended to offend Ryland, but that he had been eager to talk with classmates William Button (1754–1821) and Thomas Brewer adding, “I hope we were talking of something better.” Ryland was struck by the expression “something better” and “I suspected that he had reference to their conversing on religious subjects; and that they had that sort of knowledge and sense of them which I had not, but which it was necessary I should have.”<sup>39</sup> Button and Ray had been shaken by the death of one of the other boarders several weeks earlier. The third boy, Thomas Brewer, had recently been awakened through one of the Sunday evening messages given by J. C. Ryland.<sup>40</sup> One evening, Ryland saw Button, Brewer, and Ray walking together and got within earshot of them. He recalled

I found that they were talking about Jesus Christ, and the salvation of their souls. I trust the Lord blessed this to me, to produce an earnest solicitude for an interest in the blessings of redemption. Oh! thought I, these boys are going to heaven, and shall I stay behind! what will become of me if I continue unconverted?<sup>41</sup>

Given his familiarity with other conversion narratives, he immediately read Joseph Alleine’s *Alarm to the Unconverted*, Richard Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted*,

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Ryland’s and at Mrs. Trinder’s Boarding School in Northampton,” are found in a book that once belonged to William Button, a classmate of John Ryland, Jr. at the academy at Northampton run by J. C. Ryland. The volume is now in the possession of Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford. James Culross published part of the account calling it an “Anticipation of the Christian Endeavour Movement” (Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 50). Both accounts provide remarkable insight into the religious and spiritual lives of a number of boys who later became prominent Dissenters as adults. See Timothy Whelan, “John Ryland at School: Two Societies in Northampton Boarding Schools,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 90–116.

<sup>39</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 18–19.

<sup>40</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 17–18. In his memoirs, Ryland notes that “Button is now pastor of the Baptist Church in Dean Street, Southwark. Ray is the pastor of the Independent Church at Sudbury, & Thomas Brewer, the son of the Reverend Samuel Brewer B.D. of Stepney, died young, not long after he left school” (Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 21). For an excellent narration of Ryland’s conversion experience, see Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 308.

<sup>41</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 19; H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (January 1928): 18.

and John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*.<sup>42</sup> Ryland writes that he could not "suppose but I had head knowledge of these things but now I trust I knew it indeed and I endeavored to pray for mercy."<sup>43</sup> He began to pray twice a day and sensed some conviction of sin, but soon the prayers abated and the conviction wore off. In a church meeting on December 12, 1766, he witnessed the testimony of several young women who were warmly received into membership. He writes that, as they walked past, "I thought I felt a very great love to all the Lord's people and had a little hope."<sup>44</sup> In the same way that he wanted to share in the experience of his schoolmates, he did not want to be excluded from the fellowship of the church.<sup>45</sup> The following day, greatly dejected, he happened upon a Bible in his father's library and opened it to Hosea 13:14. Not knowing why "that particular number occurred to my mind," he opened it and read "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." Ryland saw this as a promise immediately applied by God to him and "went and prayed and had a good deal of joy."<sup>46</sup> Yet the comfort, again, waned. Summarizing his diary from March of 1767, Ryland wrote, "I sometimes was greatly injured, by a passionate temper which bro't me into much distress. I express'd however in my Diary an earnest longing after holiness, and could not be content with merely hoping I was pardon'd, but wanted to be like Christ."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Robinson, "The Experience of John Ryland," 18.

<sup>43</sup>Robinson, "The Experience of John Ryland," 18.

<sup>44</sup>Robinson, "The Experience of John Ryland," 19.

<sup>45</sup>Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 309.

<sup>46</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 23; Robinson, "The Experience of John Ryland," 18. Looking back, Ryland is cautious to approve his experience in this instant as true religious affection. He writes, "It is impossible for me, at this distance of time to recollect the exact train of thought which they excited; or to ascertain that there was no erroneous conception mixed with my comfort. I believe I had often heard religious people express themselves inaccurately respecting the application of the promises. It was not till some years afterwards, that I was led, by reading M<sup>r</sup> Edwards on the Affections, to consider this subject closely. But I remember that I was immediately convinced of the justice of his observations; and I hope that my own experience, even before I thus understood the subject, did agree in the main with the statement of that most judicious divine. See his Treatise. Part III. 125 &c" (Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 23–24.).

<sup>47</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 28.

Beginning on December 15, 1766, Ryland began keeping regular account of his spiritual state in a diary. These entries go on to describe his fluctuating sense of assurance over the next two years. Ryland details more than a dozen experiences of doubt and comfort leading all the way up to his baptism and admission to membership at Northampton. Near his fourteenth birthday, Ryland recalls fighting the temptation of the devil who “had the impudence to tell me Christ could not save me.” Ryland answered the temptation with “He is able to save to the uttermost all that shall come to him,” to which the devil retorted, “But he can’t make you come.”<sup>48</sup> On the Friday of his presentation before the church he found some greater sense of peace, perhaps because of the opportunity of “give his experience” and the comfort he received in hearing George Whitfield preach from Isaiah 61:10 after the service.<sup>49</sup> On September 13, 1767, despite the resistance of several people in the congregation who objected to the boys’ baptisms on account of their youth, Ryland, Button, and another schoolboy, John Everard, were baptized by the Rev. John Collett Ryland and admitted to the Lord’s Table. The younger Ryland recorded the significance of the moment, “I was much affected in the water, my papa lifting up his eyes to heaven and crying out ‘Thanks be to God for this Boy.’ I shall never forget that sound while I live.”<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, as Ryland later recorded, “my affections were not so lively as I could wish.”<sup>51</sup>

As Hindmarsh suggests, Ryland’s conversion story is undoubtedly “characteristic of the Puritan introspective quest for assurance and for evidence of

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<sup>48</sup>Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 20. This temptation likely centered on Ryland’s high-Calvinist understanding of eternal justification. If justification was established in eternity past apart from the exercise of faith in the present, then Ryland could surmise that his affections for God were a guise. Thus, Ryland was tempted to believe that, if the Father had eternally predestined him for destruction, then the Son “can’t make you come”—Ryland’s desires notwithstanding.

<sup>49</sup>Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 22.

<sup>50</sup>Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 22.

<sup>51</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 32.



effectual calling.”<sup>52</sup> But, like Jonathan Edwards, Ryland was uncomfortable about how his experience didn’t fit the model. His search for assurance was complicated by the way that his own conversion experience was in tension with what was understood to be the *process* by which a person came to know he was elect. On the one hand, Ryland could identify religious affections which attested to his life in Christ. In November of 1767, he first recorded a desire to preach the good news of the glory of Christ to others and a sense that God might fit him for the work of ministry.<sup>53</sup> In a journal entry on April 26, 1768, Ryland writes “I think I felt some strong desires after Holiness, this morning, while reading Dr. Owen’s *Evidences of the Faith of God’s Elect*; with a comfortable persuasion that God has had mercy on me and will never cast me off.”<sup>54</sup> On May 29, 1768, nearly a year after his baptism, Ryland records that he was finally “in general freed from doubts” after hearing his father preach on Isaiah 53.<sup>55</sup> But, on the other hand, however, Ryland’s account reflects a concern that his own experiences—the desire to talk of spiritual things, the unprompted suggestions of Scriptures to the mind, the variety of affections in his heart—were an insufficient warrant for assurance. While his concern over assurance abates during this period at his father’s academy, these intuitions would prove the high Calvinism he later adopted as more problematic. Ultimately, his reading of Jonathan Edwards’s *Religious Affections* would help him understand the tension he felt about unreliable signs of religious affection and what he would come to understand as genuine evidence of saving faith—a life marked by disinterested love and the presence of true Christian graces.

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<sup>52</sup>Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 312.

<sup>53</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 32.

<sup>54</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 35.

<sup>55</sup>Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 24.

## **The Intellectual and Spiritual Formation of John Ryland**

“The best education of the eighteenth century,” argued Baptist historian W. T. Whitley, “was given by Dissenting ministers.”<sup>56</sup> This was, of course, a necessity since Dissenters had been barred from grammar schools and from taking degrees at Universities by the 1662 Act of Uniformity.<sup>57</sup> As it turned out, the Nonconformist clergy were among the most efficient, innovative, and progressive of educators. Of course, Nonconformists also refused to send their sons to institutions which would require them to affirm the doctrines for which many of their fathers had left livings, tutorships, or professorships.<sup>58</sup> Thus, a series of Academies began developing in late seventeenth-century England as alternatives to Universities. These Academies required prospective students to come with a grammar-school training and a good knowledge of the classics.<sup>59</sup> While the content of a grammar-school education had largely remained unchanged since the sixteenth century, many of the grammar schools under the control of the Church in the eighteenth century had declined in their teaching of the classics. Many had also abandoned Greek and Hebrew, often offering little more than a smattering of Latin.<sup>60</sup> This, however, was not the case of the grammar school run by J. C. Ryland. Ryland possessed an “ardent passion for educating his pupils in a broad range of subjects,” himself writing a primer on mechanics, geometry, and plane trigonometry, adapting Latin texts for the use of grammar-school students, and even writing three essays on the fundamental components of education.<sup>61</sup> His *The Preceptor*, published in London in

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<sup>56</sup>Whitley, “J. C. Ryland as Schoolmaster,” 141.

<sup>57</sup>A religious test for matriculation remained part of Oxford’s entrance requirements until 1854.

<sup>58</sup>Irene Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England: Their Rise and Progress and Their Place among the Educational Systems of the Country* (New York: University Press, 1914), 48.

<sup>59</sup>Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England*, 52.

<sup>60</sup>Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England*, 79.

<sup>61</sup>Whitley, “J. C. Ryland as Schoolmaster,” 143.

1775, included essays on natural and moral philosophy, history, rhetoric, brief sketches of notable men throughout history, and biblical wisdom.<sup>62</sup> It was in this unique environment that John Ryland Jr. matured and, beginning in 1775, taught alongside his father.<sup>63</sup>

### John Ryland at School

Not long after taking up residence in Northampton, J. C. Ryland wrote,

John is now eleven years and seven months old. He has read Genesis in Hebrew five times through; he read through the Greek Testament before nine years old; he can read Horace and Virgil; he has read through *Telemachus* in French; he has read Pope's *Homer* in eleven volumes, Dryden's *Vigil* in three volumes, Rollins' *Ancient History* in ten volumes; and he knows the pagan mythology surprisingly.<sup>64</sup>

The younger Ryland's love for reading and particular attraction to natural science likely had to do with his "somewhat weakly health" as a child and, undoubtedly, the nearsightedness that plagued him his whole life—a disability which he later used to great advantage.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>John Collett Ryland, *The Preceptor; or, General Repository of Useful Information, Very Necessary for the Various Ages and Different Departments of Life. Containing, among Other Subjects, Natural and Moral Philosophy, History and Eloquence, Lives of the Most Illustrious Men in All Ages, with Various Pieces of Salutory Advice to the British Youth* (London: Dilly, 1775).

<sup>63</sup>In the testimony of many, J. C. Ryland was also quite eccentric. William Jay described his first meeting with Ryland: "He laid hold of me by the collar, and, shaking his fist in my face, he roared out, 'Young Man, if you let the people of Surrey Chapel make you proud, I'll smite you to the ground!' But then, instantly dropping his voice, and taking me by the hand, he made me sit down by his side and said, 'Sir, nothing can equal the follies of some hearers; they are like apes that hug their young ones to death'" (William Jay, *The Autobiography of William Jay* [New York: R. Carter & Brothers, 1855], 324–25). In 1775, a King's Messenger was sent to Northampton to reprimand Ryland for speaking too freely from the pulpit in support of the American Revolution. Robert Hall reported that, as a student in Ryland's school, he heard Ryland declare his opposition to the British prosecution of the war "with a fierce countenance and a loud voice," declaring "If I were General Washington I would summon all my officers around me, make them draw blood from their arms into a basin and, dipping their swords into it, swear that they would not sheath them till America had gained her independence" (Jay, *The Autobiography of William Jay*, 328).

<sup>64</sup>Quoted in A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Kingsgate, 1956), 168.

<sup>65</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 70. Ryland's myopia was (sometimes painfully) evident to anyone who ever saw him preach. He would write out his sermon notes in print so small that few besides himself could read without a magnifying glass. To his advantage, he would inscribe his notes on strips of paper one and one half inches wide and ten inches long and, pasting the ends together, would slip the paper over the leaf of his Bible (an example of this practice, from a sermon on Prov 7:22, can be seen on the flyleaf of John Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials, Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Rev. John Ryland D.D. of Bristol with a Memoir of the Author in Two Volumes* [London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1826] 1:n.p.). He would preach from these notes in the pulpit, sometimes holding his copy of the New Testament so near his face that it obscured him from the view of his congregation. Remarkably, Daniel Sedgwick notes that Ryland's pathos, clear reasoning, and powerful appeals to conscience allowed the members of his

Nevertheless he was, by any account, a “child prodigy.”<sup>66</sup> From childhood, he possessed a nearly insatiable appetite for learning, demonstrated by his deep love of natural philosophy, classical literature, and poetry.<sup>67</sup> His interests were undoubtedly fueled by the unique school environment created by his eccentric father. J. C. Ryland connected his son to prominent thinkers, resourced him with a large library, provided unusual liberty for independent study, and even incentivized his writing by publishing several of Ryland Jr.’s poetic and devotional works.<sup>68</sup> His remarkable academic gifting is evident in an address he delivered to Northampton’s Juvenile Philosophical Society on May 9, 1765, at the age of twelve.<sup>69</sup> Commenting on quotation from Cicero’s *Pro Archia*, Ryland extolls the delight and usefulness of philosophy—a gift which cannot be stolen by robbers or destroyed by shipwreck. By the time he was twenty, Ryland was not only known for his remarkable knowledge of history, literature, and language but for his practice of creating scale models of the solar system in the boarding school garden.<sup>70</sup> The boarding school

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congregation to quickly get over this peculiarity (Daniel Sedgwick, ed., *Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects: The Greater Part of Which Are Now Published for the First Time from the Originals* [London: Daniel Sedgwick, 1862] viii).

<sup>66</sup>Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” 77. Robert Hall also mentions that Ryland read a chapter of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis) to James Hervey when he was only four years old (*WRH*, 1:390).

<sup>67</sup>This formation would be one of the many assets valued by Bristol Academy when they called him as Principal in 1791, in spite of the fact that he had no formal academic training (Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland Jr.,” 215).

<sup>68</sup>By 1771, five volumes of Ryland’s poetry had appeared in print. See John Ryland, *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel and the Various Branches of Vital Experience* (London: J. Pasham, 1771); John Ryland, *The Divinity and the Names of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In Three Classes. To Which Are Added, The Titles given Him by the Primitive Fathers of the Christian Church. With an Appendix, The Names of Christ in Verse* (London, 1769); John Ryland, *The Divine Inspiration and Authority of the Holy Scriptures Asserted and Approved. A Poem* (London, 1769); John Ryland, *A Compendious View of the Principal Truths of the Glorious Gospel of Christ for the Use of Youth* (London, 1769); John Ryland, *Perseverence, a Poem* (London, 1769). Whelan notes that Ryland’s poetry was typical of religious poetry popular among Dissenters of the time in which “usually by means of quatrains in common meter or iambic pentameter couplets, the poet weaves scripture, dogma, and human experience into plain but forceful lines” (Whelan, “John Ryland at School,” 93). Apparently, as the preface to *Serious Essays* shows, Ryland was encouraged to put his poems into print, whereupon he was “persuaded to consent” (John Ryland, *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel and the Various Branches of Vital Experience* [London: J. Pasham, 1771], viii.).

<sup>69</sup>His “Oration” appeared in print later the same year. In it, he mentions the previous publication of his *Poetical Essays*. John Ryland, *An Oration by a School-Boy Twelve Years of Age; Composed for the Juvenile Philosophical Society* (London: J. Pasham, 1765), 7.

<sup>70</sup>Whitley, “J. C. Ryland as Schoolmaster,” 144.

provided more than learning opportunities for Ryland; it provided a spiritually-challenging environment which forced Ryland to come to terms with his doubts and clarify his understanding of Christian community.

### **Christian Community and The Prayer Society**

Amidst his ongoing tensions over assurance, Ryland was meeting regularly with the boys at his father's school who had been similarly awakened. Together they formed a religious society eventually comprised of some twenty-two boys and three men from the boarding school.<sup>71</sup> The society, which began in 1766, recorded its minutes until 1770. It met twice weekly as a secret gathering for prayer and accountability, with each boy required to pray aloud when his turn came. Boys wishing to join were first examined and then admitted upon their agreement with the society's rules. Attendance was mandatory and a member could be disciplined by the group if he violated the rules or if his conduct was found to be "disgraceful to [his] profession."<sup>72</sup> Ryland quickly became the group's leader and remained so until his entrance into pastoral ministry in 1771. His accounts of the society show the intense concern over true religious affections as well as the pastoral concern which would be characteristic of his life. Ryland recorded that group's membership consisted of boys who "appeared to have been with Jesus" and who were "earnestly seeking after Christ." Though the society began with only four members (and twice was reduced to only two), Ryland wrote of God's faithful presence among "this small flock." The account records the names of fellow students for whom the society would regularly pray "that the Lord would be pleased to make them Partakers of the like Grace as he had freely given unto us."<sup>73</sup> The society's intentionality also made it

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<sup>71</sup>Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 316.

<sup>72</sup>Whelan, "John Ryland at School," 100.

<sup>73</sup>Whelan, "John Ryland at School," 100.

a target for opposition: “Our adversary the Devil was very wrath, and set on his friends among our Schoolfellows to call us Pharisee, Hypocrites, Fools & Mopes,” to which Ryland noted that “thro Mercy we were no wise discouraged, but were enabled to rejoice that our God so honoured us to count us as worthy of suffering Shame in his Cause.”<sup>74</sup>

The society also served as a vehicle for developing its members understanding of church life. The society, mirroring the church into which many had been accepted as members, was a select group of boys gathered as a “pure community” among the larger population of the boarding school. Like the church, it required membership based on a close examination of personal testimony. Like the church, the society kept their proceedings secret from the general population and even disciplined two members of the society for backsliding.<sup>75</sup> As Hindmarsh concludes, Ryland and his peers “grew up within the piety and the theology of their elders and reproduced it in their private introspective narratives and their shared life as adolescent schoolchildren.”<sup>76</sup>

It was also at these society meetings that Ryland made his first attempts in preaching. While he had composed two sermons “before I was first awakened,” his first sermon before an audience was to the boys of the society on February 2, 1768. Over the next three years, Ryland preached at least twenty times before the society, persevering in the face of its dwindling numbers.<sup>77</sup> Ryland’s experiences in the society were an important bridge between his “intense agony and doubting of his election prior to 1766 and his more settled sense of assurance and pronounced confidence in his theological knowledge and prowess as a preacher in 1771.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Whelan, “John Ryland at School,” 100.

<sup>75</sup>Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 317.

<sup>76</sup>Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 318.

<sup>77</sup>Ryland kept a careful accounting of his preaching activities from his initial efforts in 1768 up to his death in 1825. The manuscript, entitled “Text Book, J. R. j.” notes his text and the location and date of the sermon. The book can be found in the Northamptonshire Record office.

<sup>78</sup>Whelan, “John Ryland at School,” 95.

In the Thursday night service on May 3, 1770, Ryland preached publicly for the first time at his father's church in Northampton on Jeremiah 31:8–9. His sermon was well enough received that he was asked to preach eleven additional Thursdays at Northampton that year. Additionally, Ryland was asked to preach in London at the end of December of 1770 and again in January of 1771.<sup>79</sup> When his father fell ill in January of 1771, Ryland was asked to preach for a Sunday service and, by March, the church had asked him to continue in occasional preaching.<sup>80</sup> On August 4, 1771 church members and several ministers signed a testimonial confirming his call to ministry.<sup>81</sup> Ryland was eighteen. He would serve alongside his father until his ordination in 1781, when he succeeded him as pastor of College Lane.

### **Study of Divinity and High-Calvinism**

As foundational as the prayer society was for Ryland's spirituality, his natural inclination towards reading and the ready access of his father's library exerted profound influence on his theological formation during this period. Over the course of 1768, J. C. Ryland as schoolmaster gave his son unusual liberty to pursue his own interests. With this freedom, Ryland spent twelve months "chiefly reading in divinity," devouring volumes in his father's theological library, including the works of John Gill and John Brine "whose writings my father held in greatest esteem."<sup>82</sup> Not only had Brine and Gill been personally influential for John Collett Ryland, they represented an attractive Calvinist response to prevalent questions over the nature of human freedom, the breadth of God's

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<sup>79</sup>Whelan, "John Ryland at School," 93.

<sup>80</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 46.

<sup>81</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 47.

<sup>82</sup>John Ryland, *Serious Remarks on the Different Representations of Evangelical Doctrine by the Professed Friends of the Gospel* (Bristol, England: J. G. Fuller, 1818), 2:7–8. Despite the fact that J. C. Ryland attended and benefitted from his education at the Bristol Academy, he apparently did not encourage his son to attend. It seems likely that the elder Ryland thought he could provide a better education than Bristol offered under tutor and President Caleb Evans (1758–1781).

knowledge and the order of his sovereign decrees, and the extent and application of the atonement. Ministering in London, Gill and Brine had provided a rigorous, logical, and sophisticated response to response to the questioning of Christian orthodoxy in London in the first half of the eighteenth century. It was this “high-Calvinist” outlook that the young Ryland readily adopted.

**Early English High Calvinism.** Given the significance of high Calvinism for the thinking of John Ryland and other English Baptists of the eighteenth century, it is important to understand both its theological emphases and its genealogy. High Calvinism arose as a response to the ongoing Arminian and Antinomian controversies of the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>83</sup> These debates centered on persistent questions over the nature of human freedom, the breadth of God’s knowledge and the order of his sovereign decrees, and the extent and application of the atonement. Calvinists such as Tobias Crisp (1600–1643) sought to protect the biblical teaching of God’s sovereign work in human election by grounding it in the idea of the elect’s personal declaration of justification in eternity past—a logical construction built on biblical understanding, but not one taught in the Scriptures themselves.<sup>84</sup> In a twist of irony, this Calvinist reaction to semi-Pelagianism actually undermined a proper understanding of obedience as a necessary consequence of justification. Since the elect were justified in a decree in eternity past, it followed that

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<sup>83</sup>Keith Grant provides an excellent summary of these developments. See Keith S Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 26–28. My account depends on Curt Daniel, “Hyper Calvinism and John Gill” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765*. (London: Olive Tree, 1967); Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “Northamptonshire and the Modern Question : A Turning-Point in Eighteenth-Century Dissent,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 1, 1965): 101–23.

<sup>84</sup>Supralapsarianism was a contested issue among Calvinists in the eighteenth century. The Second London Confession of 1689 expressed the early Calvinistic Baptist rejection of eternal justification: “God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect and Christ did in the fullness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification; *nevertheless, they are not justified personally, until the Holy Spirit in time does actually apply Christ to them.*” See Article 11.4 in Peter Masters, *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689: Or the Second London Confession with Scripture Proofs*, rev. ed. (London: Wakeman Trust, 1981), emphasis mine.



they were also to be considered as being righteous and without sin. A life of obedience, then, was not requisite and to emphasize such would be tantamount to denying the sufficiency of God's eternal declaration. Many years later, Andrew Fuller would refer to this aspect of high Calvinism as "Crispism."<sup>85</sup>

The controversy was renewed in the 1690s when Independent Richard Davis of Rothwell, Northamptonshire began teaching doctrines reminiscent of Crisp's doctrinal antinomianism. Davis, like Crisp, a vigorous evangelist and church planter, spread this teaching among a network of well-established Independent and Baptist churches.<sup>86</sup> An inquiry was held in Kettering to judge Davis's teachings. However, Davis was not present and no formal censure resulted from the meeting.<sup>87</sup> Instead, his version of high Calvinism spread quickly to others. Davis's arguments eventually persuaded Joseph Hussey (1660–1727), an Independent minister who testified against Davis at the Kettering inquisition, to adopt his views. One of Hussey's converts, John Skepp, also adopted Baptist convictions and was called to a prominent Baptist congregation in London, formerly pastored by Hanserd Knollys and Robert Steed. Skepp's advocacy of high-Calvinist doctrine had the most enduring impact on two men who were to become the leaders in both Calvinistic and Baptist circles for over fifty years: John Gill (1697–1771) and John Brine (1703–1765). Gill moved to London in 1719 from Kettering where he had pastored the church at Higham Ferrars. Brine had been converted under Gill's preaching ministry. Skepp ordained Gill in London and, after Skepp's death, Gill ordained Brine to Skepp's pulpit. As has been noted, Brine would ordain John Collett Ryland in 1750. The zealous and fruitful efforts of these high-Calvinist preachers was so

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<sup>85</sup>Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life*, ed. Andrew Gunton Fuller (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836), 2:713.

<sup>86</sup>Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, 27.

<sup>87</sup>Daniel, "Hyper Calvinism and John Gill," 5.

effective that by the mid-eighteenth century, high Calvinism was “received orthodoxy among Particular Baptist churches in London and the Northamptonshire Association.”<sup>88</sup>

**High Calvinism and the “modern” question.** The high-Calvinist response also prompted a number of other questions for ministers of the gospel: Should the gospel of salvation in Christ be offered to all sinners without distinction? Do the unregenerate have the ability and the moral obligation to respond to the gospel’s offer with repentance and faith? Is the minister of the gospel obligated to call all men to faith in Christ? In essence, these three questions constitute what became known in the eighteenth century as the “Modern Question.” As Ryland would recount in his 1816 biography of Andrew Fuller, the question was frequently stated as “whether it be the duty of all men to whom the gospel is published, to repent and believe in Christ.”<sup>89</sup> A host of practical and theological implications were entailed in one’s affirmation or denial. If one answered affirmatively that faith was in fact a duty, he was affirming not simply the responsibility but also capability of man to respond in faith. Consequently, ministers of the gospel would also have the responsibility to call sinners to repentance and faith. Those who took the “positive side” of the question saw themselves as faithful heirs of Calvin and the evangelical faith.<sup>90</sup> High Calvinists however, sensitive to the claims of Arminians and

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<sup>88</sup>Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology*, 27. Gerald Priest helpfully summarizes that the eighteenth-century advocates of high Calvinism “normally advocated the following positions or variations of them: (1) a supralapsarian decree of election which would include (2) reprobation or what John Gill called “pre-damnation”; (3) eternal justification, the doctrine that God decreed the elect *for* justification before the fall, a corollary of this logically being (4) passive faith (i.e., God grants his elect faith apart from active human volition); (5) a divine warrant or indication (usually conviction of sin) that an individual was elect prior to conversion; and (6) a distinction between preaching the gospel indiscriminately and *offering* it to those *sensible* to it (i.e. those who have a warrant that they are elect)” (Priest, “Andrew Fuller’s Response to the ‘Modern Question,’ 45n3).

<sup>89</sup>John Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Charlestown, MA: Samuel Etheridge, 1818), 4.

<sup>90</sup>Among Baptists in the late eighteenth century, these would be men like Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliff, Robert Hall, Sr. (1728–1791), and William Carey (1761–1834).

Socinians, found the affirmative answer problematic since it implied that the unregenerate had the ability to respond to the gospel. In their view, this rejected the necessary work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. In response, high Calvinists argued that ministers must only declare the work of Christ as simple fact in preaching—to call men to repentance was both theologically erroneous and pastorally dangerous. The obvious result of this conviction was the decline of evangelistic preaching.

The modern question had first been raised by Hussey in 1707, but it surfaced again in 1739 with the posthumous publication of Matthias Maurice’s *The Modern Question Affirm’d and Proved*. Maurice, an Independent pastor forsook the high-Calvinist position and argued for the duty of all hearers of the word to believe in Christ.<sup>91</sup> Maurice’s recantation of high Calvinism brought the debate to London and provoked a “pamphlet battle” between the high and evangelical Calvinists. High-Calvinist Baptists John Gill and John Brine would both offer “negative” responses to the modern question.<sup>92</sup> Gill famously disagreed with the 1689 London Confession’s rejection of eternal justification, writing that justification “does not begin to take place in time or at believing, but antecedent to any act of faith.”<sup>93</sup> Abraham Taylor’s (fl. 1727–1740) “affirmative” answer in *The Modern Question Concerning Repentance and Faith Examined* (1735) occasioned John Brine to enter the fray with *A Rebuttal of Arminian*

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<sup>91</sup> Alan P. F. Sell, *Great Debate: Calvinism Arminianism and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 78.

<sup>92</sup> Brine and Gill were both pastoring congregations in London in the 1730s; Gill (a successor of Benjamin Keach) at Horsleydown and Brine (the successor of John Skepp) at Cripplegate. Gill wrote to defend John Crisp’s argument for eternal justification and eternal union from the attacks of Abraham Taylor in his 1732 *A Justification of the Doctrine of Eternal Justification* (Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 39). Gill also republished John Skepp’s (1675–1721) *The Divine Energy: or the efficacious operations of the Spirit of God in the soul of man, in his effectual calling and conversion: stated, proved, and vindicated. Wherein the real weakness and insufficiency of moral persuasion, without the super-addition of the exceeding greatness of God’s power for faith and conversion to God, are fully evinced. Being an antidote against the Pelagian plague* (1739). Skepp was Gill’s friend and mentor and participated in his ordination council (Sell, *Great Debate*, 78).

<sup>93</sup> John Gill, *A Body of Divinity*. (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1971), 203.

*Principles*.<sup>94</sup> While the controversy died down in London, it heated up among Calvinistic Baptists in support of evangelical Calvinism in other parts of the country.<sup>95</sup> Thus, by the middle of the eighteenth century, there was significant division between Baptists (and between Calvinists more generally) over evangelical doctrine.<sup>96</sup>

During his year of intensive reading, Ryland's views came to reflect the high-Calvinist position, especially through his reading of Brine.<sup>97</sup> J. C. Ryland strongly supported Brine's view, arguing that the gospel is a "*declaration of the free grace of God*," not properly an indiscriminate offer.<sup>98</sup> A snapshot of Ryland's convictions around this time can be seen in a collection of essays published in 1771. According to the prefatory "advertisement," the 121 pieces collected in *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel and The Various Branches of Vital Experience for the Use of True Christians* were "the result of four years labour and pleasure."<sup>99</sup>

The preface goes on to show his emerging confidence in the high-Calvinist position to interpret his own conversion. He argues that though all mankind are "utterly abominable in the sight of God," subject to an enmity "nothing can subdue" and a depravity which "nothing can change" nevertheless "the almighty, sovereign, free operations of God the Spirit" produce in the elect a "perception of the evil of sin, the beauty of holiness and the fitness of Christ to save them."<sup>100</sup> All "who are thus wrought

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<sup>94</sup>Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 39.

<sup>95</sup>Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 40.

<sup>96</sup>These debates would persist until Andrew Fuller's 1785 publication of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. The genesis for Fuller's journey out of high Calvinism was his reading of Taylor's 1735 work. Nuttall argues that it was with Fuller's *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* that "the walls of High Calvinism fell flat." Nuttall, "Northamptonshire and the Modern Question," 123.

<sup>97</sup>Writing in 1807, Ryland commented that he read Brine's works in 1768: "I trust with much profit on the whole, yet with some disadvantage; as it led me to fall into his opinions too indiscriminately" (Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 38–39).

<sup>98</sup>William Newman, *Rylandiana Reminiscences Relating to the Rev. John Ryland, Father of the Late Rev. Dr. Ryland of Bristol* (London: G. Wightman, 1835), 50.

<sup>99</sup>"Advertisement" in Ryland, *Serious Essays*, 1771, A2.

<sup>100</sup>Ryland, *Serious Essays*, 1771, x–xi.

upon were elect, and then (but not till then) have a pleadable right to Christ.”<sup>101</sup> He displays his alignment with the high-Calvinist argument, writing that he “dare not fall in with” those who “hold that a man is in *no sense* justified till he believe.”<sup>102</sup> Those who make such a case suffer from “the want of making proper distinctions” and in their arguments find themselves opposed to biblical teaching on justification. For, as it relates to justification, “*making righteous* and *accounting righteousness*, must precede *declaring* any one *righteous*; also the particular work of the Father and Son precedes the particular work of the Spirit.”<sup>103</sup> Justification “was before calling, yea, from eternity.” Though Ryland admits of insufficient space to defend such a doctrine fully in his preface, he points his readers to “the late excellent (though too little known) Mr. John Brine.”<sup>104</sup> Whelan argues that these passages “[set] forth his credentials as a high-Calvinist after the order of John Gill and John Brine, uniting his intense spiritual endeavors of the past five years with the rigorous theological training he received from his father.”<sup>105</sup>

### **John Newton (1705–1807): Wise and Faithful Counselor**

Whether or not Ryland had fully resolved his earlier misgivings about the high-Calvinist framework, the publication of *Serious Essays* in 1771 put him on a collision course with its implications. The impact was felt, however, through a surprising means—a friendship that had begun some years earlier with John Newton (1725–1807).

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<sup>101</sup>Ryland, *Serious Essays*, 1771, xi.

<sup>102</sup>Ryland, *Serious Essays*, 1771, xiii.

<sup>103</sup>Ryland, *Serious Essays*, 1771, xv.

<sup>104</sup>Ryland, *Serious Essays*, 1771, xvi. In a brief note at the end of the preface, Ryland writes “If any one would see what is farther to be said on our side, either with a view to his confirmation in the truth, or with an intent to answer it as a repited error, I would refer him (beside the pamphlets of Mr. *Brine*, already mentioned) to Dr. *Gill’s Body of Divinity*, chap. 5 of the second book, where this doctrine is clearly explained and unanswerably defended” (Ryland, *Serious Essays*, xx).

<sup>105</sup>Whelan, “John Ryland at School,” 93.

On January 17, 1768, a little more than five months after his baptism, Ryland notes in his diary that he went to Olney with two friends and “became first acquainted with Mr. Newton.”<sup>106</sup> Despite being thirty years his senior, Newton struck up an intentional friendship with the younger Ryland. In August, Newton came to Northampton to preach at St. Peter’s. Ryland found “much pleasure” in his sermon from Acts 26:18. Two and a half weeks later, Ryland traveled to Olney again and stayed with Newton through September 3, hearing him preach three times and having “much pleasure in his conversation and that of several of his poor people whom he took me to see.”<sup>107</sup> In October of 1771, Newton and Ryland began to exchange letters, a practice they continued until Newton’s death nearly four decades later.<sup>108</sup> The publication of Ryland’s *Serious Essays* occasioned their first exchange of letters.<sup>109</sup> Ryland’s presumptuous tone in defending his high-Calvinist principles provoked the elder churchman to send a strongly-worded response:

If Dr. Gill or Mr. Brine had expressed themselves as you do, it might have been borne with, their years, characters, and experience might have made it less noticed. For a young man under eighteen, to pronounce *ex cathedra* upon a point in which the majority of the most learned, spiritual and humble, Divines, are of another opinion, was such an offense against decency as grieved me.<sup>110</sup>

Ryland was not unacquainted with those who opposed Brine’s views. Even at that time, his “extensive acquaintance with [Brine and Gill’s] predecessors, both the old

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<sup>106</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 33. See also Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:346.

<sup>107</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 38.

<sup>108</sup>Despite Newton’s contribution to evangelical hymnody and his indefatigable support of the abolitionist cause, perhaps his most lasting impact was through his remarkable ministry of letter-writing—to John Ryland and countless other evangelical leaders and laypersons during his lengthy ministry. Grant Gordon has collected the eighty-three extant letters from Newton to Ryland in *Wise Counsel*. Unfortunately, Ryland’s letters to Newton have not survived. See Grant Gordon, *Wise Counsel: John Newton’s Letters to John Ryland, Jr.* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009).

<sup>109</sup>Gordon notes that Newton sprang to action prompted both by Ryland’s publication as well as the editorial notice that appeared in the April 1771 *Gospel Magazine* (Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 10–11).

<sup>110</sup>Letter 1, 17 October 1771, Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 14.

Nonconformists and the most evangelical Episcopalian writers,” made him “sensible that former divines consider the exhortations to which Mr. Brine objected, as perfectly consistent with Calvinistic principles.”<sup>111</sup>

In a later letter, Newton went on to advise Ryland in his new preaching ministry to “aim at plain and experimental things, and endeavor rather to affect your hearers’ hearts with a sense of the evil of sin, and the love of Jesus, than to fill their heads with distinctions.”<sup>112</sup> Ryland apparently took Newton’s advice to heart, making substantive changes for a later republication of *Serious Essays*.<sup>113</sup> Newton acknowledged that Ryland had demonstrated a teachable spirit in a second letter in October of 1771. In a warm and irenic tone, Newton went on to urge Ryland to consider the theological and pastoral implications of his high-Calvinist position. Newton recognized that the emphasis of high Calvinism was its speculative focus on the logic of the decrees of God and less the biblical data concerning the doctrine of salvation. Newton thus zeroed in on the experiential reality. High Calvinism often went beyond both experience and clear biblical teaching. He reminded Ryland that John Owen (1616–1683) “and a hundred more I might mention” held to the infralapsarian position.<sup>114</sup> A few months later, in January of 1772, Newton flatly stated that some high-Calvinists with whom Ryland was acquainted were unhelpful:

And though I know several in the supra-lapsarian scheme at whose feet I am willing to sit and learn, and have found their preaching and conversation savoury and edifying; yet I must say that the greater part I have met with who have appeared to

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<sup>111</sup>Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 1818, 2:7–8. Ryland, for example, had read and found profit in John Owen’s “Evidences of Faith of God’s Elect” on April 26, 1768 (Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 35).

<sup>112</sup>Letter 2, 16 January, 1772. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 15.

<sup>113</sup>Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, 150. See John Ryland, *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel and the Various Branches of Vital Experience*. (London: J. Pasham, 1775).

<sup>114</sup>Letter 1, 17 October 1771, Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 14.

be rather wise than warm, rather positive than humble, rather captious than lively, and more disposed to talk of speculation than experience.<sup>115</sup>

He went on to exhort Ryland to focus on practical rather than speculative doctrine by focusing on the text of Scripture

[L]et us give ourselves to the study of the word, and to prayer; and may the great Teacher make every scriptural truth food to our souls. I want to grow in knowledge, but I want nothing which bears that name that has not a direct tendency to make sin more hateful, Jesus more precious to my soul; and at the same time to animate me to a diligent use of every appointed means, and an unreserved regard to every branch of duty.<sup>116</sup>

While Ryland’s side of the correspondence has not survived, the letters they exchanged between 1771 and 1803 are strong evidence for Newton’s role in Ryland’s rethinking of the high-Calvinist position. Given the October 1771 admonition that his younger friend consider other Reformed voices, Newton may have actually been the first to inspire Ryland to read the works of the New England theologian who, more than any other, would come to shape Ryland’s theology and piety—New England revivalist, pastor, and theologian, Jonathan Edwards.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Newton wrote pointedly about the writings of Hussey “in whose provisions I have frequently found more bones than meat, and seasoned with much of an angry and self-important spirit” (Letter 2, 16 January 1772. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 20).

<sup>116</sup>Letter 2, 16 January 1772. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 20.

<sup>117</sup>Ryland never clearly states where the encouragement to read Edwards originated. Robert Hall Sr. (1728–1791) has been suggested as having introduced Edwards’s works to Ryland and other Baptists in the Northamptonshire Association. In a letter included in Ryland’s biography of Andrew Fuller, Fuller mentions meeting Robert Hall Sr. (1728–1791) at his ordination on May 3, 1775. Fuller writes that Hall had encouraged him to read *Edwards on the Will*, which the former mistook for Dr. Edwards of Cambridge and, thus, did not read Jonathan Edwards until 1777 (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 56–58.) In diary entries recorded in “Autograph Reminiscences,” Ryland mentions Hall numerous times beginning in 1767—however he nowhere indicates Hall as the impetus for his own reading of Edwards. Newton is a more likely candidate for Ryland’s initial exposure to Edwards, given the start of their friendship in 1768. Though Newton would eventually become critical of the “Scheme, System, & Notion” of American divinity, in 1762 he had declared Edwards “my favorite author” and in 1778 gave him “the laurel for divinity in this century” (D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], 154, 167). In 1774, around the same time Ryland first mentions reading Edwards, Ryland borrowed John Smalley’s *The Consistency of the Sinner’s Inability to Comply with the Gospel* (1769) from Newton. Smalley (1734–1820) was crucial in helping Ryland understand the distinction between natural and moral inability, an insight which changed Ryland’s mind about the modern question (on Smalley, see Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, 152–54.) Ryland saw “the same effect” in his friend Hall, to whom he loaned the book in 1774 (Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 2:19; see Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 9 n2). According to Ryland, Smalley’s *Consistency* influenced Hall’s 1781 publication, *Help to Zion’s Travellers*. (See Ryland’s introduction to the second edition [1807], viii.) Ryland’s friend, John Sutcliff, later printed



**Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758): “The Greatest, Wisest, Humblest, and Holyest of Uninspired Men”**

While Edwards had significant impact on prominent Baptists like Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), John Sutcliff (1752–1814), and Robert Hall (1728–1791) in the late decades of the eighteenth century, Ryland was one of the first to both be exposed to and transformed by the works of the New England divine.<sup>118</sup> Edwards’s works, particularly his *Religious Affections* (1746) and *The Life of David Brainerd* (1749), decisively shaped Ryland’s evangelical Calvinism and helped him and Andrew Fuller lead Baptist theology away from the previous generation’s high Calvinism of Gill and Brine.<sup>119</sup>

News of the New England revivals first came to England through correspondence between London minister John Guyse (1680–1761) and Benjamin Colman (1673–1747), pastor of Boston’s Brattle Street church, in 1735.<sup>120</sup> In May, at Colman’s request, Jonathan Edwards had sent along an eight-page account describing the powerful awakening taking place at Northampton. Colman included much of Edwards’s account in his next letter to Guyse. Receiving the inspiring news, Guyse quickly shared Edwards’s account with his congregation and fellow minister, Isaac Watts (1674–1748). The response was so enthusiastic that Guyse wrote back to Colman for permission to prepare the account for printing. Colman shared the request with Edwards’s uncle and neighbor, William Williams (1665–1741), who encouraged the Northampton minister to

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Smalley’s sermons from a transcription Ryland had made (John 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: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [London: Button & Son, 1818], 2n.).

<sup>118</sup>Sutcliff attended Bristol Academy under Caleb Evans (1737–1791) beginning in 1772. Evans, like his predecessor Bernard Foskett, was acquainted with the works of Edwards. Sutcliff would pastor the Baptist church in Olney (where Newton had begun parish ministry in 1764) from 1776 until his death in 1815.

<sup>119</sup>Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, 146. This shift to evangelical Calvinism would ultimately be defined by Fuller’s 1785 publication of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*.

<sup>120</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening*, ed. C.C. Goen, vol. 4, *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 32.

prepare an extended account. Edwards responded quickly, sending the account to Colman in November of 1736.<sup>121</sup> By December, Colman had prepared an extract, publishing it as an appendix to Williams's *The Duty and Interest of a People*. In February of 1737, Guyse replied that the extract had given him such pleasure that he "longed for a more complete account of it" and wrote again in April promising to underwrite the printing of the entire narrative.<sup>122</sup> By October of 1737, the full *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* with a fourteen-page introduction composed by Guyse and Watts, appeared in London bookstalls. The book's impact was initially restricted to conversations among a smaller group of Congregationalist ministers. It would be the publication of Edwards's theological and biographical works in the following years that would have revolutionary impact among Baptists.<sup>123</sup>

Edwards's works seem to have made their first appearance among Baptists in the early 1740s. Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795) corresponded with Edwards while a student at Bristol Academy, and had *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741) in his possession by April 1742.<sup>124</sup> It is likely that he introduced the works of Edwards to his congregant, J. C. Ryland.<sup>125</sup> The elder Ryland read both *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin* while studying under Bernard Foskett (1685–1758) in Bristol in 1744–1745, commenting that Edwards's arguments had "never been given any solid

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<sup>121</sup>WJE, 4:34.

<sup>122</sup>WJE, 4:36.

<sup>123</sup>The archive at Bristol College holds an autographed copy of *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival in New England Religion* (1742) which was sent by Jonathan Edwards to Isaac Watts.

<sup>124</sup>Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 87.

<sup>125</sup>Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 196.

answer by the Arminians.”<sup>126</sup> John Ryland, Jr.’s close friend, John Sutcliff, would also read Edwards at Bristol under Foskett’s successor, Caleb Evans, in 1777.<sup>127</sup>

Nevertheless, it does not appear that Edwards was among the theologians J. C. Ryland suggested for his son’s focused study.<sup>128</sup> Even though the elder Ryland owned a 1765 edition of *The Life of David Brainerd* as well as Jonathan Edwards, Jr.’s (1745–1801) *Life of Jonathan Edwards* bound together with *Sermons on Various Subjects*, Ryland’s account of his year of intensive study in 1768 makes no mention of reading these works.<sup>129</sup> Neither does the young Ryland’s *Serious Essays*, as discussed above, evidence awareness of Edwards’s thought. In the estimation of Bruce Hindmarsh, though the elder Ryland had read him enthusiastically, he “did not seem to find Edwards particularly revolutionary.”<sup>130</sup> Throughout the modern question controversy, J. C. Ryland remained a committed high-Calvinist even while understanding (and, seemingly, agreeing with) Edwards on moral and natural inability.<sup>131</sup> As the younger generation of Baptist

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<sup>126</sup>J. C. Ryland included Edwards’s works on a list entitled “Select Library for a student of divinity” (John Collett Ryland, “MSS Notebooks, 1744–1745” 1744, 208–14, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford).

<sup>127</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 55.

<sup>128</sup>Michael Haykin makes the opposite argument in *One Heart and One Soul*, 139. Ryland does hint, however, that his father’s interest in Edwards came lamentably late. In a diary entry on June 12, 1786, Ryland writes “I believe I may fairly attribute some confusion in my ideas, when so very young, to the want of more distinct instruction on some heads. O that my father had then thoroughly studied Edwards on the *Affections!* it might have rendered his ministry more useful to me and others” (“Extracts from the Diary of the Late Rev. Dr Ryland,” *American Baptist Magazine* 12, no. 5 [May 1832]: 135).

<sup>129</sup>See Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 77. John Ryland, Jr. had the Brainerd volume bound in October of 1776 and both are presently part of the Bristol Baptist College archive.

<sup>130</sup>D. Bruce Hindmarsh, “The Reception of Jonathan Edwards by Early Evangelicals in England,” in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David William Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 209.

<sup>131</sup>The entry on “*Impotence, natural and moral*” in Ryland’s theological dictionary agrees with Edwards’s distinction in *Freedom of the Will*: “Natural inability arises from some obstacle extrinsic to the will, and is not the proper subject of praise or blame. Moral inability consists in the opposition or want of inclination or will, and may either be commendable or blameable – See President *Edwards* on Original Sin” (Newman, *Rylandiana Reminiscences Relating to the Rev. John Ryland, Father of the Late Rev. Dr. Ryland of Bristol*, 53).

ministers began studying and discussing Edwards in the 1770s, Ryland remarked “The devil threw out an empty barrel for them to roll about, while they ought to have been drinking the wine of the kingdom. That old dog, lying in the dark, has drawn off many good men to whip syllabub, and sift quiddities, under pretense of zeal for the truth.”<sup>132</sup> In a diary entry in 1786, the younger Ryland lamented,

I believe I may fairly attribute some confusion in my ideas, when so very young, to the want of more distinct instruction on some heads. O that my father had then thoroughly studied Edwards on the *Affections*! it might have rendered his ministry more useful to me and others.<sup>133</sup>

Whatever the impetus may have been, Ryland’s diary notes that he first read an abridgement of Edwards’s *Religious Affections* in February 1774—and its impact on Ryland’s lingering tensions about his conversion was immediate.<sup>134</sup> The mixed results of the New England revivals of 1740–1742 had prompted Edwards to rethink his understanding of assurance. While there had been numerous genuine conversions, it was also evident that many were deceived about their true state. Edwards concluded that congregants were insufficiently equipped to discern true conversion, often times overemphasizing “impressions on the imagination” rather than “the abiding sense and temper of their hearts” and true “fruits of grace.”<sup>135</sup> *Religious Affections* was the fruition of Edwards’s effort to articulate a biblical understanding of the true signs of religious affection.<sup>136</sup> Ryland immediately resonated with Edwards’s argument that certain signs, while vital to the spirituality of the awakened, are insufficient indicators of truly gracious

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<sup>132</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 63.

<sup>133</sup>“Extracts from the Diary of the Late Rev. Dr Ryland,” 136.

<sup>134</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 58. This must be the abridgment published by Congregationalist pastor William Gordon in 1762, since Ryland later mentions obtaining an unabridged version of *Religious Affections* in October of 1775 (Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 58). Ryland must have read the *Life of Jonathan Edwards* prior to his reading of *Religious Affections* since a note in the volume’s bookplate indicates he had it in his possession as early as 1773.

<sup>135</sup>“To the Rev. Thomas Gillespie of Carnock, Scotland,” in *WJE*, 4:564.

<sup>136</sup>*WJE*, 4:84.

affections. The fifth of Edwards's "no signs" argued that simply because affections may come with texts of Scripture is no sure sign of their gracious origin:

Tis evident that persons may have high affections of hope and joy, arising on occasion of texts of Scripture, yea precious promises of Scripture coming suddenly and remarkably to mind...and yet all this be no argument that these affections are divine or that they are any other than the effects of Satan's delusions.<sup>137</sup>

Reflecting on his experience of meeting with comforting texts "suddenly suggested" from Scripture, Ryland later wrote,

I believe that I had often heard religious people express themselves inaccurately respecting the application of the promises. It was not till some years afterward, that I was led, by reading Edwards on the [Religious] Affections, to consider this subject closely. But I remember that I was immediately convinced of the justness of his observations; and I hope that my own experience [doubting the reliability of these 'suggestions'], even before I understood the subject, did in the main agree with the statements of that judicious divine. See his Treatise, Part III, p. 123, &c.<sup>138</sup>

*Religious Affections* crystallized Ryland's understanding that the surest sign of gracious affection is the Spirit's work in sanctifying and progressively transforming the life of the believer. In a sermon on Ephesians 4:30, Ryland argues for this Edwardsean distinction;

The *seal* of the *Spirit*, I conceive, consists in the impression of the divine image on the soul; really conforming us to God, in the temper of our minds. Without *this*, no immediate witness would be valid; and with it, it is unnecessary; for God cannot deny himself, nor the soul that is one in affection and disposition with him. This is truly a supernatural and divine work. It requires, indeed, the finger of God, to engrave his image on the soul, where it was totally effaced: to renew the resemblance of his moral perfections, and transform us into the likeness of his dear Son. This is the best proof of the *love* of the Spirit, as it is a greater evidence of love to confer an inestimable benefit upon us, than barely to tell us we are loved. This seal is the best proof of our relation to God.<sup>139</sup>

Ryland noted in his diary that *Religious Affections* "and the *Life of David Brainerd* I trust shewed me more of the Nature of True Religion than I ever saw before."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith, vol. 2, Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 145.

<sup>138</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:7.

<sup>139</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:157–58.

<sup>140</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 58.

In the fall of 1774, Ryland borrowed from Newton two sermons on *The Inability of the Sinner to Comply with the Gospel* (1769) by John Smalley (1734–1820). Smalley was a graduate of Yale and had studied under Joseph Bellamy (1719–1790) before being ordained as a parish pastor in New Britain, Connecticut.<sup>141</sup> Smalley published little during his four-decade ministry, but upon retirement issued two anthologies of sermons which demonstrated his unusual ability to strike a balance between “theological technicality and pithy explanation.”<sup>142</sup> His *Inability of the Sinner* was reflective of the degree to which Smalley had “thoroughly digested Mr. Edwards’s writings,” itself a distillation of Edwards’s argument in *Freedom of the Will* (1754).<sup>143</sup> Following Edwards, Smalley distinguished two forms of inability.<sup>144</sup> The first, natural inability, had to do with human faculties which were not directly impacted by sin, “a physical hindrance, a lack of physical strength, a want of opportunity, or an absence of understanding.”<sup>145</sup> The second, moral inability, consisted “in the want of a will or disposition.”<sup>146</sup> Like Edwards, Smalley argued that men, unless mentally handicapped, had a natural ability to understand and obey the law and, similarly, an ability to understand the gospel, accept it, and repent of sin. Holifield summarizes, “as long as no one physically restrained the unregenerate, or took away their mental faculties, or prevented their hearing the gospel, they labored under no natural inability.”<sup>147</sup> Thus,

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<sup>141</sup>C. L. Goodell, “John Smalley,” *Congregational Quarterly* 15 (July 1873): 351–64.

<sup>142</sup>Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, *The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 144.

<sup>143</sup>E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 142.

<sup>144</sup>For Edwards’s argument, see especially Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey, vol. 1, Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 360.

<sup>145</sup>Holifield, *Theology in America*, 142.

<sup>146</sup>Holifield, *Theology in America*, 142.

<sup>147</sup>Holifield, *Theology in America*, 143.

sinner who refused to love God did so not because they were physically or mentally incapable of doing so, but because they lacked the will to love. “A man *must* act,” Smalley argued, “according to his own heart.”<sup>148</sup> This did not excuse those who rejected the love of Christ; on the contrary, since the cause of their inability was their own willing, they were morally responsible. Heirs of Edwards, like Smalley, labored to demonstrate that this distinction was consistent with Edwards’s argument regarding freedom. Free agency simply meant the ability to act in accord with one’s nature.

The New Divinity distinction between natural and moral inability was crucial in changing Ryland’s mind about the modern question, and he sought to pass the insight along to other ministers with whom he was acquainted. “I well remember lending them to Mr. Hall of Arnesby,” Ryland later wrote, “to whom I remarked, that I was ready to suspect that this distinction, well considered, would lead us to see, that the affirmative side of the Modern Question was fully consistent with the strictest Calvinism.”<sup>149</sup> By October of 1775, Ryland had “a more decided Conviction of Truth of the affirmative side of the modern Question and a clearer view of the nature of Faith in Christ,” having by this time read Edwards’s *Freedom of the Will*.<sup>150</sup>

Ryland’s reflections on the modern question during this time can be seen in an article he published in 1785 (the same year Ryland took full ministerial duties at College Lane), in the *Theological Miscellany*. Here Ryland patiently argues that even on the basis of John Brine’s definition of faith, faith must be the duty of all who hear the gospel.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>John Smalley, *The Consistency of the Sinner’s Inability to Comply with the Gospel; With His Inexcusable Guilt in Not Complying with It, Illustrated and Confirmed. In Two Discourses on John VI, 44* (Hartford, CT: Green & Watson, 1769), 13.

<sup>149</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 9n2.

<sup>150</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 57. Ryland also noted that “the sixty-second of Samuel Rutherford’s letters was one of the first things that put me to a stand on this subject. Closely studying Edwards’ ‘On the Will’ and entering into the distinction between natural and moral inability, removed all the difficulties which ever embarrassed my mind” (Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 78).

<sup>151</sup>Ryland reprints the entirety of his article in *Serious Remarks*, 1818, 2:13–18.

Faith is allowed to be a duty because the Bible plainly shows rejection of Christ (or even “a partial or feigned reception”) as an intolerable crime.<sup>152</sup> This admission, however, neither implies that man can believe apart from the Spirit nor represents “the sinner’s inability as owing to a merely *natural* and *innocent* defect for which he is in no way blameable.”<sup>153</sup>

Thirty years later, in 1816, Ryland wrote a two-part article responding to a revival of discussion on the modern question. In it, he reflects on how Edwards’ *Freedom of the Will* was “a great means of reliving my own mind from the difficulties I had felt [regarding natural and moral inability],” at the start of his ministry. The essay goes on to include six pages of illustrations and examples on natural and moral ability from his own notebooks likely drawn up at that time.<sup>154</sup> In summary, Ryland emphasizes that “*natural ability* does not constitute a man truly virtuous, good, or holy; nor does *natural inability* render a man wicked or blameable. But *moral* inability may be either *virtuous* or *vicious*.”<sup>155</sup> Echoing Edwards, he concludes:

Therefore, the *more unable* we are to love God with all our powers, and to believe and obey his revealed will, the *more guilty* and inexcusable are we; because we love the creature instead of the Creator, and regard lying vanities in opposition to eternal truth. Regeneration is not a creation of *new faculties*, but the giving [of] new ideas and *dispositions* which were our *indispensible duty* before, though our evil hearts were contrary thereto.<sup>156</sup>

L. G. Champion concludes that Ryland “appears to have read carefully most of Edwards’s writings and to have responded wholeheartedly to his interpretation of Calvinism.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 1818, 2:16.

<sup>153</sup>Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 1818, 2:16, emphasis original.

<sup>154</sup>Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 1818, 2:19–23.

<sup>155</sup>Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 1818, 2:21, emphasis original.

<sup>156</sup>At this point, Ryland commends his readers’ serious attention to Fuller’s *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation: or the Obligations of Men fully to credit and cordially to approve whatever God makes known, &c.*” (Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 1818, 2:25–26).

<sup>157</sup>Leonard G. Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (January 1979): 19.



Through his reading of Edwards, Ryland came to deliberately reject some of the doctrines prevalent in his day and reformulated Calvinism to make sense of “the sovereignty of divine grace both [as] a powerful incentive to evangelism and a guiding light for Christian conduct.”<sup>158</sup>

It was Edwards’s biographical work, however, which had the most profound impact on Ryland’s spirituality. Several months after reading *Religious Affections*, in May of 1775, Ryland notes, “I first met with *The Life of David Brainerd*, which I read with great interest, and I trust with humiliation and profit.”<sup>159</sup> The volume, from his father’s library, is heavily annotated in two distinct handwritings, with black ink and red-penciled underlining throughout. Mid-way through the volume, the two hands converge on where a note reads, “J. R. jr. read thro this a second time 16.1.1776. O God give me the like Spirit.” Underneath, in his father’s hand, is written: “Amen, Amen, Amen!”<sup>160</sup> Ryland had the volume rebound in August of the same year, inscribing on the bookplate “his book, which he prizes above almost all others. O for the like Spirit that rested on this blessed Man whose life is here in related.”<sup>161</sup> Reflecting on his early reading of Edwards’s *Religious Affections* and *The Life of David Brainerd*, Ryland writes:

I had some time before this felt the like effects from reading Edwards on the Affections. At the close of this volume of my Diary, I entered some reflections on my want of that power of Godliness, which was so eminently possessed by that eminent Christian. Oh! How little I have of the spirit of prayer! How little spiritual feeling in prayer, & when I find my heart a little more affected, I find myself in

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<sup>158</sup>Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland,” 21.

<sup>159</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 52. Ryland also mentions having read Edwards’s *Freedom of the Will* in 1765 (Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:15, 52–53n).

<sup>160</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr David Brainerd* (Edinburgh: William Gray, 1765), 279. The Rylands’s copy resides in the library of Bristol Baptist College, Bristol.

<sup>161</sup>Edwards, *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr David Brainerd*, bookplate. The text was, apparently cut down when Ryland, Jr. had it rebound. Some of the marginal notations made in his first reading (Spring/Summer of 1775) were rendered illegible.

danger of resting satisfied with that, instead of continually panting after more and more nearness to God.<sup>162</sup>

Brainerd's piety was so convicting that Ryland became fearful that, in his own pursuit of godliness, he might fail to possess it. "Many may think well of me because I preach the truth with a loud voice and sometimes come close to the consciences of my hearers," Ryland wrote, "but surely my love for souls is very defective." He continued,

God, I believe, gives me some success, for which I am far from feeling proper thankfulness. Oh! that I may not eye my own glory more than the glory of God, and deceive myself with a counterfeit religion, originating and terminating in *self*. I often think of that expression, 'One sinner destroyeth much good.' So may one lukewarm professor; and doubtless, my dullness may greatly injure. Hence, I have often wished to keep away from our experience meetings; not, I trust, lest our people should think ill of me, but lest, thinking well of me, and yet hearing from me so often the same heartless complaints, they should be encouraged to feel satisfied with the same dull frame which their minister so often mentions. I fear, lest the reading of Brainerd's Life should be the occasion of my working up myself to a higher pitch of apparent ardor, merely from a conviction of my need of it, without my really possessing it.<sup>163</sup>

The seriousness of Brainerd's life and the extent of his commitment to gospel ministry both excited and sobered Ryland's view of ministering to the needs of others—especially those who had yet to hear of the gospel of Christ. Preaching on Titus 2:6, Ryland exhorted young hearers to cultivate "a deep sense of our responsibility to God" and to live with their hopes set on happiness in God and not from the world. Ryland went on to quote Brainerd's counsel to his brother:

Do not think you shall be more happy if you live to set up for yourself, to be settled in the world, or to gain an estate in it; but look upon it, you shall then be happy, when you can be constantly employed for God, and not for yourself; and desire to live in this world, only to do and suffer what God allots you.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, Ryland was inspired by both Edwards's and Brainerd's "improvement" of time. They both, as far as he was concerned, set the example for Christian usefulness.

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<sup>162</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 53.

<sup>163</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:54.

<sup>164</sup>"On Sobermindedness: Titus 2:6," in Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:230.

Brainerd's brief life was an example to the young pastor of a man who was willing to spend and be spent for the gospel of Christ. In a sermon on Deuteronomy 11:21, Ryland argued "We must be perpetually employed for God, and habitually resign our wills to the will of God. 'Filling up time with and for God,' said Brainerd, 'is the way to rise up and lie down in peace.'"<sup>165</sup> In his funeral sermon for Joshua Symonds (1738–1788), Baptist minister of John Bunyan's church in Old Bedford, Ryland confessed that Brainerd, in his estimation, was the preeminent example of a life well-lived:

Among all uninspired men, I know of no example so interesting and edifying as that of David Brainerd. I scarce know a book in the world that I could so earnestly wish to be attentively perused by ministers and Christians as the *Account of his Life*, published by President *Edwards*; containing such an example of vital and powerful godliness as well as so delightful an account of a work of grace upon many ignorant savages who were brought by his ministry to the knowledge of salvation.<sup>166</sup>

Ryland, in part, carried out his desire for ministers to read Brainerd by inserting a number of Brainerd's journal entries into his editions of *Christianae Militae Viaticum* (1795). In it, Ryland wrote that he had found "no uninspired volume" of "greater benefit than from the life and journal of the Rev. David Brainerd, and the judicious remarks on the same by the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, afterwards President of *New Jersey College*."<sup>167</sup>

Ryland's interest in Jonathan Edwards's work spurred a friendly correspondence with a number of Edwards's descendants and New Divinity heirs. Over the course of sixteen years, Ryland kept up a regular correspondence with Edwards's

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<sup>165</sup>John Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Rev. John Ryland D.D. of Bristol with a Memoir of the Author in Two Volumes* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1826), 1:19.

<sup>166</sup>John Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer's Consolation and the Grand Subject of the Gospel Ministry. A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Joshua Symonds* (London: J. Buckland, 1788), 22 n.

<sup>167</sup>John Ryland, *Christianae Militiae Viaticum: Or, A Brief Directory for Evangelical Ministers* (London: J. Rose, 1795), 22–23. This volume is a collection of excerpts from Cotton Mather's (1663–1728) *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (1781, ed.), John Rogers of Dedham's (c. 1570–1636) *Sixty Memorials for a Godly Life* (posthumously published c. 1650), Jonathan Edwards's *Resolutions* which Ryland had excerpted from Samuel Hopkins's *Life of Edwards*, and an excerpt on "spiritual mindedness" from John Owen's *Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually-Minded* (1681).

second son, Dr. Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745–1801). Edwards wrote Ryland in 1785, determining to “seek an acquaintance, by epistolary correspondence . . . as may interest & quicken us both as Christians and ministers.”<sup>168</sup> Despite the vagaries of transatlantic post, Edwards and Ryland managed to discuss not only the general state of religion in their respective countries, but to exchange books and pamphlets and debate various theological controversies taking place in England and America. Ryland often asked Edwards’s perspective on the writings of Fuller as well as other English writers like Abraham Booth (1735–1806) and Daniel Taylor (1738–1816). Edwards responded to Ryland’s request for comment on Taylor’s *Observations on Mr. Fuller’s “Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation”, by Philanthropos*, writing that “Mr. A. Fuller will not find it very difficult to answer. The dispute seems chiefly to depend on the clear explanation of natural and moral inability, and of the provision which Christ has made for the invitation of all men to salvation.”<sup>169</sup> Ryland also indulged his curiosity for details on President Edwards, David Brainerd, and several figures who had become prominent through the elder Edwards’s writing.<sup>170</sup>

Samuel Hopkins, whose biography of Edwards Ryland had repeatedly read, also became a frequent correspondent. Edwards Amasa Park (1808–1900) wrote that Hopkins’s correspondence with Ryland was “as extensive as that with Andrew Fuller” and that Ryland was “wont to express a higher reverence for our author, than for any other of President Edwards’s disciples.”<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, Ryland was not afraid to differ

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<sup>168</sup>Jonathan Edwards Jr. to John Ryland, May 28, 1785, Letters from the Edwards Family to John Ryland, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

<sup>169</sup>Jonathan Edwards Jr. to John Ryland, March 30, 1789, Letters from the Edwards Family to John Ryland, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

<sup>170</sup>In a letter to Edwards in 1789, Ryland inquired about Brainerd’s conversion and his friendship with Jerusha Edwards (Edwards Jr. to Ryland, March 30, 1789). Edwards sent a copy of his father’s “Resolutions” to Ryland in 1790 (Jonathan Edwards Jr. to John Ryland, July 1790, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven).

<sup>171</sup>Edwards Amasa Park, ed., *The Works of Samuel Hopkins, D.D., First Pastor of the Church in Great Barrington, Mass., Afterwards Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newport, R.I. with a Memoir of His Life and Character*, vol. 1 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1852), 228.

with the theology of any man whom he greatly respected. He was uneasy about the ways in which the New Divinity writers seemed to be departing from their formidable forebear. Park contended that while Ryland never “seems to controvert any of the more essential doctrines of Hopkins such as those relating to the nature of sin, natural power, etc.,” he criticized “the ambiguous propositions that God is the author of moral evil, and that men should be willing to be lost” for the glory of God.<sup>172</sup> While Park is correct in assessing Ryland’s concerns, he understates the vigor with which Ryland offered them. While Ryland agreed with Hopkins, and with the younger Edwards as well, that true evangelical spirituality consisted in a love for God for who he is in himself rather than simply in what God does for the believer, Ryland did dispute the degree to which the New Divinity men took this idea of “disinterested love.” In particular, Ryland saw no biblical grounds for their supposition that truly disinterested love required the believer’s willingness to be damned:

What call have [Christians] to be willing to be damned, when God assures them Christ is able & willing to save them? And can be glorify’d more in their Salv[ation] than in their Damnation? It also seems strange that a Man sh[ould] from *love to God*, be willing to *hate* God, & blaspheme him. That a sinner ought to own the perfect Equity of his Condemnat[ion], and to consider the very Sanction of the Law as an expression of divine Equity and Love of order, etc. I readily admit—But do we not puzzle people needlessly, to require them to be willing to be eternally *tormented*, & even eternally *wicked*, when Christ came on purpose to save them both from torment and sin?<sup>173</sup>

Ryland also objected to Hopkins’s emphasis “in explaining and vindicating divine agency in the existence of moral evil” and instead urged him to take more pains “in proving that God is the Author of all moral good.” In addition to the lack of scriptural

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<sup>172</sup>Park, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*, 1852, 1:227.

<sup>173</sup>John Ryland to Samuel Hopkins, February 21, 1803, Privately held, Craig Fries, Amsterdam, NY. Quoted in Michael A. G. Haykin, “Great Admirers of the Transatlantic Divinity: Some Chapters in the Story of Baptist Edwardsianism,” in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 201–2. See also Edwards Amasa Park, ed., *The Works of Samuel Hopkins, D.D., First Pastor of the Church in Great Barrington, Mass., Afterwards Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newport, R.I. with a Memoir of His Life and Character*, vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 752–58.

evidence, Ryland forcefully enquired how Hopkins and others would “obviate the consequences which the Hindoos in India infer from this doctrine that God is the Author of all sin.”<sup>174</sup> Hopkins thanked Ryland for the pains he had taken in England to help Hopkins’s writings be heard “without prejudice and with candor.” Such a fair hearing, Hopkins asserted, would allow “all the mistakes and errors in my publications [be] detected and exploded; and all the truth contained in them set in a much clearer and more advantageous light; and great advances made, far beyond what I have attained, or even all the divines who have written.”<sup>175</sup>

Ryland also demonstrates how his thought was challenged by New Divinity writing on the nature of the atonement. In 1787, Ryland admitted to Dr. Edwards that he and others were “rather boggled” by Dr. Bellamy’s understanding of the Cross, and that some of his fellow ministers “begin to have less objection than we had to allow the sufficiency of Christ’s death to have saved more than will be eventually saved.” The notion, championed by the New Divinity men, that the Cross was sufficient to atone for all sin but only efficient for the sin of the elect was slow to take root among Particular Baptists—especially for its similarity to the Arminian scheme. Nevertheless, the idea had biblical and logical merit. Ryland also conceded the danger of the purely commercial terms in which Christ’s substitutionary work was often defended, insightfully noting that “probably nothing contributed to the spread of antinomianism in England as good men’s treating all who verged [towards a more governmental understanding] with contempt and neglect.”<sup>176</sup> Theologians who rejected moral government theory out of hand, he argued, can subtly encourage an Antinomian tendency to regard the atonement as a license for further sin. In light of Bellamy’s argumentation, Fuller would alter his view on the nature

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<sup>174</sup>Park, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*, 1854, 2:757.

<sup>175</sup>Park, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*, 1852, 1:232.

<sup>176</sup>John Ryland to Jonathan Edwards Jr., June 29, 1787, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

of the atonement between the first and second editions of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*—eventually arguing against a commercial understanding and for a more nuanced view which embraced both the moral government and substitutionary theories of atonement.<sup>177</sup> Ryland concluded the same.

Additionally, Ryland corresponded with Dr. Edwards’s son, Jonathan Walter Edwards (1772–1831), Timothy Edwards’s (1730–1831) son, Captain Timothy Edwards (1774–1851), and President Edwards’s great-grandson and publisher of his collected works, Sereno Edwards Dwight (1786–1850).<sup>178</sup> The correspondence is intriguing not only in Ryland’s sincere appreciation for the broader Edwards’ family, but for their shared interest in the progress of the gospel at home and abroad.

In his funeral sermon for Ryland, Robert Hall asserted that Ryland’s system of divinity was a moderate Calvinism, “modelled and explained by that prodigy of metaphysical acumen, the celebrated Jonathan Edwards.” Hall rightly noted that “for the

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<sup>177</sup>Paul L. Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 94.

<sup>178</sup>Jonathan Walter Edwards was a 1789 graduate of Yale College and served as an attorney and, for a time, a judge in Hartford. He served as a State Representative for Connecticut from 1809–1818. Edwards and his wife, Elizabeth Tyron of Wethersfield, CT (1778–1857) had ten children. Ryland had sent a packet and letter to Dr. Edwards on August 14, 1801 which arrived in Hartford nearly a year later, in June 1802. John Walter wrote Ryland in 1803, nearly two years after the August 1, 1801 death of Dr. Edwards, to inform Ryland of his father’s final illness and death as well as answer several questions Ryland had posed in his final letter to Dr. Edwards (see Jonathan Walter Edwards to John Ryland, December 7, 1803, Letters from the Edwards Family to John Ryland, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven). Ryland did not receive the letter until 31 August, 1807, the package apparently having been detained in London for years (see John Ryland to Jonathan Walter Edwards, August 31, 1807, Letters from the Edwards Family to John Ryland, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven).

Timothy Edwards, Jr. (1774–1851) was for several years master of a ship between Charleston, SC and Liverpool, England. After marrying Sarah Haigh, they settled in Augusta, GA where Edwards became a cotton broker. He later moved to Lexington, NY and finally settled in Jersey City, NJ around 1835. Captain Edwards visited the Serampore missionaries in 1807 where, according to Ryland, “my dear brothers Carey & Marshman were highly gratified with the company of one of the grandsons of President Edwards” (see Ryland to Edwards, August 31, 1807). He also apparently carried correspondence between Ryland and several New Divinity writers beginning sometime in 1814 or 1815 (see Edwards Amasa Park, “Contributions to History: Letters of John Ryland to Stephen West,” *The Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Eclectic* 30, no. 117 [January 1873]: 178–87). In a letter Edwards wrote Ryland on 27 January, 1819, he recalled the “kindness I received in your hospitable house” and included a memento from Princeton as well as a recent edition of President Edwards’s work (Timothy Edwards Jr. to John Ryland, January 27, 1819, Letters from the Edwards Family to John Ryland, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven).

writings of this great man, and those of his followers, [Ryland] formed a warm predilection very early, which continued ever after to exert a powerful influence on his public ministry, as well as his theological inquiries and pursuits.”<sup>179</sup> Historian L. G. Champion agrees, noting that “the strongest influence on the young Ryland was undoubtedly that of the writings...of Jonathan Edwards.”<sup>180</sup> No theologian, living or dead, had as much influence over Ryland’s life and piety. Ryland would come to advocate Edwards’s theology as a vital rallying point in the midst of theological crisis. His advocacy was instrumental in making the Baptists, rather than the Anglicans, Congregationalists, or the Wesleyans, the champion of Edwards’s theology in the eighteenth century—an exercise in which he never tired.<sup>181</sup> Perhaps the ultimate expression of his admiration, however, is evident in the fact that Ryland named his second son, Jonathan Edwards Ryland (1797–1866), after the one whom he considered “the greatest, wisest, humblest, and holiest of uninspired Men.”<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup>WRH, 5:404–5.

<sup>180</sup>Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland,” 18.

<sup>181</sup>Hindmarsh, “The Reception of Jonathan Edwards by Early Evangelicals in England,” 216. In the postscript of the funeral sermon for Andrew Fuller, Ryland wrote, “If I knew that I should be with Sutcliff and Fuller tomorrow, instead of regretting that I had endeavored to promote that religion delineated by Jonathan Edwards in his treatise on *Religious Affections* and in his *Life of David Brainerd*, I would recommend his writings, and Dr. Bellamy’s ... with the last effort I could make to guide a pen” (John Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ No Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life* (London: Button & Son, 1815), 47.

<sup>182</sup>The bookplate in Ryland’s copy of *The Life of the Late Reverend, Learned, and Pious Jonathan Edwards* (Boston: S Kneeland, 1765) reads “John Ryland, Jnr 1773, his book, and an inestimable one it is – the life of the greatest, wisest, humblest, and holiest of uninspired Men! J.R.j. having bo’t a new one for himself for 2/6d returned this to his Father, October. 1786. J.Ryland, senr.” Tellingly, J. C. Ryland had named John Ryland Jr.’s younger brother Herman Witsius Ryland (1760–1838) – after the Dutch theologian, Hermann Witsius (1636–1708) whose theology had shaped the high Calvinism of Ryland’s hero, John Gill. In a 1814 letter to Stephen West (1735–1819), Ryland wrote “if God had been pleased to order the sex of my younger children differently, I should have had David Brainerd and Joseph Bellamy born in my house” (Park, “Contributions to History: Letters of John Ryland to Stephen West,” 179).



CHAPTER 3  
CERTAIN INCREASE: THE MINISTRY OF JOHN  
RYLAND

**Marriage to the Glory of God**

On January 12, 1780, nearly nine years into his ministry at Northampton, John Ryland married Elizabeth Tyler. She was not his first love—nor, in God’s difficult providence, would she be his last. Ryland had pursued courtship twice before, but had been cautioned by his parents in the first case and rejected by the young woman in the second.<sup>1</sup> Newton proved a constant source of support, encouraging Ryland to trust in God amidst disappointment. “Praise the Lord,” Newton wrote, “He loved you first and He will love you for ever; and if He be pleased to arise and smile upon you, you are in no more necessity of begging for happiness to the prettiest creature upon earth, than of the light of a candle on midsummer noon.”<sup>2</sup>

They met in 1777 when Ryland was twenty-three and she not yet twenty. Elizabeth had been a student at Martha Trinder’s boarding school for girls, the complement to J. C. Ryland’s boys school in Northampton. On April 10, 1774, the elder Ryland had baptized Elizabeth and twenty others who had come to faith in a revival that swept Northampton that Spring.<sup>3</sup> By 1777, Elizabeth had experienced the death of both parents and, under terms of her guardianship, it would be nearly three years before she

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<sup>1</sup>John Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences: Memoirs of His Family and Autobiographical Material,” 1807, 55–56.

<sup>2</sup>Newton to Ryland, December 20, 1776. Grant Gordon, *Wise Counsel: John Newton’s Letters to John Ryland, Jr.* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 100.

<sup>3</sup>Ryland, “Autograph Reminiscences,” 51.

and Ryland would be permitted to marry.<sup>4</sup> Even in the courtship, Ryland doubted he could win her guardians' approval.<sup>5</sup> Two years in and with little apparent hope for the future, Ryland was disheartened. Newton wrote reminding Ryland that "in a few things [God] crosses or delays our inclinations, telling us at the same time that it is for our benefit, that we shall find his season the best, and that he will withhold nothing that is truly good."<sup>6</sup> Thus, when they finally married in 1780, there was cause for much celebration. Ryland would later recount his confidence that "God provided still better for me, in the end."<sup>7</sup> He records,

If ever I sought the glory of God in any Action of my Life, I am sure it was in this affair. Surely I did pray for direction; I did regard sincere piety in the choice of a Companion more than any other consideration whatever. It was my concern to be united with one whose [heart] was united to Christ, and who would help me to devote myself wholly to him.<sup>8</sup>

Elizabeth was "a most amiable and excellent woman, the loveliness of whose personal appearance strikingly corresponded with her mental endowments."<sup>9</sup> Childless for the first six years of their marriage, Elizabeth conceived early in the summer of 1786 and gave birth to a son, John Tyler Ryland (1786–1841), on December 9, 1786. She never fully recovered, contracting "consumption" and dying several weeks later on January 23, 1787.<sup>10</sup> Ryland was devastated. In his personal diary, he drew a single deep black line

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<sup>4</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 103.

<sup>5</sup>Newton to Ryland, February 15, 1777. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 107.

<sup>6</sup>Newton to Ryland, February 23, 1779; Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 125.

<sup>7</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 56.

<sup>8</sup>Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences," 56.

<sup>9</sup>John Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Rev. John Ryland D.D. of Bristol with a Memoir of the Author in Two Volumes*, Vol. 2 (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1828), 40.

<sup>10</sup>Roger Hayden, "John Tyler Ryland, 1786-1841: A Further Assessment," *The Baptist Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (June 2015): 120. See Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:40.

without any word or explanatory letter by it.<sup>11</sup> Later that year, in a letter to Jonathan Edwards the younger (1745–1801), Ryland remarked

few women ever equal'd her in prudence and every amiable disposition. She had a great degree of domestic œconomy, join'd with much benevolence to the poor. I never knew a person more sincerely & universally lamented by all her acquaintance, & even the common irreligious people of the town both high & low.<sup>12</sup>

Ryland surmised that Elizabeth's illness went long unnoticed because of "her singular modesty" and her difficulty in distinguishing the sickness from what would otherwise attend the pregnancy—her first. "She died very sweetly!" Ryland wrote, "I never saw anybody die beside. I had hold of her had all the while. God took away her fears. Tho she was of a very nervous, timid constitution—O she had a thousand times more religion than I!"<sup>13</sup> In the days after her death, Ryland gave his grief vent by writing several poems addressed to John Tyler in hope of preserving her memory for him.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>John Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton: With Biographies of Pastors* (London: Taylor & Son, 1897), 37.

<sup>12</sup>John Ryland to Jonathan Edwards Jr., June 29, 1787, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

<sup>13</sup>Ryland to Edwards Jr., June 29, 1787, June 29, 1787.

<sup>14</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:40–4. The fact that John Tyler Ryland is not mentioned in *Pastoral Memorials* has been a source of speculation on the father's relationship with this tragically-born son. Stella Read has suggested that John Tyler Ryland was overlooked by his father because his mother was "Dr. Ryland's first love and that subconsciously he blamed the baby for her death and was never able to forgive him for it" despite the fact that Tyler's whole married life was spent "within a couple hundred yards of the College where his father was the Principal." This ignoring of his first born son, Read argues, puts Dr. Ryland, "in a considerably less favourable light than that in which he usually appears" (Stella Read, "Further Information on the Ryland Family," *The Baptist Quarterly* 36 (1995): 202.). But Jonathan Edwards Ryland does not mention either *himself* or his sisters by name in *Pastoral Memorials'* biographical account (Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:40). One reason why neither he nor later biographer James Culross (*The Three Rylands*) mention John Tyler may simply be because he was not famous in theological circles, likely a significant part of their intended audiences. Additionally, John Ryland's second wife, Frances, affectionately describes her eight-year-old step-son in her diary as "our dear child," certainly an indicator of Frances's deep love for the son of her husband and recently departed friend (see Timothy Whelan, "Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland," in *Nonconformist Women Writers, 1720-1840*, vol. 8 [London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011], 348, 351, 315). Ryland also included J.T. in the list of his children when drawing up his will in 1821 (Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 194). Roger Hayden has recently noted that each of John Tyler's children are also noted in the Broadmead Birth Registers (1787–1817, 1813–1837) in the distinctive hand of John Ryland, often with his own personal notes. Hayden also notes that J.T. Ryland consciously chose second names for his children that reflect the spiritual legacy of his father's family (e.g. Jane Beddome Ryland [1815–?], David Brainerd Ryland [1820–1871], Herman Wistius Ryland [1823–1825]). See Hayden, "John Tyler Ryland, 1786-1841: A Further Assessment," 122. Gordon rightly concludes that there is "no evidence at all that Ryland or his second wife treated John Tyler unlovingly" (Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 124).

John Newton wrote Ryland at least five times during this period, the first letter sent to Ryland on the day of Elizabeth's death (only knowing she was gravely ill). That Ryland struggled to overcome his loss is evident by the tone of Newton's letter on June 5, 1787; "Settle it in your heart, my friend, that the Lord does all well, all for the best. Believe it now, and in due time you shall plainly see it, and praise him equally for giving and taking away."<sup>15</sup> Four months later, in October, Newton wrote concerning the depression in which Ryland found himself,

There is something fascinating in grief: though we feel it hurts our peace, and may know, that when it is great and long continued, it threatens the very root of our usefulness, we are apt to indulge it, and to brood over sorrow till it gives a tincture to the whole frame of our spirit and, perhaps, makes a lodgement in us, too deep to be removed. We say, indeed, the Lord is wise and good, and does all things well; and, for our principles' sake, we avoid positive complaint; but folded hands, downcast looks, and reiterated sighs, are deemed very allowable, as they doubtless are for a time; but, if for a long time, they become ensnaring and injurious. I pray the Lord to make you heartily willing to be wholly set at liberty from this insinuating and plausible source of pain; the willingness is half the matter, and will marvelously facilitate the cure. Dally no more with grief, try to cut short all recollections that feed the anguish of your mind. Your taper is extinguished, but you still have the Sun with you.<sup>16</sup>

Newton wrote again in April of 1788, actively encouraging Ryland to remarry—counsel which Ryland seemed to welcome. By the summer of the following year he married a second time, wedding Frances Barrett of Northampton on June 18, 1789.<sup>17</sup> Frances had been a close friend of Elizabeth's and was well aware of the role she was to assume. Only days before she and Ryland wed, Frances wrote in her journal,

The thought of presiding in the place of one I so dearly loved, and whose *temper* and *conduct* was so truly *amiable*, fills my heart with a thousand anxieties. No, I shall never forget the *sweetness of her love and esteem!* My hope is in God, otherwise the charge and care of her dear Infant, would occasion still greater concern. May the recollection of her kindness, affection, and sympathy, not only

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<sup>15</sup>Newton to Ryland, June 5, 1787. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 192.

<sup>16</sup>Newton to Ryland, October 26, 1787. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 193.

<sup>17</sup>Newton to Ryland, April 1788. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 205; Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:42.

soften every care, but animate me to the discharge of duties however difficult with all fidelity.<sup>18</sup>

Frances saw their marriage to be one of both happiness and significance. Ryland was to her “one of the kindest, the best, of men” whose ministerial influence lent great importance to the conduct of their union. “I feel the importance of my situation,” Frances wrote, “because I am sure of all others, it will require great delicacy, and propriety of conduct.”<sup>19</sup> Frances was a remarkable match for Ryland’s intellect and activity. Like Ryland, Frances she was deeply pious. Her journal is replete with meditations on sermons, her personal Bible study, and theological volumes.<sup>20</sup> An entry from May 1791, typical of her writing, records,

Such are the dreadful effects of sin over every faculty of the soul that the mind can discern nothing of the excellency of the divine nature but as it is enlightened by the holy spirit. The Law is holy, just, and good, and it appears glorious in the hands of Christ. All it’s requirements he hath obeyed, and made it for ever honourable, but the gospel shines with a transcendent glory because it reveals to us the heart of Christ in his love, pity, and compassion to favor sinners!! I long for a tender feeling heart, and to be more than ever in love with the display the blessed God has made of himself. Oh what an eternal source of admiration & contemplation will his perfections yield! The hope of being for ever with the Lord, how should it excite in me a holy contempt for all the vanities of time, how diligent and how watchful should I be considering what I am—where I am—& whither I am going. Sometimes such is the power of divine grace that I can appeal to him who searcheth the heart and say “Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”<sup>21</sup>

Their marriage was a happy one. In journal entries stretching over twenty-five years, Frances refers to Ryland as “my dear J R,” frequently noting her admiration for his preaching, rejoicing over his letters during long periods of separation, and taking joy in the fruit of the ministry that God had given them.<sup>22</sup> Besides John Tyler, the Rylands

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<sup>18</sup>Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 315.

<sup>19</sup>Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 315.

<sup>20</sup>In an entry from the summer of 1806, Frances records her reflections on John Owen’s *The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ* (1645), writing “I want to feel the application of divine truth upon my heart, nothing short of this will afford solid hope and strong consolation” (Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 396, 331, 359).

<sup>21</sup>Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 336.

<sup>22</sup>Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 356.

opened their home to other children whom they nurtured and educated.<sup>23</sup> These joys undoubtedly deepened the pain they experienced through nearly a decade of infertility and complications with pregnancy. Frances lost a daughter to miscarriage in September 1793 and again in October 1794.<sup>24</sup> In 1795, she records the death of their infant son, whom they intended to name Johnathan Edwards Ryland: “Thus the blessed God has seen meet to disappoint my pleasing expectations again. Yet he has only done that which he knows to be *best for me*. I hope my soul can stand to the surrender still.”<sup>25</sup> In 1797, after nearly a decade of waiting, Frances gave birth to a healthy son whom they named Jonathan Edwards Ryland. Eventually, the couple would add three daughters, Elizabeth Barrett (b. 1798), Frances Barrett (b. 1800), and Mary (b. 1803) to the family. Ryland was an affectionate father, whose “exquisite warmth [and] tenderness” were evident “to the very close of his life.” He was especially jealous for the education of his children. Jonathan Edwards Ryland wrote, “he lost no time, and as far as his other duties permitted concerned, spared no pains in imbuing them with the elements and love of knowledge; that knowledge especially which is the beginning and consummation of wisdom.”<sup>26</sup> In a moving testimony to his father’s piety, Ryland concludes, “it was the happiness of those who enjoyed the privilege of constant intercourse with so revered a parent, to receive lessons of piety in language far more powerful than that of the lips, the language of a life pre-eminently ‘influenced and directed by the powers of the world to come.’”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Martha Trinder operated a successful school for the daughters of Nonconformist families from 1765 to 1789. After the death of Trinder in January 1790, Frances took over the responsibility of educating the young women of the school—a task which she continued until the Rylands moved to Bristol in 1793. See Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 337–38, 556-557n, 558n.

<sup>24</sup>Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 347. Frances records a stanza from John Newton’s hymn *Tis my Happiness Below*: “Trials make the promise sweet / Trials give new life to prayer / Trials bring us to his feet / Lay us low, and keep us there.”

<sup>25</sup>Whelan, “Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland,” 361. Frances records a moving poem John Ryland penned for the child’s funeral.

<sup>26</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:43.

<sup>27</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:44.

### **“Closely and Cordially United”: Ministry at College Lane**

In 1771, during his first year at Northampton, Ryland preached 138 times, each sermon from a different text.<sup>28</sup> Robert Hall would later report “he never attained the highest summit of popularity,” but his ministry was nonetheless “replete with instruction, and not infrequently accompanied with an unction which rendered it irresistible.”<sup>29</sup> In addition to his preaching, Ryland assisted his father at the boarding school. He was seen to be a better disciplinarian both there and in the church; “he was gentle where his father was stern; mellifluous where the other stormed.”<sup>30</sup> Despite his gentle demeanor, he could be firm as a rock when needed, once overseeing in a single meeting the excommunication of five members of the Northampton church while his father was away ill.

After nearly eleven years of membership at College Lane, Ryland was ordained as pastor on June 8, 1781. As was expected of ordinands, Ryland delivered a confession of faith to the congregation, expressing in summary form the doctrine he had come to embrace. His confession reflects much of what one would expect from a dissenting minister in the reformed tradition; a strong and primary affirmation of the authority and inerrancy of Scriptures, a clear articulation of Scriptures’ teaching regarding man’s depraved nature, God’s unconditional election of the redeemed, the sufficiency of Jesus’s death in atoning for the sins of the elect, God’s irresistible grace in securing the children of faith, and the perseverance of the true possessors of salvation.<sup>31</sup> Utilizing the Nicene formulation, he places himself not only in the reformed, Baptist tradition, but in the creedal tradition as well.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, his confession repudiates the apostasy of the

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<sup>28</sup>Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton*, 31.

<sup>29</sup>*WRH*, 1:391.

<sup>30</sup>Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton*, 31.

<sup>31</sup>See “A Confession of Faith Delivered by John Ryland Jr. of Northampton at his Ordination to the Pastoral Care of the Church in College Lane, June 8, 1781” in John Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings” n.d., 1–22, Special Collections, Bristol Baptist College, Bristol.

<sup>32</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 20–23.

Roman church, its unscriptural view of justification, and its ecclesiastical and economical hegemony. He instead argues for a New Testament pattern of the independency of the local congregation in choosing its own ministers and administering its own disciplines.<sup>33</sup>

Ryland's confession also highlights two significant places where he disagreed with his reformed Baptist and Dissenting forebears. He writes,

I believe that the risen Savior has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name among all nations and his Gospel to be published to every creature. That his ministers are commissioned to assure their hearers in general that all things are ready, the gospel feast is provided for all comers; Jesus who saves to the uttermost will in no wise cast out or reject any that apply to him. I believe that as the sinner's disinclination to regard divine *authority* cannot release him from his obligations to obey God's *commands*, so his disinclination to regard the *kindness* of God our Savior cannot release him from his obligation to regard his *invitations*. Men are still the proper subjects of commands and invitations notwithstanding their moral depravity.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, even comparatively early in his ministry, Ryland answers the Modern Question in the affirmative—sinners are morally obliged to respond to God's offer of clemency in faith. Pastors, therefore, are under duty to call sinners to repentance. Ryland's confession also explicitly rejects the teaching of Robert Sandeman (1718–1771), who taught that the essence of Christian faith was mental assent to truth about God. Ryland argues that true faith is not a speculative assent to any Scriptural truths, but “receiving his testimony concerning his Son as worthy of all acceptance,” embracing him in “all the offices” and “for all the ends” revealed in Scripture, and through the “blessed effects” of faith to “increase repentance, purify the heart, overcome the world, and work by love to God in Christ, universal holiness in the saints and to all mankind.”<sup>35</sup> The confession undoubtedly displays the doctrinal marks that would characterize his vibrant ministry over the next four decades.

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<sup>33</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 19–20.

<sup>34</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 14–15.

<sup>35</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 17.



After his ordination, Ryland's father increasingly left the pastoral responsibilities to the son and turned his own energies to the boarding school. Ryland's mother, Elizabeth had died in 1779, perhaps explaining J. C. Ryland's diminished pastoral energies. In a manner similar to the loss Ryland would feel over the loss of his own wife in 1787, his father was deeply grieved. J. C. Ryland remarried in February of 1782 and, a year and a half later, left Northampton for London after twenty-six years of ministry. Ryland Jr. remained as College Lane's sole pastor. Despite being at a distance, much of the congregation continued to consider the senior Ryland their pastor, undoubtedly contributing to the difficulties the son would experience in coming years. When John Collett Ryland died on July 24, 1792, his body was returned to Northampton for the funeral and burial.<sup>36</sup> The congregation memorialized his death with the epitaph "after being thirty-two years their pastor, he was gathered unto his people, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1792, aged 69."<sup>37</sup>

When the elder Ryland departed Northampton for London in 1785, controversy lagged not far behind. Attendance at College Lane had been diminishing since 1782. By 1791, it had fallen from 206 to 181.<sup>38</sup> The decline, however, does not seem to be attributable to a dislike of Ryland Jr., nor his inefficacy as a minister. When the Northampton congregation ordained him in 1781, he had already been ministering alongside his father for nine years. The letter of invitation, voted on by the congregation on November 19, 1780, notes the fruitfulness of his ministry and expresses an earnest longing for the pastoral care that Ryland Sr. seemed to have been diverting to the

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<sup>36</sup>Faithful to his theological inheritance to the end, Ryland wanted to be buried in Bunhill Fields, London, alongside the "three great Johns"—John Owen, John Gill, and John Brine (Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 72).

<sup>37</sup>James Culross, *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service* (London: Elliot Stock, 1897), 66.

<sup>38</sup>Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton*, 37.

boarding school.<sup>39</sup> The loss, instead, is to be attributed to theological controversy among high-Calvinist Baptists and the congregational shifts it precipitated, particularly through the teaching of William Huntingdon.

In the 1790s, Particular Baptist pastors in Bristol, Northampton, and London had been engaged in an acrimonious controversy with a provocative and prominent London pastor named William Huntington (1745–1813). Although Huntington had many admirers, his haughty spirit and dangerous teachings had made him a number of enemies among the Particular Baptists, including both J. C. Ryland and John Ryland Jr. Most concerning for John Ryland Jr. were Huntington’s dangerous views on the moral law and the responsibilities of Christians. Huntington insisted that the moral law was “binding on the unbeliever, but was not a rule of life for the Christian.”<sup>40</sup> While Huntington argued that the Christian was not left free to sin, his understanding of the place of the law inevitably resulted in a passive view of sanctification. For Huntington, “the eternal predestining decree of God was declared to be the cause of the believer’s obedience, to the exclusion of the Christian’s responsibility to obey commandments.”<sup>41</sup> Sanctification in the life of the believer takes place apart from slavish obedience to command—rather, it is the decreed will of God empowered by the Holy Spirit that results in the believer’s conformance to the image of Christ. This idea, of course, could be embraced without rejecting the place of the law. Fuller, Ryland, and others insisted that, while the empowering work of the Holy Spirit was essential to progressive sanctification, his

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<sup>39</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 75.

<sup>40</sup>Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771-1892: From John Gill to C.H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 124. In numerous publications, Huntington consistently insisted that, “bondage, hardness of heart, revealed wrath, enmity against God, desperation, curses, hell and damnation, are the best things that men can fetch from the killing letter of the law of Moses: whether the man be a believer or an infidel it matters not. The law will pursue the believer if he goes there. Christ alone is his refuge; it will entangle the believer, and yoke him again if he looks for help there” (Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771-1892*, 124).

<sup>41</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771–1892*, 127.

working was not in opposition to but in conformance with obedience to God's commands. Nevertheless, Huntington was not swayed—and his rigorous but specious logic led to him to deny the right of pastors to preach the gospel to all people.<sup>42</sup>

The controversy reached College Lane in 1791. Early in the year, a Mr. Hewet and his wife had been excommunicated from College Lane because of their “antinomian and rebellious spirit.”<sup>43</sup> Hewet subsequently asked that Huntington be allowed to preach at College Lane. When Ryland refused, Hewet invited Huntington to Northampton and obtained a license for him to preach at his home. He invited several members from College Lane to attend, including John Adams who had become discontented under Ryland and accepting of Huntington's views. While the church labored to reconcile Adams, its attempts failed and he was excommunicated. Huntington then printed College Lane's letter of excommunication to Adams along with his own comments.<sup>44</sup> Eager for counsel, Ryland wrote to John Newton. Newton responded,

Let him alone, and he will expose himself more effectually than you can expose him. And his performance will soon die and be forgotten unless you keep the memory of it alive by an answer. I believe scarcely anything has conduced so much to perpetuate disputes and dissensions in the professing church, as the ambition of having the last word.<sup>45</sup>

While there were repartees from the College Lane congregation, Ryland wisely heeded Newton's advice and refused to take the controversy to the press.<sup>46</sup> Thirteen years later, Ryland would respond to the resurgence of Antinomian sentiment with a series of theologically astute and profoundly pastoral series of tracts entitled *Serious Remarks*. He would note that the spirit of false teaching is liable to reappear in any age:

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<sup>42</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771–1892*, 128.

<sup>43</sup>Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton*, 37.

<sup>44</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771–1892*, 137.

<sup>45</sup>Newton to Ryland, January 25, 1792. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 249.

<sup>46</sup>Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton*, 37.

This man [Huntingdon] is now gone, but his writings remain, an awful monument of the pride, censoriousness, and malignity, which sometimes be connected with a distorted and mutilated gospel. Many others, inferior to him in their talents, imbibed similar sentiments and, as far as they were able, propagated them in a similar manner.<sup>47</sup>

Happily for Ryland, two other significant events in the following year would overshadow the strife over Huntingdon; the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society and the call to Broadmead Church in Bristol.

### **“Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things”: Ryland and the Founding of The Baptist Missionary Society**

Ryland’s labors at Northampton had not been constrained to the College Lane congregation. Beginning in 1771, he was “in labors more abundant; far from confining his ministry to a single spot, he diffused its benefits over a wide circle, preaching much in the surrounding villages.”<sup>48</sup> Much like his father, Ryland also developed a wide network of close friends. On July 24, 1773, John Sutcliff stopped in to visit J. C. Ryland, a fellow Bristol Academy alumnus, on his way home to Bristol. The elder Ryland convinced Sutcliff to preach at the College Lane church, and by his preaching the younger Ryland found in him a kindred spirit.<sup>49</sup> Fast friends, Ryland and Sutcliff met a year later to discuss the vacancy at Olney in Buckinghamshire. Ryland had written to a prominent congregant, Mary Andrews, asking her to inquire of Sutcliff about the vacancy. Ryland encouraged Sutcliff to take the pastorate because he believed that Sutcliff and Newton could ably minister to each “denomination” in cooperation in Olney and in hopes of Sutcliff overcoming the “stiffness” in the Baptist congregation there.<sup>50</sup> It was in Olney, in

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<sup>47</sup>John Ryland, *Serious Remarks on the Different Representations of Evangelical Doctrine by the Professed Friends of the Gospel*, vol. 2 (Bristol, England: J. G. Fuller, 1818), 41. Ryland mentions that after his death, one of Huntingdon’s followers wrote a panegyric entitled *The Voice of Years* extolling Huntingdon’s life and theology. Andrew Fuller’s response, published in 1815, was one of the last things he wrote.

<sup>48</sup>*WRH*, 1:390.

<sup>49</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 64.

<sup>50</sup>Kenneth W. H. Howard, “John Sutcliff of Olney,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 14, no. 7 (July 1952): 306.

1776 at the meeting of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, that Ryland and Sutcliff first became acquainted with Andrew Fuller.<sup>51</sup> Fuller soon became Ryland's most intimate friend; "No one, of those that grew up with me in the work of the Lord, had a higher share in my esteem than Mr. Fuller."<sup>52</sup> The three of them became what Robert Hall later called a "lovely triumvirate," working ceaselessly together for the proclamation of the gospel throughout the Midlands and beyond.<sup>53</sup> Ryland would write, "I always considered [Andrew Fuller], and Brother [John] Sutcliff, and myself, as more closely united to each other, than either of us were to anyone else."<sup>54</sup>

Although Ryland built numerous other significant friendships in these years, one additional relationship is particularly worthy of mention. Raised as an Anglican, William Carey, had joined the dissenters as an Independent after hearing the preaching of Thomas Chater in Olney in February of 1779. There he became acquainted with John Sutcliff and, through Sutcliff, with Ryland in Northampton. In reference to Ryland's influence, Carey once wrote, "if there be any thing of the work of God in my soul, I owe much of it to his preaching, when I first set out in the ways of the Lord."<sup>55</sup> Having become convinced of credobaptism, Ryland baptized Carey on October 5, 1783.<sup>56</sup> Carey

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<sup>51</sup>Howard, "John Sutcliff of Olney," 306. John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from Its Commencement, in 1792* (London: Button & Son, 1816), 56.

<sup>52</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, vii.

<sup>53</sup>*WRH*, 1:410.

<sup>54</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, vii.

<sup>55</sup>Joseph Belcher, *William Carey: A Biography* (American Baptist Publication Society, 1853), 31.

<sup>56</sup>Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 8. Stanley also records the infamous meeting of the Northamptonshire Association ministers, which probably occurred in September of 1785. J. C. Ryland chaired the meeting and requested that the two most junior ministers suggest a topic for discussion. The suggestion offered by J. W. Morris of Clipstone was deemed unacceptable. The question proposed by the second, William Carey, was "whether the command given to the apostles to 'teach all nations,' was not obligatory on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent" (Stanley, *The History of*

soon settled as a pastor in Moulton, bringing him closer to Fuller in Kettering and Ryland in Northampton, and forging bonds of friendship that would prove invaluable.<sup>57</sup>

On April 23, 1784, Ryland received a package from John Erskine containing Jonathan Edwards's *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer*. Ryland shared the pamphlet with Fuller and Sutcliff. Fuller was so moved by Edwards's idea that he preached a sermon at the Northamptonshire Association meeting in Nottingham on June 2, 1784 entitled "The Nature and Importance of Walking by Faith" which called upon his hearers to extraordinary prayer for revival. On the following day, Sutcliff successfully persuaded the churches to meet on the first Monday of every month for united prayer for revival at home and "the spread of the gospel to the most distant parts of the habitable globe."<sup>58</sup> The Association appended Sutcliff's plea to Ryland's sermon "The Nature, Evidences, and Advantages to Humility" as a circular letter to the churches of Northamptonshire, both influenced by the thinking of Jonathan Edwards. The effect among the churches was astonishing. By the following year, the pattern of monthly prayer meetings was well established. Soon churches in Warwickshire, Yorkshire, and the Western Association began to take part. By 1789, the prayer call was so popular that Sutcliff decided to print an English edition of *Humble Attempt*.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile, while pastoring at Moulton, Carey, inspired by the writings of James Cook and the accounts of expanding global trade, began to consider the plight of humanity where the gospel had not yet been preached. By 1788, he had written "a piece

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*the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992*, 7). According to Morris's account (the only first-hand source we possess), Ryland dismissed Carey's question as unworthy of discussion. Both Ryland Jr. and Carey later contested this testimony, Ryland noting that his father had left Northampton before the ministers' meeting took place in Oakham in 1786 (Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992*, 6).

<sup>57</sup>Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, 8.

<sup>58</sup>Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, 5.

<sup>59</sup>Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, 5.

on the state of the heathen world.”<sup>60</sup> He met with Ryland, Fuller, and Sutcliff, who encouraged him to prepare the essay for publication. Soon after its publication on May 12, 1792, the Northamptonshire Association met again at Nottingham and a resolution was put forward to form “a Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the heathen” at the next association ministers’ meeting in October.<sup>61</sup> On October 2, the Baptist Missionary Society was formed. The first signature on the list of financial pledges, in his characteristically lucid handwriting, is John Ryland, Jr.

The vision of global evangelization captured Ryland’s imagination for the rest of his life. “From the very beginning,” wrote Robert Hall, “he mingled his counsels and his prayers with that determined band, who, in the absence of all human resources, resolved to send the gospel to the remotest quarter of the globe; nor did he cease to his last hour to watch over its progress with parental solicitude.”<sup>62</sup>

A snapshot of Ryland’s passion and “parental solicitude” can be seen in his sermon at the annual meeting of the Baptist Association in Chard on July 11, 1794. Although Ryland took nothing more than his minuscule sermon notes into the pulpit, his preaching was so anointed that his friends later persuaded him to reconstruct it and publish it for the encouragement of the churches.<sup>63</sup> The exhortation, entitled *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, highlights several themes characteristic of Ryland’s life and ministry.

First, Ryland underscores that the grand object of the minister’s life is the exaltation of Christ, not personal comfort or ministerial prestige.<sup>64</sup> Drawing from John

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<sup>60</sup>Quoted in Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, 9.

<sup>61</sup>Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, 14.

<sup>62</sup>*WRH*, 5:409.

<sup>63</sup>John Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus: A Sermon Preached at Chard, in Somersetshire, on Wednesday Evening, July 11th, 1794, at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Association* (London: J. Rose, 1794), iv.

<sup>64</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, iii.

3:30, “He must increase, but I must decrease,” Ryland argues that John the Baptist “willingly expects that the size difference between him and his divine Master would soon become more visible to every spectator.”<sup>65</sup> John’s relative debasement was “the purpose of Heaven” to which the last of the Old Testament prophets “fully subscribed.” Let Christ be glorified and John was willing “to be laid aside...his highest honor was to have been employed as Christ’s forerunner.” This theme of self-abasement for the glory of Christ undoubtedly resonated with the counsel Ryland had received from Newton as a young minister. Newton identified Ryland’s unusual talent as a potential threat to the young man’s spirituality. Several of Newton’s early letters wisely instruct Ryland to depend more radically upon God through prayer and earnest submission of will.<sup>66</sup> Newton’s correction had such impact on Ryland that he took a ministerial course markedly different than that of his prominent father. J. C. Ryland was so fond of the press that, in his later years, his haste to publish nearly sunk him in financial ruin. The younger Ryland never bore the same eagerness to make his mark in print in Baptist or evangelical circles. His biographers note the remarkable way in which Ryland’s life was characterized by self-forgetfulness and humility, especially notable in light of his considerable intellectual gifts.<sup>67</sup>

Second, Ryland’s sermon emphasizes the inevitable growth of the church as the necessary consequence of the resurrection of Christ. Even though the church has experienced setbacks in history, Ryland argues that there has never been a moment in which the kingdom of Christ has diminished; “Though the Church *below* has not always been increasing in numbers, the Church *above* is continually increasing.” “The gates of new Jerusalem, which are never shut day nor night,” he continues, “are perpetually

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<sup>65</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 3.

<sup>66</sup>See especially the letters from 17 October 1771 and 16 January 1722 in Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 11–21.

<sup>67</sup>*WRH*, 5:393.



admitting some happy spirit, transported from a state of imperfection, to the perfection of holiness and bliss.”<sup>68</sup> This work, however, is not yet complete, “The principal harvest of the earth has not yet been gathered in.” Instead,

we are well assured that there shall be a far more extensive application of Christ’s redemption, than has yet taken place. In spite of all obstacles, which earth and hell have laid in the way, the everlasting Gospel must be preached among all nations. . . He must increase, till his mystical fullness is completed; till all his elect being regenerated and sanctified, he can say to his Father, “Here am I and the children thou hast given me.”<sup>69</sup>

*Certain Increase* also reflects the profound impact of Jonathan Edwards on Ryland’s thinking. Reflecting on John 3:30, Ryland notes that “when Christ came in his public ministry, the light of this Morning-Star [John the Baptist] decreased too, as the brightest of the planetary train, the forerunner of the rising sun, is lost in the superior lustre of his beams, soon after he arises.”<sup>70</sup> This idea he attributes directly to Edwards, directing the reader in a footnote to consult “Edwards on Redemption.”<sup>71</sup> Immediately after Edwards’s own quotation of John 3:30, he goes on to note that “soon after Christ began his public ministry, John the Baptist was put to death; as the morning-star is visible a little after the sun is risen, yet soon goes out.”<sup>72</sup>

Their shared eschatological vision is even more prominent in the sermon. Ryland argues that the increase of the glory of Christ takes place not only in the life of the believer on earth, but in increasing degrees throughout all of eternity. He writes:

[In heaven] will their positive happiness be increasing to all eternity. For, tho’ their deliverance from error, sin, pain, and grief will be complete, at their first entrance

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<sup>68</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 14.

<sup>69</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 15.

<sup>70</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 4.

<sup>71</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 4n. The quotes that Ryland appears to reference in this note can be found on pages 130 and 219 of Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption. Containing, the Outlines of a Body of Divinity, in a Method Entirely New. By the Late Reverend Mr Jonathan Edwards, President of the College of New Jersey* (Edinburgh: M. Gray, 1788).

<sup>72</sup>Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, 219.

into glory, there must still be room for finite minds to increase in the knowledge and enjoyment of the infinite Good; and consequently, to make the most rapid and uninterrupted progress in positive holiness, humility and joy, forever.... All this eternal felicity will be entirely owing to the blood of the Lamb. It will be given to his redeemed as the reward of *his* infinitely meritorious obedience. All this exceeding great and eternal weight of glory must be reckoned, therefore, as *his increase*.<sup>73</sup>

This description of the asymptotic growth of the believer's knowledge and enjoyment of God in heaven is resonant of Edwards's thought in "The End for Which God Created the World," an essay first published in London in 1778.<sup>74</sup> Evidence indicates that Ryland read *Two Dissertations* after its republication by Margaret Gray in early 1788.<sup>75</sup> While Ryland does not specifically mention "The End for Which God Created the World" in *Certain Increase*, his language is Edwardsean. Edwards writes,

it is a thing infinitely good in itself, that God's glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings. And that there should be in them an increasing knowledge of God to all eternity, is an existence, a reality infinitely worthy to be, and worthy to be valued and regarded by him, to whom it belongs to order that to be, which, of all things possible, is fittest and best.<sup>76</sup>

Edwards goes on to argue,

There are many reasons to think, that what God has in view, in an increasing communication of himself throughout eternity, is an increasing knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him. . . . In the view therefore of God, who has a comprehensive prospect of the increasing union and conformity through eternity, it must be an increasingly strict and perfect nearness, conformity, and oneness. For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 15–16.

<sup>74</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Two Dissertations Concerning the End for Which God Created the World; and the Nature of True Virtue. By the Late Reverend, Learned, and Pious, Jonathan Edwards, A. M. President of the College of New-Jersey* (Edinburgh: W. Darling, 1788), 25–37, 49–52.

<sup>75</sup>Ryland found out about the less expensive edition of *Two Dissertations* from his friend, John Erskine. "Erskine to John Ryland, Jr." November 8, 1788, Edinburgh University Library. See Jonathan M. Yeager, *Jonathan Edwards and Transatlantic Print Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 129.

<sup>76</sup>Edwards, *Two Dissertations*, 24.

<sup>77</sup>Edwards, *Two Dissertations*, 34–35.

Ryland concludes the sermon by exhorting his listeners to draw great courage from the fact that Christian ministers “are on the safe side, the rising side, the side that must prevail, let what events so ever will take place. In life, death, and to eternity, you are secure.”<sup>78</sup> In light of this security, ministers should “be excited to activity and resolution” in the cause of Christ, recognizing that every talent allotted them has been purposed “that we may promote the cause of Christ.” Ministers should seek first of all the increase of the kingdom of Christ *in their own souls*, for “own happiness is best promoted by our being thoroughly subdued and entirely devoted to the Lord.”<sup>79</sup> If Christ is the great end of the minister’s life, Ryland argues, then “let us seek the attainment of that end with utmost vigor...May Christ be more known, more enjoyed, more glorified, thro' our means!” But Ryland does not only have the Association’s domestic evangelistic efforts in view. Instead, he exhorts his fellow pastors to “enlarge our plans for promoting the cause of Christ” in light of the fact that millions are perishing around the world without the knowledge of Christ,

If indeed we believe the gospel, let us be eager to propagate it in every part of the globe. . . . If Christ must increase, his servants must be active. The indolent must be roused from their lukewarmness or else be removed out of this world. . . . The increase of his Kingdom will sooner or later increase the joy and happiness of his friends. May this be the chief end, therefore, both of our ministry and of our lives. . . . Never may there be room to suspect that our aim is to increase our income, increase our influence, increase our reputation among men, or to increase an interest of a party. But this be our sole design that He may increase, whose we are, and whom we serve; tho' we be as reprobates.<sup>80</sup>

In the ensuing years, Ryland would travel thousands of miles to raise support for the Society’s missionaries. With the assistance of James Hinton (1761–1823) of Oxford, Ryland also briefly served as secretary of the Society after Fuller’s death (1815–1817). Despite several significant disagreements over administration of the Society’s Serampore

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<sup>78</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 28.

<sup>79</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 29.

<sup>80</sup>Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus*, 31–32.

station, Carey and Ryland remained close friends.<sup>81</sup> When the Society moved to London in 1817 under the leadership of John Dyer, Ryland expressed his conviction that a mission society be run by pastors and theologians rather than administrators, saying that “he trembled for the ark of the mission when it should be transported to London and fall into the hands of mere counting-house men.”<sup>82</sup> After hearing of Ryland’s death in 1825, Carey wrote an affectionate letter to his family, calling Ryland “my very dear friend, certainly the dearest to me of any man in the world.”<sup>83</sup> “No man,” he wrote, “felt a more lively interest than he in the undertaking to which I have devoted myself. He has left the world and is gone to glory. I hope to meet him there, and with him, ‘in transporting joy, recount the labours of our feet.’”<sup>84</sup>

### **Ministry in Bristol and Beyond**

Another event significant for the life of John Ryland took place in 1792. In August of 1791, Caleb Evans, who had held the joint position of pastor of Broadmead Church and principal of Bristol Academy died. For twenty years, the Bristol Education Society had financially supported a renewed commitment to training “a succession of able and evangelical ministers” for Baptist congregations through the ministry partnership of the Broadmead congregation and Bristol Academy.<sup>85</sup> This training effort

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<sup>81</sup>Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, 58–62.

<sup>82</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 37.

<sup>83</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:57.

<sup>84</sup>Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1828, 2:57. In another example of Ryland’s deep love for Carey, William Henderson recounts, “The first time our annual meetings were held in London, a remarkable incident occurred. In the course of a sermon which he was preaching in the Dutch church, Austin Friars, mention was made by Dr. Ryland of the happiness of Dr. Carey in having two of his sons, Felix and William, devoted to mission; ‘but,’ said he, ‘there is a third who gives him pain because he is not yet turned to the Lord.’ Then the Doctor burst into tears, and implored the audience to send up a united fervent prayer to God, in solemn silence, for the conversion of Jabez Carey. Two thousand persons silently asked God for that favour. The petition was answered. Among the first tidings from India was the statement that ‘nearly or quite synchronous with the fervent supplication,’ Carey’s third son had become a believer (William John Henderson and John Brown Myers, *The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1892* [Baptist Missionary Society, 1892], 5).

<sup>85</sup>Norman S. Moon, Leonard G. Champion, and H. Mowvley, *The Bristol Education Society, 1770–1970* (Bristol, England: Published by the Bristol Baptist College, 1970), 5.

had been forged nearly 100 years earlier when Edward Terrell, a preaching elder at Broadmead, had provided in his will that the proceeds from his estate be devoted to the support of “a holy learned man, well-schooled in the tongues who should devote three half days in the week to instruct some young men, not exceeding twelve members of any baptised congregation in or about Bristol for two years at most.”<sup>86</sup> Bernard Foskett had fulfilled these requirements at Broadmead from 1720 to 1758. His successor Hugh Evans (1712–1781), assisted by his son Caleb, expanded this training in the formation of the Bristol Academy.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, at Caleb Evans’s death, Broadmead extended a call to John Fawcett (1740–1817) and another minister to replace him, but both declined. In 1792, Ryland was asked to fill the Broadmead pulpit for a month and the church, pleased with his ministry, extended a call for him to fill the joint post. This caught Ryland, now forty years old and completing his twentieth year of ministry in Northampton, by surprise.<sup>88</sup> As a youth, J. C. Ryland had decided not to send his son to his *alma mater* for education. As a consequence, Ryland had received all of his training at the College Lane church and at his father’s school in Northampton. Ryland was well aware that the Academy’s graduates included many notable ministers such as Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795), Morgan Edwards (1722–1795) who founded the College of Rhode Island (now Brown University), Robert Hall Jr., Samuel Pearce (1766–1799), John Rippon (1751–1836), and John Sutcliff. In addition to this, in the previous year, Broadmead had secured Joseph Hughes (1769–1833) to assist the ailing Caleb Evans. Hughes was a graduate of Bristol, Kings College, Aberdeen and Edinburgh University.<sup>89</sup> Ryland, sensing his lack of

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<sup>86</sup>Moon, Champion, and Mowvley, *The Bristol Education Society, 1770–1970*, 5.

<sup>87</sup>Moon, Champion, and Mowvley, *The Bristol Education Society, 1770–1970*, 5.

<sup>88</sup>Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753-1825),” 84.

<sup>89</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 259.

qualification, declined. The Academy, however, persisted, extending two further calls.<sup>90</sup> Ryland wrote Newton with his concern. Newton, who was not enthusiastic about theological training as a requirement for pastoral ministry, argued that Ryland's pastoral role in Northampton was of great value and should not be hastily abandoned. He nevertheless stated that Ryland's comparative lack of formal training was no disqualification, "if [Joseph Hughes] should be a better classical scholar than yourself, I see not any harm, provided he be humble and peaceful. You would probably be his superior in general and [have] more useful knowledge."<sup>91</sup> The congregation at Northampton was also very reluctant to release Ryland—and Ryland was reluctant to leave. In his preface to *The Earnest Charge* (1793), Ryland noted that he had never been "more closely and cordially united than at the time when the providence of God called me away from you in so unexpected a manner."<sup>92</sup> After nearly two years of protracted discussion, Ryland accepted the call on January 24, 1794, Northampton granted his release to Broadmead, and two weeks later Ryland assumed the post that he would retain for the rest of his life.

Ryland was, in the end, a remarkably strategic choice. Robert Hall, Jr. noted that Ryland was a "scholar from his infancy" and, in addition to his remarkable attainment in Hebrew, "he had a general acquaintance with the principles of science" and a "passion for natural science."<sup>93</sup> Hall wrote that Ryland was "extremely addicted to study and meditation" and that "his reading was various and extensive."<sup>94</sup> Ryland had

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<sup>90</sup>Gordon, "John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825)," 85.

<sup>91</sup>Letter 56, 30 April 1792. Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 267. Hughes would go on to found the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) and was a founding member of the Religious Tract Society (1799). See *Bristol Baptist College: 250 Years (1679–1929)* (Bristol, England: Rankin Brothers, 1929).

<sup>92</sup>John Ryland, *The Earnest Charge, and Humble Hope of an Affectionate Pastor* (Bristol, England: W. Pine, 1794), ii.

<sup>93</sup>*WRH*, 1:404.

<sup>94</sup>*WRH*, 1:404.

already been awarded a Master of Arts degree from Brown University in 1773, when he was twenty years old. In a coincidence of timing, Brown also awarded him a Doctor of Divinity degree in 1792.<sup>95</sup> Ryland was unusually well read and had a vast vision for education. He strongly believed in the importance of an educated ministry, stating to the Stepney Academy in 1812 that it was “highly expedient that every large body of Christians should possess some learned ministers and the greater their numbers and attainment the better.”<sup>96</sup> Given the advance of modernism in the academy and the prevalence of deism in the broader culture, Ryland also recognized that ministers for the nineteenth century needed more than a narrowly theological education. They also needed a broad and thorough grasp of all the fields of human knowledge, “so that well-informed and well-trained minds might be brought to the service of the Gospel.”<sup>97</sup> Not surprisingly, Ryland himself taught students Hebrew, Greek, Latin, theology, church history, rhetoric and logic.<sup>98</sup> In the latter subjects, he used a new method of teaching—assigning a book to be read by the students in advance and then discussing the argument in great detail in the classroom. Moon notes that William Rhodes answered an implied criticism that Ryland never produced lectures of his own when he wrote,

If it was any defect at all, it was compensated to a very great extent by his preaching. . . which was of a highly vigorous and intellectual, as well as very devotional cast. We thus received of him his enlarged and luminous views of nearly all the great topics of Divine Truth.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 27.

<sup>96</sup>John Ryland, *Advice to Young Ministers, Respecting Their Preparatory Studies a Sermon Preached June 25, 1812, in the Meeting-House in Devonshire-Square, London: Before the Subscribers to the Academical Institution at Stepney, for the Education of Candidates for the Ministry of the Baptist Denomination: Published at the Request of the Managers, Tutor, and Students* (Bristol, England: E. Bryan, 1812).

<sup>97</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 28.

<sup>98</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 28.

<sup>99</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 28.

In addition to the curricular developments and his own classroom instruction, Ryland oversaw the design of a new campus at Stokes Croft and raised the necessary funding for the move, secured tutors, corresponded with future students and Baptist associations who expressed interest in them, visited graduates, and preached in Broadmead chapel or in local churches three times a week on average. Under Ryland’s “vigorous presidency” the College graduated nearly two hundred students, with an average of twenty students enrolled at any one time.<sup>100</sup> He also “put the claims” of the BMS to his students such that no less than twenty six of his students during his thirty two years of principalship, became missionaries with the society.<sup>101</sup> Ryland trained Joshua Marshman in Hebrew and Syriac and sent him to assist Carey in the translation of the Scriptures in 1795.<sup>102</sup> Another translator, Dr. William Yates, was trained at Bristol and sent in 1814. He published grammars in Sanskrit and Urdu in Serampore.<sup>103</sup> A “notable succession” of his students opened up a new work in Asia between 1800 and 1816—in India, Java, and Ceylon.<sup>104</sup>

All the while, Ryland was also active in opposing the slave trade and in sending missionaries to work among slaves in Jamaica for the Baptist Mission Society. He conducted an extended correspondence with William Wilberforce in the effort to promote religious liberty in Jamaica. Although the advice of the Society had been to remain “neutral” to the issue of slavery after two missionaries were kicked out of Sierra Leone in 1797, it was the efforts of William Knibb (1803–1845) (member of Broadmead during Ryland’s pastorate) and others who successfully roused public opinion such that Parliament abolished slavery in the Empire in 1834.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 30; *Bristol Baptist College: 250 Years (1679–1929)*, 35.

<sup>101</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 35.

<sup>102</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 35.

<sup>103</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 36.

<sup>104</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 36.

<sup>105</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 37.



## The Theology of John Ryland

While the investigation of Ryland's spiritual formation, piety, and ministry has already explored facets of his baptistic and evangelical Calvinism, several additional considerations may round out a portrait of his Edwardsean and evangelical theology.

Drawing on the riches of his Puritan and reformed heritage, Ryland's 1781 *Confession of Faith* demonstrates his evangelicalism in the fullest sense of Bebbington's definition.<sup>106</sup> First, Ryland shared the conviction that true belief was only to be found in turning to Christ. While genuine Christianity was reflected in a life of piety, good works themselves were insufficient grounds for a right standing before God. "Our works are not only imperfect," Ryland wrote in his 1781 Confession of Faith, "but also are by no means designed to be in whole or in part the ground of our justification before God."<sup>107</sup> Justification "is solely upon the account of the imputed righteousness of Christ," righteousness that is "received by faith alone."<sup>108</sup> Conversion is essentially, then, the work of the Spirit in convicting sinners of the insufficiency of their works and their deep need for the righteousness of God in Christ.<sup>109</sup> Ryland, however, rejected the rationalistic formulations of high Calvinism which removed the sinner's foundational obligation to repent by emphasizing the role of the Spirit. While the Spirit's operations are "the undoubted *cause* of a sinner's *compliance* with duty," Ryland argued, they "are neither

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<sup>106</sup>David Bebbington's "quadrilateral of priorities" is a helpful rubric for defining the characteristics of evangelicalism from the 1730s onward. Bebbington proposed that evangelicals were defined by their common commitment to 1) conversionism, 2) Biblicism, 3) crucicentrism, and 4) activism. While it is true that these commitments were shared in larger with the Reformers and Puritans before them, Bebbington argues that they are especially characteristic of the period of 18<sup>th</sup> century revivals. See David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). D. W. Bebbington, "Revival and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Modern Christian Revivals*, ed. Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer and Randall Herbert Balmer (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 14–41. For a brief account of Ryland's theology, see Champion, "The Theology of John Ryland," 19–21.

<sup>107</sup>Ryland, "MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings," 16.

<sup>108</sup>Ryland, "MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings," 16.

<sup>109</sup>"The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction" in Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1826, 1:346. For a more descriptive account of Ryland's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, see Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Sum of All Good": John Ryland, Jr. and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Churchman* 103, no. 4 (1989): 332–53.

the *source* or the *measure of duty*.” In other words, the absence of love to God cannot remove man’s obligation as creature “to be wholly and exclusively devoted to his service.”<sup>110</sup>

As has been noted, Ryland’s manner of navigating the tension between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility was profoundly influenced by Jonathan Edwards’s articulation of natural and moral inability.<sup>111</sup> These insights about the nature of conversion also shaped his understanding of the duty of Christian ministers. They are “commissioned to assure their hearers in general that all Things are ready,” Ryland wrote, “the Gospel feast is provided for all comers; Jesus who saves to the uttermost will in no wise cast out or reject any that apply to him.”<sup>112</sup> Gospel ministers must earnestly exhort their hearers to respond to the offer of reconciliation in Christ because “it is our duty to use the utmost closeness and earnestness in addressing our perishing fellow Sinners.”<sup>113</sup> In his final sermon to the Northhamptonshire congregation, Ryland emphasized, “I wish you may seek for nothing else, but the gracious and indefinite call of his word. I know this to be the doctrine of the old Calvinists, and I believe it to be the doctrine of God’s Word, and had I preached the contrary for many years past I could not have thought myself pure from the blood of all men.”<sup>114</sup>

Second, as his 1781 “Confession of Faith” indicates, Ryland was deeply committed to the centrality of Scripture. He argues that a belief in divine inspiration of

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<sup>110</sup>John Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet’s Giving a Certain Sound* (Bristol, England: E. Bryan, 1813), 22.

<sup>111</sup>For an example of Ryland’s exposition of this idea in preaching, see “Depravity the Cause of Spiritual Ignorance” in Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:315–18.

<sup>112</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 14. See also Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet’s Giving a Certain Sound*, 24–29.

<sup>113</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 15. Ryland further unpacks his understanding of external and internal evidences in a sermon entitled “On the Holy Scriptures.” See Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:223–27.

<sup>114</sup>Ryland, *The Earnest Charge, and Humble Hope of an Affectionate Pastor*, 65.

the “Scriptures of Truth” is not mere fideism, because both external and internal evidence “most clearly demonstrates” its origin, truthfulness, and authority.<sup>115</sup> As the “Godbreath’d Book,” Ryland argues that the Bible is “a full and sufficient directory respecting faith and practice” and that “all Doctrines or Practices that are not proved and warranted thereby” are to be steadfastly rejected.<sup>116</sup> The Scriptures alone possesses sovereign authority over “all ancient traditions and all new revelations” and Ryland “would admit nothing in Religion myself [upon] the authority of any man or set of men whatsoever without Scripture proof.” Ryland thus appealed to his congregation, “I desire all that hear me may try every doctrine or sentiment that I deliver, by the word of God, and receive or reject it accordingly.”<sup>117</sup>

From his earliest years, he dedicated his life to the careful study of Scripture, committing to the life-long discipline of maintaining and teaching the original languages. The place of Scripture is evident in his commitment to exegetical preaching as the keystone of a prodigious public ministry. Ryland consciously saw himself, regardless of his many other ministerial responsibilities, primarily responsible to faithful preaching of the Bible. “We have unspeakable reason to bless God for the Bible,” Ryland writes, “we have great reason to dread abusing so invaluable a gift, lest it should be only a price in the hands of a fool to get wisdom.”<sup>118</sup>

Third, Ryland’s theology, like other evangelicals of his day put special emphasis on the cross of Christ. “Whether you call it atonement or reconciliation,” Ryland declares in a sermon on Romans 5:11, “it was needful for Jesus to make peace by the blood of his cross, and that it is by his obedience unto death that he hath made

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<sup>115</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 4.

<sup>116</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 5–6.

<sup>117</sup>Ryland, “MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings,” 6.

<sup>118</sup>“On the Holy Scriptures” in Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:227.

reconciliation for transgressors.”<sup>119</sup> As such, the atonement was “of infinite importance.”<sup>120</sup> Reconciliation is necessary because of mankind’s odious rebellion and the infinite offence even the smallest sin is against a holy God.<sup>121</sup> In his funeral sermon for Robert Hall, Sr., Ryland gives an extended argument for centrality of the cross,

An absolutely perfect and benevolent being would never have subjected any of his intelligent creatures to the smallest penalty, unless the reason and fitness of things had rendered it requisite in the case of disobedience. . . . Love to the uncreated Being and love to the intelligent Creation, unite in demanding that the authority of God should be supported. . . . To this end, not only must a plain, perfect, and invariable rule of conduct be laid down, but that that law which is holy, just, and good must be properly sanctioned. . . . God’s displeasure against sin must be in proportion to his love of holiness. . . . It follows that the Curse of the Law is the result and display of the divine benevolence, or of the Love which the governor of the universe bears to God, and to the highest good of the created system. . . . It was. . . from a wise, just, holy, and benevolent regard to the general good of the whole system. . . that Jehovah threatened every transgressor of his admirable law with death. Yet with astonishment we behold the like penalty inflicted on the incarnate Son of God.<sup>122</sup>

Not only is the cross the fitting means by which God reconciles sinners to himself, it is the central display of the glory of God.<sup>123</sup> Ryland writes, “the atonement exhibits, in the strongest light, by the united testimony of the Lawgiver and the Mediator, God’s utter abhorrence of sin, and thus manifests in the most decisive manner that salvation is wholly of grace.”<sup>124</sup>

Ryland’s qualification for the fourth component of Bebbington’s definition,

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<sup>119</sup>“Reconciliation by the Death of Christ” in Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:1.

<sup>120</sup>“Remarks on Dr. Chalmers’s Sermons” in Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:326–27.

<sup>121</sup>Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet’s Giving a Certain Sound*, 20–21.

<sup>122</sup>John Ryland, *Salvation Finished, as to Its Impetration, at the Death of Christ; and with Respect to Its Application, at the Death of the Christian: A Funeral Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Robert Hall. By John Ryland, To Which Is Annexed, Mr. Fuller’s Oration at the Grave. With an Appendix* (London: Matthews & Button, 1791), 8–9.

<sup>123</sup>Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 18.

<sup>124</sup>“Salvation by Grace” in Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:128. This statement shows Ryland’s agreement with Fuller and the New Divinity writers against a purely economic view of the atonement. Ryland, like Fuller, came to embrace a governmental view which sought to ground the atonement in God’s moral justice rather than the commercial sense it was often portrayed.

activism, scarcely needs additional exposition. Apart from his many efforts in domestic and international evangelism, his efforts to destroy the evil of human slavery, and his determined efforts to train the next generation of gospel ministers, Ryland was also provoked by the resurgent nominalism of his day. In an address to the Western Association in 1813, Ryland lamented that should he have been called as a missionary, he would have been “obliged to admit, with heartfelt grief, that the lives of many nominal Christians prove that they are only Christians in name, nor could I long conceal it that there are also nominal Christians whose sentiments differ widely from my own, and who reject the most important doctrines of the sacred word.”<sup>125</sup> This he saw as having primarily a doctrinal origin in the antinomianism that perennially plagued the church.<sup>126</sup> Particularly nefarious was the “evangelical hypocrite” who “professes to love free grace but is at heart an enemy to the law.” This person’s religion “is entirely the product of self-love” and consists “merely in the confidence of his own safety” and despises repentance as “a mean, legal thing.”<sup>127</sup> The evangelical hypocrite represents the believer as one who is “raised above obligation” and who, it would follow, is “incapable of sinning after [his] conversion.”<sup>128</sup> Thus, he has “no reason to mourn over the plague of [his] own heart,” no need of the Spirit’s conviction, no need to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and “no need to live upon Christ for strength.” According to Ryland, nothing can tend much more “to the dishonor of the Holy Spirit than to entertain so unscriptural an opinion.”<sup>129</sup> The solution to this malaise was to use every means available to preach the whole counsel of the

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<sup>125</sup>Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet’s Giving a Certain Sound*, 46.

<sup>126</sup>See especially John Ryland, *The Law Not against the Promises of God* (London: J. Buckland, 1787); John Ryland, *Serious Remarks on the Different Representations of Evangelical Doctrine by the Professed Friends of the Gospel*, vol. 1 (Bristol, England: J.G. Fuller, 1817); Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 1818.

<sup>127</sup>Ryland, *The Earnest Charge, and Humble Hope of an Affectionate Pastor*, 70n.

<sup>128</sup>Ryland, *The Law Not against the Promises of God*, 46.

<sup>129</sup>Ryland, *The Law Not against the Promises of God*, 48.

gospel, defend orthodox doctrine in teaching and in print, and to exhort ministers of their responsibility to do the same.

Despite Ryland's firm convictions, he maintained a remarkably irenic spirit—one which occasionally brought criticism from his fellow Baptist ministers. In a defense of Baptist doctrine published in 1814, Ryland lamented how doctrinal differences were often emphasized rather than what Dissenters and the Established church held in common: "Strange would it be, if an agreement with our Episcopalian brethren, in six and thirty articles, except two sentences, should not have more effect to unite us, than a disagreement on three articles and two clauses could have to divide us."<sup>130</sup> Ryland felt that the Scriptures gave liberty of conscience to disagree over matters not clearly defined in the text. He was willing to disagree even with those of this own denomination over doctrinal matters like the Lord's supper. Agreement over doctrine, in his view, could never take place at the expense of truth; "Zechariah exhorts us to love truth, even before peace; (5:19) but, for the sake of spreading the truth, I wish to speak it in love."<sup>131</sup>

While the preceding investigation has demonstrated the influence of Edwards on Ryland's theology, one final observation is worthy of comment. Like Fuller, Edwards's theology so saturated Ryland's thinking that it pervades his writing even when Ryland does not quote him directly.<sup>132</sup> This can be seen in Ryland's *Confession* where he adopts Edwardsean terminology in describing his convictions about the fundamental order of the universe. Reminiscent of Edwards's *Two Dissertations*, Ryland writes "I believe that God is infinitely worthy to be his own chief End, & that for his Pleasure & Glory all things are and were created."<sup>133</sup> Perhaps the most significant Edwardsean

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<sup>130</sup>John Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons Which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from so Many of Their Christian Brethren* (London: Button & Son, 1814), ix.

<sup>131</sup>Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons*, xi–xii.

<sup>132</sup>Chris Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 132. While Chun makes this argument in reference to Fuller, it is equally true of Ryland.

<sup>133</sup>Ryland, "MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings," 8. See *Dissertation 1: Concerning the*

undercurrent in Ryland's thought, however, is the conviction that true Christian spirituality loves God for who he is rather than primarily what he does for the sinner. Ryland writes that all creatures "are bound to treat God as the supreme Good...loving him supremely, delighting in him superlatively and making his glory their chief End." Reflective of Edwards's sentiments in *Religious Affections*, Ryland continues,

True Faith I apprehend is neither a speculative assent to any scripture Truths, nor an Assurance of that Proposition no where to be found in Scripture that Christ died for me in particular but A cordial Approbation of God's Method of Salvation receiving his Testimony concerning his Son as worthy of all Acceptation & upon the credit thereof embracing him in all those offices and for those Ends in and for which he is revealed in the Gospel. This Faith manifests itself to be genuine by its blessed effects, ever tending in proportion to its degree, to increase Repentance, purify the heart overcome the world, & work by Love to God Christ, universal holiness the Saints, & all mankind.<sup>134</sup>

The upshot of this final observation is that Ryland's uniquely Edwardsean evangelicalism not only shapes the way he understands the Christian life, but how he frames his portrait of Andrew Fuller. Like Edwards's Brainerd, Ryland's Fuller is an epitome of Edwards's understanding of true Christian spirituality.

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*End for Which God Created the World* in *WJE*, 8:403.

<sup>134</sup>Ryland, "MS Volumes of Miscellaneous Writings," 17–18.

## CHAPTER 4

### BY INSTANCE AND EXAMPLE: EDWARDSEAN EVANGELICAL BIOGRAPHY

#### **Introduction**

On October 13, 1750, an essay by Samuel Johnson appeared in *The Rambler* in which Johnson made a simple observation on the role that imagination plays in shaping human action. Imagination places the reader “in the condition of him whose fortunes we contemplate; so that we feel, while the deception lasts, whatever emotions would be excited by the same good or evil happening to ourselves.” Such imagination, particularly when it resonates with personal experience, has profound power to cultivate virtue and to stir the passions. “Therefore,” Johnson concluded, “no species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful, none can more certainly enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition.”<sup>1</sup> This perspective on biography’s significance and its direct application to “private life,” reflects important philosophical and literary changes taking place in life-writing during the eighteenth century—a shift that ultimately defines the modern genre of biography.

This chapter briefly traces the development of life-writing from ancient times to its re-tooling in the eighteenth century in order to underscore the remarkable shift in subject and perspective that takes place as a result of the enlightenment. This literary history serves as a backdrop to highlight how evangelicals, including Jonathan Edwards

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Johnson, “Rambler No. 60: Saturday, October 13, 1750,” in *The Rambler*, vol. 2 (London: J. Payne and J. Bouquet, 1752), 208.



and John Ryland, conform to and diverge from other contemporary eighteenth-century biographers. The chapter then turns to examine Edwards's familiarity with contemporary literature and his own approach to biography. Edwards's biographical work and that of his New Divinity heir, Samuel Hopkins, demonstrate clear awareness of contemporary biography while maintaining a strong embrace of the moral purpose of biography which was largely being jettisoned by popular biography of his time. A final section assesses the predominant features of Edwards's biographical work, preparing the groundwork for comparison with the Fuller biographies of Ryland and Morris in chapter six.

### **“Not Histories, but Lives”: Historical Precursors to Eighteenth-Century Biography**

Though “biography” and “biographer” and their related terms in European languages are formed from the Greek roots *bios* (life) and *graphein* (to write), the terms themselves do not appear until the mid-seventeenth century. As Duane Reed Stuart notes, *biographos* was “certainly never used in ancient Greek,” and its equivalent, *biographia*, “occurred rarely in Latin until the Middle Ages” to denote written accounts of a life or lives.<sup>2</sup> This is because biography as a discrete genre of literature which presented individual lives as more important than places or things is conspicuously absent in ancient times.<sup>3</sup> Instead, one finds a variety of ancient literature that includes what might be abstractly referred to as “the biographic” or “biographical individualization.”<sup>4</sup> Tracing biography's development then involves tracing a trend from the use of “biographical individualization” as a feature of broader historiography to biography itself considered.

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<sup>2</sup>Nigel Hamilton, *Biography: A Brief History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 15.

<sup>3</sup>C. B. R. Pelling, “Biography, Greek.” Edited by Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 116.

<sup>4</sup>Simon Swain, “Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire,” in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, ed. M. J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 1.

Biography's emergence as a discrete genre has more to do with the history of ideas—particularly the extended philosophical reflection on the nature of the individual human self—than with mere literary innovation. In giving an account for this biographical trend, this introduction will briefly trace the biographic element from ancient Greco-Roman historiography and its various permutations through the rise of eighteenth-century biography.<sup>5</sup>

### **Greek Lives**

Accounts of the lives and exploits of great men is a common feature of human civilization.<sup>6</sup> For thousands of years, orally-recited stories preserved life records. Meter, rhythm, and alliteration, as well as powerful characterization enabled a caste of professional story-tellers to both recount and pass on detailed accounts of great lives. Stuart writes,

Transmission of personality belongs to so long a time before Herodotus and Thucydides, Isocrates and Xenophon, that the literary historian, addressing himself to the theme, may well be moved to echo the preface of the harassed Odysseus and inquire: "What, then, shall I make of my tale? What is its end."<sup>7</sup>

Written accounts developed early in Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilizations, focusing on the continuity of dynastic power and highlighting the acts of ancient rulers through first-person pronouncements and testimonials.<sup>8</sup> Even before the

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<sup>5</sup>For an extensive survey of the literature on the development of biography, see Carl E. Rollyson, *Biography: An Annotated Bibliography* (Pasadena, CA: iUniverse, 2007).

<sup>6</sup>While contemporary historians of biography readily note that the genre should not be reduced to exclusively literary forms, this chapter will limit its examination to written accounts of lives. See William Epstein's landmark study of the genre and its theoretical understanding in William Epstein, *Recognizing Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987). At the introductory level, Nigel Hamilton provides an excellent orientation to the breadth and history of the genre (see Hamilton, *Biography*). An example of the important connection of biography to visual forms of nonfiction storytelling as it relates to Stuart and Georgian England can be found in Richard Wendorf, *The Elements of Life: Biography and Portrait-Painting in Stuart and Georgian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>7</sup>Duane Reed Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography* (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1967), 10.

<sup>8</sup>Catherine Neal Parke, *Biography: Writing Lives* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 2.

dawn of Greek literature, there were both ancient bards who “knew how to couch in artistic style the life histories of warrior princes” and an eager public “ready to lend its ears to these works of commemoration.”<sup>9</sup> Such life histories, however, were set in much larger historical (or legendary) settings—the lives serving to texture the larger historiographical project.<sup>10</sup> While great lives were part of these grand narratives, they were not of central focus.

Nevertheless, classical Greece and Rome developed particularly significant written biographical traditions. Herodotus (ca. 484–425 BC), Thucydides (ca. 460–400 BC), Xenophon (ca. 430–354 BC) and Polybius (ca. 200–118 BC) authored portraits of generals and eminent statesmen, often using them to frame significant historical narratives or political theses. Swain argues that these “are not really biographical portraits, but judgments. They do not ask where a man has come from or where he is going to.”<sup>11</sup>

By the fourth century BC, accounts of individual lives began to emerge—among the first of which were Isocrates’s account of Evagorus (ca. 411–374), the King of Cyprus, and Xenophon’s account of Socrates in *Memorabilia*.<sup>12</sup> Xenophon’s account reflected several important developments. Parke notes that his was the first account to focus on a man “of popular interest,” instead of a king or general. Xenophon also explored the relationship between his subject’s character and his work—focusing on Socrates’ aims and purposes, rather than simply recounting his deeds. Finally, Xenophon used anecdotes from Socrates’s life as well as accounts of conversations, to bring depth to

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<sup>9</sup>Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*, 9.

<sup>10</sup>Parke, *Biography*, 1.

<sup>11</sup>Swain, “Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire,” 23.

<sup>12</sup>Parke, *Biography*, 3.

his characterization.<sup>13</sup> But Xenophon's homage to his teacher, Socrates, introduced a problem. While the recounting of personal accounts gave his portrait unusual depth of field, its intimacy introduced a new dynamic to personal bias—one which increasingly called into question the relationship between history and the writing of lives.

Later accounts of lives, however, drew most heavily from the model of Plutarch (ca. 46–120 AD). Plutarch saw a value to the recording lives beyond propaganda, entertainment, or encomium. He found that the record of the subject's character, particularly his response to life circumstances, had the power to shape the reader's virtue. In the introduction to his *Life of Timoleon*, Plutarch wrote,

I began writing of my *Lives* for the sake of others, but now I find that I have grown fond of the task and continue it for my own pleasure. The reason is that it allows me to treat history as a mirror, with the help of which I can adorn my own life by imitating the virtues of the men whose actions I have described. It is as though I could talk with the subjects of my *Lives* and enjoy their company every day, since I receive one in turn, welcome him as my guest, observe him with admiration as Priam did of Achilles, "What was his stature, his qualities?" and select from his career those events which are most important and the most inspiring to record. As Sophocles has written, "What greater joy could you attain than this?" And what could do more to raise the standards by which we live?<sup>14</sup>

In his account of the life of Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), Plutarch likened his work to that of the portrait painter who uses the face and the posture to convey the inner man; "In the same way, it is my task to dwell upon those actions which illuminate the working of the soul, and by this means to create a portrait of a man's life."<sup>15</sup> But it was also here that Plutarch distinguished the approach of the historian and that of the biographer:

It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories but lives . . . . The most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the virtues and vices of the men who performed them . . . a chance remark or joke may reveal far more of a man's

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<sup>13</sup>Parke, *Biography*, 3.

<sup>14</sup>"Life of Timoleon" in Plutarch, *The Age of Alexander: Nine Greek Lives*, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1973), 151.

<sup>15</sup>"The Life of Alexander" in Plutarch, *The Age of Alexander*, 252.

character than the mere feat of winning battles in which thousands fall, or marshalling great armies, or laying siege to cities.<sup>16</sup>

For Plutarch, the recounting of lives aimed not at describing what a person does, but who he is. Thus, Plutarch's portraits were largely moralistic and memetic. Plutarch did not approach his work with standards familiar to either ancient nor modern historiographers. Instead, he "was primarily an artist who considered biography to be both educationally substantive and imaginatively pleasurable."<sup>17</sup> This development in the biographical genre introduced a distinction between biography and history which, when coupled with a concern for morality, "made his *Lives* both edifying and entertaining, guaranteeing them popularity not only as reading matter through the ages but also source material for writers of fiction including Shakespeare."<sup>18</sup>

### **Roman Lives**

The writing of lives also flourished with the growth of the Roman empire and the period brought greater attention to the individual in the moral, legal, political and religious domains.<sup>19</sup> While Roman biographers were familiar with the Greek tradition, Roman biography was not wholly derived from it.<sup>20</sup> Roman biographers particularly aimed to underscore the cultural emphasis on devotion, though often in the form of panegyric.<sup>21</sup> Tacitus's (ca. 56–120) *Life of Agricola*, a highly positive account of the

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<sup>16</sup>"Life of Alexander" in Plutarch, *The Age of Alexander*, 252.

<sup>17</sup>Parke, *Biography*, 6.

<sup>18</sup>Irena Dorota Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe: Lives of Reformers by Friends, Disciples and Foes* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), xi.

<sup>19</sup>Swain, "Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire," 2.

<sup>20</sup>C. B. R. "Biography, Roman." Edited by Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 117.

<sup>21</sup>This devotion, however, should be understood as one's faithfulness to the rites of the Roman cult. Roman *bios* retained an overarching concern with the competitive quest for glory and little concern for the more intimate facets of life—exploration of spiritual life was largely regarded as inappropriate (Pelling, "Biography, Roman," 118).

prominent statesman who was also Tacitus's father-in-law, demonstrated how one could remain virtuous under despotic rule. Perhaps the most significant development in Roman biography, however, is reflected in Suetonius (ca. 69–122), the most prominent of Roman biographers and author of the highly popular *Lives of the Caesars*. Suetonius offered a different model of biography, radically reducing the element of the historical narrative in his accounts in favor of a “learned survey of an emperor’s character and behavior.” This reflects the tendency among Roman writers to see history “in terms of the ruling personality.”<sup>22</sup> Biography, thus, came to supplant historiography as the dominant mode of record.

Roman works in the late Republic period represent another important development in biography. While biography had already been used to cement “the different regions of the empire by giving them one common illustrious lineage,” the political dimensions of the late Republic spawned writings designed to praise, defend, and occasionally attack the character or philosophy of prominent men.<sup>23</sup> Caesar’s *Anticato*, a response to works by Cicero and Brutus surrounding the death of Cato the Younger, represented the beginnings of “a blend of martyrology and ideological propaganda which came to cluster around the Stoic opponents of the first-century Principate.”<sup>24</sup> Roman biography thus became increasingly concerned with the “setting of these lives in social, political, and religious contexts” with the purpose of shaping the narrow segment of literate Roman culture.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Pelling, “Biography, Roman,” 118.

<sup>23</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, x.

<sup>24</sup>Pelling, “Biography, Roman,” 118.

<sup>25</sup>Swain, “Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire,” 1, 3.

Perhaps the most enduring and familiar example of life-writing during the Roman period, however, are the Evangelists' accounts of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>26</sup> As continuous prose narratives comprised of sayings, anecdotes, speeches, and narratives, the synoptic Gospels bear features common to ancient and classical *bios*.<sup>27</sup> The introduction to Luke's gospel, for example, reflects the author's meticulous research and orderly writing (Lk 1:3), a reality evidenced by Luke's clear use of various written sources. While not among the eyewitnesses, Luke records that he had "undertaken to compile a narrative" having "followed all things closely for some time past" (1:1,3). Both Matthew and Mark, similarly, evidence the use of written sources and aim to portray Jesus as the fulfillment of the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>28</sup> Like Plutarch, however, the gospels were concerned to do more than recount a history of events. Rather, the conscious design of their narratives was to provide "certainty concerning the things you have been taught," particularly as it related to Gospel's primary subject, Jesus "who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 1:4; 2:11). Additionally, the Gospels were not strict chronological accounts. Instead, they followed the standard pattern of arranging collections of materials topically to display the subject's ideas and teaching.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Until the 1970s, New Testament scholarship held to the thesis that the Gospels constituted a unique literary genre. More recently, however, scholarship has asserted that the Gospels are related to other Greco-Roman literature, especially *bios*. Hurtado is right to argue that "both sides in the debate have legitimate point" since the Gospels both share features in common with and are written in a form distinctive from contemporary Greco-Roman literature. See Larry Hurtado, "Gospel (Genre)," ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 276. For an extensive treatment see the Gospels as Greco-Roman biography, see Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>27</sup>Richard A. Burridge, "Biography, Ancient," *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: Eerdmans, 2000), 169. Parke, *Biography*, 7. See also Hurtado, "Gospel (Genre)."

<sup>28</sup>For a concise discussion of the synoptic gospels and the Evangelists' use of written sources, see Robert Stein, "The Synoptic Problem," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 784–92.

<sup>29</sup>Richard A. Burridge, "Reading the Gospels as Biography," in *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, ed. Brian C. McGing and Ewen Bowie (Swansea, UK: Classical Press of Wales, 2007), 33. Burridge notes that the Gospels also fall within the basic length parameters of ancient biographies. He notes that shorter works were comprised of less than 10,000 words, medium length accounts between 10,000 and 25,000 words, and longer texts containing over 25,000 words. Most biographies fell in the medium length category since they were designed to be read in a single sitting and scrolls typically held no more than

## Lives in the Church

The expansion of the church inspired a proliferation of life-writing across the Mediterranean world, particularly in a body of literature modeling Christian witness amidst adversity and persecution. Like Greek and Roman accounts, early lives of the saints focused on the acts and deeds of the subjects, not their psychology or personal development.<sup>30</sup> However, Christian accounts introduced the miraculous and replaced pagan morality with biblical virtue. In contrast with Roman biography, the person most worthy of imitation was not the most illustrious or heroic, but the one who served God and the church with the most ardor, “preferably suffering martyrdom at the end.”<sup>31</sup> Since so many of the early Christian biographies focused on the lives of those of modest social status and involved miraculous events, it was important to guarantee an account’s truthfulness by appealing to first-hand witness—a practice which, at first, involved a local bishop’s approval but, from the thirteenth century onward, required canonization by the pope.<sup>32</sup> This is particularly significant since “truthfulness did not always apply as a criterion” in ancient biography, some of which was “frankly fanciful.”<sup>33</sup> As a genre, the lives of the saints was relatively diverse. In his preface to *De viris illustribus*, Jerome (c. 342–420) listed the pagan Roman authors Varro (116–27 BC), Cornelius Nepos (c. 110–c.25 BC), Hyginus (64 BC–AD 17), and Suetonius as part of his diverse literary lineage.

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25,000 words (Burrige, *What Are the Gospels?*, 114–15).

<sup>30</sup>The earliest collection of this material, compiled by Eusebius (c. 260–340), is now lost (F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, “Hagiography,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 733).

<sup>31</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xiii. Michael Williams makes a convincing argument that early lives (specifically Eusebius’s *Life of Constantine*, Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Moses*, and *Praise of Basil*, Athanasius’s *Life of Antony*, and Augustine’s *Confessions*) should not be read simply as Greco-Roman literary works, but as re-enactments of Scripture or evidences of God’s intention to intervene in the lives of contemporary subjects and their authors as he had intervened in the Bible (see Michael Stuart Williams, *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography: Between Eusebius and Augustine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>32</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xiii.

<sup>33</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, viii.



The lives of the saints also rapidly came to include particular patterns of devotion to the saints themselves. Evidence for the celebration of such events begins as early as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (c. 156), where the eyewitnesses to his martyrdom express their intention to “gather together as we are able, with joy and gladness, [where] the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom.”<sup>34</sup> Cyprian (d. 258) asserted the power of the martyrs’ intercession after death.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the hagiographic tradition varied widely in the importance authors attached to historical accuracy.<sup>36</sup> Parke notes that despite the fact that hagiography possessed “different evidentiary signs from those which the modern scientific world of the sixteenth century and after would find convincing,” the accounts were understood “to reveal unimpeachable and indispensably educative truths.”<sup>37</sup>

Possidius’s *Life of Augustine*, composed sometime before the capture of Carthage in 439, is particularly noteworthy in the development of Christian biography. In his preface, Possidius wrote that his purpose was “to aid in the edification of the holy and true catholic church of Christ the Lord, and so [have resolved] to not keep silent concerning the life and character of most noble bishop Augustine.”<sup>38</sup> Such an account, he stated, “was often done in times past by most devout men of the holy catholic church.”<sup>39</sup> Possidius continues,

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<sup>34</sup>*Mart. Pol.* 18:3.

<sup>35</sup>*The Epistles of Cyprian* 56.5, *ANF* 5:352. See also John Chrysostom’s (c. 349–407) *Homilies on Second Corinthians* 26.5, *NPNF<sup>1</sup>* 12:402. For a summary of the development of the cult of the saints, see F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, “Saints, Devotion to The,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1454–55.

<sup>36</sup>Cross and Livingstone, “Hagiography,” 733.

<sup>37</sup>Parke, *Biography*, 8. For a less-sympathetic assessment, see Hamilton, *Biography*, 48–55.

<sup>38</sup>Possidius, “The Life of St. Augustine,” in *Early Christian Biographies*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1952), 73.

<sup>39</sup>Possidius, “The Life of St. Augustine,” 73.

Inspired by the divine Spirit, yet using their own speech and style, they spoke and wrote like histories for the ears and eyes of those who wished to learn and, thus, brought to the notice of the studious, the great men who were counted worthy by the Lord's free grace both to live amid human affairs and to persevere to the end of their course. Therefore, in that faith unfeigned whereby all righteous and faithful souls must serve and please the Lord of Lords, I also, the least of all his stewards, have determined, with the Lord's help, to set forth the origin, career, and end of this venerable man as I have learned them from him and observed them through so many years of loving fellowship.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike much of medieval hagiography, Possidius's account focused very little on miraculous events surrounding his subject's life and ministry. Instead, Possidius only mentioned exorcism and miraculous healing as an illustration of the power of prayer. Possidius underscored his personal knowledge of Augustine as a guarantee of his truthfulness. His account presented Augustine as a model bishop: a tireless and faithful teacher who led a moderate and disciplined life, avoiding the extremes of asceticism and luxury, and assiduously conducting his tasks as a bishop to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Rather than presenting Augustine as an exceptional figure, Possidius was careful to show his subject as a model of piety for all Christians. Even the account of Augustine's death avoided the more fanciful features of hagiography, presenting Augustine, surrounded by friends, hoping in the eternal life to come.

Possidius's account demonstrates several features common to ancient biography. He followed a Suetonian pattern, dividing his work into three or four parts; a chronological account of Augustine's life (chs. 1–18), virtues (chs. 19–27.5), and last days and death (chs. 27.6–31). While it is clear that Possidius was familiar with Suetonius's pattern, he did not include a separate section devoted to Augustine's literary output. Instead, he focused on his subject as a model, rather than singular, Christian. Like Suetonius, he described both his subject's private and public character, devoting chapters to describing Augustine's use of church revenues as well as his household management, his attitude and behavior when attending church councils as well as his practices

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<sup>40</sup>Possidius, "The Life of St. Augustine," 73–74.

concerning female companionship. Nevertheless, Possidius followed Plutarch in distinguishing biography from history. Despite the documentary value of Augustine's autobiography and its availability to his audience, Possidius left out the account of Augustine's early life; including his concubinage and illegitimate son.<sup>41</sup> Not every detail of Augustine's life was relevant to his stated aim. Thus, Possidius provided an intriguing example of Christian adaptation of ancient biographical models.

Nevertheless, hagiography became increasingly prominent and diverse in the Middle Ages, linked as it was with medieval veneration and the ritual cult of the saints. The genre included *lives* as well as accounts of the finding of relics, papal canonization bulls, accounts of visions, and anthologies of miraculous occurrences. Altick argues that what separates the medieval and ancient genre of biography from the modern genre is the former showed "no attempt to draw individualized portraits or to examine psychology."

He writes

To the authors of these lives—anonymous for the most part—a saint was a saint, the value of whose story lay not in who he was, and specifically where and when he lived and what he actually did, but rather in the edification a reader could derive from what he was *said* to have done. For their narratives, the hagiographers drew freely from the great stockpile of heroic qualities and supernatural deeds that had accumulated since the beginning of the Christian era and attributed the same ones, with generous impartiality, to saint after saint . . . . It was upon these miracles, rather than the everyday circumstances of their saints' existence, that the hagiographers concentrated.<sup>42</sup>

One unmistakable heritage that the saints' "lives" did leave was the idea that "biography should be an instrument of inspiration and instruction." This, after all,

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<sup>41</sup>See Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xiii–xiv. Augustine's *Confessions* (c. 397), while autobiographical in form, plays an important role in the history of biography in the way it shapes the view of the self. Hamilton notes, "By the attention they paid to the ethical choices available to each individual human being, Christian autobiographers [following Augustine] focused upon the life story of the individual as a drama of the moral self—a focus that would remain long after the secularization of the Western world" (Hamilton, *Biography*, 59). Autobiographical accounts would become an important source for biography (See Williams, *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography*; Swain, "Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire").

<sup>42</sup>Richard D. Altick, *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America* (New York: Knopf, 1965), 6.

explains why hagiography has had such significant ethical impact in Christian piety. At the same time, “the implicit denial that biography should provide entertainment or satisfy curiosity militated against the collection and preservation of the very kind of data that men in later centuries were to find most revealing.”<sup>43</sup>

### **The Renaissance of Lives**

The rediscovery of Greek and Roman accounts in the sixteenth century fueled a new interest in life-writing.<sup>44</sup> Humanists produced numerous biographies, some of which were published in collections, in keeping with their Greek and Roman predecessors. Ancient biographical collections like those of Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius were even republished.<sup>45</sup> Theophrastus’s (c. 371–287) *Characters*, first translated into English in the sixteenth century, provided a model for Renaissance characterization.<sup>46</sup> Biographies of the era “retained all of [their] polymorphous character. Some biographies were accurate, others anecdotal, some were an attempt to identify a group, others were works of justification.”<sup>47</sup>

As Backus demonstrates, one major development that took place with the sixteenth-century Reformation was the use of the genre of lives to portray major figures of the Reformation as worthy examples or, conversely, as tools of the devil. This was

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<sup>43</sup>Altick, *Lives and Letters*, 7. Numerous twentieth-century studies seriously question the reliability of medieval hagiography, however recent scholarship has focused on rehabilitating saints’ lives. See Bertram Colgrave, “The Earliest Saints’ Lives Written in England,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 44 (1958): 35–60; Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Pamela Sheingorn, “The Saints in Medieval Culture: Recent Scholarship,” *Envoi* 2, no. Spring (1990): 1–29.

<sup>44</sup>For the most extensive study and summary of the developments during this period, see Donald A. Stauffer, *English Biography before 1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930).

<sup>45</sup>Parke goes so far as to argue that the rediscovery of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* “stands as the distinct predecessor of modern biography” (Parke, *Biography*, 6).

<sup>46</sup>Parke, *Biography*, 4.

<sup>47</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xvii.

particularly true of the biographies of the Reformers written by Catholics. Rather than, like Melancthon, placing Luther at the center of God's eschatological design, Cochlaeus, placed Luther into the history of his own time while stressing his links with the devil.<sup>48</sup> The "favorable lives" of the Reformers "spawned in their wake a wave of hostile biographies, a genre which was new (although not completely alien to classical models, especially Roman biography-writing in the context of opposition to the first Principate), and not invariably ahistorical nor mendacious by any means."<sup>49</sup>

Early Reformation biographies usually started out as funeral sermons and "tended to be first written shortly after the subject's death by authors who had personally known him or someone connected with him, so as to guarantee the truthfulness of their account."<sup>50</sup> Often these biographies were written for private use or as prefaces to other works. These *Lives* were "generally brief, quite unlike some luxuriant humanist biographies such as Erasmus's *Life* of Jerome or Camerarius's *Life* of Melancthon."<sup>51</sup> For the most part, biographers during the Reformation period had a deliberate religious strategy. Unlike the pagan and humanist *Lives*, these biographers sought to illustrate the glory of God by recounting his activity in the lives of prominent men. Backus notes that Reformation biography "is to be much more sharply distinguished from the traditional *Lives* of the Saints in that, unlike they, it rests on truth."<sup>52</sup>

Biographers of the Reformers were cautious against repeating the errors of medieval lives of the saints which, by the time of the Reformation, were increasingly regarded as unworthy of attention. As Backus notes, the omnipresent fear of establishing

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<sup>48</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xvii.

<sup>49</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xxxiii.

<sup>50</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xviii.

<sup>51</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xix.

<sup>52</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, xxxi.

“a new form of hagiography” did not prevent a flourishing of life-writing in the period.<sup>53</sup> Instead, writers of the sixteenth century produced lives on the actors of the Reformation that were “as diverse in scope and purpose as the biographical literary *genre* itself.”<sup>54</sup>

### English Lives

In 1598, a book by Thomas Speght (d. 1621), entitled *The Works of Our Antient and lerned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer* appeared in London bookstalls. What distinguished it from earlier collections of Chaucer was a preface devoted to “The Life of Our Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer.” Searching “heralds, chronicles, and records,” Speght sought to give an account of all the retrievable “facts” about Chaucer, the man. This, according to literary historian Richard Altick, is the first “life” in the English language.<sup>55</sup> In a strict sense, English literature of the time possessed no genre of biography—the word, itself, only entered into the English language in the 1660s.<sup>56</sup> Altick argues that “biography was to prove one of the very *last* harvests from the seed of English Renaissance humanism.”<sup>57</sup>

Other literary historians argue for earlier origins. Sir Thomas More’s (1478–1535) *The Life of Picus Earl of Mirandola* (c. 1505), while an abridged English version of an earlier Latin biography, is the first English life of a man who is neither a monarch nor an ecclesiastic.<sup>58</sup> This focus on a non-heroic figure anticipated the seventeenth-

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<sup>53</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, 231.

<sup>54</sup>Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe*, 233.

<sup>55</sup>Altick, *Lives and Letters*, 3. Others, however, have suggested the honor belongs to Thomas More’s (1478–1535) *Life of Richard III* (c. 1513), see Linda Anderson, “Biography,” ed. Dinah Birch, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Altick and others (see Vivian de Sola Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century* [Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969], 19) distinguish between this work and vernacular works of the tenth and eleventh centuries which belong more to the categories of hagiography or royal biography.

<sup>56</sup>Altick, *Lives and Letters*, 6. Emphasis mine.

<sup>57</sup>Altick, *Lives and Letters*, 9.

<sup>58</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 18.

century philosophical shift towards the individual. More's *The History of Richard the Third* (c. 1517) is, according to Pinto, "the first English biography of real literary merit," possessing "masterly characterization" and "vivid dramatic quality" evident of the close study of Tacitus and Suetonius.<sup>59</sup> George Cavendish's (1497–1562) *Life of Cardinal Wosely* (1641) broke new ground with the intimacy of his account. As Wosely's usher, Cavendish was eyewitness to most of the scenes he describes and, while unlikely to have been influenced by classical models, nevertheless depicts his subject with great detail and pathos.<sup>60</sup>

Undoubtedly, developments in English biography were shaped by the significant literary achievements of the era. In the five years before the appearance of Speght's *Life of Chaucer*, Edmund Spenser (c.1552–1599) had published *Amoretti* and *Faerie Queene*, Francis Bacon (1561–1626) issued the first version of his *Essays*, and at least ten of William Shakespeare's (c. 1564–1616) plays had been performed, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Henry IV*.<sup>61</sup> This proliferation of imaginative drama and poetry throughout the seventeenth century had profound effects, not least of which was familiarizing Englishmen with the recording of mental states and expanded their modes of expression. Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* had significant influence on English biography writing, especially on Izaak Walton (1594–1693) who wrote a number of brief biographies in a similar style.

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<sup>59</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 19.

<sup>60</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 19. While Cavendish's *Life of Wosley* remained in manuscript until 1641, there is strong evidence to suggest that it was used by Thomas Storer (1571–1604) for a poem published in 1599 and as a source for William Shakespeare's (1564–1616) *Henry VIII* (1612–1613).

<sup>61</sup>Altick, *Lives and Letters*, 9.

Works from the Tudor (1485–1603) and Stuart (1603–1714) eras reflect the transition taking place in the perceived relationship between the material world and the factual world. Biographers were increasingly conscious of the way in which their work was not simply a recitation of historical facts, but the deliberate and artistic shaping of those facts. Biography “itself occup[ied] a middle ground between history and art, chronicle and drama, objective truth and creative invention” and existed in multiple and often overlapping forms.<sup>62</sup> In this important transition period in English biography, there was growing appreciation for the difference between fact and fiction. Fiction, as “invented narrative of verisimilar actions in contemporary and familiar settings” was distinguishable from truth as “the correspondence of a tale with things that have happened, the kind of correspondence that should obtain between the testimony of a witness in the courtroom and the events he describes.”<sup>63</sup> Biographers of the seventeenth century increasingly sought to represent the lives of their subjects through eyewitness accounts or intimate personal knowledge rather than creative similitudes.<sup>64</sup>

Sparked by the developments of science, English biographical writers also increasingly applied an empirical, inductive approach to individual lives.<sup>65</sup> Francis Bacon (1561–1626) argued that inductive study of history could provide the foundation for a science of human behavior.<sup>66</sup> The life-writer, then, played a particular role in such

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<sup>62</sup>Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 2.

<sup>63</sup>William Nelson, *Fact or Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Storyteller* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 1–2.

<sup>64</sup>Pinto writes, “the two great literary inventions of the modern world are biography and the novel; they are closely related, and perhaps the second could hardly have developed in the way in which it did without the example of the first” (Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 45). While Cervantes’ novel *Don Quixote* appeared in Spain in 1605, it is important to note that the new kind of biography preceded the first publication of the first English novel by several decades. When the novel appeared, it commonly took the form of fictitious biography (e.g. Daniel Defoe’s [1660–1731], *Robinson Crusoe* [1719]).

<sup>65</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 5.

<sup>66</sup>George Bruce Nadel, “History as Psychology in Francis Bacon’s Theory of History,” *History and Theory*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1966): 280–81.



historical work. He was not simply a recorder of facts, but a synthesizer and interpreter. The life-writer for Bacon was “a perfecter of raw experience and raw fact who imparts the shape of wisdom to them,” writes Anderson, “he is realistic, not telling what men ought to do, but what they do or, rather, what they *really* do, because he gets at inner springs and secret causes.”<sup>67</sup> This move towards realism and the use of concrete statement was the genius of English biography, anticipating a new kind of biographical art.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, with the exception of Cavendish’s *Life of Cardinal Wolsey* and William Roper’s (1496–1578) *The Life of Sir Thomas More* (1626), the period produced little artistic advance over the lives of the saints. Bacon even noted his puzzlement over this lack of creativity in the Elizabethan period (1558–1603):

For lives, I do find it strange that these times have so little esteemed the virtues of the times, as that the writings of the lives should be no more frequent. For although there be not many sovereign princes or absolute commanders. . . yet there are many worthy personages that deserve better than dispersed report or barren eulogies.<sup>69</sup>

Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* (1605) argued that, in keeping with the spirit of the age, lives must “of necessity contain a more true, native, and lively representation” of their subject.<sup>70</sup> This combination of the scientific spirit, Christian humanism, and Puritanism had a revolutionary effect by the middle of the seventeenth century, producing fearless explorations of human character and personality. The empirical and inductive methods, drawn from the “new science,” were used “in a series

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<sup>67</sup>Anderson, *Biographical Truth*, 168.

<sup>68</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 19.

<sup>69</sup>Francis Bacon, *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, and Lord High Chancellor of England* (London: J. J. & P. Knapton, 1733), 1:52.

<sup>70</sup>Bacon, *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, 1:51. Bacon, like Plutarch, saw particular advantages to lives over other types of writing. Since lives were concerned with the complete man—both his important and trifling actions, his public and private behavior—the writer was guarded against superficial treatment. The more lifelike the treatment, the more “safely and happily” real the example for imitation and action. See A. H. Buford, “History and Biography: The Renaissance Distinction,” in *A Tribute to George Coffin Taylor; Studies and Essays, Chiefly Elizabethan*, ed. Arnold Williams (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 104.

of works hitherto unattempted in the English language—life-records which are not only reasonably accurate and detailed, but also vivid and convincing portraits of human beings.”<sup>71</sup> Izaak Walton exemplified the progressive nature of this transition. His lives of John Donne (1573–1631), Henry Wotton (1568–1639), Richard Hooker (1554–1600), and George Herbert (1593–1633), were published both separately (1640, 1651, 1665, 1670) and, like Plutarch’s *Lives*, as a collection (1670). Walton was one of the earliest English writers to take up the classical practice of prefacing an author’s works with a brief biography. The biographical preface gave the reader insight into the subject’s works while the works illustrated the author’s genius. Walton completed his first, the *Life of Donne*, in nearly six weeks after learning that Donne’s sermons were to be released without the preface the late Henry Wotton had hoped to write. Walton’s biography was by far the most artistic and accurate English biography to date.<sup>72</sup> Walton had known Donne during the latter part of his life and his biography is aimed at exalting Donne as a man of great piety as well as an example of Christian humanism at its best. Nevertheless, as was common to the period, Walton’s art contained invented dialogue, a practice that would diminish with the empiricism of the late seventeenth century.<sup>73</sup> Despite Walton’s greater self-awareness, he was thus closer to Plutarch’s approach than Bacon’s. His *Lives*, while keenly interested in the subject as an individual, did not delve into his subjects’ interior thought or motivation as would become increasingly common in literary biography.

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<sup>71</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 31.

<sup>72</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 35.

<sup>73</sup>See R. C. Bald, “Historical Doubts Respecting Walton’s Life of Donne,” in *Essays in English Literature from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age: Presented to A.S.P. Woodhouse*, ed. Millar MacLure and F. W. Watt (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 70. Bald is probably too critical of Walton. More recent research shows that Walton was surprisingly accurate in his accounts, especially considering the fact that he was a shopkeeper (rather than a historian or academic) who turned to writing biographies later in life. See Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 34; F. P. Wilson, *Seventeenth Century Prose* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1960), 51.

In 1683, a new translation of Plutarch's *Lives* was published under the supervision of John Dryden (1631–1700). Though Dryden did not devote himself to biographical writing, he provided the most important contemporary critical remarks on the genre's development and importance. While he argued that biography is "in dignity inferior to history and annals," in pleasure and instruction "it equals, or even excels, both of them."<sup>74</sup> In the spirit of the age, Dryden wrote that biography celebrates the memory "of great and worthy men," by showing how examples of virtue "are of more vigor when they are thus contracted into individuals."<sup>75</sup> Dryden continues,

Biographia, or the histories of particular lives, though circumscribed in the subject, is yet more extensive in the style than [history or annals]; for it not only comprehends them both, but has somewhat superadded, which neither of them have. The style of it is various, according to the occasion. There are proper places in it for the plainness and nakedness of narration, which is ascribed to annals; there is also room reserved for the loftiness and gravity of general history, when the actions related shall require that manner of expression. But there is withal a descent into minute circumstances, and trivial passages of life, which are natural to this way of writing, and which the dignity of the other two will not admit. There you are conducted only into the rooms of state, here you are led into the private lodgings of the hero; you see him in his undress, and are made familiar with his most private actions and conversations. You may behold Scipio and a Ladius gathering cockle-shells on the shore, Augustus playing at bounding-stones with boys, and Agesilaus riding on a hobby-horse among his children. The pageantry of life is taken away; you see the poor reasonable animal as naked as ever nature made him; are made acquainted with his passions and his follies, and find the demi-god, a man.<sup>76</sup>

The seventeenth-century writer who best captured the potential of biography and who anticipated the art of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell (1740–1795) by more than a century was John Aubrey (1626–1697). Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, a collection of short biographies written between 1669 and 1696, was his effort to help fellow Oxford antiquarian Anthony Wood (1632–1695) collect material for a biographical dictionary of Oxford men. Aubrey collected everything he could gather on the lives of his subjects,

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<sup>74</sup>John Dryden and Walter Scott, *The Works of John Dryden* (London: William Miller, 1808), 17:59.

<sup>75</sup>Dryden and Scott, *The Works of John Dryden*, 17:59.

<sup>76</sup>Dryden and Scott, *The Works of John Dryden*, 17:61.

often through the help of luminaries Dryden and Walton. To a degree greater than either, Aubrey possessed a critical detachment which drove his curiosity. He was “an indefatigable collector of gossip and anecdotes of every kind” and his scrupulous attention to detail was coupled with a vividness of language which “belongs to the old poetic world.”<sup>77</sup> Aubrey was the first English biographer to fix his aim on what would be characteristic of James Boswell—the man, as he really was.

### **Lives in the Eighteenth Century**

Seventeenth-century writers’ attention to “scars and blemishes as well as beauties, the truth for better or worse,” and their “aim to distinguish one man from all others” by examination of his private conduct “are the very principles of Johnson and of Boswell.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, the bud of seventeenth-century empiricism, with its emphasis on the mundane, blossomed in the early decades of the long eighteenth. Much of this was due to the complex and rapidly-occurring cultural, social, and political changes that took place in England after the Restoration (1660). The end of the Commonwealth brought about a strong backlash against radical Puritanism. While the established church felt immediate benefits, more troubling attacks were taking place upon the very roots of Christianity. Political thought increasingly reflected an ordering of society grounded in anti-theistic enlightenment rationalism. Thomas Hobbes’s (1588–1679) *Leviathan* (1651) epitomized a shift towards a new determinism located in inescapable human desire. So, too, English philosophy, art, and literature shifted in the direction of realism. Locke’s (1632–1704) representational epistemology underscored the conviction that all knowledge came through observation. Human beings were, thus, *tabula rasa*, and close study of their contexts and development, particularly their education, was key to understanding them.

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<sup>77</sup>Pinto, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century*, 45.

<sup>78</sup>Wilson, *Seventeenth Century Prose*, 66.

Even the realist portraiture of James Thornhill (1675–1734) and William Hogarth (1697–1764), and the frankness of architecture of the era reflected the era’s emphasis on sense observation as the mediator of reality. Alexander Pope (1688–1744) captured the spirit of the age, “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan / the proper study of mankind is man.”<sup>79</sup> This empiricism was the soil in which the great literary developments of the modern era were sown. The idealistically-treated life and the romantically-treated character in fiction passed into history. In their place, novelists and life-writers forged real men in a real world. England developed a voracious appetite for these kinds of depictions. In this environment, biography, in the words of Longaker, “became a fad.”<sup>80</sup>

The London coffeehouse was the primary place where such stories were first cultivated. Imported from Smyrna by Daniel Edwards, coffee was introduced in London sometime between 1652 and 1654.<sup>81</sup> The drink proved to be a compelling alternative to the beverages sold in taverns and ale houses—establishments which were seen by civic authorities to be a growing scourge on public life.<sup>82</sup> In the years leading up to the Restoration, voluntary associations had become a central feature of English social life. John Aubrey called these associations “a clubbe,” which he defined as “a sodality in a taverne.”<sup>83</sup> The coffeehouse provided a more socially-acceptable place for such clubs to meet and, by the first decade of the eighteenth century, London alone had more than three thousand.<sup>84</sup> Coffeehouses were bustling hives of all manner of discussion. Clubs met to

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<sup>79</sup>Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Man,” in *The Harvard Classics 40–42: Complete English Poetry, Chaucer to Whitman.*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1910), 425.

<sup>80</sup>John Mark Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 63.

<sup>81</sup>Christopher Ellis, “Baptists in Britain,” *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29.

<sup>82</sup>Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 29.

<sup>83</sup>Ellis, *The Coffee House*, 45.

<sup>84</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Catalogues of Books*, ed. Peter Johannes Thuesen, vol. 26, *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 45.

discuss political theory, trade news on parliamentary happenings, and gossip about the real lives (both public and private) of intriguing men of the day. Discussions drove Grub Street pamphleteers to Newgate prison to investigate and write on the lives of notorious prisoners.<sup>85</sup> Similar curiosity about great men of the past inspired the formation of the Society of Antiquaries (1717), dedicated to studying and revising the historical and biographical records of centuries past. Coffeehouse debates spawned new literary organs like Richard Steele's (1672–1729) *Tattler* (1709) and his *Spectator* (1711) and *Guardian* (1713), both published with friend Joseph Addison (1672–1719). These would be the archetype for Samuel Johnson's (1709–1784) more serious and reflective *The Rambler* (1750–1752). Coffeehouses fueled the writing of lives as participants traded in facts and observations, disputed with one another for greater clarity, and speculated on motive or causation. They were a place to observe, collect, dispute, and learn. In 1680, Aubrey wrote to a friend,

I never thought to have undertaken till you imposed it upon me, saying that I was fit for it by reason of my general acquaintance, having now not only lived above a half a century of years in the world, but have also been much tumbled up and down in which hath made me much known; besides the modern advantage of the coffee-houses in this great city, before which men knew not how to be acquainted, but with their own relations, or societies.<sup>86</sup>

The century's inclination towards realism was also responsible for the recognition of diaries, autobiographies, and letters both as sources and distinct literary

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<sup>85</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 62. Economic interests were also in view. An eager reading public drove the publication of sensational works at the century's beginning and the trivial works at its end. The proliferation of such works and the innovation of the weekly magazine and daily newspaper underscore the fact that, more and more, men wrote to make a profit out of writing. See Donald A. Stauffer, *The Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 478.

<sup>86</sup>John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 1:10. Spelling and capitalization in seventeenth and eighteenth-century quotations have been modernized throughout the dissertation. Book titles, however, have not been modified. Aubrey's collection of short biographical pieces *Brief Lives* (posthumously published, 1813) themselves epitomize how the new scientific methods of the era were applied to biographical art. As a Royalist, a member of the Rota club at Miles's Coffeehouse, and an early member of the Royal Society, Aubrey was well acquainted with the most celebrated politicians, aristocrats, scientists, and writers of the day. He captured his observations in writing and frequently returned to his notebooks to add any fresh information he came across.

forms.<sup>87</sup> Writers jettisoned the idealization characteristic of earlier life-writing and made use of such sources for intimate detail on their subjects' lives. Personal letters were seen to be the path to a true knowledge of personality—Locke himself famously noting that “no gentleman can avoid showing himself in this kind of writing; occasions will daily force him to make use of his pen which...always lays open to a severer examination of his breeding, sense, and abilities than oral discourses.”<sup>88</sup> As early as 1662, Walton had seen the letter “as a literary form for revealing personality” and employed the information they carried in his biographical sketches.<sup>89</sup> Writers of personal memoirs became increasingly aware of their own minds and of the complexity of human consciousness.<sup>90</sup> The emphasis on self-analysis in French memoirs widely available in England early in the century prompted English biographers to adopt the autobiographer's position, writing “as if they were inside their subject's mind and knew its workings.”<sup>91</sup> This “deliberate assumption of omniscience” as a narrative device became a prominent feature of eighteenth-century biography.<sup>92</sup> Biographers made extensive use of letters, diaries, journals, and other meditations as a way to legitimize this presentation of the inner life.<sup>93</sup>

But while eighteenth-century biography showed keen interest in psychology, it had appetite for all of human life—detailing little things of great men, providing (sometimes imaginative) narrative texture to personal events, elevating the affections

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<sup>87</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 71.

<sup>88</sup>John Locke, “Essay on Education,” in *The Works of John Locke*, vol. 8 (London: C. Baldwin, 1824), 180.

<sup>89</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 78.

<sup>90</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 268.

<sup>91</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 258.

<sup>92</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 262.

<sup>93</sup>Biographers like Job Orton (1717-1783) were conscious of the fact that doing so was making works intended for private reflection a matter of public scrutiny, but concluded that the same could be said of David's Psalms and the writings of Marcus Aurelius (Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 259).

through tales of distress or goodness, entertaining with humor and wit, enlarging knowledge through criticism or profound remark. It was, according to Stauffer, not the simply the province of great biographers like Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, but “a national art.”<sup>94</sup>

The nearly simultaneous birth of the modern novel employed these same interests to great effect. Novelists like Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) ingeniously used the methods and devices of biographers to create vivid character portrayals. Defoe’s use of these methods was so convincing that when *Robinson Crusoe* appeared in 1719, most readers believed the characters in the story to be real people. Gone was the heroic portrayal of previous fictional narratives—in its place was a fiction so realistic as to be true. Crusoe, as Longaker notes, “was first and last a human being.”<sup>95</sup>

The diaries, autobiographies, published correspondence, and realistic novels of the early eighteenth century all reflect the era’s quest to know the truth about the life of man. Literate culture possessed both a curiosity and an appetite which drove the development of the modern conception of biography. And the two men who put these methods and devices to use most powerfully in life-writing were Samuel Johnson and James Boswell. In their hands, the modern biographical genre as “the history of the lives of individual men, as a branch of literature” was born.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 552. See especially Samuel Johnson’s *The Lives of English Poets 1779–81* and James Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). The latter, according to the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, is the “first distinctive masterpiece of English biography” (Anderson, “Biography,” 128).

<sup>95</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 85–86. Longaker wryly notes that Defoe should perhaps be considered a pseudo-biographer.

<sup>96</sup>Hamilton, *Biography*, 158. Hamilton finds this definition of biography to be reductionist, both because of its exclusivism and its rejection of other enduring historical (e.g. drama and portraiture) and modern (broadcasting and the internet) forms of nonfiction story-telling (Hamilton, *Biography*, 1).



**Samuel Johnson (1709–1784):**  
***Life of Richard Savage (1744)***

Samuel Johnson understood the importance of the material reality of the writer's life. The son of a provincial bookseller, Johnson grew up with unusual access to literature as well as a window into the lives of contemporary writers. Johnson demonstrated remarkable intelligence as a child, surpassing others of his age in language ability and writing proficiency.<sup>97</sup> Financial difficulties were a major feature of his early life, forcing him to abandon his education at Oxford's Pembroke College after only a year. Johnson sought several opportunities to teach in grammar schools but, lacking a degree, was found unqualified. While he would never pursue formal academic training, he applied rigorous disciplines of reading, translating, and writing in his personal life. Oxford would later recognize his abilities, awarding him a Master of Arts (1755) and an honorary doctorate (1775).<sup>98</sup>

Johnson moved to London in 1737 and found work with Edward Cave (1691–1754) as a writer for *Gentlemen's Magazine*. Johnson's work as a "hack-writer" for Cave brought him into contact with all manner of Grub Street personalities and demanded both inquisitiveness and the examination of human motivation. In the succeeding years, Johnson documented parliamentary debates, wrote critical reviews of publications, and contributed essays on numerous political and social issues. His ever-widening network of relationships brought him "much gossip and fact concerning both great and small in the realm of letters" and cultivated in him remarkable skills of observation.<sup>99</sup> Johnson was intensely interested in the lives of men—their inner springs of action, their responses to success and failure, their personalities and proclivities, their social graces and moral

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<sup>97</sup>Walter Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977), 18–19.

<sup>98</sup>Bate, *Samuel Johnson*, 36.

<sup>99</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 315.

failings. “No man of the eighteenth century,” writes Longaker, “had his finger more firmly on the pulse of the age.”<sup>100</sup>

Johnson’s first attempt at life-writing, “a Life of Father Paul Sarpi” (published in *Gentlemen’s Magazine* in 1738), touched off a lifetime of effort in conceiving, shaping, and retelling the lives of friends and prominent figures. In a later essay in the *Idler*, Johnson argued, “biography is of the various kinds of narrative writing that which is most eagerly read, and most easily applied to the purposes of life.”<sup>101</sup> His familiarity with the historical form was coupled by his own sense of what should define life-writing. “The value of any story depends on it being true,” Johnson reported to Boswell, “A story is a picture either of an individual or of human nature in general; if it be false, it is nothing.”<sup>102</sup> While one could write a panegyric and “keep vices out of sight,” a professed life-writer had to represent a life “as it really was.”<sup>103</sup> This requires an intimacy between the biographer and the subject. “They only who live with a man can write his life with any genuine exactness and discrimination,” Johnson argued, “and few people who have lived with a man know what to remark about him.”<sup>104</sup>

Johnson’s vision of biography was exemplified in his *Life of Richard Savage* (1744), “the greatest contribution to the matter and method of the form in the early half of the century.”<sup>105</sup> Six months before the book’s release, Johnson wrote an anonymous letter

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<sup>100</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 315.

<sup>101</sup>Samuel Johnson, *Idler*, November 24, 1759.

<sup>102</sup>James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Comprehending an Account of His Studies and Numerous Works, in Chronological Order; a Series of His Epistolary Correspondence and Conversations with Many Eminent Persons; and Various Original Pieces of His Composition, Never before Published. The Whole Exhibiting a View of Literature and Literary Men in Great-Britain, for near Half a Century, during Which He Flourished* (London: Henry Baldwin, 1791), 2:19.

<sup>103</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 2:144.

<sup>104</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 2:26.

<sup>105</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 325. While Johnson is best known for his *Lives of the Eminent English Poets* (1779–1781), the principal features which make his *Lives* the archetype of modern biography are exemplified in his *Life of Savage*. *Lives* includes short biographies and critical appraisals of fifty-two prominent English poets, all of whom Johnson had extensively read

in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, soliciting information on his life and declaring his intention to save Savage's memory "from insults and Calumnies."<sup>106</sup> Despite the fact that Savage had been Johnson's friend, his *Life* was not a panegyric—instead, it frankly admitted Savage's vices and shortcomings. Johnson noted that Savage was frequently prone to "intemperate desire of pleasure, and habitual slavery to his passions, which involved many perplexities." He attempted to present his friend's life in a balanced way, showing Savage's remarkable gift for the poetic. The biography is so replete with Savage's work that it could serve as an anthology. Johnson even had to remind the reader that "my province is rather to give the history of Mr. *Savage's* performances, than to display their beauties or obviate the criticisms which they have occasioned."<sup>107</sup> All the while, Johnson resisted the temptation to bring himself into the narrative—a practice which Boswell readily gave into in his life of Johnson.

Nearly thirty-five years would elapse between Johnson's *Savage* and his *Lives of the English Poets*. In that time, he wrote only four brief literary biographies, two of which would, along with *Savage*, be adapted for use in *Lives*. In these years, a number of other biographical works appeared on the scene. Some, like Patrick Murdock's life of James Thomson, contained few advances in literary criticism and were "almost pure panegyric."<sup>108</sup> Others deepened the realist trend. Perhaps the most significant development came in William Mason's (1724–1797) *Memoirs of Thomas Gray* (1775). In

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throughout his life and some of whom, like Savage, he had known personally. Johnson commissioned by Tom Davies, William Strahan, and Thomas Cadell in 1777 to write a series of biographical prefaces for an edition of the English poets. The booksellers intended to begin with Chaucer, but reconsidered the plan as being too extensive. Instead, they chose forty-seven poets to which Johnson suggested five additional names (Robert Halsband, "The 'Penury of English Biography' before Samuel Johnson," in *Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. John Dudley Browning [New York: Garland, 1980], 124). Johnson had been encouraged by others, including King George III, to complete a literary biography of England as early as 1767 (Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 341).

<sup>106</sup>Quoted in Halsband, "The 'Penury of English Biography' before Samuel Johnson," 121.

<sup>107</sup>Quoted in Halsband, "The 'Penury of English Biography' before Samuel Johnson," 122.

<sup>108</sup>Halsband, "The 'Penury of English Biography' before Samuel Johnson," 123.

addition to Mason's acquaintance with Gray and his thorough knowledge of the poet's life, Mason had a considerable supply of Gray's private documents. Mason rejected the panegyric approach he saw in many seventeenth-century Lives and recognized the remarkable power that the subject's own voice had for presenting character. This had been used to great effect in novels and collections of the letters of prominent figures had become a staple of public reading in the mid-eighteenth-century's republic of letters. Mason, therefore, carefully selected and edited Gray's letters, arranging them in chronological order, and added minimal editorial commentary, with the aim that "Mr. Gray will become his own biographer."<sup>109</sup> In his concluding chapter, Mason insisted that his method had a major benefit: "it makes the reader so well acquainted with the man himself as to render it totally unnecessary to conclude the whole with his character." "I might have written his life in the common form," he continued, "perhaps with more reputation to myself, but surely not with equal information to the reader."<sup>110</sup> While Walton and Johnson had used letters in their earlier works, no one had done so to the extent that Mason did.<sup>111</sup>

Mason's documentary tendency was received with mixed reviews. While critics overwhelmingly agreed that Mason failed to give a clear interpretation and judgment on Gray's life, the reading public appreciated Mason's authentic portrait. Johnson reluctantly admitted that Mason helped readers see more of Gray's diligent literary labor than could have been known through the publication of his poetry. However, Johnson was critical of the form itself: "I forced myself to read it only because it was a common topic of conversation. I found it mighty dull; and, as to the style, it is fit

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<sup>109</sup>Quoted in Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 299.

<sup>110</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 299–300.

<sup>111</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 293. Mason was later found to have substantially altered many of the letters, oftentimes omitting passages that showed Gray in an unfavorable light (see Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 307–10).

for the second table.”<sup>112</sup> Johnson was famously impatient with his contemporaries’ style of biography—particularly their strict and unadorned focus on recording the chronology of their subject’s achievements. He valued narrative description of real life, declaring that “more knowledge may be gained of a man’s character by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.”<sup>113</sup> Unlike Mason, Johnson’s style was to “assimilate what information he could find about his subjects, to order it, interpret it, and weigh its significance and to produce a series of ‘Lives’ of generally modest proportions.”<sup>114</sup>

**James Boswell (1740–1795):  
*Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791)**

James Boswell, however, was one of the first to praise Mason’s work, siding with him against Johnson’s attacks. In the preface to his *Life of Johnson*, Boswell later reiterated his judgement, having resolved “to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason in his *Memoirs of Gray*” in his biography of Johnson.<sup>115</sup> His adaptation of Mason’s documentary tendency, his discipline of meticulous note-taking, and his remarkable facility with anecdote and illustration are reflected in “the finest biography that the age—or that all time—produced.”<sup>116</sup>

Central to Boswell’s success was his overweening ambition and inveterate curiosity about human nature. His aggressiveness, a weakness that would have undoubtedly been an obstacle to success for most men, gained him access to the privileged class. These traits combined to give him a consuming interest in good

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<sup>112</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 302.

<sup>113</sup>Samuel Johnson, “On Biography,” *The Rambler*, no. 60 quoted in Michael Benton, *Literary Biography: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 4.

<sup>114</sup>Benton, *Literary Biography*, 5.

<sup>115</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1:4.

<sup>116</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 407.

biographical material. After his first visit to London, he knew he could no longer live in Edinburgh, the city of his birth. He studied law for a time and gave cursory attention to the classics, but his preference was for whatever was the talk of the elite. Lacking common restraint, Boswell positioned himself among the celebrated and, by 1763, had found a place among august company. His journals, kept from the age of twenty until his death at fifty-five note his interaction with the notables of the day: Rousseau, Voltaire, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Burke, Wilkes, Pitt, George III, and Edmond Malone.<sup>117</sup> He not only relished his time with the elite, he loved to reflect on these interactions afterward, expanding his shorthand notes in great detail and interpreting their importance. His introduction to Johnson in May of 1763 kindled a friendship that lasted a quarter-century. The elder Johnson loved to give advice and Boswell happily received it. Boswell found in Johnson a counselor with a ready ear and one in whom he increasingly put his trust. Both loved to talk. Johnson considered Boswell a devoted friend, once writing his friend Dudley Long, “Sir, if I was to lose Boswell, it would be a limb amputated.”<sup>118</sup> By the time of Johnson’s death in 1784, the youthful Boswell had socially matured, developing “a patience, a deliberateness of observation and conclusion, a heightened sense of biographical values, and a method for recording his observations.”<sup>119</sup>

Boswell knew Johnson better than most, having frequently traveled with him—including a trip to Scotland, an account of which he published with great success in 1785. What qualified him more than any other man of his era to write Johnson’s biography, however, was his own confidence that he was made to write such a work. By 1789, he

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<sup>117</sup>The most extensive collection of Boswell’s papers is located at the Sterling and Beinecke Libraries at Yale University. See Irma Lustig, “Fact into Art: James Boswell’s Notes, Journals, and the Life of Johnson,” in *Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. John Dudley Browning (New York: Garland, 1980), 128.

<sup>118</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 423.

<sup>119</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 413.

wrote that his account of Johnson would “be more of a life than any work that has ever yet appeared.”<sup>120</sup> Boswell seemed impervious to the pressure of rushing his biography to print. Between 1784 and 1791, he worked methodically to work through Johnson’s publications, letters, and conversations in chronological order—all the while other biographies rolled off the press. Because of his remarkable memory and methodical note-taking, Boswell was able to reconstruct a considerable portion of his time with Johnson. His commitment to truthfulness made him attentive to the least detail: “I have also been extremely careful as to the exactness of my quotations,” Boswell wrote, “holding that there is a respect to the public which should oblige every Author to attend to this... Were I to detail the books I have consulted and the inquiries I [have made], I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious.”<sup>121</sup> His biographical approach is distilled in the advertisement to the first edition:

Indeed, I cannot conceive of a more perfect mode of writing any man’s life, than not only relating all the most important events of it in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote and said and thought; by which mankind are enabled as it were to see him live and to ‘live o’er each scene’ with him, as he actually advanced through several stages of his life... And he will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write, not his panegyric, which must be all praise, but his *Life*; which, great and good as he was, must not be supposed to be entirely perfect.<sup>122</sup>

Boswell was conscious of the dangers that lurked in life-writing. “If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity,” he remarked, “there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness overpower his fidelity and tempt him to conceal, if not invent.” Preserving the conversation of the subject, himself, guarded against such dangers by presenting the subject’s character in his own words. Noting that even this could be manipulated by the biographer, Boswell

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<sup>120</sup>Quoted in Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 413.

<sup>121</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1:x.

<sup>122</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1:4.

recalled Plutarch's value of the mundane as truly indicative of character.<sup>123</sup> He quoted Johnson on the same point:

the business of the biographer is to pass lightly over the performances and incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue.<sup>124</sup>

“I remain firm and confident in my opinion,” Boswell echoed, “that minute particulars are frequently characteristic, and always amusing, when they relate to a distinguished man.”<sup>125</sup> He concluded the preface by expressing his confidence that “recording such so considerable a portion of the wisdom and wit of ‘the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century,’ I have largely provided for the instruction and entertainment of mankind.”<sup>126</sup>

The genius of Boswell's work was his documentary tendency to “let his subject speak for himself by quoting *verbatim* letters, conversations, stories, and words of wit and wisdom.”<sup>127</sup> His ability to recreate detailed conversations drew in his readers and made the narrative sparkle with interest, despite the work being “a ‘baggy’, loosely formed ‘Life’ of elephantine size.”<sup>128</sup> While not wholly innovative, this contribution to Mason's method did more to standardize “notions of this type of biography than of any other single biographer” in history.<sup>129</sup>

The biography, by all accounts, was incredibly successful. Boswell lived to see great praise heaped upon his work in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* and *Monthly Review*.

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<sup>123</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1:5.

<sup>124</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1:5.

<sup>125</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1:7.

<sup>126</sup>Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1:xii.

<sup>127</sup>Benton, *Literary Biography*, 5.

<sup>128</sup>Benton, *Literary Biography*, 5.

<sup>129</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 473.



Following centuries echoed the acclaim—Sir Leslie Stephen (1832–1904) is reported to have said that his enjoyment of books began and ended with Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*.<sup>130</sup> Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) remarked that Boswell’s *Life* was the only great English biography. Boswell’s unique formation, according to Longaker, is what gives his *Life of Johnson* its unparalleled richness: “The youthful Boswell gave the *Life* its vivid detail, its frank ingeniousness, and its method; the mature Boswell gave it its serious and lofty purpose, its depth of sentiment, and its patient care.”<sup>131</sup>

Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century, the telling of lives had undergone a seismic shift from the idealism of medieval hagiographers to the realism of modern biographers. Fundamental to this shift was the extreme skepticism that had percolated throughout intellectual culture. Simple interpretation, moral purpose, and the bias of eulogy and satire “were viewed with increasing distrust.”<sup>132</sup> The subjective turn from knowledge as objectively rooted in biblical revelation to knowledge as demonstrated and authenticated by human reason inaugurated a new concept of the self. Rapid political and cultural changes put a higher value on affirming ordinary life, resulting in a vulgarization of literature.<sup>133</sup> “Getting to know someone” became a defining ideal. Thus, life-writing moved away from the study of exceptional individuals who made an invariably worthy contribution to public history to subjects whose “exceptionalism or individualism derived less from historical greatness than our knowing them as people.”<sup>134</sup> Biographical purpose focused on acquiring close personal knowledge. Johnson and Boswell are representative

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<sup>130</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 468.

<sup>131</sup>Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century*, 416.

<sup>132</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 457.

<sup>133</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 477. See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 286.

<sup>134</sup>Clare Brant and Susan E. Whyman, *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay’s Trivia (1716)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37.

of this shift. This had the effect of democratizing life-writing and, in the decades to come, all manner of people would become subjects of biography.<sup>135</sup> Writers in “the most social and worldly age in English history” encouraged the development of biography as in no other century.<sup>136</sup> “In the art of biography,” notes Stauffer, “the eighteenth century is the High Renaissance.”<sup>137</sup>

This period also saw what Charles Taylor calls “the moral consecration of sentiment”: high cultural value placed on feeling and its full expression.<sup>138</sup> The popular success of novels like Samuel Richardson’s (1689–1761) *Pamela* (1740) and Jean–Jacques Rousseau’s (1712–1778) *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) reflected a society which found its own moral outlook confirmed.<sup>139</sup> This consecration of sentiment is reflected both in the shape and reception of eighteenth-century biography. Boswell’s *Johnson* was not only concerned with the life of a star in the literary firmament, but of a complex man whose approval and friendship were of deep personal concern. The documentary tendency of eighteenth-century biography was also part of its popular appeal. The inclusion of extensive personal correspondence, sometimes quite intimate, was lauded as giving a true picture of character. Sentimentality was also evident in a new approach to nature. The age was marked by an increasing vogue of living in the country, of walks in nature, and of new trends in landscape design. Rather than being seen as a howling wilderness, nature was appreciated for its power to evoke strong feelings of awe in the face of its power or peace in the face of its stillness or of sublimity in the face of its

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<sup>135</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 456.

<sup>136</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 457.

<sup>137</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 457.

<sup>138</sup>Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 294.

<sup>139</sup>Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 294.

grandeur. Nature's power to awaken or intensify feeling was valued for the way in which it could "evoke and strengthen the best in us."<sup>140</sup>

The reading public increasingly drove demand for literature that entertained and convinced. Writers scurried to cover every possible biographical subject which might satisfy curiosity. Eighteenth-century readers had little taste for the heroic or the didactic. Instead, they wanted stories of people that seemed true-to-life, which corresponded to their own sensibilities, which perhaps even reinforced their own presuppositions and behaviors. "The traditional religious and didactic purpose of earlier biographers," writes Stauffer, "is now supplemented on the one hand by curiosity, which at its best takes the form of the pursuit of truth for its own sake, and on the other hand by a greater trust in emotions and instinct."<sup>141</sup> These developments had stark impact on the long tradition of moral biography—a tradition most prominently used by Christians to teach godly piety.

### **Eighteenth-Century Evangelical Biography**

The intellectual and cultural changes of the times split the earlier conception of biography into fragments. Secularism, individualism, and sentimentality shifted the ethical emphasis away from biblical piety to a subtle, urbane tolerance of human behavior and a reluctance to issue strong judgment on subject's lives. The long tradition of moral biography was increasingly supplemented by biography "designed purely to satisfy curiosity, to answer, without moral predispositions of any sort, the simple question 'what happened?'"<sup>142</sup> What biographical works originated among mid-eighteenth-century Anglican divines were mostly antiquarian research, "as if the great days of the Church of

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<sup>140</sup>Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 297. This was reflected not only in the new wave of English gardens, but in the biographical attentiveness to man's relationship to nature. Contrasts are also evident. Johnathan Edwards's outlook on nature is remarkably different than that of David Brainerd.

<sup>141</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 456.

<sup>142</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 485.

England were already in the past.”<sup>143</sup> This undoubtedly reflects the torpor of mid-century Anglican church in theological decline. When it existed, energetic Christian biography in the last half of the eighteenth century was largely produced by evangelical Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists. While “the theological subtlety and intellectual vigor of the seventeenth-century divines disappears or becomes vulgarized,” writes Stauffer, it is during this period that the “evangelical emotional element, in compensation, increases.”<sup>144</sup>

Many eighteenth-century evangelical biographies, like those of the sixteenth-century Reformers, were simply funeral sermons reproduced for public edification. This, in itself, was a striking contrast with popular biography of the time which characteristically avoided discussing the significance of death.<sup>145</sup> These biographies were ordinarily brief, comprising less than one-hundred printed pages and, reflective of general trends, often recounted the imitable lives of otherwise ordinary men and women.<sup>146</sup> Biographers realized the economic value of such biographies, using subscription and public consumption as a means to support the family of the deceased.

Christian biographies were not limited, however, to accounts of ordinary people and their extraordinary piety. Biographers also focused on prominent men and women whose exemplary lives and writings might inspire faithful Christian living. John Wesley’s (1703–1791) *Life of the Rev. John Fletcher* (1786) reflects the documentary

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<sup>143</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 459.

<sup>144</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 458.

<sup>145</sup>Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 516.

<sup>146</sup>For example, several which may have been familiar to Ryland: John Brine, *The Believer’s Triumph over Death, Considered in a Sermon Occasioned by the Decease of Mr. Hugh Lloyd Who Departed This Life Feb 11, 1735* (London: Aaron Ward, 1735); John Brine, *The Covenant of Grace Open’d: In a Sermon Occasioned by the Death of Mrs. Margaret Busfield, Who Departed This Life May 13th, 1734* (London: Aaron Ward, 1734). Charles Chauncy, *Early Piety Recommended and Exemplify’d. A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of Elizabeth Price, an Eminently Pious Young Woman Who Departed This Life February 22, 1731* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1732); Charles Chauncy, *Man’s Life Considered under the Similitude of a Vapour, That Appeareth for a Little Time and Then Vanisheth Away. A Sermon on the Death of That Honorable and Virtuous Gentlewoman Mrs. Sarah Byfield* (Boston: B. Green, 1731).

style typical of Mason and Boswell. “I am little more than a compiler,” Wesley wrote in his introduction, “for I owe a great part...of the ensuing tract to a few friends who have been at no small pains in furnishing me with materials...[I] give you most of their Accounts, very nearly in their own words.”<sup>147</sup> Wesley’s biography stretched to over two hundred pages, chronologically narrating Fletcher’s life and utilizing his subject’s writing, correspondence, and extensive testimony from family and friends. Nevertheless, Wesley stated that the biography was deliberately shaped to hold up “one that was enabled in so large a measure to *put on the whole armour of God*.”<sup>148</sup>

Evangelical biography also reflected a growing concern with the decline of gospel salience in English culture. Isaac Watts’s (1674–1748) prefatory recommendation to the third edition of Thomas Halyburton’s (1674–1712) *Memoirs* (1733), contended that the writing of Lives is particularly important, because “every transcript of [the gospel] in the Heart of a Christian is a new Argument to confirm [the truth of Christianity].”<sup>149</sup> He reflects the tension that a culture obsessed with empiricism needed to be reminded that truth could be arrived at by ways other than the scientific method. Holding fast to a vibrant Christian orthodoxy did not mean surrendering one’s intellect. Watts underscored

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<sup>147</sup>John Wesley, *A Short Account of the Life and Death of the Rev. John Fletcher* (London: G. Paramore, 1786), iv.

<sup>148</sup>Wesley, *A Short Account of the Life and Death of the Rev. John Fletcher*, 161. Intriguingly, Wesley notes that Roman Catholic biographers have advantages over Protestant life-writers because their subjects disclose “all the circumstances of their lives and secrets of their hearts” to their spiritual Directors, something that does not ordinarily take place in Protestantism (Wesley, *A Short Account of the Life and Death of the Rev. John Fletcher*, 162). Ironically, however, Wesley deliberately excised significant, deeply personal sections of David Brainerd’s journal—particularly the theological reflections Wesley found distasteful. In the margin of the copy of Edwards’s *Brainerd* which they shared, J. C. and John Ryland frequently noted where Wesley “shamefully omitted” what “made much against Mr. Wesley’s principles,” particularly against his “notion of faith” (see the copy of Jonathan Edwards, *An Account of the Life of the Rev. Mr. David Brainerd* [Edinburgh: John Gray & Gavin Alston, 1765]), 230–231, in Special Collections, Bristol Baptist College, Bristol; John Wesley, *An Extract of the Life of the Late Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians* [London: G. Paramore, 1793]).

<sup>149</sup>Thomas Halyburton, *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Halyburton, Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews; Digested into Four Parts, Whereof the First Three Were Written with His Own Hand Some Years before His Death, and the Fourth Is Collected from His Diary by Another Hand; to Which Is Annex’d Some Account of His Dying Words by Those Who Were Witnesses to His Death*, ed. Janet Halyburton, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: Gavin Hamilton, 1733), iii.

that though Halyburton's writings unapologetically described the inner experience of the heart, through which the thoughtful reader will be both "delighted and improved," he was, nonetheless a man of great learning.<sup>150</sup> Watts's recommendation also squared off against contemporary skepticism. He warned that the *Memoir* will be of value to those who have the "taste of inward religion," but of no service to those who "relish nothing but what is polite and modish."<sup>151</sup> He contended that while Halyburton's experiential language of relish and savor may be off-putting to "persons of lower degrees of piety" and "the irreligious man," it was nevertheless common to "great and holy men." He emphasized the reasonableness of Christianity while underscoring Halyburton's efforts to rescue it from the rigidly logical and arid religion of the Deists.<sup>152</sup> He even hinted at his own discomfort with the sentimental preference of the day, arguing that the biography includes things "too private and personal" because of public appeal, not because Halyburton would have desired them to be printed.<sup>153</sup>

Philip Doddridge's (1702–1751) *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honorable Col. James Gardiner* (1747) is another example of evangelical adaptation of the form and content of modern biography. Keeping with the time's emphasis on the "ordinary man," Doddridge's subject, James Gardiner (1688–1722), was a relatively unknown Scottish soldier who was notable perhaps only because of his bold piety. As a young soldier, Gardiner happened to peruse Thomas Watson's (d. 1686) *The Christian Soldier* (1669) while waiting to keep a midnight rendezvous with a married woman. Hoping to resonate as a nominal Christian with sayings he thought he'd find in Watson, Gardiner instead came under deep conviction of sin, leading to a powerful conversion and

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<sup>150</sup>Halyburton, *Life of Thomas Halyburton*, iv.

<sup>151</sup>Halyburton, *Life of Thomas Halyburton*, viii.

<sup>152</sup>Halyburton, *Life of Thomas Halyburton*, ix.

<sup>153</sup>Halyburton, *Life of Thomas Halyburton*, xi.

a life of zealous witness. Gardiner's life, Doddridge noted, was an especially important example "as it shone not in Ecclesiastical, but *Military Life*, where temptations are so many and the Prevelancy of the contrary Character so great."<sup>154</sup> Doddridge was aware of the manner in which such a testimony could shape the piety of his readers. He wrote that his purpose in publishing Gardiner's life was to assist others to "gather the valuable fruits from [Gardiner's] *Life*" with which his "own Heart has been so much edified and animated."<sup>155</sup> Like other biographers of the eighteenth century, Doddridge related Gardiner's life through extensive quotation from journals, correspondence, and the personal testimony he gathered from Gardiner's family and friends. In his retelling, Gardiner exhibits "courage in a very new kind of combat, and [becomes] an open advocate for religion in all its principles."<sup>156</sup>

Evangelical biography thus developed both within the larger frame of eighteenth-century biography and in ways distinct from it. The characteristics of modern biography with its focus on ordinary life, its wide variety of subjects, its documentary tendency, its use of anecdote and illustration, and its concern with character illustration rather than strict chronology are present in evangelical writing. Yet evangelical authors in particular retained the emphasis on biblical spirituality which is diminished or jettisoned in more broadly popular biography of the time. It resisted the tendency to replace the spiritual with the sentimental. While paying heed to the human psyche, it ultimately lodged the causation of events in God's wise providence rather than in character traits (or flaws) evidenced in childhood. Finally, eighteenth-century evangelical biography refused to surrender its didactic aims in the face of a reading public whose interest largely

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<sup>154</sup>Philip Doddridge, *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honourable Col. James Gardiner, Who Was Slain at the Battle of Preston-Pans, September 21, 1745* (Edinburgh, 1747), 4.

<sup>155</sup>Doddridge, *Life of James Gardiner*, 3.

<sup>156</sup>Doddridge, *Life of James Gardiner*, 42.

centered on being entertained and informed.

### **Jonathan Edwards and Evangelical Biography**

In the preface to the 1749 publication of *The Life of David Brainerd*, Jonathan Edwards began by explaining the benefit of exemplary lives: “There are two ways of representing and recommending true religion and virtue to the world, which God hath made use of: the one is by doctrine and precept; the other is by instance and example.”<sup>157</sup> Edwards underscores that while God has explained the design and importance of faith in Scripture, he has also set down many examples of its power in practice. Jesus, the great prophet of God, made use of both of these methods—declaring the mind and will of God in doctrine “more clearly and fully than ever it had before” and, in his own practice “gave a most perfect example of the virtue he taught.” Throughout the history of the church, Edwards explains, God in his Providence has perpetuated this pattern, raising up eminent teachers “to exhibit and bear testimony to the truth in their doctrine” and “from age to age, raised up some eminent persons that have set bright examples of that religion that is taught and prescribed in the Word of God.” These persons “have a great tendency to engage the attention of men to the doctrine and rules that are taught, and greatly to confirm and enforce them” particularly when example is combined with commendable teaching, faithfulness through travail, and fruitfulness in ministry.<sup>158</sup> David Brainerd, Edwards argues, is such a person—“a remarkable instance of true and eminent Christian piety in heart and practice...most worthy of imitation, and many ways tending to the spiritual benefit of the careful observer.”<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *WJE*, 7:89.

<sup>158</sup> *WJE*, 7:90.

<sup>159</sup> *WJE*, 7:96.



Edwards's prefatory comments are important not only in the way that they introduce the most widely-read of Edwards's works, but as an apologetic for the evangelical use of the rapidly developing eighteenth-century genre of biography. Additionally, while, as will be made clear later in this chapter, Edwards's immediate New Divinity heirs appropriated his didactic use of biography to accomplish similar aims, only Edwards provides sustained biblical reflection on its legitimate use. As in so many other ways in the eighteenth-century republic of letters, Edwards is not only positioned on the frontier of the British Empire, but also on the leading edge of Christian intellectual culture.

This section examines the features of Jonathan Edwards's biographical works, putting them into conversation with the biographical works of Edwards's heir, New Divinity theologian and biographer, Samuel Hopkins. While not a stream wholly distinct from all other Christian biography of the time, the "lives" modeled on Edwards's work share with him both content and form—particular emphasis on piety and doctrine and an unobtrusive documentary style that foregrounds the voice of the subject through extensive use of his (or her) own writing. First, this section will assess Edwards's exposure to eighteenth-century "lives" as suggested by his *Catalogue of Books*. Edwards's works will then be examined, briefly noting the features of his conversion narratives as subset to his most developed biographical work in *The Life of David Brainerd*. Finally, we will compare and contrast *The Life of David Brainerd* with the biographical work of Hopkins. Chapter Six will build on the conclusions of this section by tracing the influence of these various streams of eighteenth-century biography on the works of John Ryland and J. W. Morris (1816).

### **Edwards's *Catalogue***

Among the hundreds of books that Edwards recorded in his *Catalogue* there are at least a half-dozen biographies. In several entries, Edwards noted the advice of

Cotton Mather (1663–1728) to read “lives”, especially those of the philosophers. In a reference to Mather’s *Directions for a Candidate to Ministry*, Edwards noted Mather’s exhortation for ministerial candidates to read the lives “of them who have done worthily in Israel.”<sup>160</sup> The *Catalogue* suggests that Edwards read William Cave (1637–1713). Three of Cave’s earlier works were part of over 800 volumes donated by Jeremiah Dummer to Yale in 1714.<sup>161</sup> Though the books were only available during Edwards’s senior year, he would have had the opportunity to access the library as both a graduate student (1720–1722) and as a tutor (1724–1726), when he along with other tutors were paid to sort the books.<sup>162</sup>

In another entry, Edwards transcribed the advertisement for Madam Perier’s *Life of Monsieur Paschal* that he encountered at the end of Pascal’s *Thoughts*.<sup>163</sup> Edwards noted *verbatim* the publisher’s commendation of Perier’s book as being worth “more than an 100 sermons & would do more towards the Reforming the Libertines of the Present Age than if you should Let Loose twenty missionaries upon them.”<sup>164</sup> If, in fact, Edwards later read Perier’s account, it would be significant given her moving account of Pascal’s piety and Jansenist commitment in the face of opposition and terminal illness—an account that may have been echoed in Edwards’s recounting of the life of David Brainerd.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>WJE, 26:186. Entry 329.

<sup>161</sup>Anne Pratt, “The Books Sent from England by Jeremiah Dummer to Yale College,” in *Papers in Honor of Andrew Keogh* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1938), 15.

<sup>162</sup>WJE, 26:9. The Dummer collection included Cave’s *Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Historia Literaria* (1693–98), a literary history of ecclesiastical writers (Louise May Kirkpatrick Bryant and Mary Patterson, “The List of Books Sent by Jeremiah Dummer,” in *Papers in Honor of Andrew Keogh, Librarian of Yale University* [New Haven, CT: Yale College, 1938], 466). *Scriptorum* includes biographical sketches as well as a list of publications from the early church through Martin Luther.

<sup>163</sup>WJE, 26:195. Entry 362.

<sup>164</sup>WJE, 26:195. See Blaise Pascal, *The Life of Mr. Paschal with His Letters Relating to the Jesuits*, vol. 1 (London: Printed by James Bettenham, 1744), 316.

<sup>165</sup>According to the analysis of Thomas Schafer, the entry is probably to be dated after Feb of 1725 and probably no earlier than 1735. While, as with many entries in the *Catalogues*, it is difficult to

But several entries indicate that Edwards was familiar with prominent biographies.<sup>166</sup> Edwards read the memoir of Thomas Halyburton, noting in his *Catalogue* that Halyburton found “the fulfilling of Scriptures more convincing of the Truth of the divine authority of Scriptures than any other.”<sup>167</sup> Edwards mentioned reading both periodical and biographical works by Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729), including his biography of John Churchill (London, 1714)<sup>168</sup> and Steele’s tract on the reformation of military manners, *The Christian Hero* (London, 1701).<sup>169</sup> Finally, in a letter to John Erskine, Edwards specifically mentioned the impact of Doddridge’s *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honorable Col. James Gardiner*.<sup>170</sup> In his letter to Erskine, Edwards writes that amidst the need to lament the “wickedness that prevails in the earth,” there are yet “some things that afford a degree of hope in this dark day” among which is

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know with certainty that Edwards read the book, it is clear that this particular entry was logged before Edwards’s work on Brainerd (*WJE*, 26:109, 111).

<sup>166</sup>One additional possibility is Samuel Mather’s, *The Life of Cotton Mather*. The probate record of Timothy Edwards’s estate (1771) lists Mather’s *Life* as part of Timothy Edwards library (*WJE*, 26:387). As Theusen notes, it is surprising that the Mathers are rarely mentioned in Edwards’s works given the fact that twenty percent of Timothy Edwards’s holdings were titles by Increase and Cotton Mather (*WJE*, 26:373). As noted above, Cotton Mather’s *Maducutio ad Ministerium* is noted several times in the *Catalogues*.

<sup>167</sup>*WJE*, 26:188. Entry 340. Thuesen speculates that Edwards may have read the third edition of Halyburton’s *Memoirs* (Edinburgh, 1714).

<sup>168</sup>*WJE*, 26:170. Entry 262. John Churchill (1650–1722), First Duke of Marlborough, was undoubtedly of interest to Edwards given the former’s abandonment of Catholicism and his royal patron to side with William of Orange (1650–1702) in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The biography pays little attention, however, to Churchill’s religious motivations—all the more surprising given that its publication followed Steele’s *Christian Hero* (see Richard Steele, *Churchill’s Annals: Being a Compleat View of the Duke of Marlborough’s Life and Glorious Actions, Both in the Field and Cabinet*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [London: S. Popping, 1714]). In addition to the biographical works mentioned in the *Catalogue*, numerous entries note Edwards’s early (before 1720) interest in and access to Joseph Addison and Richard Steele’s *Spectator* (*WJE*, 26:78–79).

<sup>169</sup>*WJE*, 26:154. Entry 192. Samuel Johnson, a member of Yale’s class of 1714, mentions that the library received from Dummer “all the *Spectators* and *Tatlers* being eleven Volumes, in Royal paper, neatly bound and gilt” (quoted in Pratt, “The Books Sent from England by Jeremiah Dummer to Yale College,” 15. Steele’s *Hero* addresses several heroic figures of antiquity before turning to Jesus as the model for heroism, particularly focusing on the attribute of meekness. While Steele does not identify contemporary figures as representative, his portrait is aimed at political figures of Whig convictions. See Richard Steele, *The Christian Hero*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Jacob Tonson, 1712), 64–68.

<sup>170</sup>*WJE*, 26:244. Entry 499.

the manner in which Londoners had responded to Doddridge's portrait of Gardiner's piety.<sup>171</sup>

What can be conclusively drawn from these intriguing records? Edwards was a participant in the transatlantic republic of letters and as well aware of the developments in literature as he was with those in philosophy. Though the precise dimensions of his biographical reading are unclear, he was familiar with modern tendencies in biography. Doddridge's *Life of Gardiner* mirrored the trend since Mason to construct a biography through extensive use of the subject's correspondence and journal entries. Edwards's biographical writing, particularly his *Life of David Brainerd*, is marked by this eighteenth-century documentary tendency rather than the narrative style of Cave's *Scriptorum*. Like the popular biographies of the age, Edwards made primary use of his subject's writing to shape a character portrait. While Edwards explicitly grounds his purpose for life-writing in the Scriptures and in the history of Christian literature, his reading of *The Spectator* also undoubtedly reinforced the value of the depiction of character in the attempt to shape public morality.<sup>172</sup>

### **Edwards's *Faithful Narrative***

Several of Edwards's works, while biographical in nature, are best categorized as conversion narratives.<sup>173</sup> Edwards recorded the conversions of "two notable converts,"

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<sup>171</sup>See Jonathan Edwards, *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S Claghorn, vol. 16, Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 365. Doddridge's prefatory dedication indicates his purpose to show James Gardiner (1688–1745) as a model of Christian piety (Doddridge, *Life of James Gardiner*, vii).

<sup>172</sup>For Edwards's commentary on the biblical grounds for biography, see *WJE*, 7:89–90. Addison's first two issues of *The Spectator* (March 1 and 2, 1711) are an apologetic for its existence grounded in the character and virtue of its publishers.

<sup>173</sup>For a detailed study of the development of conversion narratives, see Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*. This section will omit Edwards's autobiographical *Personal Narrative*, though it has significant value for consideration alongside his other conversion narratives. Admittedly, the lines that distinguish biography from autobiography can be porous. Even Stauffer's magisterial study occasionally and unconsciously treats autobiographical works as biography.

Abigail Hutchinson and Phebe Bartlett, in the 1737 publication of *The Faithful Narrative*.<sup>174</sup> Edwards saw these accounts as a way of describing the scope and nature of the Northampton revivals of 1734–35. These narratives mirrored the emphasis of Edwards’s own spiritual autobiography in portraying conversion less in terms of the structure of the experience and more on the nature and disposition of the soul. Nevertheless, they are instructive in the way that Edwards delves into his subject’s inner spiritual struggle through his access as pastor and counselor. This literary experience provides an important backdrop to his work on the *Life of David Brainerd* nearly a decade later.

### **Edwards’s *Life of David Brainerd***

Edwards’s intimate account of Brainerd’s life, published in 1749, belies the fact that the majority of their relationship was formed in the last four months of Brainerd’s life. Edwards had heard of Brainerd’s work at Crossweeksung in 1745 and had written to a friend that Brainerd was “remarkable for his piety, and eminent zeal for the good of souls, and his knowledge in divinity, and solidity of his judgment, and prudence of conduct.”<sup>175</sup> But it was during the summer and fall of 1747, when David Brainerd lay, deathly ill, in the Northampton pastor’s parsonage, that Edwards truly observed the young man’s conduct. “His manner of praying,” Edwards wrote, was “very agreeable...addressing [his prayers] to an infinitely great and holy God...at the greatest distance from any appearance of ostentation...from the fullness of his heart.”<sup>176</sup> As the local pastor, the honor fell to Edwards to preach Brainerd’s funeral. His sermon, later published as *True Saints, when Absent from the Body are Present with the Lord*, presented

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<sup>174</sup>WJE, 4:191ff, 199ff.

<sup>175</sup>WJE, 16:179.

<sup>176</sup>WJE, 7:446.

Brainerd “in embryonic form” as an example of normal Christian life.<sup>177</sup> Edwards examined Brainerd’s conversion, his subsequent spiritual exercises, his conduct, and the days leading up to his death. His portrait of Brainerd, in what would be the outline for his larger *Life*, focused on Brainerd’s complete devotion to Christ through numerous personal trials and in the face of opposition from without and within. Edwards concluded that Brainerd “in his whole course acted as one who had indeed sold all for Christ and had entirely devoted himself to God and made his glory his highest end, and was fully determined to spend his whole time and strength in his service.”<sup>178</sup> Edwards had seen in Brainerd’s example the marrow of his argument for the reliable signs of genuine conversion. Thus, as biographer George Marsden writes, the *Life of David Brainerd* was to be “*Religious Affections* in the form of a spiritual biography.”<sup>179</sup>

A comprehensive biography of Brainerd, begun that autumn and completed by December of 1748, was so compelling and widely distributed that David Brainerd became the second most recognizable American religious figure of the eighteenth century.<sup>180</sup> Several distinct facets of Edwards’s biography are worthy of note, especially as they relate to a larger pattern of Edwardsean biography. In terms of form, Edwards opted for a comprehensive rather than distilled narrative. In this fashion, Edwards is mirroring William Mason and presaging the form that will be used to great acclaim by James Boswell. Rather than creating a narrative of Brainerd’s life, seasoned with occasional quotations from Brainerd’s diary, Edwards stitched together (often lengthy)

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<sup>177</sup>John A. Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 135.

<sup>178</sup>*WJE*, 7:548.

<sup>179</sup>George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 331.

<sup>180</sup>Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 5. Grigg argues that Brainerd is second only to Edwards in significance. He also helpfully provides a representative (not exhaustive) list displaying how widespread the republishing of Brainerd’s public journal, Edwards’s *Life*, and Wesley’s *Extract* have been over the last two and a half centuries (Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 195–97).

excerpts from the diary with contextual comments.<sup>181</sup> Such an approach, following the conventions of the day, foregrounded the subject's voice giving a true-to-life portrait of Brainerd. He bookended this collection with an introduction defending his editorial decisions and a rationale for the biographical genre and concluded with an extended reflection on the personal impact of Brainerd's life.<sup>182</sup>

While Edwards reflected the era's psychological interest, his aim is not to satisfy public curiosity.<sup>183</sup> Several editions of Brainerd's diaries had already been published to great acclaim.<sup>184</sup> However, Edwards's contribution does not editorialize or compile extensive anecdotes, as might have been expected as one of Brainerd's close friends and literary executor.<sup>185</sup> Rather, he included previously unpublished diary entries that illustrate Brainerd's "experience of religious truths, rather than his personality."<sup>186</sup> Intriguingly, Edwards, conscious of the cost of a more-lengthy book, specifically chose to

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<sup>181</sup>Because of this 'documentary' form, Petit notes that "a question that has long been asked is to what extent the *Life of Brainerd* may with fairness be called a 'biography.' The editor of the 1801 Worcester edition has to defend Edwards's approach by stating that nearly the whole of the work is "extracts from Mr. Brainerd's diary, and his own words" accompanied by "a few brief remarks" interspersed by Edwards "to give the whole the cast of a continued narrative." Nevertheless, Petit rightly concludes, "the skill with which [Edwards's account of Brainerd's life] is done make the volume more than a 'mere compilation.' Because the biographer functions not as a mere compiler, but as a close observer who is also one of the principal characters involved, the work is significant" (*WJE*, 7:71).

<sup>182</sup>This resulted in a comparatively long biography. The 1793 Worcester, MA edition of Edwards's *Life of Brainerd* stretched to 430pp. In comparison, Wesley's *Extract* (London, 1793) at 281pp was almost half the length. Edwards is more like Boswell than Johnson in this respect—preferring the inclusion of personal documents to preserve the subject's voice over a largely interpretive summary of his subject's life. In comparison, the average length of a biographical entry in Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* (1780–81) is 31pp, and his *longest* entry, on Alexander Pope (vol. 2), is 173pp. James Boswell's biography of Johnson (*Life of Samuel Johnson*, London 1791), by contrast, swelled to two volumes and over 1000pp.

<sup>183</sup>Disappointingly (and bizarrely), Stauffer's magisterial work only mentions Edwards's *Life of Brainerd* in a list of "the best travel-and-adventure biographies" (Stauffer, *Art of Biography in Eighteenth-Century England*, 209n).

<sup>184</sup>*WJE*, 7:73. Brainerd was expected to submit reports of the progress of gospel ministry to the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge—which were published in two parts in 1746 by the Society to great acclaim. Though not co-extensive with his personal diary, his diary entries formed the basis for these reports.

<sup>185</sup>*WJE*, 7:96.

<sup>186</sup>*WJE*, 7:5.

omit the sections of Brainerd's diary that speak most of the latter's success among the Indians. This underscores the fact that Edwards's aim is not to present Brainerd as a model of missionary fruitfulness, but to answer the basic and compelling theological question he proposed in the preface of *Religious Affections*: "What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards?"<sup>187</sup> Petit rightly observes that it was Brainerd who exemplifies the ideals of *Religious Affections* in a way similar to Sarah Edwards (1710–1758) in *Some Thoughts on Revival*.<sup>188</sup> Edwards was mainly concerned with "the *theological example*" the diary provides.<sup>189</sup>

As Grigg has argued, Edwards saw Brainerd "as living proof of what he had argued in *Religious Affections*."<sup>190</sup> The intent to present Brainerd in this way is clear from Edwards's funeral sermon for Brainerd—later printed as *True Saints, when Absent from the Body, are Present with the Lord*—which became the template for the reflections he composed for the conclusion of his *Life of Brainerd*.<sup>191</sup> In it, Edwards noted several ways in which Brainerd epitomized true religious affections.

First, Brainerd's conversion was evidenced by his clear conviction of sin, an awakened conscience, and exercises of mind "agreeable to reason and the Gospel of Jesus Christ." These "proper intellectual views of the supreme glory of the divine Being," Edwards specified, consisted in the sight of "the infinite dignity and beauty of the perfections of his nature" and the "transcendent excellency of the way of salvation by

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<sup>187</sup>WJE, 7:22. See also *Religious Affections* in WJE, 2:84.

<sup>188</sup>WJE, 7:5.

<sup>189</sup>WJE, 7:22 (emphasis mine).

<sup>190</sup>Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 134.

<sup>191</sup>WJE, 7:543–54. The sermon was originally printed for Rogers and Fowle by Daniel Henchman in December of 1741. It was later revised and reprinted in Dwight's *Memoirs* (1822).



Christ.”<sup>192</sup> In *Religious Affections*, Edwards had argued that the first objective ground of truly gracious affections is the “transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things.”<sup>193</sup> Likewise “a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency,” Edwards had contended, “is the first beginning and spring of all holy affections.”<sup>194</sup> By contrast, Brainerd was not subject to “strong impressions, sudden flights and pangs of the affections” or “vehement emotions in animal nature,” indicators which Edwards had argued were no signs either way as to whether affections are truly gracious.<sup>195</sup> In fact, Brainerd “detested enthusiasm in all its forms and operations, and abhorred whatever in opinion or experience seemed to verge towards Antinomianism.”<sup>196</sup>

Second, Brainerd “excelled in his judgement and knowledge of things in general, so especially in divinity.” This was evidenced through his journals and sermons, but exemplified in the careful way in which Brainerd conducted his ministry among the Indians. Edwards claimed that he “never knew [Brainerd’s] equal...for clear, accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion, and its distinctions from various false appearances.”<sup>197</sup> This corresponded with Edwards’s conviction that gracious affections “do arise from the mind’s being enlightened, rightly or spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.”<sup>198</sup> So also, true piety must be attended by “a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment of the reality and certainty of divine things.”

Third, Brainerd’s life was attended with “holy influences” which were not only

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<sup>192</sup>WJE, 7:543.

<sup>193</sup>WJE, 2:290.

<sup>194</sup>WJE, 2:253–54.

<sup>195</sup>WJE, 7:544; WJE, 2:125–90.

<sup>196</sup>WJE, 7:547.

<sup>197</sup>WJE, 7:545.

<sup>198</sup>WJE, 2:266, 291.

great at his conversion, but which “were so in a continued course from that time forward” as evidenced by his private journal. “He was lively in religion in the right way,” Edwards argued, “lively not only nor chiefly...in professing and talking, but lively in the work and business of religion.” Brainerd lived “a life of labor and self-denial,” spending his “strength and substance in pursuing that great end, the glory of his Redeemer” in a way “scarcely to be paralleled in this age in these parts of the world.”<sup>199</sup> These evidences, too, were aligned with Edwards’s conviction that “gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice.”<sup>200</sup> This final evidence, in fact, was the “chief of all evidences of a saving sincerity in religion” both to professors, themselves, and the world.<sup>201</sup>

Brainerd was the epitome of Edwards’s convictions on the nature and evidence of God’s gracious activity. As such, his life was to be commended that it might “effectually stir us up to endeavors that in the way of such a holy life we may at last come to so blessed and end.”<sup>202</sup> In Brainerd’s funeral sermon, Edwards wrote,

how much is there in the consideration of such an example and so blessed an end, to excite us who are yet alive with all diligence and earnestness to improve the time of life. . . to earnest care and endeavors, that we may be in like manner faithful in our work; that we may be filled with the same spirit, animated with the like pure and fervent flame of love to God, and the like earnest concern to advance the kingdom and glory of our Lord and Master, and the prosperity of Zion.<sup>203</sup>

Like other biographers, Edwards’s aim guides his selection and presentation of material. Brainerd’s lively religion and scarcely-paralleled pursuit of God’s glory “may be perceived by anyone that reads his journal.”<sup>204</sup> Of Brainerd’s biographers, Edwards

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<sup>199</sup> *WJE*, 7:548.

<sup>200</sup> *WJE*, 2:383.

<sup>201</sup> *WJE*, 2:426.

<sup>202</sup> *WJE*, 7:554.

<sup>203</sup> *WJE*, 7:552–53.

<sup>204</sup> *WJE*, 2:548.

takes the least liberty in emending Brainerd's journal.<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, he occasionally condensed the journal entries that describe Brainerd's deep depressions. He also eliminated passages which he thought would confuse readers or stand in apparent contradiction to the thrust of Brainerd's thought.<sup>206</sup> Conscious of the way that Brainerd's entries could be appropriated by enthusiasts, Edwards frequently toned down passages where Brainerd wrote in evocative language in order to give greater weight to his entire life as a demonstration of authentic religious affection.<sup>207</sup> While Edwards's editorial excisions are significant, rounding off "some of the sharper and less orthodox edges of Brainerd's life," Grigg agrees that "the essential message he conveyed...is true to its subject."<sup>208</sup> As valuable as Brainerd's diary is, however, Edwards also recognized the value of outside perspective. He maintained that "much more has been learned by long intimate acquaintance with him" and by looking into parts of Brainerd's diary which "he purposely concealed in what he published."<sup>209</sup>

Edwards's appendix returned to several important emphases. First, he commended Brainerd as a model of true religious affections, demonstrating Brainerd's exemplification of the twelve reliable signs developed in *Religious Affections* in details similar to the funeral sermon. "His love to God was primarily and principally for the supreme excellency of his own nature," Edwards wrote, "and not built on the preconceived notion that God loved him...So his joy was in God and not in himself."<sup>210</sup> The great object "of the new sense of his mind" was "holiness, conformity to God, living

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<sup>205</sup> *WJE*, 7:74.

<sup>206</sup> *WJE*, 7:80.

<sup>207</sup> *WJE*, 7:83.

<sup>208</sup> Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 136.

<sup>209</sup> *WJE*, 2:548.

<sup>210</sup> *WJE*, 2:505.

to God, and glorifying him.” His life was characterized by “evangelical humiliation, consisting in a sense of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness,” a “meek and quiet spirit,” and continual “longings and thirstings after greater degrees of conformity to God” which all ended at last “in a marvelous peace, unmoveable stability, calmness, and resignation in the sensible approaches of death.”<sup>211</sup>

Second, Edwards emphasized Brainerd’s commitment to “those doctrines usually called ‘the doctrines of grace.’” “For if it be allowed that there is truth, substance, or value in the main of Mr. Brainerd’s religion,” Edwards remarked, “it will undoubtedly follow that those doctrines are divine since ’tis evident that the whole of [Brainerd’s religion]. . . is established in the mind by those doctrines.”<sup>212</sup> In fact, the very testimony of Brainerd’s life confronted the prevailing notion that Calvinism tended to undermine “the very foundations of all religion and morality. . . [by] enervat[ing] and vacant[ing] all reasonable motives to the exercise and practice of them.”<sup>213</sup> Third, Brainerd’s example was good general counsel for the right way of practicing religion by teaching others to “honor God in the world, adorn their profession, be serviceable to mankind, have the comforts of religion while they live, be free from disquieting doubts and dark apprehensions. . . and finish their course with joy.”<sup>214</sup> Finally, Edwards argued that Brainerd’s memoirs also have much “to teach and excite to duty” for those called to the work of ministry, especially in the cause of mission among the heathen.<sup>215</sup> His concluding wish was that “Mr. Brainerd’s life and death may be for the great spiritual benefit of all

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<sup>211</sup> *WJE*, 7:506, 507, 509, 520.

<sup>212</sup> *WJE*, 7:522.

<sup>213</sup> *WJE*, 7:526.

<sup>214</sup> *WJE*, 7:531.

<sup>215</sup> *WJE*, 7:530, 534.

that shall read it, and prove a happy means of promoting the revival of true religion in these parts of the world. Amen.”<sup>216</sup>

### **Edwardsean Evangelical Biography?**

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to examine the impact of Jonathan Edwards on John Ryland’s *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of Andrew Fuller* (1816/1818). This study’s central thesis is that John Ryland consciously adopted the biographical aims of Jonathan Edwards in his biography of Andrew Fuller. The burden of this thesis is to prove that Ryland, following Edwards, understood the importance of depicting “lives” through the dual emphases of doctrine and piety and, what is more, shaped his depiction of Fuller’s piety along the lines of Edwards’s *Religious Affections*. It has already been noted that Ryland’s piety was deeply shaped both by his reading of Edwards’s *Life of David Brainerd* and by *The Life of Jonathan Edwards*, by New Divinity theologian Samuel Hopkins. Before examining Ryland’s biography, it is instructive to note similar patterns between the work of Edwards and Hopkins in light of their cumulative impact on Ryland’s vision for biography.

### **Hopkins’s *The Life and character of the late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards* (1765)**

Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803) had likely read some of Edwards’s works while an undergraduate student at Yale, but it was Edwards’s commencement sermon in 1741 that made him resolve “to go and live with Mr. Edwards, as soon as I should have opportunity.”<sup>217</sup> Edwards’s sermon provided “the spiritual signposts” helping Hopkins to

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<sup>216</sup>WJE, 7:541

<sup>217</sup>Samuel Hopkins, *Sketches of the Life of the Late Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D., Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newport*, ed. Stephen West, Levi Hart, and Abner Reed (Hartford, CT: Printed by Hudson and Goodwin, 1805), 41–43.

see “the resemblance between his own religious experiences and the distinguishing marks [of genuine conversion] the great preacher had delineated.”<sup>218</sup> In December of 1741, Hopkins arrived in Northampton for the first of several extended stays at the Edwards home. He was quickly recruited as an itinerant preacher in Western Massachusetts and, by 1742, left Northampton to obtain ordination in Waterbury.<sup>219</sup> He would return to Northampton in the summer of 1742 and, again, in the summer of 1743, making extensive use of Edwards’s library where he “read as much as he could and discussed his impressions with Edwards.”<sup>220</sup> Even after accepting a call to the minister in Housatonic, Massachusetts in 1743, Hopkins and Edwards would remain close friends until the latter’s death in 1758.

Soon after Edwards’s death, Hopkins authored a biography that according to the last of the great New Divinity theologians, Edwards Amasa Park, “the world are [sic] indebted to it, for [it is] the best portraiture of Edwards which was ever drawn by a man who knew him.”<sup>221</sup> Several features stand out. First, like his mentor’s biography of David Brainerd (Hopkins’ Yale classmate and spiritual exemplar), Hopkins’s preface included a moving personal appreciation of “an eminently good man.” Like Edwards, Hopkins did not encourage his readers to attain to his subject’s success but to imitate his piety:

The design of the following memoirs, is not merely to publish these things, and tell the world how eminently great, wise, holy, and useful President Edwards was; but rather to inform in what way and by what means he attained to such an uncommon stock of knowledge and holiness; and how, in the improvement of this, he did so

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<sup>218</sup>Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins & The New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England Between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 29.

<sup>219</sup>Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins & The New Divinity Movement*, 30.

<sup>220</sup>Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins & The New Divinity Movement*, 31.

<sup>221</sup>Edwards Amasa Park, *Memoir of the Life and Character of Samuel Hopkins, D.D.* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 213. Nevertheless, according to Park, the biography had fallen into “unmerited oblivion” by the middle of the nineteenth century.

much good to mankind; that others may hereby be directed and excited to go and do likewise.<sup>222</sup>

Thus, Hopkins saw his biography “not so much as an act of friendship to the dead, as of kindness to the living,” coupled with “an earnest desire that every reader may faithfully improve it to this purpose.”<sup>223</sup>

Both Edwards and Hopkins begin with a brief account of birth, parentage, and early life and proceed as quickly as possible to their subject’s earliest writings.<sup>224</sup> While Edwards interspersed commentary between Brainerd’s diary extracts and then appended his reflections at the end of the biography, Hopkins consolidated extracts from Edwards’s personal writings into larger sections followed by brief reflections. This allowed Hopkins to foreground the voice of his subject.<sup>225</sup>

Most importantly, Hopkins excerpted Edwards’s *Personal Narrative* to give the reader an account of his subject’s conversion.<sup>226</sup> While Edwards’s *Personal Narrative* was written before the sermon series that formed the basis for *Religious Affections*, Edwards’s mature reflection (composed twenty years after his diary and *Resolutions*) hinted at what he would later regard as reliable evidence of truly gracious affections.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>222</sup>Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College at New-Jersey Together with a Number of His Sermons on Various Important Subjects* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1765), 2.

<sup>223</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 3. Edwards Amasa Park took notice of this commendation of the life of Edwards in his biography of Hopkins, writing “here we see another point of resemblance between the pastor of the Housatonic and his theological instructor. In the memoir of that instructor, the pupil says just what we may say of Hopkins himself” (Park, *Memoir of the Life and Character of Samuel Hopkins, D.D.*, 37).

<sup>224</sup>See *WJE*, 7:100. Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 14.

<sup>225</sup>Hopkins also includes a selection of Edwards’s (to that point, unpublished) sermons at the end of the volume. Since Hopkins had access to Edwards’s manuscripts and, in the succeeding years, would see many of them into publication, his selection is likely intended to represent the heart of Edwards’s ministry. While Hopkins’s brief preface to the eighteen sermons does not demonstrate this definitively, he makes a connection between the piety of Edwards and the particular collection of sermons contained in the volume (Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 101).

<sup>226</sup>Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 23; *WJE*, 16:790.

<sup>227</sup>The *Personal Narrative* was likely written at the request of Edwards’s future son-in-law Aaron Burr in 1740 (*WJE*, 16:747). Hopkins’s note that the narrative “it seems was wrote nearly Twenty

He emphasized the importance of the “inward, sweet Delight in God and divine Things,” the new “sweet Sense” of the heart which would come to characterize Edwards’s unique “rhetoric of sensation.”<sup>228</sup> As this sense of divine things increased in his life, Edwards experienced “vehement Longings of Soul after God and Christ” and greater zeal “after more Holiness” which he felt as “a burning Desire to be in every Thing a compleat Christian, and conformed to the blessed Image of Christ.”<sup>229</sup> These longings were accompanied by a great hunger after the Scriptures, for private contemplation of God’s excellencies, for God’s work in the world through gospel-preaching, and a stronger sense of his own sin—each markers which Edwards would later distill in *Religious Affections* as evidences of saving influences of the Spirit.

Hopkins’s biography makes greater use of distilled narrative than Edwards’s *Brainerd*. The 330 pages of interleaved diary and commentary in Edwards’s *Life of David Brainerd* can be tedious reading. Hopkins covers Edwards’s life, apart from the inclusion of his personal writings, in less than fifty. Since Hopkins knew Edwards over a longer period of time and more intimately than Edwards knew Brainerd, this is more likely a function of practicality than a difference in style. Additionally, while the young Edwards kept a diary and, later, filled numerous notebooks with his miscellanies, Hopkins notes that Edwards “made a secret of his private devotion.”<sup>230</sup> Modern readers are limited to

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years after” *Resolutions* and the *Diary* confirms the timeline (Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 23).

<sup>228</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 25–26; Michael J. McClymond, “Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,” *Journal of Religion* 77, no. 2 (April 1997): 199.

<sup>229</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 28–29.

<sup>230</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 39. The first entry is dated to December 1722, soon after taking a pastorate in New York City and, likely, not long after beginning the composition of his “Resolutions.” There is a total of 150 entries covering his New York pastorate (1722–23), summer in East Windsor with his family (1723), pastorate in Bolton (1723–24), his years as tutor at Yale (1724–1726) and the period of his pastorate in Northampton (1726–1735). The journal entries slow considerably, especially after Edwards’s call to assist Stoddard in the fall of 1726. The final five entries cover a span of seven years (four of the five entries in the year of the Northampton / Connecticut Valley Awakening in 1734–1735). According to Marsden, Edwards, like Cotton Mather, “literally kept score of how well he did” in keeping his resolutions, “or as he put it, of the evidence of



what little Hopkins and Dwight included in their memoirs—which may have been nearly all that Edwards left.<sup>231</sup>

But in Hopkins, as in Edwards, the subject's exemplary life and God's remarkable providence shines through. For example, Hopkins extensively recounted Edwards's dismissal from the Northampton congregation, foregrounding Edwards's humility and confidence in God amidst what was "a great trial to Mr. Edwards" that "surely [came] very near to him and [tried] his spirit."<sup>232</sup> While the loss of the pastorate threatened financial ruin, Hopkins recounted that God "soon appeared for him, in his providence, even beyond all of his expectations."<sup>233</sup> Hopkins also focused on Edwards's confrontation of death. In his sickness, Edwards "seemed to enjoy an uncommon degree of the presence of God" and, as his illness progressed, "was an admirable instance of patience and resignation to the last."<sup>234</sup>

Finally, Hopkins used Edwards's life as a foil for the decline of authentic biblical spirituality in his own day. Hopkins lamented the "superficial study of divinity," worldly zeal, and inauthentic Christian experience of ignorant churchmen who caused churches to "suck dry breasts."<sup>235</sup> "In this world, so full of darkness and delusion,"

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God's grace" (Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 52). See entries dated Jan 21, 1722 (*WJE*, 16:766) and that of December 27, 1723, (*WJE*, 16:783). Edwards's aim in diligent and consistent introspection was self-improvement. His "Diary" cross-referenced his "Resolutions" as a means of tying his overarching goals to his daily practice.

<sup>231</sup>Edwards, *WJE*, 16:750. Perhaps, like Fuller, Edwards destroyed some of his personal diaries. For example, Edwards later expressed some regret over his *Resolutions*, writing "I used to be continually examining myself, and studying and contriving for likely ways and means, how I should live holily with far greater diligence and earnestness, than I ever pursued anything in my life: but with too great a dependence on my own strength; which afterwards proved a great damage to me" (*WJE* 16:795). According to Hopkins, the "Personal Narrative" was written 20 years afterward for "his own private Advantage" (Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 22).

<sup>232</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 62–63.

<sup>233</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 65.

<sup>234</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 80, 82.

<sup>235</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 21.

Hopkins wrote, “it is of great importance that all should be able to distinguish between true religion and that which is false.” None have taken greater pains to demonstrate this “than he whose life is set before the reader.”<sup>236</sup> While Edwards showed the young Brainerd to be an example of the best of what the awakenings could produce and a model of true religious affection, Hopkins presented the young Edwards as a model of true Christian zeal and ministerial health. “If the protestant world abounded with you persons of this stamp; with you men who were preparing for the work of ministry, with such a temper, such exercises, and such resolutions,” Hopkins exclaimed, “what a delightful prospect would this afford, of the near approach of happier days, than the church of God has ever yet seen!”<sup>237</sup>

### **Hopkins’s *The Life and Character of Mrs. Susanna Anthony* (1796)**

After an interlude of nearly four decades, Hopkins penned two additional autobiographies—nearly back to back. That Hopkins, who had composed the biography of one of New England’s most prominent theologians, should turn his efforts to the lives of two women underscores the way in which evangelicals understood the importance of women in the Awakenings.<sup>238</sup> While his biography of Sarah Osborn (1714–1796, see below) is better known, Hopkins first published the life of her friend Susanna Anthony (1726–1791).<sup>239</sup> Anthony was born in Newport and raised in a Quaker home. She was converted in 1741 during the Great Awakening and became a member of the Congregational church, where she was “a distinguished and eminent instance of piety and

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<sup>236</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, n.p.

<sup>237</sup>Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 21.

<sup>238</sup>Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, *The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 98.

<sup>239</sup>Sarah Osborn’s life has recently received sustained attention in Brekus, *Sarah Osborn’s World*.

strict religion in every branch of the duties of Christianity” for nearly fifty years.<sup>240</sup> Never married, Anthony kept an exhaustive diary of her Christian life and maintained an extensive correspondence with friends. In the midst of the crisis surrounding his ordination at Newport in 1769, Hopkins wrote to both Anthony and Osborn, who supported his call to the church.<sup>241</sup>

Hopkins’s biography of Anthony proceeds in a fashion similar to his earlier work. Beginning with his own brief biography of her life (1–13), he appends her own account (13–48), extracts from her diary (49–160) and letters to friends (160–174) and, finally, his own observations on her life and writings (174–192). While it is true that Anthony was an important supporter of Hopkins’s ministry and doctrine (as was Osborn), it is evident by his painstaking work that he considered her life a model of female piety. He invested incalculable time excerpting from her diary (whose entries totaled over 1000) and personal correspondence. Intriguingly, Hopkins’s extended section of “observations” is a feature present in Edwards’s biography of Brainerd, but absent (or, perhaps, truncated) in Hopkins’s earlier biography of Edwards. Hopkins noted two significant emphases in Anthony’s piety, and from them shaped exhortations for the reader. First, Susanna proved the divine nature of the gospel through her “most deliberate choice and resolutions to look for happiness in nothing but the service and enjoyment of Christ.” This, Hopkins stated, is the evident by the degree to which Anthony displayed a “higher and more eminent degree” of the Christian graces.<sup>242</sup> These graces, concatenated in love and evidenced in joy, testify to the unbelieving world of the supernatural reality of the gospel. Hopkins concluded, “if there be any true religion for man, or any happiness for

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<sup>240</sup>Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony* (Worcester, MA: Hudson and Goodwin, 1799), 3.

<sup>241</sup>Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins & The New Divinity Movement*, 103.

<sup>242</sup>Hopkins, *The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony*, 175.

him, suited to his nature and capacities, Christianity is from heaven.”<sup>243</sup> Second, Hopkins argued that Anthony’s life “may teach us what true religion is, as distinguished from all counterfeits.”<sup>244</sup> Reflecting the emphases of Edwards, Hopkins demonstrated that true religion is grounded in biblical doctrine and expressed in joyful obedience. Anthony demonstrated true religion from her genuine faith, eager devotion, constant prayer, and deep affection for God. Similar to his biography on Edwards, Hopkins concluded with an appeal to young people to consider Antony as a person “worthy of particular attention and imitation.”<sup>245</sup>

### **Hopkins’s *Memoirs of the Life of Sarah Osborn* (1799)**

Finally, several observations should be made on *Memoirs of the Life of Sarah Osborn*. Osborn stands out as a model of Christian piety through suffering. Sarah, by her own admission and in Hopkins’ telling, wrestled for some years with a lack of personal assurance. After her conversion during the Great Awakening, her life was marked by a dramatic range of suffering and loss. Widowed and remarried, she and her husband persevered through life, teetering on the edge of poverty. She experienced the waywardness and then loss of her son, tension with her second husband’s unbelieving children, and then widowhood for a second time.<sup>246</sup> She suffered from chronic illness that ultimately robbed her of her sight for the last twenty years of her life.<sup>247</sup> Amidst it all, however, Osborn showed a resilient trust in the goodness of God. Her confidence and graciousness was so compelling that a women’s society she begins grew so large it posed

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<sup>243</sup>Hopkins, *The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony*, 179.

<sup>244</sup>Hopkins, *The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony*, 180.

<sup>245</sup>Hopkins, *The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony*, 186.

<sup>246</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 66.

<sup>247</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 61, 352.

a threat for the insecure pastor of her church. Her weekly ministry to women, young people, and to black freedmen stretched over half a century and resulted in the conversion of many.<sup>248</sup> She was, for Hopkins, a model of true spirituality.

While the biography's arrangement is slightly different, Hopkins nevertheless utilized personal writings and a documentary style to foreground Osborne's voice. The work contains a narrative biography (58-83), extensive selections from Osborn's diary (84-351), and, like his work on Edwards, Hopkins's close observation of her confrontation with death (352-373). Apart from form and approach, the biography also hints at the way in which Edwards's *Religious Affections* impacted Osborne's understanding of the Christian life. In her diary entries between December 9 and 28, 1764, Osborne noted that "her thoughts and exercises were chiefly excited, I trust by the Spirit of God, while reading President Edwards on Religious Affections"—a work which she called "A lovely piece."<sup>249</sup> The diary entries reflect a sensitivity to the efficacious signs of divine grace: the pursuit of holiness, disinterested love, a taste for God's beauty and glory, and a greater sense of the odiousness of sin. Osborne even noted the impact of biography on her spirituality,

I have always reaped much benefit myself by reading the lives and experiences of others. Sometimes they have been blessed to convince me of sin, sometimes to scatter doubts, and sometimes to raise my affections into a flame. . . . He can bless a word from the weakest, meanest, and un-worthiest of all creatures, even *me*. If a word in these lines ever proves useful to one soul after my decease, it will be ten thousand times more than I deserve from the hands of a bountiful God.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 71, 81.

<sup>249</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 362–65; 356n.

<sup>250</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 56. Osborne writes that the purpose of her diary is not only to stir up her own soul to gratitude to God, but "for the encouragement of any who may providentially light on these lines after my decease, to trust in the Lord and never despair of mercy" (Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 6).

Hopkins's concluding reflections emphasize numerous "particulars of her Christian character, in which Mrs. Osborn was eminent and worthy of imitation."<sup>251</sup> Among other characteristics, Hopkins lauded her fervent prayer, secret devotion, practice of family worship, love for the Sabbath, her vibrant evangelism, her growing sense of the evil of sin and the goodness of God, her self-awareness and humility, her longing to be perfectly holy, and her desire for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the world. Though the last twenty years of her life "stripped, by degrees, and deprived [her] of many privileges and enjoyments," yet she "enjoyed the almost uninterrupted light of God's countenance, and spend most of her time in strength and devotion, in prayer and in praise," in which she had "unspeakable delight and a rich foretaste of heaven."<sup>252</sup> As in his reflections on Susanna Anthony, Hopkins noted Sarah's disinterested benevolence towards God, a prominent theme in Hopkins's theology.<sup>253</sup> Finally, Hopkins gave special attention to Sarah as a "kind and *faithful* friend," not only noting her special friendship with Susanna Anthony, but with "all, even to those who acted an unfriendly part to her, and injured her"—a friendship he experienced by which he was blessed.<sup>254</sup>

### Conclusion

Eighteenth-century evangelicals, especially Edwards and his heir Samuel Hopkins, retain the fundamentally religious character of biography common to pre-eighteenth-century biography. Each display a dual-focus on piety and doctrine in keeping with Edwards's own observations from Scripture. Each foreground the voice of the subject, leveraging the power of biography to draw the reader into the life of someone

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<sup>251</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 363.

<sup>252</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 358; 360.

<sup>253</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 364.

<sup>254</sup>Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 371.

with whose trials, sufferings, and joys they can identify. Moreover, each reflect a biblical summons, exhorting readers to consider the subject's life and doctrine and imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7). For them, biography is not simply a means of preserving the memory of the deceased or entertaining a curious readership, it is a fruitful way of teaching evangelical doctrine and practice by vivid example. Edwards and his heirs defy the modern, subtle, subjective turn by repeatedly demonstrating that man can only know himself in relation to the God who created him for personal relationship. And, while Edwards and fellow evangelicals adopt, whether deliberately or accidentally, contemporary biographical conventions (like portraying true-to-life characters through their subject's personal correspondence and journals), they underscore that the purpose of life-writing is "representing and recommending true religion and virtue to the world."<sup>255</sup>

Their biographical accounts, however, also have two distinct elements which distinguish them from other spiritual biographies. Each biography emphasizes the importance of Reformed convictions in undergirding its subject's piety.<sup>256</sup> Second, and most significantly, each has a distinct focus on the spiritual origin of true religious affections. In a religious landscape bounded by the extremes of fideism and enthusiasm, Edwards and his heirs emphasize that genuine faith is a work of the Spirit which brings about a total transformation of the individual—a new sense of the heart which delights in the excellence of divine things, the loveliness and sweetness of Christ, evangelical humiliation, a gracious and meek disposition, a beautiful symmetry and proportion in affection, and a life which bears the fruit of Christian practice.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> *WJE*, 7:89.

<sup>256</sup> On Anthony, see Hopkins, *The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony*, 180–83; on Edwards, see Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 1765, 52–53; Hopkins, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 362–71; on Brainerd, see *WJE*, 7:523–26.

<sup>257</sup> Edwards and Hopkins, however, do seem to differ on the idea of "new sense of the heart," a phrase which is not present in Hopkins's accounts *apart* from direct quotation of Edwards.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WORK OF FAITH, THE LABOR OF LOVE, AND THE PATIENCE OF HOPE: RYLAND'S FULLER BIOGRAPHIES

#### Introduction

While Ryland was neither the first nor certainly the last to memorialize Andrew Fuller, their intimate friendship and shared theological vision positioned Ryland to most faithfully capture the substance and spirit of his friend.<sup>1</sup> Ryland explained that the bond of their friendship was grounded in a “strong attachment to the same religious principles, a decided aversion to the same errors, a predilection for the same authors, with a concern for the cause of Christ at home and abroad and particularly for the success of the Baptist Mission.” Such things, Ryland continued, “laid the foundation of a friendship which never met with one minute’s interruption, by one unkind word or thought, of which I have any knowledge.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The first biographical account of Fuller’s life appears to have been published by Dr. Charles Stuart (1746–1826) in August of 1815 (Charles Stuart, “A Short Memoir of the Late Mr. Andrew Fuller,” *Christian Herald*, 1815), which Ryland mentions in his preface (John Ryland, *The work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope, illustrated in the life and death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller: late pastor of the Baptist church at Kettering, and secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from its commencement, in 1792* [London: Button & Son, 1816] xii). Stuart, a Baptist pastor in Edinburgh, was a frequent host and travelling companion to Fuller during his trips to Scotland for the BMS. J. W. Morris also preempts Ryland’s publication, issuing his biography only shortly before Ryland’s goes to press in 1816 (J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* [London: T. Hamilton, 1816]). Ryland read Morris’s memoir but, perhaps, too late to make any substantive changes prior to the publication of his own (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vi). Numerous periodicals later used Morris’s narrative and character sketch which were easier to adapt to short form. It is notable, however, that Fuller’s grandson, Andrew Gunton Fuller (1799–1884), uses Ryland’s memoir rather than Morris’s in his biographical account (Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life*, ed. Andrew Gunton Fuller, vol. 1 [Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836]).

<sup>2</sup>John Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ No Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life*. (Kettering: J.G. Fuller, 1815), 35–36.



No single theologian exerted greater influence on Ryland, Fuller, and their closest associates than the New England Congregationalist pastor, Jonathan Edwards.<sup>3</sup> While this influence is evident in the preaching and writing of eighteenth-century Baptist pastors from the Northamptonshire Association, it is prominently reflected in John Ryland's memoir of Andrew Fuller. Ryland's biography underscores the Edwardsean character of Fuller's theology while itself reflecting Edwards's approach to biographical writing. After a discussion of Ryland's fitness for composing Fuller's memoir, this chapter will examine the biography in detail, noting its purpose and form, selectivity and structure, and its content and theological emphases. The chapter concludes by noting the changes between the 1816 and 1818 editions of Ryland's biography as background for the following comparison of Ryland's biography with the memoir by John Webster Morris in chapter six.

### **Ryland as Biographer**

Given the short life—expectancy and high childhood mortality rate in the eighteenth century, pastors were often called upon to comfort the grieving and coordinate support for orphans and widows. Ryland's role as principal of the Bristol Academy and his generous evangelical ecumenism meant that his relational network vocation was disproportionately populated by gospel ministers. By Fuller's death in 1815, Ryland, at the age of sixty-two, had not only surpassed the median life-expectancy of 35, he had outlived many of his students and most of his closest friends. Ryland was, thus, frequently called upon to preach funeral sermons, a task he once called “the last solemn

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<sup>3</sup>For an excellent treatment of the influence of Edwards on Fuller, see Chris Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Boston: Brill, 2012). For the influence of Edwards on English Particular Baptists, see Michael A. G. Haykin, “Great Admirers of the Transatlantic Divinity: Some Chapters in the Story of Baptist Edwardsianism” in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 197–207

office of friendship.”<sup>4</sup> Ryland saw this service as both an honor and a strategic opportunity to grieve the loss of godly men and celebrate the faithfulness of God in all circumstances.<sup>5</sup> The later publication of these sermons, usually at the initiative of the deceased pastor’s congregation, provided needed financial support for surviving family in an era where publicly-funded social services did not exist.<sup>6</sup>

While his published funeral sermons are only a fraction of those he preached, they provide a useful window into Ryland’s pattern of life-writing.<sup>7</sup> Several observations are worthy of mention. First, after a Christocentric exposition of a scripture text, Ryland highlights the importance of Christian doctrine for the life of the believer. His sermons often connected his subject’s life to the beauty and importance of a doctrine he celebrated—whether the presence of the Spirit of Christ (in the case of Samuel Pearce [d.

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<sup>4</sup>John Ryland, *Seasonable Hints to a Bereaved Church; and the Blessedness of the Dead, Who Die in the Lord. Being the Substance of Two Discourses, Delivered at Sheepshead, October 26, 1783; Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. William Guy* (Northampton, England: T. Dicey & Company, 1783), i.

<sup>5</sup>In the funeral sermon for Fuller, Ryland underscored the propriety of grief: “When Stephen fell asleep in Jesus, devout men made great lamentation over him (Acts 8:2), and God censures those who lay not to heart the removal of the righteous from our world (Isa. 57:1). We may justly mourn for Zion, when her strong rods are broken and withered (Ezek. 19:12). And surely we should cry earnestly to Him with whom is the residue of the Spirit (Mal. 2:15) that he would pour down his influences from on high to increase the zeal, activity, and fidelity of his servants that are left, and to raise up fresh instruments to carry on his cause” (John Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ No Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life* [Kettering: J. G. Fuller, 1815], 41). Ryland’s funeral sermons are, in modern terms, remarkably “biblical-theological” or “canonical.” When preaching from the Old Testament, Ryland always centers on the manner in which the text points to Christ. Each of funeral sermons exalt the beauty and goodness of God in Christ and exhort his hearers to respond to the invitation to find salvation through divine grace.

<sup>6</sup>The title page of Ryland’s funeral sermon for the Rev. William Guy, for example, notes, “and sold for the Benefit of the Widow by the Author and the other ministers of the Northamptonshire and Leicestershire Association” (John Ryland, *Seasonable Hints to a Bereaved Church; and the Blessedness of the Dead, Who Die in the Lord. Being the Substance of Two Discourses, Delivered at Sheepshead, October 26, 1783; Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. William Guy* [Northampton, England: T. Dicey & Company, 1783], n.p.).

<sup>7</sup>See Ryland, *Seasonable Hints to a Bereaved Church*; John Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer’s Consolation* (London: J. Buckland, 1788); John Ryland, *Salvation Finished* (London: Matthews & Button, 1791); John Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ with His People a Source of Consolation under the Most Painful Bereavements: A Sermon Delivered at the Baptist Meeting-House, Cannon-Street, Birmingham, Oct. 20, 1799; Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M.* (Clipston: J. W. Morris, 1800); John Ryland, *The Duty of Christians in Reference to Their Deceased Ministers: A Sermon Preached at the Baptist Meeting House in the Pithay, Bristol; Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Sharp* (Bristol, England: E. Bryan, 1805); Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*; John Ryland, *Brief Memoirs of Four Christian Hindoos, Lately Deceased* (London: Gale and Fenner, 1816).

1799]), the deity of Christ (in the life of Joshua Symonds [1739–1788]), the preciousness of the atonement (in the life of Robert Hall, Sr. [d. 1791]), or union with Christ (in the life of Andrew Fuller [d. 1815]). In his funeral sermon for Hall, Ryland underscores Hall’s emphasis on the sufficiency of the atonement with his concluding congregational exhortation, exclaiming “It is finished! . . . In fine, the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters that cover the depths of the seas!!! Dear brethren, let the philanthropy of God our Saviour expand our bosoms.”<sup>8</sup>

Ryland’s sermons carefully illustrated the link between doctrine and piety in his subject’s life. Belief in the truths of Scripture, as Ryland demonstrated, animates the lives of God’s people—supporting them under heavy trials, comforting them in persistent suffering, and energizing them to make great advances in gospel ministry.<sup>9</sup> He could say of Fuller that he was both “mighty in the scriptures” and “one of the most conscientious, faithful, and spiritually-minded men on earth.”<sup>10</sup> This frequently served to underscore an exhortation to his hearers to follow the example of their departed friend.

Additionally, the published sermons highlight Ryland’s early practice of using correspondence to let the subject speak for himself. The print version of his sermon for Symonds included an extensive footnote using a letter Ryland had received from Symonds to illustrate how the latter made Christ his consolation in the midst of his

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<sup>8</sup>Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 21.

<sup>9</sup>In his funeral sermon for Symonds, Ryland notes David Brainerd as the preeminent illustration of doctrine’s connection to piety. Ryland writes “and thus when we would excite our hearers to *duty*, we would draw our motives from the love of Christ, show the example of Christ as the pattern of all obedience, and urge the glory of Christ as the end which you are under the sweetest obligation to pursue. Thus did the apostles of our Lord and all his faithful servants from age to age have walked in the same steps.” In an extended footnote in the published funeral manuscript, Ryland writes, “Among all uninspired men, I know of no example so interesting and edifying as that of David Brainerd. I scarce know a book in the world that I could so earnestly wish to be attentively perused by ministers and christians, as the *Account of his Life* published by President *Edwards*; containing such an example of vital and powerful godliness as well as so delightful an account of a work of grace upon many ignorant savages, who were brought by his ministry to the knowledge of salvation. In his remarks upon that work, p. 424., he observes, that he was favored with particular assistance in making all the various lines of his discourses meet and centre in Christ” (Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer’s Consolation*, 22).

<sup>10</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 2, 13.

extensive physical suffering.<sup>11</sup> The published funeral sermon for Samuel Pearce listed five letters Ryland read to the congregation before concluding his sermon.<sup>12</sup> Ryland's funeral sermon for Fuller used a particularly moving letter from Fuller's final days expressing no confidence in the flesh, but steady hope in Christ: "I am a poor guilty creature, but Christ is an almighty Savior."<sup>13</sup>

In an appendix accompanying the 1790 funeral sermon for Robert Hall, Ryland signals the components he finds necessary for a memoir. He admits a difficulty of giving a "regular account" of Hall's life due to the absence of "any diary or other papers from which it might have been formed." This illustrates Ryland's conviction that the best way to illustrate Hall's life was not through the testimony of his friends or even Ryland's own memory, but through Hall's personal journal—which, Ryland notes, had been destroyed by Hall two weeks before his death.<sup>14</sup> He concludes that the best account he can give of Hall's life is through Hall's published writings and the correspondence surrounding his final illness and death. Ryland then draws special attention to Hall's 1776 Circular Letter for the Northamptonshire Association. He notes that although Hall had received the least formal education of the ministers present, he had been distinguished by the Association as "the ablest Divine" to write on the Trinity, given his "close and nervous manner of reasoning," a "knowledge of experimental religion" and an unsurpassed "humility and modesty."<sup>15</sup> Through a brief survey of Hall's writings, Ryland highlights Hall's

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<sup>11</sup>Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer's Consolation*, 4–5. Ryland also occasionally includes footnotes illustrating how his subject's reading impacted his life and theology, see Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 25. See also Ryland, *Promised Presence of Christ*, 51–58.

<sup>12</sup>Ryland, *Promised Presence of Christ*, 51–64.

<sup>13</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 34.

<sup>14</sup>Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 66. In the footnotes, Ryland does give a flavor of Hall's spirituality by including entries in a commonplace book Hall used for a record of accounts (See Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 65n1).

<sup>15</sup>Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 68n1.

understanding of divine grace, his love for Scripture, and his personal piety as worthy of commendation and imitation. Ultimately, Ryland calls Hall, himself, as final witness on his life; illustrating his character through Hall's correspondence and final interactions. These excerpts show a man responding to approaching death with resolute hope in Christ and overflowing gratitude for God's providential care.<sup>16</sup>

While Ryland does not specifically articulate a method for life-writing, his consistent pattern evidences underlying convictions about how to write a biography. Ryland understood biography as a primarily spiritual exercise, designed to illustrate God's work in and through the lives of the saints. This spiritual biography has imitation as its appointed end. Second, Ryland believed that God's presence is displayed in the life of a believer through the Spirit's production of true religious affections which have their fruit in Christian piety. Third, this life of piety is best illustrated by the subject's personal writings which allow the reader to form his own judgement about character. Ryland's vision for biography was shaped by theological conviction and, as is evident in his biography of Andrew Fuller, the example of Jonathan Edwards.

### **Remembering Andrew Fuller: Ryland's 1816 Biography**

It was expected that Ryland, Fuller's closest living friend, would compile Fuller's memoir and oversee the publication of his works. Nine days before his death, Fuller wrote Ryland

We have enjoyed very much together, which I hope will prove an earnest of greater enjoyment in another world...If I should never see your face in the flesh, I could wish one last testimony of brotherly love and of the truth of the gospel to be expressed, by your coming over, and preaching my funeral Sermon, if it can be, from Romans 8:10.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 78ff.

<sup>17</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 35.

It would be the last letter Fuller would dictate. Fuller died on May 7, 1815; he and Ryland had been friends for 37 years. In his funeral sermon for Fuller, Ryland remarked

After a longer and more intimate acquaintance than I have had with any other minister, there is no one to whom I could more confidently apply the emphatic phrase which the Apostle uses concerning himself, “I knew a man in Christ” (2 Cor 12:2)—a man whose temper and conduct, in a variety of private as well as public concerns, led me to consider him as not only a true believer in Christ, vitally united to him; but as one of the most conscientious, faithful, and spiritually minded men on earth; who might truly affirm, “For me to live is Christ.”<sup>18</sup>

Ryland admitted that he “had no friend with whom I kept up so constant and so profitable a correspondence.”<sup>19</sup> Their friendship

never met with one minute’s interruption by any one unkind word or thought, of which I have any knowledge. I never had a friend who was so willing to stand by me, even in such services as most others would wish to decline; yet I never had a friend who would more faithfully, freely, and affectionately give me warning or reproof, if ever it appeared necessary; or whom I could more readily and freely, and without the least apprehension of giving offence, tell of any fault which I imagined I could see in him. And this I think is the best friendship in the world. For no man is faultless; and true friendship will not be blind to the failings of those we love best; but will rather show itself in an anxious concern to prevent the least appearance of evil in them, or whatever might occasion their good intentions to be misrepresented.<sup>20</sup>

In his funeral sermon, Ryland lamented the loss of “this most faithful and judicious friend,” exclaiming “never will my loss be repaired upon earth!”<sup>21</sup>

Fuller’s widow, Anne, soon wrote to Ryland, stating that there “was no one better acquainted with the dear deceased in his public character, than yourself.” While she forbade him from holding Fuller up “in the style of a panegyric,” she expressed her certainty that her husband’s memoirs “may be safely left” to Ryland’s discretion.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 2.

<sup>19</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 35.

<sup>20</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 36.

<sup>21</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 37.

<sup>22</sup>Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life*, ed. Andrew Gunton Fuller (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836), 1:94.

While Robert Hall, Jr. was also a close friend of Fuller and preached alongside Ryland at Fuller's funeral, he was confident that Ryland was the right choice for publishing his memoirs. A few days after Fuller's death, Hall wrote to Joseph Fletcher (1784–1843) of Stepney, "Dr. Ryland will, I believe, compile a pretty extensive memoir of him. He has been strongly urged to do so."<sup>23</sup> Ryland had expressed the hope to collect materials for a proper biography and, apparently, began the work right away.<sup>24</sup> He contacted Hall in June of 1815, requesting permission to publish Hall's funeral oration. Hall refused, noting that the 'wretched oration' was the product of "extreme depression of spirits." He also discouraged Ryland from publishing the sermon that Ryland had preached at Fuller's funeral, especially if Ryland planned to publish Fuller's memoirs. The sermons, he argued,

are utterly unnecessary, if the memoirs are published; not only so, but they would stand in each other's way. When a biography is published, it is not, I think, usual for the same person to publish a funeral sermon previously. It is slaking the public curiosity prematurely. If you persist in your intention of publishing memoirs, I should feel no objection to taking opportunity of testifying my profound esteem and friendship for dear Mr. Fuller in some form which you may deem most eligible.<sup>25</sup>

Ryland, however, did not follow Hall's advice, publishing his funeral oration, *The Indwelling Righteousness of Christ no Guard against Temporal Death but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life*, by the end of 1815.<sup>26</sup> As evidenced in the sermon's postscript, Ryland is little concerned with the threat to commercial interest or popular reception such a publication might pose. Instead, he was eager to defend his own (and

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<sup>23</sup>WRH, 5:492.

<sup>24</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 31.

<sup>25</sup>WRH, 5:494.

<sup>26</sup>Since Fuller was a prominent figure among Baptists and well-regarded by others, Hall knew that other works on Fuller would be published (Charles Stuart's biographical sketch was released two months later, in August; see note 1 above). While he hoped for the widest exposure of Fuller's life and works to the public, he was concerned about flooding the market. Ryland's 1816 biography would have to compete with a rival volume published the same year by Clipston printer and former pastor, John Webster Morris (see chapter 6).

Fuller's) deepest theological convictions against unfair criticism.<sup>27</sup>

The “numerous avocations” Ryland incurred after Fuller’s death slowed his work on Fuller’s biography. On top of his routine responsibilities at Broadmead church and the Bristol Academy, Ryland oversaw the outfitting and dispatching of a half-dozen missionaries to Jamaica and Ceylon and the editing and publication of the BMS’s periodical accounts. Fuller’s memoirs were squeezed into any time he had remaining. “I have good materials,” Ryland wrote to Stephen West, “but it will take considerable time to transcribe and arrange them.” The wearying pace of the work and the removal of his friends, Ryland wrote “makes me feel as if I was got very old, and must soon expect to remove hence.”<sup>28</sup> In a letter to Maria Hope (1789–1866), Ryland wrote, “My time is so exceedingly occupied that I get on very slowly with dear Mr. Fuller’s memoirs...I have besides many valuable materials, but cannot get on as I could wish through the multiplicity of my engagements.” “I must either give up Mr. Fuller’s Memoirs altogether,” he continued, “or work hard at them just now. I have written above 60pp this week.”<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the many pressures, Ryland sent the manuscript to Hall for review in the fall of 1815. Hall enthusiastically wrote back, “judging from this

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<sup>27</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 44. Ryland’s postscript is especially eager to clarify his sermon’s controversial notion that true religious affection is evidenced by disinterested love. Ryland argues for the distinction (common to Edwards’s New Divinity heirs) that, while true religious affection always has the believer’s interest in view, this interest must be love for the excellency and beauty of God apart from the benefits received in salvation itself. While the distinction quickly breaks down (at least, in part, because what believers receive through faith is God himself and, together with him, all things), Ryland and Fuller were fundamentally right to argue that no person will be in heaven who isn’t first there to praise and rejoice in the glory of Christ.

<sup>28</sup>Park, “Contributions to History: Letters of John Ryland to Stephen West,” 185.

<sup>29</sup>John Ryland to Miss Maria Hope, n.d., Alice Beamer Taylor Collection, Tutt Library, Colorado College. Maria Hope (1789–1866) organized ladies’ branches of the Society in the north of England for the British and Foreign Bible Society. A very effective organizer and influential collector, she eventually led the ladies auxiliary to build accommodations in Liverpool in hopes of making the city a depot for Bible distribution for the North of England, Scotland, and Wales. See Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 56.



specimen [I] have no doubt it will give much satisfaction to the friends of our invaluable deceased Brother, as well as to the religious public at large.”<sup>30</sup> Ryland turned to an old friend, publisher and bookseller William Button, for the memoir’s publication. Button and Ryland had been schoolmates in Northampton and had followed similar courses in pastoral ministry. Button was very active in English Baptist life and is listed as a supporter of the BMS—even being present for the send-off of Joshua Marshman and William Ward on May 25, 1800.<sup>31</sup> Button pastored several Particular Baptist congregations, including a group which split from the Carter Lane congregation of John Rippon who had only recently succeeded John Gill.<sup>32</sup> Beginning in 1778, Button also began selling books and, by 1811, was publishing a number of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century titles. Despite being an early critic of Fuller’s *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785), the two became friends and, eventually, Button became the publisher and seller of many of Fuller’s works.<sup>33</sup> Not surprisingly, Button chose Fuller’s son, J.G. Fuller (1799–1884) of Kettering, to print Ryland’s memoir.<sup>34</sup> Ryland completed his preface in late January and the book was available for purchase in August at the price of twelve shillings.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Robert Hall to John Ryland, October 26, 1815, Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

<sup>31</sup>Jeff Straub, “William Button (1754–1821) High Calvinist, Friend of Missions, Opponent of Slavery and Baptist Publisher,” (paper presented at the Andrew Fuller Center Conference, Louisville, KY, September 21, 2012), 10.

<sup>32</sup>Straub, “William Button (1754–1821) High Calvinist, Friend of Missions, Opponent of Slavery and Baptist Publisher,” 5.

<sup>33</sup>Straub, “William Button (1754–1821) High Calvinist, Friend of Missions, Opponent of Slavery and Baptist Publisher,” 9.

<sup>34</sup>The first American edition of Ryland’s biography was published in Charlestown, MA by Samuel Etheridge (1769–1817) in 1818. Etheridge died before the volume was published and William Collier (1771–1843), a Baptist minister in Charlestown, saw the project through to completion (see the book’s registration notice, prior to the table of contents in John 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: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Charlestown, MA: Samuel Etheridge, 1818).

<sup>35</sup>Anonymous, “Select Literary Information,” *The Eclectic Review* 6 (July 1816): n.p.; Anonymous, “List of Works Recently Published,” *The Eclectic Review*, August 1816.

## Purpose and Form

Ryland intended that his memoir form part of a larger collection of Fuller's works, a project on which he was already at work in the autumn of 1815.<sup>36</sup> In the first biographical sketch printed after Fuller's death, Charles Stuart wrote:

It gives us great satisfaction to hear that a full relation of his life and death will be published with a projected complete edition of his whole works, drawn up by two of his friends, Dr. Ryland and Mr. Robert Hall, men qualified beyond all others, by long and intimate friendship to the last, by their talents, and no doubt by their desire to exhibit the bright example of the deceased, for the glory of Divine grace, and for the excitement and imitation of survivors.<sup>37</sup>

That Ryland intended his memoir to be part of Fuller's collected works, rather than simply a stand-alone publication, is reflective of his fundamental aspirations. His aim was not to establish himself as a literary biographer, but to set Fuller's works alongside a portrait of his piety. Ryland entitled his memoir *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*. The title is drawn from 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 where Paul describes how he prays for the congregation in Thessalonica:

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father (1Thess 1:2-3, KJV).

Ryland alluded to this text because it captured the fundamental, biblical aim of his memoir. Ryland's object was not to exalt the genius of an unusually gifted divine nor pay tribute to a heroic figure with a fitting literary monument. Instead, his aim was to give thanks *to God* by remembering the work of divine grace in the life of his closest friend. Ryland believed that Fuller's life illustrated the very things Paul commended among the Thessalonians. And his hope in compiling the memoir was to perpetuate Fuller's legacy of evangelical piety. As Ryland explained in the preface,

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<sup>36</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 212, 236.

<sup>37</sup>Stuart, "A Short Memoir of the Late Mr. Andrew Fuller," 1.

I do not hesitate to profess, that I have undertaken this office, of giving a faithful representation of my dear departed Brother's life, not under the influence of any wish to display my skill as a writer of biography, nor yet to appear as a critic on his publications; but with the hope of promoting pure and undefiled religion, founded on truly scriptural and evangelical principles.<sup>38</sup>

Ryland reflected the pervasive impact of Jonathan Edwards by framing the memoir in light of Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd*. His personal copy of Brainerd, replete with marginal notations and two courses of underlining, was a prized possession which he repeatedly read.<sup>39</sup> Ryland's "hope of promoting pure and undefiled religion" echoed Edwards's purpose in "representing and recommending true religion and virtue to the world. . . by instance and example."<sup>40</sup> Edwards saw in Brainerd "a remarkable instance of true and eminent Christian piety in heart and practice. . . most worthy of imitation, and many ways tending to the spiritual benefit of the careful observer."<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Ryland saw in Fuller a brother who "evidently hungered and thirsted after righteousness; his soul panted after God, the living God." Ryland continued,

while others admired his zeal, his diligence, his activity, &c. he was often bewailing his lukewarmness, his sloth, and inactivity. He had a deep sense of what a Christian *ought* to be; he understood the spirituality of the divine law; he felt the obligations of the gospel, which did not supersede, but confirm, enhance, and endear prior obligations; and hence, while he trusted to behold God's face in the imputed righteousness of another, he could not be satisfied till he awoke in the likeness of his blessed Saviour.<sup>42</sup>

While he believed that a faithful retelling of Fuller's life would satisfy public interest and bring a measure of financial support to his surviving family, he is convinced "my highest ambition is, like the biographer of David Brainerd, to show what manner of man my friend was, and to excite others to follow him, so far as he followed Christ."<sup>43</sup> Brainerd

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<sup>38</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, v.

<sup>39</sup>See pp. 51–53, above.

<sup>40</sup>*WJE*, 7:89.

<sup>41</sup>*WJE*, 7:96.

<sup>42</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 200.

<sup>43</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vi.

and Fuller were both eminent teachers who “exhibit and bear testimony to the truth in their doctrine” and men whom God had raised up to “set bright examples of that religion that is taught and prescribed in the Word of God.” Fuller as much as Brainerd had title to “a great tendency to engage the attention of men to the doctrine and rules that are taught, and greatly to confirm and enforce them” especially since his example was combined with commendable teaching, faithfulness through travail, and fruitfulness in ministry.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, Ryland portrayed Fuller’s piety through a distinctly Edwardsean lens. As was demonstrated in chapter 2, Ryland was profoundly shaped by Edwards’s *Religious Affections* and its practical display in *The Life of David Brainerd*. Ryland’s convictions about Christian spirituality, defined as they were by his embrace of Edwards’s *Religious Affections*, shaped his picture of Andrew Fuller in the same way that Edwards’s had for *The Life of David Brainerd*. Ryland saw in Fuller’s life what he understood to be characteristic of the Christian life—a love for God grounded in the display of God’s manifold excellencies rather than simply what he had done for the sinner, himself; an inclination towards the beauty and goodness of God that was the immediate result of the Spirit’s activity in granting a new sense of the heart; and an unmistakable change in life resulting in ever-increasing longings for Christ and a perceptible growth in holiness and Christian charity. Ryland could fairly portray his friend’s piety in this way because of the Edwardsean outlook they shared in common. Edwards’s thought pervaded the way that Ryland and Fuller thought to such a degree that, in Ryland’s hands, Fuller becomes a type of Brainerd.<sup>45</sup>

Like Edwards, Ryland desired the reader to see his subject’s piety in Fuller’s

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<sup>44</sup>WJE, 7:90.

<sup>45</sup>Chris Chun argues that *Religious Affections* “so saturated Fuller’s thinking” that it pervaded his writings “even when he did not specifically cite Edwards” (Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, 132, 110–41). “For the elephant of Kettering,” Chun concludes, “the greatest instruction received from human writings, indeed, was from Jonathan Edwards” (Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, 213).

private writings and diary rather than through a composed narrative. This documentary form of biography, pioneered by Mason and made popular by Boswell, had become increasingly common in the eighteenth-century. Edwards, familiar with Mason and with contemporary literary conventions, preferred the documentary style to condensed narrative. Similarly, Ryland writes “I wish, as much as possible, to let my dear departed brother be his own biographer; and shall therefore insert the narrative, as given by himself.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, the biography (stretching to 582 pages in the first edition) is overwhelmingly a thematic and chronological compilation of Fuller’s diary entries, personal writings, and correspondence with family, friends, fellow pastors, and congregants. In this way, Fuller’s voice is placed in the foreground throughout the biography. Like Edwards, Ryland contends that his subject’s piety can be more convincingly seen through writings Fuller did not intend for public view.<sup>47</sup> Edwards wrote,

‘Tis fit, the reader should be aware, that what Mr. Brainerd wrote in his diary, out of which the following account of his life is chiefly taken, was written only for his private use, and not to get honor and applause in the world nor with any design that the world should ever see it, either while he lived or after his death...he was pleased finally to yield so far as that his papers should be left in my hands, that I might dispose of them as I thought would be most for God’s glory and the interest of religion.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 16. Ryland’s documentary approach, whether intentional or accidental, reflects the eighteenth-century subjective trend to present the man “as he is.”

<sup>47</sup>At least one reason why Ryland persisted in completing the memoir was his unwillingness “that the public should suffer loss by the suppression of the valuable materials which had been put into my hands” (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vi). These materials were Fuller’s personal journals as well as hundreds of letters between Fuller and his family and friends across the British empire. Apart from brief mention of their frequent correspondence, Ryland’s humility prevents him from mentioning that the single largest source of Fuller’s letters was those composed to Ryland, himself. Ryland is so adamant that a person’s life must be seen through these intimate correspondences that he is strongly critical of another recently-published memoir because it consisted “chiefly of a review of [Fuller’s] works” (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vi). Given the positive statement on Stuart’s publication in the *Christian Herald* that follows, this reference is likely to Morris’s *Memoirs* (1816).

<sup>48</sup>*WJE*, 7:96.

Similarly, Ryland writes,

I am satisfied, that intelligent readers will know what use to make of these valuable extracts; never intended, indeed, for public view, and almost prohibited from being seen; but which I have ventured to make, under a strong persuasion, that if I could *now* consult my dear departed friend, he would be satisfied with the reasons of my conduct; and, indeed, apprehending that I have done only as he would have done by another, in like circumstances. Much there is to show, what a poor creature is man, saved, renewed man, even at his best estate. I do not object, and I am very sure he would not, to the idea, that there may be Christians who have got nearer to the mark of our calling, and who have had a fuller enjoyment, even beforehand, of the prize: would to God they were more numerous, and their attainments far higher! But, after all, I am fully satisfied, that the best believer on earth has need of daily pardon, daily aid, daily healing; and that Mr. Edwards had good ground for the conviction he once expressed: “There is no dependence upon self. It is to no purpose to resolve, except we depend on the grace of God; for, *if it were not for his mere grace*, one *might* be a very good man one day, and a very wicked one the next.”<sup>49</sup>

Ryland, like Edwards, was mainly concerned with “the theological example” that the diary provides. And, similar to Brainerd, Fuller exemplified the ideals of Edwards’s *Religious Affections*.

Ryland was conscious that the disclosure of Fuller’s diaries might occasionally impact his surviving friends and family. The reward, he wagered, was worth the risk. Describing Fuller’s interactions with his son, Robert (1782–1809), Ryland wrote

This last narrative contains many things very painful to surviving friends which they would gladly have buried in oblivion and which I would never have inserted, had they absolutely forbidden me. But the strong room which there seems to be, to hope that so affecting an account may be, under a divine blessing, the means of reclaiming some unhappy youth in similar circumstances, or of deterring others

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<sup>49</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 198. Ryland’s quotation of Edwards comes from a diary entry dated Wednesday January 2, 1722-23, “Dull. I find by experience, that let me make resolutions, and do what I will, with never so many inventions, it is all nothing, and to no purpose at all, without the motions of the Spirit of God: for if the Spirit of God should be as much withdrawn from me always, as for the week past, notwithstanding all I do, I should not grow; but should languish, and miserably fade away. [[I perceive, if God should withdraw his Spirit a little more, I should not hesitate to break my resolutions, and should soon arrive at my old state.]] There is no dependence upon myself. [[Our resolutions may be at the highest one day, and yet, the next day, we may be in a miserable dead condition, not at all like the same person who resolved.]] It is to no purpose to resolve, except we depend on the grace of God; for if it were not for his mere grace, one might be a very good man one day, and a very wicked one the next. [[I find also by experience, that there is no guessing out the ends of providence, in particular dispensations towards me—any otherwise than as afflictions come as corrections for sin, and God intends when we meet with them, to desire us to look back on our ways, and see wherein we have done amiss, and lament that particular sin, and all our sins, before him—knowing this, also, that all things shall work together for our good; not knowing in what way, indeed, but trusting in God” (*WJE*, 16:760).

from rending a parent's heart with anguish, and involving themselves in temporal misery at least; has induced them to yield to my wish for its not being suppressed. Parents also under the like trying circumstances, may I think, derive much instruction from this example.<sup>50</sup>

He was not reckless, however, guarding against the kind of disclosure that might bring others into disrepute.<sup>51</sup>

While a number of the letters included in the memoir are between the author and Fuller, Ryland showed remarkable restraint by allowing the letters to stand with little commentary or reflection. In fact, all things considered, Ryland provided less of his own reflection on Fuller's life than Edwards does on Brainerd. While Edwards knew Brainerd well, their friendship had been short and much of his experience of Brainerd came in the final months of Brainerd's life.<sup>52</sup> Yet Edwards's reflections on Brainerd, not counting those in the Preface, stretch to nearly twenty pages in the appendix alone.<sup>53</sup> Apart from the preface, there are only two places in the biography where Ryland reflected on Fuller's character—in total, less than eight printed pages in the first edition.<sup>54</sup> This is especially remarkable given that Ryland considered Fuller “a friend that stuck closer than a brother, if ever that phrase might be applied—as I believe Solomon intended it should be—to a mere mortal.”<sup>55</sup> Beyond his conviction for the value of a documentary approach, the preface suggests that Ryland was aware of the perceived disadvantage his authorship brought to the memoir. The depth of their friendship made him liable in the eyes of others

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<sup>50</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 484.

<sup>51</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 147.

<sup>52</sup>*WJE*, 16:179.

<sup>53</sup>*WJE*, 7:500–517.

<sup>54</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vii-x; 197–200; 559–561. This would draw criticism from the memoir's reviewers. The *Congregational Magazine* wrote that the memoir was “is rather deficient in analysis and criticism” (Anonymous, review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The London Christian Instructor or Congregational Magazine* VII, no. 84 [December 1824]: 648).

<sup>55</sup>Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ No Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life*, 35.

to paint Fuller too optimistically. Ryland wrote,

No one of those that grew up with me in the work of the Lord, had an higher share in my esteem than Mr. Fuller; and the task he assigned me at his death is some evidence, that I did not impose upon myself, in supposing I possessed a peculiar interest in his friendship. But, as I affirmed at his funeral, so I again avow my persuasion, that our intimate friendship did not blind either of us to the defects or faults of the other; but, rather showed itself in the freedom of affectionate remark on whatever appeared to be wrong.<sup>56</sup>

To do otherwise, Ryland had argued in the funeral sermon, would deface true friendship:

true friendship will not be blind to the failings of those we love best; but will rather show itself in an anxious concern to prevent the least appearance of evil in them, or whatever might occasion their good intentions to be misrepresented.<sup>57</sup>

Ryland realized that it was to readers' advantage to see Fuller "as he was," lest they be tempted to think too highly of Fuller or too meanly of God's grace at work in their own lives:

I sincerely wish, (as I am sure *he* would, still more earnestly than I,) to beware of any attempt to make others think more highly than they ought to think of my dear departed friend; or to lead them to imagine that he was "exempt from the common infirmities of our corrupted nature." A sinner ready to perish, but saved by marvellous grace, was the only light in which he wished to be viewed, or in which I have attempted to exhibit him.<sup>58</sup>

Ryland had also received a letter from Robert Hall in October of 1815, while he was hard at work compiling the memoir. In it, Hall expressed concern that Ryland might be as "sparing of [Fuller's] shades" as his competitor might be of Fuller's "lights."<sup>59</sup> These factors explain why Ryland does not hide Fuller's faults—even leading with them in his prefatory comments.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, Ryland allows *others* to do the eulogizing, though he

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<sup>56</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vii.

<sup>57</sup>Ryland, *Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ*, 36.

<sup>58</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 146.

<sup>59</sup>Letter from Robert Hall to John Ryland, Jr., 25 October 1815.

<sup>60</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, viii, 198, 559. It is likely that Ryland here, also, follows Edwards who details Brainerd's proneness "to melancholy and dejection of spirit" in the preface to his *Life* (*WJE*, 7:92).



“fully believe[d] it to be just” to have included his own. True to Anne Fuller’s request, the only panegyric in the volume is from the pen of Robert Hall.<sup>61</sup>

### Selectivity and Structure

But Ryland recognized that the documentary approach had its dangers. As the editor, Ryland had to be mindful of how the excerpts he chose presented Fuller. His exegetical discipline and life-experience (as well as friendly exhortation from Hall) reminded him to present a full and contextualized representation. Ryland remarked, “I shall be careful not to disguise anything I extract.”<sup>62</sup> Prefacing the first significant block of excerpts from Fuller’s diary, Ryland wrote,

I have made such a selection, according to the best of my judgment, as I thought would tend to the honour of his blessed Lord, and to the benefit of candid and intelligent readers; inserting nothing which I conceived he would have objected to insert, had he been the biographer of just such another man.<sup>63</sup>

Biographies in the documentary style demanded more of the reader. They expected an active, alert reader, prepared to enter into the writer’s circumstances and mind, reason inductively, and draw conclusions on what he experienced rather than simply passively responding to artful narrative. Ryland saw this literary approach as the appropriate way to impact his reader’s affections. While reading Fuller’s account of discerning between true and false religious impressions might be difficult (and could have been summarized or left out entirely), it might also lead the reader to personal clarity and new convictions:

Possibly some sincere Christian may be puzzled for a time, on reading the first letter; but it is better that such an one should be subjected to temporary pain, in learning to distinguish between genuine and false religion, than that others, who

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<sup>61</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, x. In addition to the quote from Hall (see *WRH*, 3:5), the preface includes a reference to Charles Stuart’s biographical sketch in the *Christian Herald* and laudatory remarks from William Wilberforce and the British and Foreign Bible Society. The longest single reflection on Fuller’s character comes from Anne Fuller’s letter which Ryland reproduces at the end of chapter nine (475-479).

<sup>62</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 263.

<sup>63</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 146–47.

mistake counterfeit experience for the true work of the Holy Spirit, should be left to deceive themselves. Close examination will soon lead to discern the essential difference; and a good hope will stand firmer, if both feet are placed on the rock alone, than if one rested partly on a quicksand.<sup>64</sup>

The approach also demanded careful organization of material—a daunting task given the multitude of options for organization. Ryland chose to primarily arrange his material in a chronological fashion, breaking his subject’s life up into categories common to spiritual biographies of the time: an introductory chapter gives basic historical context, followed by a chapter narrating Fuller’s early life, first religious impressions, conversion, and entrance into ministry, two chapters devoted to narrating Fuller’s ministry in Soham and Kettering, and a review of Fuller’s publications. The order, however, is not slavishly chronological, since Ryland devotes the seventh chapter to Fuller’s wider ministry with the Baptist Missionary Society and engaging theological controversy, followed by two chapters devoted to Fuller’s relationships with family and friends, then the account of his final illness and death, and, finally, an appendix containing various “remains” that were worthy of note.<sup>65</sup>

One component common to spiritual biographies, however, is strikingly absent from Ryland’s text. Unlike Charles Stuart or J. W. Morris, Ryland deliberately resists providing a summary sketch of Fuller’s character. “[T]he whole of this volume will sufficiently show,” Ryland wrote, “that I wished to write the actual life of my dearly beloved friend, and not his panegyric.”<sup>66</sup> Instead, the final chapter ends with an excerpt from an address given by Fuller’s friend Thomas Toller (1756–1819) on the Sunday after

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<sup>64</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 16.

<sup>65</sup>The spiritual biographies Ryland was familiar with followed a similar chronological format, for example see *WJE*, 7:89–541; Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 1765; Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M. Minister of the Gospel in Birmingham; with Extracts of Some of His Most Interesting Letters. Compiled by Andrew Fuller* (Clipston: J. W. Morris, 1800). Ryland’s biography, however, is more thematically-oriented than Edwards’s.

<sup>66</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 561. In this, Ryland and Boswell are remarkably aligned in their approach to memorializing their subjects. See Samuel Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (London: Henry Baldwin, 1791), 1:4.

Fuller's death.<sup>67</sup> Ryland concludes,

Thus I have endeavoured faithfully to exhibit the man, in life and in death. He that sees not much to admire, and to imitate; he that does not exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" who made a poor sinful man so evidently an eminent saint; would not be convinced nor edified by any encomium I could add.<sup>68</sup>

### **Content and Theological Emphases**

Ryland's aim to show "what manner of man my friend was" and "to excite others to follow him, so far as he followed Christ" is intimately tied up with "promoting pure and undefiled religion." While Ryland does not make it explicit, he has in mind the immediate context of James 1:27. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth herein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (Jas 1:25 KJV). Thus, "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas 1:27 KJV). Right doctrine leads to right practice. What some (especially those who knew him only by reputation or through his writings) found troubling about Fuller, however, was his "bluntness, inflexibility, and even sternness."<sup>69</sup> Some had gone so far as to say that "His turn of mind led him to cultivate the intellectual and practical parts of religion, rather than the devotional" and that "in the prevalence of devout affections... Mr. Fuller was not eminent."<sup>70</sup> Ryland knew better, not only because of his close friendship, but because of the massive amount of Fuller's personal writings

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<sup>67</sup>Thomas Toller (1765–1819) pastored the Independent congregation in Kettering from 1778 until his death. Despite receiving two calls from more prominent congregations with greater salaries (at Carter-Lane and Clapham), he remained in Kettering stating that "no pecuniary advantages should ever tempt him to relinquish his charge." Though he and Fuller were remarkably different in terms of their gifts, they became close friends. Robert Hall remarks that "I have reason to believe that there was not a single individual out of the circle of [Fuller's] immediate relatives who was more deeply affected by his death than Mr. Toller" (*WRH*, 4:318, 343.).

<sup>68</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 559.

<sup>69</sup>John Foster and Jonathan Edwards Ryland, *Critical Essays Contributed to the Eclectic Review by John Foster* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1877), 2:410.

<sup>70</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 478.

he had at hand. The burden of presenting “the manner of man my friend was” was as much a defense of biblical spirituality as a defense of Fuller. The following section will provide a chapter-by-chapter examination of Ryland’s account, summarizing content, noting theological emphases, and highlighting the way in which the memoir fills out Ryland’s purpose to promote pure and undefiled religion.<sup>71</sup>

Ryland’s memoir begins with an account of this spiritual decline, particularly the emergence of “false Calvinism,” and the way it sets the stage for Fuller’s life.<sup>72</sup> At its heart, high Calvinism recast the understanding of human ability such that “nothing could be a bad man’s duty, but what he *could* perform without any special influence from God.” Ryland explained that the consequence of this line of thought was that ministers could exhort the unbelieving to repentance, but not to faith—the fearsome consequence of which was that the churches,

should soon have lost sight of the essence of duty, and of the spirituality of the divine law; and, consequently, men would have been treated as though, before conversion, they were fallen *below* all obligation to anything spiritually good, and as though, after conversion, they were raised *above* all obligation to anything more than they were actually inclined to perform. Thus, *inclination* would have been made the measure of *obligation*; duty would have been confined to the outward conduct; the turpitude of sin unspeakably lessened; and grace proportionably eclipsed, both as to the pardon of sin, and as to the application of salvation to the soul.<sup>73</sup>

The complex of issues surrounding the so-called Modern Question “account for [Fuller’s] mind having been so early engaged in theological disquisitions” through which “God was preparing him to be an instrument of checking the progress of False Calvinism.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>The appendix to Ryland’s 1816 edition, containing several anecdotes, a history of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and several excerpts concerning Fuller’s pastoral ministry, will be treated under the relevant discussion of the main body of the memoir.

<sup>72</sup>Paul Brewster notes that Ryland’s historical account is “in essential agreement with the findings of most Baptist historians” (Brewster, *Andrew Fuller*, 70).

<sup>73</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 11.

<sup>74</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 11. Ryland defines the Modern Question as “Whether it be the duty of all men to whom the gospel is published, to repent and believe in Christ” (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 6).

Having established the religious and historical context for Fuller's life, Ryland's second chapter briefly notes Fuller's parentage before presenting his first religious impressions, subsequent conversion, and early ministry. Ryland did this by presenting a selection of five autobiographical letters which Fuller had written at the request of two friends. Ryland, having access to both series of letters, has "interwoven two different narratives together" to produce a robust narrative in Fuller's own words.<sup>75</sup> The reader is immediately challenged to discern between "genuine and false religion" as Fuller, himself, comes to realize that his earliest impressions were not true religious affections.<sup>76</sup> Fuller reflects that when he finally faced the odiousness of his sin, the severity of its consequences, and the necessity of being saved by "mere grace", he "was not then aware that any poor sinner had a warrant to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul." Ryland thus presents an immediate opportunity to see how high Calvinism impacted Fuller's earliest thinking. In a footnote, Ryland references an 1813 sermon in which Ryland explained the biblical grounds for calling the unconverted to trust in Christ—precisely the summons that was absent in many churches in Fuller's childhood.<sup>77</sup> Fuller notes that he would have found rest for his soul sooner had he not been taught that he "had no warrant to come to Christ without previous qualification."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 57. Ryland painstakingly labored to sift the numerous materials at his disposal. For Fuller's initial religious impressions, Ryland had three separate accounts alone—one Fuller had written for Charles Stuart, one for *The Evangelical Magazine*, and one for Maria Hope. Hope was an especially important source for Fuller's autobiographical narrative and Ryland wrote her in search of pieces he was still missing in December of 1815 (see Ryland to Hope, n.d.).

<sup>76</sup>See Letter I, in Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 21.

<sup>77</sup>Ryland references his sermon *The Necessity of the Trumpet's Giving a Certain Sound* where he underscores this point: "Hence we infer that the Call of the Gospel is addressed to *Sinners*, simply as lost, guilty and perishing; who without looking into the book of God's decrees, or into their own hearts, to derive encouragement either from his secret purposes, or from their own qualifications, are invited to come to Jesus for rest for their weary souls" (Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet's Giving a Certain Sound*, 24–25).

<sup>78</sup>Letter II, in Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 29.

Fuller's account goes on to describe his discovery in 1771, through John Gill and Jonathan Edwards, of the important difference between moral and physical inability. Fuller summarizes the heart of the matter: "We have it in the power of our hands to do good, but we are disposed to do evil; and so, to do good is not naturally in the power of our hearts." Here, Ryland again attempted clarification in a footnote. He noted that just as it is "unnatural" for a child to show no affection for tender parents, it is "unnatural" for creatures to show enmity to their Creator. The wretch has the ability to show love for its parents, but its heart is not naturally disposed to do so.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, from very early on, Fuller was deeply pondering complicated theological disputes taking place in the church; issues that were also the occasion of his engaging in ministry. Ryland cites Fuller's fourth and fifth letters which describe Fuller's first opportunity to preach, the call which brought about his first gospel proclamation in January of 1774, and his ordination at Soham in 1775. Fuller found that, despite his earlier discoveries, there was significant pressure to conform to the principles of high Calvinism—especially that he "durst not... address an invitation to the unconverted to come to Jesus." The pressure forced him to wonder, again, if he had arrived at the correct understanding regarding natural and moral inability. Without interrupting the narrative, Ryland directs the reader to two of his own sermons where he addresses high Calvinism.<sup>80</sup> Added to Fuller's consternation were questions about the divinity of Christ

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<sup>79</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 44. In chapter 3, Fuller's "Confession of Faith," article VII indicates that by 1783 he had come to a clear conclusion on the matter of natural and moral inability. Men are unable to keep God's law because they are born and grow up with a "vile propensity to moral evil." Though "there is nothing *now* in the law of God but what they could perform," they "have no heart remaining for God, but are full of wicked aversion to him." As such, all men are under the just censure of condemnation because they do not do the moral good that is in their power to do. Fuller acutely points out that the Arminian, Socinian, and Antinomian systems all rest on a denial of this principle (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 101–103).

<sup>80</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 51. The sermons Ryland mentions are *The Difficulties of the Christian Ministry, and the Means of Surmounting Them. A Charge to the Rev. T. Morgan* (Birmingham, 1802) and *The Difficulties and Supports of a Gospel Minister, A Charge to the Rev. T. Coles, M.A.* (Bourton-on-the-Water, 1801).

and the nature of his human soul. Ryland concludes the chapter without fully resolving all of Fuller's questions, though he points readers in a footnote to Edwards for more thorough discussion on Christology.<sup>81</sup> In conclusion, Fuller retrospectively remarks "I have seen reason to bless God, for preserving me at a time when my judgment was so immature" and warns his reader against the dangers of obsessing over speculations that have a compelling taste but are of little substance.

This sets the stage for the third chapter, recounting Fuller's ministry at Soham and the agonizing decision to accept a call to Kettering in 1782, where he would minister for over three decades. Using the records of the church and his own knowledge of the circumstances, Ryland summarizes the difficulties that faced Fuller in his seven-year ministry at Soham. Before allowing Fuller's diary entries to narrate the removal from Soham, Ryland testifies that over two dozen letters in his possession attest to "the cautious and conscientious manner in which both Mr. Fuller and his friends at Kettering acted" during the four-year process. Using thirty-three entries from Fuller's diary between June of 1780 and September of 1781, Ryland shows Fuller's concerns to please God and bless his congregation amidst indecision. He underscores Fuller's careful examination of his own heart and motives as well as his eagerness to consult other godly ministers for wisdom. In a review, John Foster (1770–1843) commented "it is impossible to conceive a more genuine exercise of devotional conscience than that displayed and evinced by the numerous passages relating to [Fuller's removal]."<sup>82</sup> The letters, perhaps

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<sup>81</sup>Ryland directs the reader to a passage in Edwards's *Miscellanies* where Edwards interacts with the same text from Isaac Watts that Fuller was wrestling over. See *The Miscellanies: Entry Nos. 1153–1360*, ed. Douglas A. Sweeney, vol. 23, Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 90.

<sup>82</sup>Foster and Ryland, *Critical Essays Contributed to the Eclectic Review by John Foster*, 2:409. Foster, of Bristol, had studied under John Fawcett before briefly attending Bristol Baptist College in 1791–1792. Despite great intellectual gifts, Foster was a failure as a minister. His own intellectual independency and predilection for theological intricacies made him an unpopular, even intolerable, preacher. Nevertheless, he occasionally taught and lectured throughout his career and served for many years on the governing board for the College. His love of literature and his thorough scrutiny made him an excellent reviewer, and he was a regular contributor to the *Eclectic Review*. Foster also lamented the tendency to abandon works of classical literature as part of a pastoral training, writing a provocative essay "On Some of

more than anything, show Fuller’s care for God’s people; a trait that, given Fuller’s wide reputation as a theologian and leader, might be unexpected or go unnoticed.<sup>83</sup> “They exhibit,” Foster wrote, “the rare spectacle of a man capable of making *any* sacrifice of selfish interest, to his sense of duty to God and his fellow-mortals.”<sup>84</sup> Ryland’s burden to demonstrate Fuller’s pastoral care, his evangelistic fervor, his personal spirituality, and his familial tenderness is important not simply because of Fuller’s stature, but because Ryland believed that such piety is the consequence of the doctrine Fuller embraced—and because it is the true representation of the life of his friend. Chapter 3 concludes with Fuller’s “Confession of Faith,” composed in preparation for his ordination at Kettering. It is a strikingly nuanced statement for a man not yet thirty years old, showing not only how the controversies of his early experience had shaped his thinking but also the “clear distinctive conception, the firm grasp, the *completeness* of [Fuller’s] intellectual action.”<sup>85</sup>

The substance of Ryland’s fourth and fifth chapters consist of excerpts from Fuller’s diaries over the periods of 1780–1782 and 1784–1796.<sup>86</sup> At first blush these chapters may seem tedious or belabored—ninety pages of entry after entry from Fuller’s diaries. But Ryland’s editorial labor should not escape notice. He is not reproducing the

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the Causes by Which Evangelical Religion has been rendered less acceptable to Persons of Cultivated Taste.” See Doreen M. Rosman, “Foster, John,” ed. Donald M. Lewis, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995). The Baptist publication *Eclectic Review* (1805–1868), according to Rosemary Taylor, was the “Nonconformist answer to the *Quarterly Review*.” Jonathan Edwards Ryland served as its second editor (1855–1868), see Rosemary Taylor, “English Baptist Periodicals, 1790–1865,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 1977): 78.

<sup>83</sup>The agonizing process of Fuller’s removal to Kettering is also simply illustrative of the challenges of living in a broken world in the midst of creaturely limitation. Not even cautious introspection, prayerful patience, and the diligent seeking of wise counsel resulted in a clear decision and an outcome rejoiced in by all parties.

<sup>84</sup>Foster and Ryland, *Critical Essays Contributed to the Eclectic Review by John Foster*, 2:409.

<sup>85</sup>Foster and Ryland, *Critical Essays Contributed to the Eclectic Review by John Foster*, 2:408.

<sup>86</sup>Fuller destroyed one volume of his diaries, which explains the absence of entries between 1782 and 1784. Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 110.



entirety of Fuller's diaries. Instead, he skillfully selects entries that will further impress upon the reader Fuller's vibrant spirituality.<sup>87</sup> Ryland begins chapter 4 by rehearsing thirty additional entries from Fuller's diary over the short span of two months. Though they cover the same period as the entries in the previous chapter, Ryland's point is to show Fuller's cordial spirituality.<sup>88</sup> The entries chart periods of dullness of heart and tender affection, conviction of sin and evidences of grace, urgent pleas for mercy and ejaculatory praise—in an Edwardsean spirit, all evidences of true religious affection.

Ryland devotes the remainder of the chapter to organizing diary entries under five heads. The first group of entries illustrate “personal religion exemplified in both the painful and pleasant exercises of the mind.” In including Fuller's “humiliating complaints,” Ryland warns readers against the temptation to use another man's failings to justify their own. He allows the excerpts of “the more pleasing kind” of mental exercises to far outweigh the complaints—exercises which evince Fuller's supreme regard for and delight in God. Again, the reader is invited to watch Fuller meditate on Scripture, fight against unbelief by recalling the promises of God in Christ, and benefit from spiritual discussion with others.<sup>89</sup> Ryland's second group of excerpts are “passages relating chiefly to his work as a minister and pastor.” These entries show a man deeply concerned over the spiritual welfare of others, frustrated by his own occasional dullness of heart and unfruitful preaching, yet who was also powerfully moved by singing and seasons of

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<sup>87</sup>Foster rightly acknowledges the wisdom, skill, and time such editorial work required. Selecting from the massive amount of material at Ryland's disposal in such a way as to give a true portrait of Fuller without including diary entries that might injure the living, “may not have cost much less time and exercise of judgement than an equal length of free composition would have done.” Foster saw that Ryland's long friendship with Fuller “has enabled him to give more of an illustrative connexion and personal character to the composition, than any other hand could have done in working on the same written materials” (Foster and Ryland, *Critical Essays Contributed to the Eclectic Review by John Foster*, 2:398–99).

<sup>88</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 110.

<sup>89</sup>See entries from Aug. 16, 1780; Mar. 29, 1781; Sept. 2, 1781.

prayer.<sup>90</sup> The next two sections are devoted to extracts “relative to personal or family affliction” and “sympathy excited by the afflictions and deaths of others.” Here Fuller’s tenderness towards his family and friends and his concern for their eternal destiny is displayed. Far from being stoic or unmoved, Fuller is closely familiar with suffering, having lost three of his own children in three years. A final group of entries surveys Fuller’s thoughts on books and theological subjects, particularly his wrestling with the “entanglements of False Calvinism” and his expanding heart for the salvation of unreached peoples. The overall picture is of a man in pursuit of holiness.

Chapter 5 is a compilation of Fuller’s diary entries from 1784-1796, highlighting Fuller’s care for “the state of his own soul, both in private and in the discharge of his public work.”<sup>91</sup> Ryland explains that the two-year gap in the diary owes to Fuller’s destruction of a diary volume which contained the entries. He also acknowledges that, in 1784, Fuller had written that his papers and books “may never be shown, except to *very few* persons, after my death” lest anyone be tempted to think that his acquisitions are “nearly the utmost that can be attained in this life.”<sup>92</sup> Ryland goes on to defend his use of Fuller’s papers, confident not only that Fuller would have trusted his judgment, but that more was contained in the diaries to humble the reader than to “administer that despicable and pernicious comfort which we both feared some professors would be

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<sup>90</sup>See entries from Sept 22, 1780; Nov 11, 1780; Feb. 4, 1781; Mar. 11, 1781. The appendix to the 1816 edition also includes Ryland’s description of Fuller’s expository scheme, preaching consecutively a book of the Bible at a time. He also notes Fuller’s logbook of “Families who attended at the Meeting” which detailed the members of his Kettering congregation, “with a short account of each; their particular cases are recorded, and their families are mentioned. A list is added of those in the congregation whom he thought to be serious persons, or under concern about their souls” (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 575). The 1818 edition also includes a long letter, either discovered after the publication of the 1816 edition or included to controvert Morris’s critique of Fuller’s inadequate pastoral care (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope [1818]*, 375–381; see ch. 6, below).

<sup>91</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 147. The frequency of diary entries slackens in 1786. Ryland also notes that sixteen or eighteen leaves of Fuller’s diaries between the entries for June 11, 1786, and October 3, 1789 have been destroyed

<sup>92</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 145.

tempted to extract from it.” Ryland also expresses his wish that his friend not to be thought of more highly than he ought to, but simply as a “sinner ready to perish but saved by marvelous grace.”<sup>93</sup> As Ryland notes,

His humility and godly jealousy appear continually. While others admired his zeal and diligence, he was perpetually bewailing his lukewarmness, inconstancy, and inactivity; and dreading lest he should prove an “idol shepherd,” who fed not the flock.<sup>94</sup>

The ensuing excerpts, thus, have a strong flavor of Fuller’s concern to cultivate his personal spirituality as the only sure guard against unfruitfulness in ministry.<sup>95</sup> This underscores the emphasis throughout the biography of the vital connection between doctrine and piety. Ryland concludes the chapter by emphasizing both the common and exemplary facets of Fuller’s piety as an attack against Antinomian notions.

I do not object, and I am very sure he would not, to the idea, that there may be Christians who have got nearer to the mark of our calling, and who have had a fuller enjoyment, even beforehand, of the prize: would to God they were more numerous, and their attainments far higher!<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, Ryland continues, Fuller’s imperfections were not a warrant for inattentiveness to the fight against sin. There was an “unspeakable difference” between Fuller’s spirituality and that of “some high professors in the present day” who maintain a confidence of their own safety, “without evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason.” Ryland remarks that it was Fuller’s understanding of “the spirituality of the divine law” that caused him to feel the obligations of the gospel,

which did not supersede, but confirm, enhance, and endear prior obligations; and hence, while he trusted to behold God’s face in the imputed righteousness of another, he could not be satisfied till he awoke in the likeness of his blessed Saviour. Now, I am well persuaded, he is *with* him, and is perfectly *like* him; for he sees him

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<sup>93</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 146.

<sup>94</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 148.

<sup>95</sup>See entries for September 30, 1785; October 31, 1785; November 29, 1785

<sup>96</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 198.

as he is. He has fought the good fight, he has finished his course, he has kept the faith, and has received the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to all them that love his appearing.<sup>97</sup>

Having established Fuller's early theological convictions, his gifting for and calling to ministry, and his pattern of biblical spirituality, with chapter 6 Ryland turns to an account of Fuller's writings. Ryland's treatment of Fuller's works is surprising. Given historical precedents in the genre of biography, one would expect a detailed review of Fuller's major works, especially in light of Fuller's prominence in both polemical and practical theology. Ryland mentions in chronological order nearly 250 of Fuller's works—unpublished manuscripts, books, pamphlets and tracts, articles, devotional reflections, letters, and published speeches—but gives only cursory comments on several of the most significant.<sup>98</sup> Confident that the religious public is largely aware of Fuller's doctrinal convictions and can access his works, Ryland is little concerned to engage the works in his memoir. He writes,

I have not attempted any regular review, or analysis, of these polemical works; nor shall I do so, as to those of a more practical nature: I am willing to bear a full share of whatever reproach may be thrown upon me, from any quarter, for highly esteeming them; but my time would admit of nothing more than the few cursory remarks I have interspersed. They are all pretty well known to the religious public, among whom he had his share of good report, as well as of censure and opposition. I shall leave his works to defend themselves against the nibbling of minor critics, which I think they are as able to do as the best tempered file.<sup>99</sup>

What little attention he does give to Fuller's major works largely consists of emphasizing Fuller's response to high Calvinism, Socinianism, Universalism, and

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<sup>97</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 199–200.

<sup>98</sup>Though he eliminated it in the 1818 edition, the 1816 edition of the memoir includes a six-page, tightly-spaced list of Fuller's publications in DeCoetlogon's *Theological Miscellany*, the *Evangelical Magazine*, the *Missionary Magazine*, the *Quarterly Magazine*, the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*, the *Biblical Magazine*, and a table calculating the total number of Fuller's pieces in each (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 229–35). Ryland mentions that "the family" is already at work collecting the necessary material to publish a "uniform edition" of Fuller's works, which will include the unpublished manuscripts he mentions at the end of chapter six (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 236; cf. 212).

<sup>99</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 225.

Sandemanianism.

Ryland is keen to emphasize that Fuller's response to the theological controversies of the day is characterized by a cordial pursuit of truth. His aim is not to score theological points, but to pursue pure doctrine for the sake of right practice. Ryland prefaces Fuller's polemical works with an unpublished paper which expresses this conviction:

One thing, in particular, I would pray for; namely, that I may not only be kept from erroneous principles, but may so *love* the truth, as never to keep it back. O Lord, never let me, under the specious pretence of preaching *holiness*, neglect to promulge the truths of thy word; for this day I see, and have all along found—that holy practice has a necessary dependence on sacred *principle*.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, the four most significant theological controversies with which Fuller was engaged are to be seen in such a light.

**High Calvinism.** Having already given some account of the controversy surrounding the Modern Question in chapter 1, Ryland chooses several diary entries to put Fuller's first major publication, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785) into context. In them, the reader sees Fuller's supreme regard for representing the truth of God's word, cautious "lest the cause of Christ should be injured through me."<sup>101</sup> While he is convinced that the New Testament affirms the obligation of men to believe in Christ, he is wary of how publication will "expose myself to a good deal of abuse, which is disagreeable to the flesh."<sup>102</sup> After its publication, Ryland notes that many Baptists, indeed, raised "an outcry against the book and its author" including both high-Calvinist

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<sup>100</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 204.

<sup>101</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 205.

<sup>102</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 206.

William Button and Arminian Daniel Taylor. Ryland captures Fuller's reaction to the book's reception, noting his fearlessness in the face of criticism as well as his anger for the way in which obsessive discussion of theological matters can be "one of Satan's devices to destroy the tendency of any truth."<sup>103</sup>

**Socinianism.** Ryland calls *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared* (1792), Fuller's first polemic against Socinianism, "a work of the highest importance."<sup>104</sup> A rejoinder to the works of Unitarian Joseph Priestly (1733–1804), Fuller mainly aimed to refute the idea that Calvinistic orthodoxy led to "*licentious tendency*" because it "gave wrong impressions concerning the character and moral government of God, and as relaxing the obligations of virtue."<sup>105</sup> While Ryland comments on the rhetorical strategy of the Socinians, the main emphasis of his commentary is directed at how Fuller handled both the attack of critics in his earlier works against high Calvinism and the strong approbation he received as a result of his first foray against Socinianism. In one of several diary entries he includes, Fuller writes "Some years ago I endured a portion of reproach...now I am likely to be tried with the contrary; and, perhaps, *good report*, though more agreeable, may prove not less *trying* than *evil report*."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 209–210.

<sup>104</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 213. Socinianism, named after the Latinized name of two Italian religious teachers (Lelio Sozini [1525–1562] and Fausto Sozzini [1539–1604]), rejected the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, arguing instead for the unipersonality of God. In the eighteenth century, the term Socinianism was generally used to describe the Unitarian movement in England.

<sup>105</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 215 (emphasis original); *WAF*, 2:137. Fuller appears to be quoting Priestly here, but the citation is uncertain. For a critique of Fuller's argumentation, see Sell, "Andrew Fuller and the Socinians," 111, cited in Nettles, 169. Tom Nettles has rightly noted while Fuller traces the consequences of Socinian principles, he refrains from arguing that Socinianism is wrong based on the behavior of its proponents (Nettles, "Christianity Pure and Simple: Andrew Fuller's Contest with Socinianism," 169–70).

<sup>106</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 215.

**Universalism.** Ryland excerpts a diary entry from 1784 in which Fuller expresses his concern that “certain flesh-pleasing doctrines which have been lately agitated, particularly that of the final salvation of all men and devils,” will within the next twenty years “have a great spread.” He then introduces the occasion (less than ten years later) in which Fuller was compelled to write against the heresy of universalism. A fellow minister of the Northamptonshire Association, William Vidler (1758–1816), had been converted to universalism through the teaching of American preacher Elhanan Winchester (1751–1791). Vidler’s universalism had split his church in Battle. Fuller wrote “a private, affectionate, and faithful expostulation” to Vidler and, after hearing no response, ran the anonymized letter in the *Evangelical Magazine*.<sup>107</sup> These letters were later collected and published as *Letters to Mr. Vidler, on the Doctrine of Universal Salvation* (1802).<sup>108</sup>

**Sandemanianism.** Sandemanianism’s primitivism and embrace of biblical authority gave the sect much in common with Baptists.<sup>109</sup> However, its reduction of saving faith to mere mental understanding of the facts of the gospel and assent to their

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<sup>107</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 217–218.

<sup>108</sup>*WAF*, 2:292-327.

<sup>109</sup>Named after Robert Sandeman (1718–1741), son-in-law and popularizer of the views of John Glas (1695–1773), Sandemanians were a Calvinist body devoted to the restoration of the church to its state before it was corrupted by philosophy and Roman power. In 1730, Glas, an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, withdrew from the Scottish church to begin an independent sect. Glasite churches mandated unpaid plural eldership, unanimity in all church matters, weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, the use of the lot and the holy kiss, and eventually the avoidance of personal insurance and worshipping with other non-Glasite Christians. Through the efforts of Robert Sandeman, the sect spread to London and America, where Sandeman died in 1771. Derek Murray, “The Scotch Baptists and the Birth of the Churches of Christ,” in *Interfaces, Baptists and Others*, ed. David W. Bebbington and Martin Sutherland, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2013), 49. See also Timothy Whelan, *Baptist Autographs in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 1741–1845* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 127; Michael A. G. Haykin, “Andrew Fuller and the Sandemanian Controversy,” in *“At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word”: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 223–36.

truthfulness, radically altered the nature of the atonement and the substance of justification.<sup>110</sup> While Fuller had addressed Sandemanianism in two earlier works, the substance of his critique came in *Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend* (1810).<sup>111</sup> After mentioning *Strictures*, Ryland adds several lengthy comments he deems “worthy of attention.” He notes that “many good men,” particularly among the Scotch Baptists, have been tinged with Sandeman’s sentiments.<sup>112</sup> Fortunately, not all of these, “embrace all of his peculiarities” and “enter far into the system.” Several Scotch Baptists, like BMS advocate and supporter Archibald McLean (1733–1812), however, had fully embraced “the frigid scheme of Sandeman,” which presented subtle dangers to rightly understanding the role of religious affections in the Christian life.<sup>113</sup> Echoing Fuller, Ryland argues that the Sandemanian insistence on claiming that “faith is a *bare* belief of the truth” constitutes making the definition of faith the object of faith.<sup>114</sup> He goes on to note that while Sandemanians reject the idea that saving faith includes “a *cordial approbation*” on grounds that this “confounds [the] faith and love,” which Paul

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<sup>110</sup>Robert Sandeman, *Letters on Theron and Aspasio, Addressed to the Author* (Edinburgh: Sands, Donaldson, Murray, & Cochran, 1757).

<sup>111</sup>The second edition of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* included an appendix entitled “On The Question of Whether the Existence of a Holy Disposition of the Heart be Necessary to Believing” (*WAF* 2:393–416). Fuller also wrote a tract specifically designed to address the Sandemanian issue entitled, “The Great Question Answered” (*WAF* 3:540–49). Ryland mentions the latter as being “a very important tract, which has been translated into several languages” (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 228). For an excellent assessment of Fuller’s controversy with Sandemanianism, see Andrew Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, ed. Nathan A. Finn, vol. 5, *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller* (Boston: de Gruyter, 2016).

<sup>112</sup>In a diary entry from October 21, 1799, Fuller records a meeting with a Baptist pastor, Dr. Watt, in which Fuller’s friend inquires whether the religion of the “Baptists and Independents, both who are tinged with Mr. Sandeman’s peculiarities, allowed a proper and scriptural place for the exercise of the *affections*?” Scottish Independents James and Robert Haldane with whom Fuller and Ryland interacted were also influenced by Sandemanianism, though their polity and soteriology eventually shifted to a more traditional Baptist view.

<sup>113</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 382. Fuller and Ryland managed to maintain strong friendship with McLean while aggressively critiquing Sandemanianism. For Fuller’s interaction with Scotch Baptists, see Peter J Morden and Ian M Randall, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth-Century Particular Baptist Life* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 148–53.

<sup>114</sup>Fuller called the Sandemanian view of saving faith as “the bare belief of the bare truth” (*WAF* 2:566).



distinguishes in 1 Corinthians 13:13, they do not express the same concern over Paul's distinguishing of hope and love in the same passage. "If, then, one of the graces is inseparable from the other," Ryland asks, "why should this not be the case with the third also?" Ryland then defends the notion that the essence of saving faith is true religious affection which can only come about as a result of God's act in regenerating the human heart through the Holy Spirit. He identifies the rejection of human depravity as a critical flaw in the Sandemanian understanding and an incentive to Antinomianism. Returning to his catalog of Fuller's works, he justifies his extended comments by noting that he has made them "because I believe my mind is herein in unison with my dear departed friend, and because I think that they agree with the truth."<sup>115</sup>

Before concluding the chapter with an exhaustive list of Fuller's shorter publications, Ryland pauses over Fuller's *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce* (1800). Besides remarking that the work "is certainly a most valuable and interesting piece of biography," Ryland also comments on the way that Pearce, as one of the "two most popular preachers I had personally known," excelled Fuller in preaching. While Fuller was neither "deficient in tender love" nor "devoid of an evident unction from the Holy One," he "had not the sprightly vivacity" of Pearce, but "a solemn tenderness and pathos."<sup>116</sup> Fuller and Ryland agreed that Pearce's piety and ministry bore a striking resemblance to Brainerd. While Ryland, at Pearce's request, did not give a full character sketch during his funeral sermon in 1799, his portrait of Pearce's piety bears the marks of Edwards's *Religious Affections*. Pearce "had the firmest attachment to evangelical truth,

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<sup>115</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 222. Fuller's *Strictures* and correspondence with Archibald Mclean exemplify the influence of Edwards on Fuller's epistemology. For an extensive examination of this, see Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*, 110–37.

<sup>116</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 226. See also Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce*, ed. Michael A. G Haykin, *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, vol. 4 (Boston: de Gruyter, 2017).

and the most constant regard to practical godliness,” Ryland noted. His life united “remarkable soundness of judgment with uncommon warmth of affections” such that Ryland remarked that had never seen “such active, ardent zeal, conjoined with such gentleness, modesty, and deep humility” in a man of Pearce’s age.<sup>117</sup> Ryland concluded by exhorting the congregation to “be careful to shun” any of Pearce’s faults, “but, O be sure to follow him, wherein he was a follower of Christ.”<sup>118</sup> Fuller stated the resemblance more plainly to Pearce’s widow, Sarah (1771–1804): “try while your mind is warm to draw his character. Memoirs of his life must be published: he is another Brainerd.”<sup>119</sup>

Chapter 7 is devoted to Fuller’s labors for the Baptist Missionary Society and, different from the account up to this point, it is largely narrative. The chapter order is helpful, given that the theological controversies Ryland summarized in chapter 6 will now be seen in the larger context of Fuller’s travels for the BMS (chapter 7) and in his correspondence with Ryland (chapter 8). Ryland describes the emerging vision for the evangelization of foreign peoples, apportioning the credit (as, he says, Fuller would have him do) to God’s “infus[ing] into the mind of William Carey that solicitude for the salvation of the heathen which cannot fairly be traced to any other source.”<sup>120</sup> He recounts the shaping of the Carey’s biblical rationale, the pivotal Association meetings where his ideas were articulated and discussed, and the happy company which formed the Baptist Missionary Society in Mrs. Beeby Wallis’s back parlor on October 2, 1792.<sup>121</sup> In all the circumstances that would follow, Ryland notes that there was “never a moment’s

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<sup>117</sup> Ryland, *Promised Presence of Christ*, 24.

<sup>118</sup> Ryland, *Promised Presence of Christ*, 49.

<sup>119</sup> S. Pearce Carey, *Samuel Pearce, MA: The Baptist Brainerd*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Carey Press, 1923), 216.

<sup>120</sup> Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 238.

<sup>121</sup> Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 238, 241, 242

rivalship” between Carey and Fuller.<sup>122</sup> Ryland relates the scenes which will come to memorialize the Society: Fuller’s vivid illustration of the happy band of friends as Carey’s rope-holders; the moment in Northampton when Carey and John Thomas (1757–1801) unexpectedly arrived at Ryland’s door bringing news that Dorothy (1755–1807) would accompany them to India and, after an exchange of letters and affection, as Ryland recalls, “thus we parted, expecting never to more to meet on earth.”<sup>123</sup> Ryland writes,

It is pleasant to look back, and see how the Lord led us on, when we began a work, for conducting which we were very little prepared by any previous means. Well may we exclaim, What hath God wrought! For surely it was he that raised up his own instruments, both for the foreign and the home department. All was his doing, and is marvellous in our eyes.<sup>124</sup>

Returning his focus to Fuller, Ryland writes, “Never was a man more indefatigable in any work for God, than Brother Fuller was in his exertions of every kind for the welfare of this Society.”<sup>125</sup> Ryland relates that despite the early discouragements of paltry support and the impediments Fuller’s role brought about for his own ministry, he pressed on “with his whole soul.”<sup>126</sup> “In short,” Ryland summarizes, “the whole weight of its concerns lay far more upon him than upon any man in England, and he cared for it night and day, and most disinterestedly laid himself out for its welfare, from its commencement to his death.”<sup>127</sup> Ryland includes several letters highlighting Fuller’s biblical wisdom and pastoral care for the Serampore missionaries. In them, Fuller urges upon them the promises of God, warns them against what might be unprofitable to their souls, and reminds them of the great value of their work in the cause of Christ.

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<sup>122</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 240.

<sup>123</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 246, 251.

<sup>124</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 246.

<sup>125</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 247.

<sup>126</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 248.

<sup>127</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 250–51.

Ryland also relates Fuller's support-raising efforts, including his five visits crisscrossing Scotland to promote the interests of the Society among Baptists and other like-minded Dissenters. In Fuller's diary entries and letters, one sees his remarkable pace of activity in building new partnerships, speaking to various missionary auxiliaries, collecting gifts, corresponding with friends and family at home and missionaries on the field, and often preaching multiple times a week. Though the work included "great labour and fatigue" and is "attended with no end of visiting," Fuller nevertheless rejoiced that "I have hitherto been mercifully preserved in all respects. My mind is peaceful and happy and my approaches to the throne of grace...have been free and tender."<sup>128</sup>

Ryland's memoir also reflects Fuller's principled ecumenism. While he (and Ryland) was eager to engage others in the work of foreign missions, he was also unafraid to address theological convictions that undermine the gospel. From his earliest interactions with James (1768–1851) and Robert Haldane (1764–1842), Fuller counseled the men to study the New Testament regarding the issue of baptism and to critically evaluate the primitivism of the Sandemanians.<sup>129</sup> With fellow Baptists, he was even more direct. Fuller noted that the Sandemanian principle of faith as assent "commonly held by the Baptists in these parts, appears to me an important error, and, I fear, has an ill effect upon their religion which leans more to the speculative than to the affectionate."<sup>130</sup> Ryland excerpts a series of letters Fuller wrote to a Scottish Baptists pastor in which Fuller cordially, yet devastatingly shows the flaws of Sandemanianism. Ryland also includes Fuller's remarks on "the peculiarities of our northern brethren," enumerating six

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<sup>128</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 325, 507.

<sup>129</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 326. The controversy surrounding Robert Haldane and Greville Ewing results in significant changes between Ryland's 1816 and 1818 editions (see "Omissions," below). When Fuller first visited Scotland in 1799, the Haldanes's primitivism had not yet led them to embrace a credo-Baptist view (Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1852], 232, 244, 357).

<sup>130</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 277.

significant doctrinal differences between Scots Baptists and English Baptists.<sup>131</sup> The list, composed on his first visit to Scotland in 1799, evidences Fuller’s keen eye for the impact of doctrine on the practice of the church.

Chapter 8 proves beyond doubt Ryland’s suitability to compose Fuller’s memoir. In it, Ryland selects what he finds most illuminating or interesting to “illustrate the character of his friend” from among 330 letters which they exchanged. Ryland admits,

Though I wish to show all due respect to the public, I found myself unable to make a more exact arrangement, without a much longer delay; and, if my chief object be obtained, which is the profit of my readers, by a faithful representation of the spirit, principles, and exemplary conduct of my departed friend, I must be content, though I should not obtain any farther applause as his biographer. I should have been glad, had I been better able to subserve the end I have stated above; but, in a very short time at most, neither the praise nor the censure of men will be able to affect me in the least.<sup>132</sup>

As such, it is an eclectic selection showing their theological agreement and shared interest in the works of Jonathan Edwards and the New Divinity Writers, Fuller’s sharing in Ryland’s sorrows and joys, his attentive critique of Ryland’s writings, his personal burdens and dullness of heart, and thoughts about how each other could best honor God as they grew older.<sup>133</sup> The correspondence also highlights Fuller’s remarkable humility. Hearing that his congregation was voicing their complaints about his frequent absence for the support of the BMS, Fuller queried Ryland about his inclination to encourage the church to hire an assistant to preach while Fuller, their pastor of twenty-eight years, is away.<sup>134</sup> The letters demonstrate Ryland and Fuller’s close friendship, grounded in a shared love for the gospel, and conducted with the highest degree of trust

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<sup>131</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 294.

<sup>132</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 412–13.

<sup>133</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, Agreement: 345, 350; Edwards: 357, 366, 370; Sorrows: 359, (see particularly his note about receiving Ryland’s deceased child for burial in Northampton, 371); Joys: 363; Writings: 369; Dullness: 374; Old age: 375.

<sup>134</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 381.

in one another. In one notable example, Fuller wrote

If I have written under too strong feeling, my dear Brother, it is not because I suspect your want of kindness, nor, in general, your want of judgment; but in matters between us and some others, I think you have suffered yourself, from a love of peace, to be misled by flimsy professions. I should be sorry, if anything I have written should grieve you, or prevent your free remonstrances in future, whenever you think I am getting wrong. If I know a little of your blind side, you know as much or more of mine. I hope we shall get on together, and see reason to love and warn each other, as occasion requires. I wish to shun all strife, but what cannot, in justice, be avoided.<sup>135</sup>

Ryland's selection throughout the volume and in this chapter of miscellany also hints at what he and other evangelical Calvinists considered the most significant theological issues that remained. Chapter 8 concludes with a lengthy letter from Fuller to Scottish Baptist Archibald McLean, which Ryland includes at the request of another minister. In it, the memoir returns to the frequent critique of Sandemanianism's assertion of the nature of faith as mere intellectual approbation of the truth of the gospel. Fuller and Ryland, shaped as they are by their understanding of the New Testament and the theology of Jonathan Edwards, find Sandeman's rejection of the necessity and moral excellency of true religious affection as a serious misunderstanding of the gospel.

Having illustrated Fuller's doctrine and piety through his writings, labors for the BMS, and personal correspondence, Ryland turns in chapter 9 to show a remarkable picture of Fuller's family concerns. He has several objects in view: to show the painful suffering Fuller endured through the loss of his first wife and of numerous children, his paternal tenderness for his children, especially his wayward son, Robert, and his persistent concern for the best interests of his family and relatives. Consistent with the rest of the memoir, he does this through Fuller's correspondence.

Fuller was acquainted with loss, having buried his first wife, Sarah and nine of their eleven children, as well as three of the six children of his second wife, Anne. As

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<sup>135</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 409–10.

Ryland pictures, Fuller possessed a peculiar tenderness which was undoubtedly shaped by the joy and sorrow of family life. He inserts a moving narrative drawn up by Fuller of the brief life of his daughter, Sarah. Fuller describes his great affection for her, recounting how he held her, praying for God's blessing on her life as he considered the Gospel's portrayal of Christ's blessing of the little children, and includes the poem these thoughts occasioned. The narrative recalls how Fuller frequently sung over her the lines from Isaac Watts's (1674–1748) "Cradle Hymn," her vivacious but gentle spirit, her delight in spiritual matters, and her sincere and simple faith.<sup>136</sup> It recounts her sickness and eventual death, the agony of her parents as they attempted to comfort her, and the painful but patient trust in God in her loss.<sup>137</sup> Ryland also includes several of Fuller's letters and diary entries describing the motions of his heart during Sarah's illness—the fear and pain prompted by her suffering, the doubt of God's goodness occasioned by her loss, the resignation to God's will and confidence in his just purposes.<sup>138</sup>

The chapter then proceeds to chart the loss of Fuller's first wife, Sarah, through Fuller's letter to her father. It is a tender letter, showing Fuller's affection for his late wife as she declined through a three-month period of derangement and dementia. His later correspondence with Ryland shows that, though the relief of her insanity was a mercy, he took her loss hard.<sup>139</sup> Several other difficult providences are relayed in Ryland's narrative—the loss of another daughter, Ann, the eldest of his second marriage, the loss of his nephew, Joseph, an aspiring minister, and the grief caused by his wayward son,

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<sup>136</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 439.

<sup>137</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 439ff. Fuller is especially keen to portray his daughter as an example of genuine religious affection. This narrative and one Ryland composes for another of Fuller's daughters in the 1818 edition, bear strong resemblances to Edwards's account of the death of Abigail Hutchinson. See "Additions" in the discussion of the 1818 edition, below.

<sup>138</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 454.

<sup>139</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 463.

Robert (1782–1809), who died at sea without any clear evidence of saving faith.<sup>140</sup>

The memoir also contains several of Fuller’s letters to his children and near relatives, showing his concern for their temporal and spiritual welfare.<sup>141</sup> Ryland also includes excerpts from two letters demonstrating how Fuller’s compassion for his own children extended to his close concern for the children of his friends—Fuller not only writing his friends for encouragement but addressing letters to their children with parental counsel and exhortation.<sup>142</sup> The cumulative impact of the excerpts demonstrates how Fuller “earnestly watch[ed] for opportunities to do good to the children of his friends, as well as to his own, and to his more distant relatives.”<sup>143</sup>

This chapter, both materially and stylistically, is the most unique of the memoir. Other character sketches of Fuller, even in their most expansive form, take little note of Fuller’s family life. This is not uncommon for the genre. Many biographers had little access to personal correspondence of this kind or sufficient intimacy with their subject and surviving family to present such material in a beneficial way. Ryland had unparalleled intimacy with his subject, access to a wide range of documentation, and the full support of Fuller’s family. Even so, as published personal correspondence would anonymize the recipient and omit the names of controversial living figures, eighteenth-century religious biographies could be similarly circumspect.<sup>144</sup> Even Fuller’s biography of his close friend, Samuel Pearce, only includes passing reference to Pearce’s love for

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<sup>140</sup>Concerning daughter, Anne, 474; to Joseph, 491–92; concerning Robert, 490 Fuller’s letter to Robert, discovered after the publication of the 1816 edition and included in the 1818 edition, is among the most touching in the entire memoir, as Fuller pleads with his son to find mercy at the cross of Christ (see “Additions” below).

<sup>141</sup>Two letters to his daughter, Sarah: 496–97; to an “elder relative” (498). Ryland includes an intriguing letter from Fuller to William Coles with his reflections on aging (504).

<sup>142</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 512.

<sup>143</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 514.

<sup>144</sup>The general trend in eighteenth-century biography, however, was toward inclusion of intimate (and sometimes scandalous) detail. This found full expression in biographical literature of the nineteenth.



children—nothing about his interaction with the five of his own.<sup>145</sup> Ryland’s account of Fuller is, in this way, unique.<sup>146</sup> Prior to publication, Ryland sent his manuscript to Robert Hall for his review. Hall also noted the uniqueness of this chapter and the striking benefit it brought to the portrait of Fuller:

I found the whole narrative respecting his child & his first wife exceedingly affecting & interesting. I think you have done right in relating it as it puts his domestic character in a most interesting light. It shows how perfectly compatible is great tenderness of heart and an attention to minuter duties with great powers of intellect and an ardent pursuit of great objects. Biographers have been usually too sparing of such details. How delighted should we have been with such an exhibition of the church of Edwards & Howe & other illustrious Christian heroes.<sup>147</sup>

In contrast to the “*relative afflictions*” of chapter 9, the final chapter surveys Fuller’s “*personal afflictions*” culminating in his final sickness and death. In his introduction to the chapter, Ryland notes that the preceding account of Fuller’s life “contains much to illustrate the *life, walk, work, and fight* of faith.” But before addressing his topic, Ryland pauses to draw a (somewhat muddled) connection between Fuller’s life

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<sup>145</sup>Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M. Minister of the Gospel in Birmingham; with Extracts of Some of His Most Interesting Letters. Compiled by Andrew Fuller*, 259. Cf. Ryland, *Promised Presence of Christ*, 44.

<sup>146</sup>Religious biography occasionally saw the benefit of including some personal detail when it filled out the character of a person whose public life was well known. Regarding Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Hopkins wrote, “He was thought by some, who had but a slight acquaintance with him to be stiff & unsociable, but this was owing to want of better acquaintance,” going on to briefly describe Edwards’s “great esteem and regard for his amiable and excellent consort” and his manner of interaction with his eleven children (Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 1765, 42–43.). Nevertheless, Hopkins does not include the level of detail we find in Ryland, though he presumably had similar access to Edwards’s personal materials.

<sup>147</sup>Hall to Ryland, October 26, 1815. My thanks to Dr. Timothy Whelan who provided valuable feedback on the transcription of this letter. Edwards’s writings were well known to Hall. Hall began reading Edwards in his childhood, having “perused and reperused” his works by age nine (*WRH*, 1:5). Presumably, Hall was acquainted with Samuel Hopkins’s (1721–1803) biography of Edwards, but judged it insufficiently detailed. Puritan John Howe (1630–1705) served as curate to Great Torrington, Devonshire beginning in 1654. In 1656, he traveled to London to serve as chaplain to Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) in Whitehall. After the fall of Richard Cromwell (1626–1712), he returned to his congregation in Devon. With the 1662 Act of Uniformity, Howe withdrew from the Church of England and became a nonconformist. Hall wrote that he had learned far more from Howe “than from any other author I have ever read. There is an astonishing magnificence in his conceptions” (*WRH*, 1:163.). Hall exhorted a fellow minister to read “the wonderful Howe” for his practical and experimental divinity, of which he considered Howe’s *Living Temple* and *Treatise on Delighting in God* as being the best representatives (*WRH*, 1:303.). Historian Edmund Calamy, D.D. (1671–1732), grandson of the Puritan divine Edmund Calamy (1600–1666), published a memoir of the life of Howe in London in 1724. Apparently, Hall considered this volume, also, as too “sparing” in detail.

and his view of imputation. He argues that Fuller “had an impressive sense of the extent, strictness, and spirituality of the divine law.” Convicted of its “perfect equity and goodness” and approving of its just requirements, he “renounced all dependence on any righteousness of his own” and considered any attempt of a sinner to recommend himself to God by his own merit as “insolent presumption.”<sup>148</sup> But rather than seeing the death of Christ as “an amends made to us for the rigour of a law too severe to be enforced,” an implication of some Calvinists’ overly-literal way of understanding imputation, Fuller constantly “ascribed all of his salvation to rich, free, and sovereign grace.”<sup>149</sup> Fuller’s understanding of the atonement, Ryland argues, fueled his pursuit of holiness “and the tenor of his life evinced that Christ wrought in him mightily.” Again, Ryland underscores the connection between doctrine and piety:

He contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, guarding against *error* on the right hand and on the left. It engaged him also in a constant conflict with *sin*, especially with sin in his own bosom, against which he incessantly watched and prayed.<sup>150</sup>

Ryland transitions to the narration of Fuller’s final illness and death by noting that his friend was not only concerned to “do the will of God, but to *suffer* for it also.”<sup>151</sup> In the following pages, Ryland notes how several instances of dangerous illness earlier in

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<sup>148</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 515.

<sup>149</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 516. Between the first publication of Fuller’s *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* and its second edition in 1801, Fuller’s views on imputation had sharpened, changing from a purely economic view of the atonement to a governmental view. Fuller sought to ground the atonement in God’s moral justice rather than the commercial sense it was often portrayed. In the second edition, Fuller demonstrated that there were two senses to the word “impute,” one proper (where he cited 1Cor 4:1) and the other figurative (where he cited Philm 1:18). When speaking of imputing the sin of wicked men to Christ, the Bible speaks figuratively since God did not think his Son a sinner and us innocent, but treated each as so. A not so subtle twisting of the atonement, then could be used to support Antinomianism. “If Christ by imputation became deserving of punishment, we by non-imputation cease to deserve it; and if our demerits be literally transferred to him, his merits must of course be the same to us; and then, instead of approaching God as guilty and unworthy, we might take consequence to ourselves before him, as not only guiltless, but meritorious beings” (*WAF*, 2:705). For an excellent account of Fuller’s view on the nature and extent of the atonement, see Brewster, *Andrew Fuller*, 86–92.

<sup>150</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 520.

<sup>151</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 520.

life which caused Fuller to think more soberly about death and eternity. He shares intelligence received from various friends about Fuller's state mind in periods of ill health. He also traces how the burdens of the BMS, frequent travel, and advancing age brought about increasingly frequent and serious sickness. Ryland relates that the commencement of the disorder that took his life "may properly be dated back to September, 1814."<sup>152</sup> Over the next eight months, Fuller continued his labors—writing and traveling on behalf of the BMS, attending the ordination of John Mack at Clipston, preaching in Kettering—despite the advance of the disease. Growing too weak even to write, he dictated his final letter to Ryland on April 28, 1815. In the nine days that transpired before his death, Ryland relates that Fuller endured significant suffering, especially "almost unintermitted bilious vomitings."<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, Fuller remained peaceful and confident in God's grace. On the day on which he died, Sunday May 7, 1815, he expressed to his daughter Mary that he had strength enough to join her in corporate worship.<sup>154</sup>

In concluding the memoir, Ryland restates his aim to "faithfully exhibit the man, in life and death." He acknowledges that he might be blind to some of Fuller's faults, "although I thought I watched him more carefully than I did any other friend." But, he continues,

if I had known more than I ever did, I would not *needlessly* expose them. I am fully satisfied, that he is now without fault before the throne. His just spirit is made perfect. I long to be as he is. I wish I now were as he was, in all things except those bonds. O that I were well rid of all that he hath laid aside, and were like him in all that is now perfect!<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 539.

<sup>153</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 547.

<sup>154</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 550.

<sup>155</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 559.

## Ryland's 1818 Edition

Despite the regret Ryland expressed in 1816 that he had failed to “secure much more leisure to revise and improve this narrative,” the corrections to the second edition indicate that he was generally pleased with the initial publication.<sup>156</sup> Ryland's revisions can be summarized under three heads.<sup>157</sup>

### Formatting

Ryland's first edition weighed in at nearly 600 printed pages and was initially offered for sale at the price of 12s. In a postscript note to the preface of the 1818 edition, Ryland notes that, in addition to leaving out a “few particulars of less importance,” he requested the use of a smaller typeface “for the sake of reducing the price.”<sup>158</sup> These changes, however, resulted in a second edition that was almost half of the original's length at edition at 385 pages.<sup>159</sup> It was offered for purchase at 7s.<sup>160</sup>

### Omissions

Ryland made several substantive omissions in the second edition. The “particulars of less importance” which Ryland removed are most clearly seen in the

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<sup>156</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vi.

<sup>157</sup>In addition to the changes mentioned by Ryland in the postscript to his 1816 preface, this chapter has limited itself to changes between the two editions that may shed light on Ryland's editorial purposes. In addition to correcting minor errors in the 1818 edition, Ryland rearranges the order of several letters or moves excerpts from one chapter to where they are a better fit, thematically. He modifies transitions between sections for the sake of more coherence. In some cases, he Ryland includes excerpts from letters that were not in the 1816 edition or removes ones which were present, in each instance attempting to further illustrate Fuller's character. Rarely, he shortens excerpts while retaining the sense.

<sup>158</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, xii.

<sup>159</sup>The 1818 American edition, published by Charlestown, Massachusetts printer, Samuel Etheridge, also reduced the top, bottom, and right-hand margins and (regrettably) removed the chapter markers from the page headers, see John 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: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Charlestown, MA: Samuel Etheridge, 1818).

<sup>160</sup>Anonymous, review of *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by John Ryland, *The Eclectic Review* 9 (February 1818): 181.

revisions to chapter 6. Ryland eliminates a seven-page list of Fuller's publications in DeCoetlogon's *Theological Miscellany*, the *Evangelical Magazine*, the *Missionary Magazine*, the *Quarterly Magazine*, the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*, the *Biblical Magazine*, and a table calculating the total number of Fuller's pieces in each.<sup>161</sup>

The most significant changes from the 1818 edition involve several passages from Fuller's diaries concerning Scottish Independent pastor and philanthropist Robert Haldane. While serving in the Royal Navy, Haldane had come under the gospel influence of David Bogue (1750–1825), pastor of an Independent congregation, when ashore at Gosport in 1780. When he finished his commission, Haldane returned to Gosport to the ministerial academy run by Bogue and studied for a time at Edinburgh University. In 1795, he underwent an evangelical conversion and became a significant financier of gospel ministry, selling his country estate and using the proceeds for establishing churches and supporting the work of foreign missions through the Edinburgh Missionary Society.<sup>162</sup> In 1799, Haldane sent £100 to the Baptist Mission Society for Serampore translations and requested that Fuller “would come down and preach.”<sup>163</sup> In response, Fuller visited Scotland—the first of five journeys he would make between 1799 and

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<sup>161</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 146. Intriguingly, the American edition retains this list, but publishes a notice at the end of the volume stating “N.B. The papers ascribed to Mr. Fuller in the different Magazines and Periodical Publications referred to in the catalogue of his works, is not thought to be correct” (Charlestown, MA: Samuel Etheridge, 1818, p. 362). At the end of the appendix in the 1818 edition, Ryland does hint at a number of other works that Fuller did not publish: “Besides the above, he expounded the Proverbs of Solomon; but he did not commit to paper his ideas on this interesting portion of Scripture. Of all the other Expositions, he has left behind him copious notes; though as they are written in short hand, the advantage to be derived from them must be of very limited extent; as also from the outlines of upwards of 2000 Sermons, delivered to his own congregation, and repeated in many instances, to congregations in different parts of the country,” Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 382. This hints at Ryland plan to collect all of Fuller's works for publication.

<sup>162</sup>Haldane and Bogue also served as directors of the London Missionary Society from 1796 to 1804. Kenneth J. Stewart, “Robert Haldane,” ed. Donald M. Lewis, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 502. Fuller comments that the land “a perfect heaven upon earth” Haldane sold “and has ever since lived in a recluse style of life, laying out thousands every year for the propagation of the gospel in Scotland and Ireland” (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 304).

<sup>163</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 262. See Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, 295.

1813. Ryland recounts the developing relationship between Fuller and Scottish church leaders through Fuller's diary entries. The 1816 edition of Ryland's memoir included a number of entries detailing Fuller's thoughts on Robert and his brother James. Fuller's enthusiasm for the Haldanes centered on their energies in promoting evangelistic preaching. The Haldanes, however, had also stirred up significant controversy for planting an Independent congregation given the presence of the Scottish Kirk. Fuller's diary explained that "there appears a large portion of formality to have affected other denominations" and that there was "little or no entrance among their people by village preaching."<sup>164</sup> In including these excerpts early in the narrative, however, Ryland was aware that the Haldanes's connexion had foundered—largely because of Robert's changing theological convictions.<sup>165</sup> Ryland hints at this early on in Fuller's diary, writing in a footnote that when he was in Scotland in 1811, he found that Haldane was revoking the promise of funding he had given to several churches in response to several men "who did not follow him in all his subsequent changes!"<sup>166</sup> Fuller's subsequent journal entries from later trips to Scotland hint at the ongoing tension as Fuller attempts to link arms with the Haldanes in their common work of foreign missions while critiquing the Sandemanianism that was both destroying the Independent connexion and influencing Scottish Baptists like Archibald McLean.

In the 1818 edition, however, Ryland has removed most of the comments on the Haldanes from Fuller's diary entries. While leaving Fuller's affirmation of the Haldanes' support for foreign missions and their activism in forming congregations, Ryland removes stronger statements from Fuller's diary. For example, in an entry dated

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<sup>164</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 272.

<sup>165</sup>The Haldanes's theological changes, especially after 1804, were connected to their embrace of the restorationism of Robert Sandeman (1718–1771). See "Theological Emphases" above.

<sup>166</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 270.

August 5, 1813, Fuller mentions visiting with an Independent minister in St. Andrews. Fuller writes, “There are about eighty churches of this denomination in Scotland, the remains of the wreck of Mr. Haldane’s connection; but they are beginning to recover the shock they sustained.”<sup>167</sup> In Ryland’s 1818 edition, the clause reads “the remains of Mr. H’s connection.”<sup>168</sup> Gone also are the sections in the journal where Fuller mentions entreating the Haldanes to abandon their restorationist ecclesiology.<sup>169</sup>

What should be made of these omissions, particularly in light of the fact that only a little more than a year transpired between the publication of the first edition and the submission of the second edition? There is no evidence that Ryland felt that he needed to protect Fuller from unfavorable association or uncharitable readers who found in the journal excerpts another reason to critique Fuller. Neither is there an indication that Ryland was softening his stance on the intellectualist view of faith that characterized Haldane’s Sandemanianism. Instead, it is likely that Ryland thought that the selections from Fuller’s diaries cast an unnecessary shadow upon ministry partnership with the Haldanes. The changes to the 1818 edition demonstrate the concern Ryland shared with Fuller to maintain relationships with those with whom they disagreed both for the sake of missionary engagement and in hope of impacting their doctrinal understandings.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 336.

<sup>168</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 208.

<sup>169</sup>See Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1816 pp. 325-326 and Fuller’s conversations with Robert and James Haldane vs. Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 200–201.

<sup>170</sup>Daugherty has demonstrated that what separated the Haldanes from Glasites was the former’s commitment to evangelism and missions. Mainstream Sandemanians, by contrast, largely argued that the Great Commission was a command given to the apostles rather than Christians in general (Dyron B. Daugherty, “Glasite Versus Haldanite: Scottish Divergence On the Question of Missions,” *Restorationist Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2011): 65–79). Ryland exemplified an irenic spirit and a firm commitment to catholicity. In an essay articulating what was distinct about Baptist convictions, he wrote “I think I can safely affirm that I have ever endeavored to promote a spirit of unfeigned love towards all real Christians, and I believe most of my brethren are like-minded. Strange would it be, if an agreement with our Episcopalian brethren, in six and thirty articles, except two sentences, should not have more effect to unite us, than a disagreement on three articles and two clauses could have to divide us” (Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons Which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from so Many of Their Christian Brethren*, ix).

A dispute over some of these changes confirms this assertion. Intriguingly, some copies of the 1816 edition distributed in Scotland bear the following note:

Note to Page 270. I am very glad to testify that the unfavorable impression made on my mind at my first visit to Scotland, which induced me to insert this note in page 270, respecting Mr. Rob<sup>t</sup> Haldane, has been removed, both by conversations with himself in July 1816, & by the testimony of others, by w<sup>ch</sup> I am now convinced that the report there stated is utterly without foundation. And tho' I never considered what I transcribed in page 304, respecting his gaining a large sum by buying in the funds, as conveying my reflection upon him but simply as the relation of a providential occurrence, yet having been assured that the rumour of any money having been gained by him in that way is equally inaccurate, I readily contradict that also. J. R.<sup>171</sup>

The note refers to Ryland's footnote in the 1816 edition which read: "When I was in Scotland in 1811, I was grieved to find that [Robert Haldane] was calling in, with much rigor, the money he had advanced for building places of worship, from several worthy men who did not follow him in all his subsequent changes!"<sup>172</sup> Ryland again visited Scotland early in 1816 with John Saffery (1763–1825) and John Dyer (1783–1841) on an extensive support-raising trip for the Baptist Missionary Society. When in Edinburgh, a mutual friend, Baptist pastor William Innes (1770–1855), exhorted Ryland to call on Haldane who "had been much offended at this note" and who wished to speak to Ryland. Ryland recalled that a "strong impression" had been made on his mind in 1811, such that "had I met with Mr. R. H. I could not have forborne mentioning the subject to him, though I have ever been far from forwardness or courage to complain or censure my superiors, or any persons indeed." Nevertheless, Ryland consented and expressed his willingness to retract the note, so long as Haldane "could convince me I was mistaken."

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<sup>171</sup>*Letters by Mr. Ewing and Rev. Dr. Ryland Respecting a Passage in Ryland's Memoirs of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Glasgow: publisher not identified, 1816), 1. The note also appears on the final page of the appendix in the copy of Ryland's 1816 memoir held by Bristol Baptist College, in what appears to be Ryland's hand (p. 582). Bristol's copy has been annotated by someone other than Ryland since numerous marginal notations reference events after Ryland's death. Nevertheless, the note on 582 bears strong resemblance Ryland's handwriting. For Alexander Haldane's narration of the circumstances, see Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, 367).

<sup>172</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 270.



In their meeting, Haldane “cleared up this case,” convincing Ryland that his calling in the loan in question was reasonable and justified by considerations of which Ryland was not originally aware.<sup>173</sup>

Ryland promptly issued a correction to the various distributors of the memoir that they could paste into the volume. In August of 1816, Greville Ewing (1767–1841) received the pastedowns and urgently wrote to Ryland, having previously begun distributing the memoir without them. He expressed his hope that he would not be held responsible for passing off some of the editions without the “editor’s correction.” Ewing’s greater concern, however, was that Ryland’s “subsequent contradiction [will be considered by some] as expressing a judgment on the merits of a dispute which was excited against me by Mr. Haldane.” Ewing, thus, appealed for Ryland to “give equal publicity to these my remarks on it.”<sup>174</sup>

Haldane and Ewing, the pastor of Haldane’s Glasgow Tabernacle and Principal of Glasgow Theological seminary (1809), had fallen out in 1810 when Haldane sought to remove his financial interest from the Tabernacle by selling the building at a discount and turning over Ewing’s living to his congregation.<sup>175</sup> While Haldane’s hope had been to reduce the potential for conflict of interest, particularly as Ewing and Haldane’s convictions regarding polity diverged, Ewing took Haldane’s prudential move as a political one, fearing that Haldane was failing to live up to his commitment and attempting to undermine Ewing’s pastorate. Ewing wrote a scathing pamphlet

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<sup>173</sup>*Letters by Mr. Ewing and Rev. Dr. Ryland Respecting a Passage in Ryland’s Memoirs of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3. Robert Haldane’s minute account of his relationship with Greville Ewing and the history of the Tabernacle of which he was pastor is recounted in Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, 362–65.

<sup>174</sup>*Letters by Mr. Ewing and Rev. Dr. Ryland Respecting a Passage in Ryland’s Memoirs of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1.

<sup>175</sup>Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, 362. See also Kenneth J. Stewart, “Ewing, Greville,” ed. Donald M. Lewis, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 372.

enumerating his charges against Haldane, to which Haldane responded with a pamphlet of his own.<sup>176</sup>

Ryland had visited Scotland the following year, and judging from the note in the 1816 edition, had only heard Ewing's side of the matter. Ryland's 1816 meeting with Haldane and his conversations with others had convinced him, however, that his note was misleading and he had issued a correction. In his response to Ewing, Ryland, lamented that "by endeavoring to avoid Scylla, I should fall into Charybdis!"

What can I do, my dear Sir, in this case? It was mortifying to expose myself to the censure of rashness; but still, I thought myself bound to disregard my own feelings, if I had inadvertently injured at Gentlemen I never saw before; and had no suspicion that I could be considered as reflecting upon you, whose controversy I had never seen.<sup>177</sup>

Ryland acknowledges "I have got into a sad dilemma" and welcomes Ewing to "direct me to any step I can take to prevent [disagreeable consequences] without involving myself in a tedious controversy which does not belong to me."<sup>178</sup> It is unclear what further correspondence may have been exchanged, but neither the offending comment and its equally offending correction are included in the 1818 edition.

Whether to maintain Fuller's legacy and the ongoing relationship with missions-minded brethren in Scotland or to simply avoid provoking further controversy, Fuller's perspective on the Haldanes is muted in the 1818 edition. Nevertheless, the editorial changes do not appear contrary to fact or liable to cause confusion by Ryland's readership.<sup>179</sup> Ryland can still be seen as keeping to the promise that prefaces all of

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<sup>176</sup>Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, 362.

<sup>177</sup>*Letters by Mr. Ewing and Rev. Dr. Ryland Respecting a Passage in Ryland's Memoirs of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3. The "controversy I had never seen" is the pamphlet war which took place in 1810.

<sup>178</sup>*Letters by Mr. Ewing and Rev. Dr. Ryland Respecting a Passage in Ryland's Memoirs of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 4.

<sup>179</sup>None of the critical reviews of the 1818 edition pick up on these omissions.

Fuller's diary entries as "not to disguise anything I extract."<sup>180</sup>

### Additions

As Ryland mentions in the preface to the second edition, the 1818 edition made room "for some interesting additions," all of which Ryland uses to underscore Fuller's character and piety. Several of the most significant will be mentioned here. First, Ryland extends the footnote detailing the life of Rev. William Coles (1735–1809), father of Fuller's second wife and surviving widow, Ann. Ryland doesn't give an explicit reason for this inclusion, though the expanded content explains that Coles was impacted by the vision of the Baptist Mission, helping to fund the construction of a chapel in Amptill for village preaching. Ryland may have included this sketch as context for another excerpt where Coles comments on Fuller's character. In light of the impending marriage of his daughter, Coles writes that Fuller is "exceedingly respected," both by his congregation and others,

Indeed, he seemed to have *a good report of all men*; and it is a very great satisfaction to me to be fully persuaded of this, as it affords a pleasing prospect of happiness for my daughter, and for us all, in a nearer connection with him:

I feel an entire confidence in the worthy man who is designed, by Divine Providence, to be the companion of my daughter's life. I love him; and the more I know of him, the more I confide in him, as *a good man*, and *a favourite of God*. I believe his heart is right with God, and that it will be well with him, in life, in death, and forever.<sup>181</sup>

Ryland also later includes a moving letter from Fuller to Coles's widow. Like Fuller, she had outlived her first spouse and now, painfully, a second. Ryland, with this inclusion, shows Fuller's spiritual concern and empathy:

God brought me and you, my dear mother, into this family, nearly together; and we have enjoyed his blessing in it, and, perhaps, as large a portion of happiness as is to

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<sup>180</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 263; Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 164.

<sup>181</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 295.

be hoped for in earthly connections. We have loved, and been loved of those connected with us; yea, we have all loved one another to this day; and I trust, shall do so to the end. You have the comfort of Christian hope, both for the deceased and for yourself; and I am persuaded, it will be the endeavour of your friends who survive with you, to do everything in their power, to alleviate your bereaved condition.<sup>182</sup>

Second, Ryland includes excerpts from several additional letters concerning Fuller's eldest son, Robert (1782–1809), which further show Fuller's deep piety. Despite the disappointment of Robert's spiritual wandering and enlistment in the army, Fuller writes, "I do not recollect any trial of my life, in which I had more of a spirit of prayer, and confidence in God."<sup>183</sup> The most significant excerpt, in a letter from December, 1801, Ryland had discovered after the publication of the 1816 edition. In it, Ryland again shows Fuller's deep affection and spiritual concern for his wayward son. Fuller writes,

My prayer for you, continually, is, that the God of all grace and mercy may have mercy upon you. You may be assured, that I cherish no animosity against you. On the contrary, I do, from my heart, freely forgive you. But that which I long to see in you, is, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; without which, there is no forgiveness from above... Far as you have gone, and low as you are sunk in sin, yet, if from hence, you return to God by Jesus Christ, you will find mercy. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners. If you had been ever so sober and steady in your behaviour towards men, yet, without repentance towards God and faith in Christ, you could not have been saved: and, if you return to God by him, though your sins be great and aggravated, yet will you find mercy.<sup>184</sup>

The third significant addition in the 1818 edition is Ryland's lengthy footnote describing the remarkable piety of Sarah Fuller (1797–1816), the only daughter of Fuller's second marriage to survive infancy.<sup>185</sup> Fuller and his wife, Anne (d. 1825), in a moving tribute had named Sarah after Fuller's first wife, Sarah (Gardiner) Fuller. Fuller's daughter died on June 11, 1816, after the publication of the first edition of Ryland's

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<sup>182</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 322.

<sup>183</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 299.

<sup>184</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 302–3.

<sup>185</sup>See Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 305–8.

memoir. While this addition speaks to Fuller's piety and character only by inference, it is, nonetheless a striking portrait. Ryland's initial description of Sarah echoes his presentation of Fuller's character: "Her disposition from a child, was amiable. Integrity was a prominent feature in her character. She appeared to possess an habitual tenderness of conscience, and was the subject of early convictions of sin."<sup>186</sup> Like her father, she bore up under the suffering of her illness and expressed her concern, instead, for the welfare of her relatives.

Ryland's narrative of Sarah Fuller's final illness and death strongly echoes Jonathan Edwards's similar account of Abigail Hutchinson, which had appeared in *A Faithful Narrative* (London, 1737).<sup>187</sup> Both Ryland and Edwards accounts are of young women who modeled true piety in the midst of extended illnesses and death. While Edwards explicitly states what he intends to be seen in the account, Ryland characteristically gives little comment, trusting that the example of Sarah's desire to live "for the glory of God, and that she might serve him" will be clear to the reader.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, both examples model a piety shaped by their author's concerns. Edwards's emphasis is to show the true nature of religious affection as being grounded in a love for and relish in the beauty of God. Edwards highlights Abigail's "constant sweetness" of soul, her sense of the glory of God as it appeared in nature and in her private meditations

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<sup>186</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 305.

<sup>187</sup>While *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton* is not mentioned in Ryland's diary or published works, sometime in the fall of 1788, Ryland wrote a letter to Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745–1801) in which he inquired about the spiritual condition of Phebe Bartlett, the second of the two "notable converts" mentioned in *A Faithful Narrative* (*WJE*, 4:199). Edwards replies, "In answer to your inquiry in a former letter concerning Phebe Bartlet, I have to inform you that she is yet living & has uniformly maintained the character"(Edwards Jr. to Ryland, March 30, 1789). Sometime between 1804 and 1805, Ryland reprinted the narrative of Bartlett's conversion. In a letter to Jonathan Walter Edwards, Ryland wrote, "I had since the pleasure to baptize the daughter of a Counsellor who was awakened by reading it, she is the first of a family of thirteen children who has publicly professed faith in Christ" (see Ryland to Edwards, August 31, 1807).

<sup>188</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 307; Edwards notes that the inclusion of Abigail and Phebe's accounts are "to give a clearer idea of the nature and manner of the operations of God's Spirit" (*WJE*, 4:191).

on his attributes, her submission to the will of God and her desire to be with Christ.<sup>189</sup> Ryland's (and Fuller's) emphasis is to show the centrality of the atonement, the centrality of the Scriptures in the life of the believer, the urgency of belief, and the danger of an intellectualist faith. Thus, Ryland highlights Sarah's delight in public worship and private reading and meditating upon Scripture, her cordial spirituality, her concern for other youth to not put spiritual concerns off, her "reliance for salvation...solely on the atonement of the Redeemer," and her desire to convey to others "the strong impression of the weight of eternal things."<sup>190</sup> Ryland and Edwards's concerns, however, overlap in the emphasis in Sarah's meditation on "the glory of the heavenly world," her desire of "seeing God and praising him" as superseding the joy of reunion with departed friends in glory, as well as her "thoughts of serving and glorifying God, whether in this world or another" which "seemed to take place of all other considerations."<sup>191</sup> This inclusion of this extended footnote in the 1818 edition also further underscores Ryland's alignment with Edwards and Hopkins regarding the value of women in modeling exemplary piety and their vital role in religious awakening.<sup>192</sup>

Finally, Ryland also includes at the end of the appendix, the inscription which the Kettering congregation erected in a tablet in memoriam of Fuller. Apart from these additions, Ryland makes several transpositions in the 1818 edition, especially moving various letters and diary entries where they seem to better fit Ryland's choice of theme.

Perhaps what is most remarkable in the 1818 edition is how unremarkable the changes are from the previous edition, especially in light of the critical response to both

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<sup>189</sup>WJE, 4:193, 195, 196, 198.

<sup>190</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 305–6.

<sup>191</sup>Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, the Patience of Hope*, 1818, 307.

<sup>192</sup>Ryland eagerly sought to encourage the work of Christian women, pursuing the publication of Maria Saffery's poems and hymns (1772–1858) and supporting the work of girls' schools in her home and elsewhere.

Ryland and Morris's competing biographies.<sup>193</sup> The years immediately after Fuller's death were some of the busiest and trying of Ryland's life as he tried to balance his pastoral responsibilities at Broadmead, his leadership of the Bristol Academy, and the demands of the Baptist Missionary Society in Fuller's absence. It is possible that Ryland could not make the necessary time available to make a more thoroughgoing revision. It is more likely, however, that Ryland was content with the representation that he had given of Fuller. By 1815, Ryland was already at work collecting Fuller's works for publication through B.J. Holdsworth, a London publisher.<sup>194</sup> Soon after Fuller's death and despite Hall's advice to the contrary, Ryland and Fuller's son, John, published a notice indicating their intent to release a collected edition of Fuller's works which would include Ryland's memoir and "a copious index."<sup>195</sup> The *Works* were eventually released in 1824 in eight volumes. Tempting as it may have been for Ryland to craft a character sketch more in keeping with other portraits of Fuller's life, Ryland remained committed to presenting Fuller "in his own words."<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>For the reception of Ryland and Morris's memoirs on Fuller, see ch. 6, below.

<sup>194</sup>For an account of the publication of Fuller's *Works* in the English and American editions, see Chris Crocker, "The First English and American Edition of the Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller," (unpublished paper provided to me by Crocker), 2017.

<sup>195</sup>In October of 1815, Hall wrote to Ryland: "With respect to the republication of his works, I think it would be much better to defer it for some years. Most of them are at present in the possession of the religious public in a separate form, and therefore will not be much disposed to pay 4 or 5 guineas for them again. After 12 or 15 years they might be collected & published to great advantage; in the mean time, it would be easy for the Society to provide for M.<sup>rs</sup> F by a note similar to the last renewed from year to year. This would be more honorable to M<sup>r</sup> F. than to be hawking his publications & pressing them on the public for the avowed purpose of providing for his family" (Hall to Ryland, October 26, 1815). I am grateful to Michael Haykin who unearthed the publication notice at Fuller Baptist Church in Kettering.

<sup>196</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 11.

## CHAPTER 6

### A JUSTER IDEA OF CHARACTER: J. W. MORRIS AND JOHN RYLAND'S COMPETING BIOGRAPHIES OF ANDREW FULLER

#### Introduction

When Robert Hall wrote to Ryland in October of 1815 concerning the manuscript of Fuller's memoir, he not only commended Ryland's chapter on his friend's family life. He encouraged Ryland that he was "much pleased with it as far as it has proceeded, and judging from this specimen have no doubt it will give much satisfaction to the friends of our invaluable deceased Brother, as well as to the religious public at large." He also wrote concerning a competing biography:

Morris has wrote to M<sup>r</sup> Broughton<sup>1</sup> earnestly importuning me to review his *Life of Mr Fuller* which is completed to the last chapter. I need scarcely say that I absolutely declined, informing him it was impossible for me to do it without a violation of honor and consistency. I suppose his book which is to be a 12<sup>s</sup> will be out shortly. I hope and believe however it will not prevent your work from obtaining a considerable circulation.<sup>2</sup>

Hall continued that he "highly disapproved" of John Webster Morris's publication, though he did remark, "it is not impossible that posterity may obtain a juster idea of the character of our excellent friend by comparing them than by either of them separately."

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Broughton (1787–1837), Spading, Lincolnshire. Samuel Broughton was the son of Rev. Thomas Broughton (1704–1774), M.A. rector of St. Peter's, Bristol. Samuel was appointed an army surgeon in 1812 and served in the south of France until the end of the Napoleonic wars. Broughton was later a prominent physician in London and elected as a fellow of the Royal Society and of the Geological Society (Leslie Stephen, ed. *Dictionary of National Biography*, [London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1886, 6:403]. It appears that J. W. Morris sent his narrative of Fuller's life to his son, Jesse Morris (d. 1828) in hopes of using Broughton to secure a review from Robert Hall. Jesse had begun working for Samuel Broughton in 1814. Jesse [J. T.] Morris, the third son of J. W. Morris, died on June 25, 1828 at the age of 36. Apparently, J. W. Morris lost three sons "in the prime of life" (see "Recent Deaths." *New Baptist Miscellany*, August 1828, 310–311).

<sup>2</sup>Hall to Ryland, October 26, 1815.



The thesis of this dissertation is that Ryland, along with others who were heirs of Jonathan Edwards, consciously shaped their biographical works in light of Edwards's dual emphasis on doctrine and piety. Their common purpose was served by a style which foregrounded their subject's voice, letting the true color of his (or her) piety shine through their subject's writings, whether published or private. While this biographical pattern was similar to other eighteenth-century biography, particularly the documentary style popularized by Mason, evangelical biography had at its heart a spiritual purpose. It did not simply aim to show a religious man, but sought to commend a certain kind of piety for imitation. Piety, then, rather than the subject, was preeminent.

This chapter demonstrates the marked differences in purpose, style, and impact of the biographies of John Webster Morris and John Ryland. The chapter will begin by introducing John Webster Morris, noting his close connection to and disastrous split from the circle of friends he had formed in the Northamptonshire Baptist Association. Next, a brief account will be given of the purpose and form, selectivity and structure, and the content and theological emphases of Morris's memoir, examining each in light of Ryland's memoir. In so doing, an explanation will be offered for Morris's competing work, noting passages in Ryland's biography, in correspondence, and in Morris's publications which explain its origin. Finally, the two biographies will be assessed for their relative contributions and popular reception, demonstrating that Hall's sanguine hope did, in fact, come to pass.

### **J. W. Morris and the Fuller Circle**

Sometime in the spring of 1785, a twenty-two-year-old journeyman printer named John Webster Morris came to Clipston from Worsted in Norfolk. He had been a member of the church in Worsted for only a year, but in that time had already demonstrated significant promise as a gospel minister. On June 12, 1785, Morris accepted the pastorate at the Baptist church in Clipston, a position he would hold for

nearly the next twenty years. A number of pastors from the Northamptonshire Association were present for his ordination; most importantly, three men with whom he would become intimate friends: Robert Hall Sr., John Ryland Jr., and Andrew Fuller.<sup>3</sup> The same year, William Carey became pastor at Moulton and the two freshly-installed ministers attended their first Northamptonshire Association ministerial meeting together.<sup>4</sup> Carey and Morris became close friends and even when the former moved to Leicester, he remained in the Association, occasionally visiting Clipston for meetings of fellow ministers. It was at one of these meetings, at Easter in 1791 that the Baptist Missionary Society was nearly formed. Having discussed Carey's *Enquiry* and heard John Sutcliff's on "Jealousy for God" and Fuller on "The Disaster of Delay," Carey, Fuller, Ryland, and others met late into the night at Morris's Clipston manse. These discussions set the group on a path to form the Society the following year, on October 2, 1792. While Morris was not present in Kettering, he was added the Committee at its meeting in Leicester the following March and played an important role in its early deliberations.

The founding of the Society coupled with the revival of earnest prayer swept many churches in the Association into a season of revival and growth. The Clipston Church Book records that Morris and the deacons, burdened with a great sense of responsibility for the unconverted, set aside February 25, 1795, as a day for prayer and fasting.<sup>5</sup> Soon thereafter a wave of revival swept the village. Numerous young people

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<sup>3</sup>Earnest A. Payne, *Clipston Baptist Church the Record of One Hundred and Fifty Years' Witness* (Northampton, England: Billingham & Sons, 1932), 8.

<sup>4</sup>Morris's memoir records John Collett Ryland's harsh response to Carey during one of the ministers' meetings they attended together in 1786. Carey had proposed as a topic for discussion "whether the command given to the apostles to 'teach all nations' was not obligatory on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent." John Collett Ryland responded that "certainly nothing could be done before another Pentecost," when the outpouring of the Spirit would bring about the gift of tongues. John Collett Ryland went on to declaim Carey "a most miserable enthusiast for asking such a question" (Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 97). In his memoir for Fuller, Ryland Jr., however, disputed this account exclaiming that he "had never heard of it till I saw it in print." Ryland continued, "No man prayed and preached about the *latter-day glory*, more than my father; nor did I ever hear such sentiments proceed from his lips, as are there ascribed to him" (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 175).

<sup>5</sup>Payne, *Clipston Baptist Church the Record of One Hundred and Fifty Years' Witness*, 11.

were converted and added to the Clipston congregation.

Periodic revivals mark the years of Morris's pastorate. At the turn of the century, a young man named John Gulliver was radically converted and his earnest faith soon had a powerful effect on others. Young people gathered for prayer meetings, some as early as four in the morning. Morris wrote that the movement was "happily free from declamation and ostentatious pride, neither thunder nor earthquake, but the still small voice speaking in the heart producing the silent grief of godly sorrow and humble prayer."<sup>6</sup> While Morris would claim no direct part in the revival, his particular concern for the youth was evident in his advocacy for Sunday schools which were still regarded as dangerous by many.<sup>7</sup>

Morris's involvement with the Society quickly deepened. Having originally apprenticed as a printer prior to his conversion, Morris started a printing house in Clipston which soon printed the circular letters of the Northamptonshire Association and the *Periodical Accounts* of the Baptist Missionary Society. Fuller, having served as the Society's Director since its founding in 1792, increasingly grew to depend on Morris to serve as a clearinghouse for Society publications and correspondence, and soon for his own publications and personal correspondence.<sup>8</sup> In his preface to a volume of Fuller's miscellaneous writings, published in 1826, Morris recounts:

As his labours began rapidly to multiply, as soon as he was ushered into public life, he felt the need of some assistance and I became in effect his amanuensis, an office which I filled during the above period, without any other fee or reward than what arises from that friendship which teaches us by love to serve one another. From his shorthand notes I transcribed for the press the greater part of what he intended to publish, all the missionary accounts, most of his controversial letters and other

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<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Payne, *Clipston Baptist Church the Record of One Hundred and Fifty Years' Witness*, 11.

<sup>7</sup>J. W. Morris, *Discourse Delivered at Clipston, Northamptonshire, March 11, 1792* (Northampton, England: Taylor & Son, 1792). See Payne, *Clipston Baptist Church the Record of One Hundred and Fifty Years' Witness*, 12.

<sup>8</sup>William Perkins and I.E. Lauer, "Morris, John Webster," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.G.C. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 285.

papers, and his correspondence with Scotland, America, and Bengal, making in the whole perhaps not less than fifteen volumes in octavo.<sup>9</sup>

Morris also grew to depend on the printing business to support himself. As Fuller and other ministers in the Northamptonshire Association engaged the theological controversies of the day, Morris saw an opportunity to provide an outlet for their writings. In 1801, in addition to his pastoral duties and the occasional publications of the Society and Association, Morris began publishing *The Biblical Magazine*, a bi-monthly periodical of which he was editor, proprietor, and printer.<sup>10</sup> John Sutcliff warned Morris that the venture was not without risk. Fuller was already committed to writing for the *Evangelical Magazine* and it wasn't a foregone conclusion that he would have time to contribute to Morris's publication. Fuller even wrote to Morris conceding, "My heart is willing to do every thing you desire that I can do, but my hands fail me."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Morris confidently told Sutcliff that if he would support the publication "Brother Fuller will follow in his own course."<sup>12</sup> Sutcliff also warned Morris of the financial dangers he would face if magazine issues failed to sell. Morris, however, pressed boldly forward—even projecting that the magazine could recoup its costs and earn him £100 a month.<sup>13</sup>

Morris's friends generously contributed to the publication and solicited others to participate.<sup>14</sup> While visiting a congregation in Brotton, Yorkshire, Ryland came across

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<sup>9</sup>J. W. Morris, *Miscellaneous Pieces on Various Religious Subjects, Being the Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller. Collected and Arranged with Occasional Notes* (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1826), xii.

<sup>10</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times*, (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 282.

<sup>11</sup>J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: T. Hamilton, 1816), 58.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 283. In 1826, Morris would write that "Mr. Fuller took a considerable interest in the work, and wrote a great variety of pieces on purpose for it, most of them at my particular request" (Morris, *Miscellaneous Pieces*, x).

<sup>13</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 283.

<sup>14</sup>Ryland notes that Fuller contributed 43 articles to the publication in its brief existence (John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from Its Commencement, in 1792* [London: Button & Son, 1816], 234–35).

a hymn on baptism written by Maria Saffery (1772–1858). He wrote to her husband, fellow pastor and friend John Saffery (1763–1825), asking if he “could beg her occasional favors for friend Morris’s *Biblical Magazine*, which will, I strongly hope prove an interesting & useful publication.” Ryland even went so far to concede “I cannot but think *his* first [issue] superior to the first [issue] of our *Bristol Theological Magazine*, though I do not wish to be named as bearing even *true* Witness *against* my neighbors, & hope they may improve in future.”<sup>15</sup>

Morris took on additional risk in 1802 by publishing issues monthly. The magazine, however, emerged in a crowded field of Christian publications and it increasingly struggled to cover its costs. Despite a merger in 1804 with the Congregationalist *Theological Magazine and Review*, the newly retitled *Theological and Biblical Magazine* failed to consistently make a profit. Nevertheless, Morris doggedly pressed on in other ventures, constantly seeking his friends’ works for the press. In July of 1808, Robert Hall, amidst a grave sickness, replied to Morris’s incessant inquiries with a tone of exasperation, “I have written to you these few times...to put an end to your suspense by informing you I find myself under the necessity of relinquishing [the work for the press].”<sup>16</sup> Within the year, Morris’s business had reached a breaking point and he was no longer able to meet obligations to his creditors. In January of 1809, he was forced to declare bankruptcy and, on March 29, “assigned over all his affects for the benefit of

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<sup>15</sup>John Ryland to John Saffery, n.d., John Saffery Collection, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford. John Saffery (1763–1825) pastored the Baptist congregation at Brown Street in Salisbury from 1790 until his death. He was a tireless worker on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society serving as the treasurer for the Wiltshire auxiliary from its formation on March 27, 1793 and traveling extensively throughout England to raise support for missionaries. In 1816, he toured Scotland with John Ryland and John Dyer after the death of Andrew Fuller on an extensive campaign which raised £1,756.26p (Marjorie E. Reeves, “Saffery, John,” *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995], 968–69). Maria Grace Saffery (1772–1858) kept a successful boarding school in Salisbury where Ryland’s daughter attended for a time. Saffery wrote numerous poems and hymns which she eventually published in *Poems on Sacred Subjects* (1834); see Marjorie E. Reeves, “Saffery, Maria Grace,” *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 969.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Hall to J. W. Morris, July 28, 1808, Isaac Mann Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

his creditors.”<sup>17</sup>

Bankruptcy was seen by Baptist churches in the eighteenth century as a matter of church discipline. As Harrison notes, this was not because “undue value was placed on industry and thrift... what was actually condemned was dishonesty and carelessness where other people’s property was involved.”<sup>18</sup> In their thinking, bankruptcy was a violation of Paul’s command in Romans 8:3 to “owe no man anything.” As late as 1873, a deacon of the Broad Street church in Nottingham was “expected to resign from the diaconate” while the church hoped that God would cause his affairs to prosper so that he could meet the claims of his creditors.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it was a serious matter that Morris, the pastor of a congregation outside Dunstable and a member of the Baptist Missionary Society, would be declared bankrupt.<sup>20</sup>

While Morris resigned his pastorate, he persisted in blaming his misfortune on the failure of others and refused to acknowledge the pride and intransigence which had put his business on shaky footing. He also continued itinerating in various churches, despite his disqualification from gospel ministry. Fuller wrote to Morris, pleading with him to confess his sin and be reconciled both to God and to his faithful friends. With repentance, Fuller promised, “the days of past friendship and affection” would be revived.<sup>21</sup> Morris nevertheless refused and his continued impenitence drove a bitter

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<sup>17</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 285.

<sup>18</sup>F. M. W. Harrison, “The Nottinghamshire Baptists and Social Conditions,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 27, no. 5 (n.d.): 215.

<sup>19</sup>Harrison, “Nottinghamshire Baptists and Social Conditions,” 214.

<sup>20</sup>In another later example, Morton Peto resigned as Treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society when his railroad contracting company went bankrupt in 1866. After a thorough investigation by appointed members of the Bloomsbury Chapel, Peto was not judged to have been dishonest or irresponsible and was not disciplined by the church. See Brian Bowers and Faith Bowers, “Bloomsbury Chapel and Mercantile Morality: The Case of Sir Morton Peto,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 30, no. 5 (January 1984): 210–20. Morris pastored the Houghton Regis church outside Dunstable from 1803 to 1810. The church later became West Street Baptist Church and is now known as Christ Church, Dunstable. My gratitude to David Woodruff and Keith Wallis of Dunstable for their help in tracking down information on Morris’s pastorate.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 286.

wedge between himself and his friends Fuller, Ryland, and Hall.<sup>22</sup> In a letter to Serampore missionary and printer, William Ward (1769–1823), Fuller wrote “Poor Morris! I am grieved for him; but he is ruined. His pride and extravagance since he has been at [Dunstable] is beyond anything. He must have sunk the greater part of £1000 in those few years...And now he acts dishonourably to his creditors...and yet goes about preaching.”<sup>23</sup> The breach in their friendship was never healed. Morris never again exercised a pastoral ministry.

While a tone of shock is present in Hall’s October 1815 letter to Ryland, it is the shock of presumption rather than surprise. Ryland had also expressed his concern that Morris would compose an unauthorized memoir, writing to John Saffery only two weeks after Fuller’s death, that Morris “has said ‘I’ll write that fellow’s life. I have letters of his enough to fill a woman’s apron.’”<sup>24</sup> Ryland and Hall were both concerned that the bitterness of Morris’s impenitence and the seven-year breach would result in a negative portrayal of Fuller’s life. Ryland, overwhelmed by the loss of Sucliff and now Fuller, and buried under the added responsibilities of the Society, lamented “I fear that vile sinner Morris will insult his memory.”<sup>25</sup> Hall flatly stated that Morris would be “sparing of [Fuller’s] lights.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>According to Ryland, Hall later regretted that he didn’t take stronger action against Morris (see John Ryland to John Saffery, May 22, 1815, Reeves Collection, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford).

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Timothy Whelan, *Baptist Autographs in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 1741-1845* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 423; Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 285.

<sup>24</sup>Ryland to Saffery, May 22, 1815.

<sup>25</sup>Ryland to Saffery, May 22, 1815. The tone of Ryland’s statement reflects how serious Morris’s ongoing impenitence was. Ryland had enjoyed a warm friendship with Morris, writing in a letter in 1804, “May the Lord abundantly prosper the work of your hands & bless your family and flock.” John Ryland to John Webster Morris, May 30, 1804, Isaac Mann Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

<sup>26</sup>Hall to Ryland, October 26, 1815.

## A Tale of Two Biographies

Given his parting of ways with Fuller and fellow Northamptonshire pastors and the scandal of his bankruptcy, it is not surprising that Morris felt a burden to explain his qualification to publish an unauthorized memoir of Fuller. In the preface, Morris claimed to have enjoyed “a long and intimate acquaintance” with Fuller.<sup>27</sup> The relationship between the two, in Morris’s bold estimation, was “more intimate and unreserved than was enjoyed by any other person.”<sup>28</sup> Morris argued for his own qualification on the basis of having seen Fuller at work and at rest, having known him in every difficulty, and having “shared with him all the pains and pleasures of life.” These intimacies, Morris claimed, were “generally unstudied and unsought...both the cause and effect of an unremitted intercourse.” “The interchange of thought and feeling, by conversation, by letter, by preaching, by every mode of expression,” Morris wrote, “was continued almost daily for a number of years, during the most active and enterprising period of life; and accompanied with a freedom, a collision, and a confidence that knew no bounds.”<sup>29</sup> To those who knew the Morris’s impenitence and the resulting schism, Morris’s prefatory comments were preposterous: there had been little contact between Fuller and Morris for the preceding seven years.

Morris obliquely referenced the schism in the preface, still stubbornly refusing to acknowledge his responsibility for its origin. Instead, he subtly shifts the blame to Fuller, arguing that “the suspension of that intimacy, once the source of so much enjoyment, gave, it cannot be doubted, occasion for mutual regret.”<sup>30</sup> He opined that, due to the imperfections of human nature, “regrets are innumerable and unavailing” in the

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<sup>27</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, vi.

<sup>28</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, vi.

<sup>29</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, vii.

<sup>30</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, viii.



present life. Morris even goes as far as to account Fuller's (and, thus, Ryland and Hall's) opposition as a misunderstanding. Such misunderstandings with "general friendships" are easily adjusted, "but when blended with those feelings and sentiments which previous intimacies and equalities have established, and requiring a surrendering of the right of judging as well as being judged, experience has too often proved that it is far otherwise."<sup>31</sup> Morris, thus publicly lamented Fuller's "misjudging and misguided conduct" and "the irreparable injury which that conduct tended to inflict." Waving away detailed circumstances of the dispute, Morris concluded that he "is anxious to acquit [Fuller] of every dishonorable motive" and "cordially subscribes to the unimpeachable integrity of his character."<sup>32</sup> Fuller, he stated, has "gone to that world of truth and love, where every error will be banished, every passion purified, and where every virtuous and spiritual union shall be revived and perpetuated to be dissolved no more."<sup>33</sup>

### **Purpose and Form**

In his own estimation, Morris's "most perfect kind of familiarity" with Fuller qualified him to write a memoir. He wasn't, however, aiming to provide a complement to Ryland's portrait. Instead, he was claiming both the intimate knowledge and the literary qualification necessary to write a definitive literary biography. Morris believed that Fuller's genius was of such remarkable historical significance that only a truly literary biography could serve as a fitting memoir. Thus, his preface demonstrates an ambition to present Fuller with the authority and style of the most celebrated biographers. "Only one man could write the Life of Johnson," Morris remarked, "and only one the life of Cowper." Morris, like them both, was "best acquainted" with his subject. He regrets,

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<sup>31</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, viii.

<sup>32</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, viii.

<sup>33</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, viii.

however, that he had not

employed the vigilance of a Lauterbach or a Boswell, amidst the innumerable opportunities which occurred, greater intellectual treasures might have been added to the present compilation, but they are now “like water spilled upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up.”<sup>34</sup>

By rehearsing distinguished biographies, Morris implied not only Fuller’s worthiness as a subject, but his memoir as worthy of similar acclaim.

While Morris’s preface lacks the clear statement of purpose found in Ryland, his literary references, style, and language are familiar to literary biographies of the time. Morris begins poetically, reflecting on the frailty of human life and the impermanence of memory. At the end of the first paragraph, he quotes from Thomas Gray’s (1716–1771) celebrated “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751), signaling that he is targeting an educated audience that is familiar with great literature.<sup>35</sup> He makes clear that he considers Fuller a “distinguished figure” and a “great man” of “departed worth” who ranked with history’s “brightest ornaments.” Like the accomplished authors he references, his purpose is to memorialize an equally-worthy subject.

Thus, Morris’s memoir is strikingly different than that of Ryland. It is a literary biography focused on Fuller’s writing and public life. Fuller’s piety is of secondary concern and is not directly commended to the reader. Morris’s aim was to show Fuller as a man who “like many other great and original characters” rose to greatness “out of obscurity.” Morris approached his subject with a certain detachment and critical distance.

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<sup>34</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, vii. James Boswell’s *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) is commonly known as the greatest biography written in the English Language. Poet, essayist, and biographer William Hayley (1745–1820) was a patron and friend of many artists. He became acquainted with poet and hymnodist William Cowper (1731–1800) while working on his *Life of John Milton*. Anton Lauterbach (1502–1569) became a close friend to Martin Luther (1483–1546) as a student at Wittenberg in 1529. His personal diaries and notes of Luther’s sermons and table-talk became an important source of Luther’s ana. Morris evidently sees Boswell and Lauterbach as two great collectors of their subjects’ sayings.

<sup>35</sup>Morris refers to classical works and notable authors throughout the memoir, mentioning Melancton (43), Aristotle (70), Bishop (482), Latimer (486), Queen Mary, Innocent III, and Dominic (492), Aristides (495).

The “advertisement” to Morris’s *Sacred Biography* (1820), provides some insight into Morris’s approach to biography. In it he argued that while “some instruction” could be derived from the memoirs of good men, often biographies were “destitute of the essential characteristics of the truth, and are more descriptive of what men ought to be, than of what they really are.” In a remarkable passage, he continued,

In the lives of the saints, we read of righteous deeds that were never done, of voluntary privations that were never borne, of piety that was never felt, and of lives that were never lived; all intermingled with such a blaze of virtues, as not only to exclude the supposition of any moral defect, but as if intended to convince us that in truth no such characters ever existed.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the jaundiced view of hagiography, Morris nonetheless argued that biography was “of all others the most useful and important branch of human knowledge” for, quoting Pope, “the proper study of mankind is man.”<sup>37</sup>

Rather than foregrounding the subject’s voice through extensive use of documentary material, however, the memoir’s narrative construction foregrounds Morris as an omniscient narrator.<sup>38</sup> The substance of the memoir, therefore, centers around Fuller’s literary output and the general shape of his life. Morris devotes over one hundred pages, one quarter of his total volume, to critical evaluation of selected works. Even Morris’s prose corresponds to his purpose and audience; formal in style, indirect and impersonal in address, and refined in language:

The frailty of human nature, the lapse of time, and the incessant recurrence of other objects, possess a most fatal tendency to deface the remembrance of those once dear to us, or whose virtues and achievements require to be perpetuated for the benefit of posterity. Ere many years have fled, the minuter parts and finer traits of character are obliterated; nothing remains but the rude projecting outline, which affords but

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<sup>36</sup> J. W. Morris, *Sacred Biography, Chronologically Arranged: Or, Lives of All the Principal Persons Mentioned in Scripture, Forming a Connected History of the Old and New Testament*, vol. 1 (London: George Virtue, 1820), n.p.

<sup>37</sup> Morris, *Sacred Biography, Chronologically Arranged*, 1: n.p.

<sup>38</sup> In this, Morris is more similar to Hopkins than Edwards. See Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards* (Boston, MA: S. Kneeland, 1765), 40.

little to gratify the taste or encrease the aggregate of public information.<sup>39</sup>

Ryland's memoir is a dramatic contrast. It is a spiritual biography, foregrounding the voice of its subject through the use of his personal material. Friendship centered around the truth of the gospel is the predominating feature of Ryland's knowledge of Fuller.<sup>40</sup> Thus, he approached his subject, aware of the potential for bias, in an intensely personal way. Like Edwards, his aim was to highlight the evidence of divine grace in Fuller's life as a means of exhorting others to imitate his faith, hope, and love. Thus, the overwhelming majority of the memoir aims at illustrating Fuller's piety through his diary and correspondence in a documentary style. Ryland devoted only thirty-five pages (six percent of the memoir) to the discussion of Fuller's works, on which he only minimally comments. Instead, the memoir is dominated by the careful selection of Fuller's diary entries and correspondence, making up nearly ninety percent of the memoir. Ryland's prose, too, corresponded to his audience and purpose: informal in style, direct and personal in address, and common in language:

Expecting very shortly to have all my springs of actions examined at the tribunal of an impartial Judge, I do not hesitate to profess that I have undertaken this office, of giving a faithful representation of my dear departed Brother's life, not under the influence of any wish to display my skill as a writer of biography, nor yet to appear as a critic on his publications; but with the hope of promoting pure and undefiled religion, founded on truly evangelical principles...<sup>41</sup>

In sum, Morris's goal, while indirect, was to erect his own literary monument to a heroic figure—a task he considered himself uniquely qualified to carry out:

A remote successor may attempt to retrace and complete the portrait; but of the correctness of the execution, who shall judge? In this view, contemporary Biography has important advantages which subsequent compositions to not possess; it must, at least; furnish the ore, by which the latter are to be enriched. The history

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<sup>39</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, v.

<sup>40</sup>Ryland was sensitive to the fact that his friendship with Fuller was what distinguished his biography from Morris's: "No one of those that grew up with me in the work of the Lord had a higher share in my esteem than Mr. Fuller; and the task he assigned me at his death is some evidence, that I did not impose on myself, in supposing that I possessed a peculiar interest in his friendship" (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, vii).

<sup>41</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, v.

of persons who have lived in the same age and nation with ourselves, excites also an interest which we do not feel respecting others who have flourished at a distant period.<sup>42</sup>

By contrast, Ryland's goals were remarkably humble: to promote evangelical piety by his subject's example and "also with a desire of securing to the family of my beloved friend, the profits which may result from laying this sketch of his history before the public."<sup>43</sup> Despite his clear qualification to be Fuller's authorized biographer, Ryland did not take his suitability for granted: "Had I been able to persuade anyone who could do more justice to his character to have undertaken the service, I would have gladly resigned my office; trusting that the talents of the writer would have tended to the usefulness of the publication."<sup>44</sup>

Morris's approach, however, does have several distinct advantages. His narrative style requires less labor from the reader and is, therefore, significantly easier and more enjoyable to read than a catalog of diary entries. Morris's prose, while somewhat grandiose in the preface, is lucid and economical in the body of the memoir. The narrative is reasonably paced and for the most part avoids soliloquies or excessive anecdote. Morris's vivid descriptions of Fuller's personality, physical appearance, work habits, and oratory are as illuminating as they are unique. Despite Morris's critical distance and claim to lack of bias, his overall depiction of Fuller's character throughout the memoir tends towards the negative. While an extensive account of Fuller's character is reserved for the final chapter, the narrative is more often critical than commendatory.

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<sup>42</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, vi.

<sup>43</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, v. Morris nowhere expressed an intention to support Fuller's survivors. After the first publication of the memoir in 1816, Ryland received ten copies which he gave as gifts to friends and admirers of Fuller. In lamenting that he had not sent a copy to Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), Ryland tells Stephen West that "he gave the whole of the profit to my deceased brother's family" (Edwards Amasa Park, "Contributions to History: Letters of John Ryland to Stephen West" in *The Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Eclectic* 30, no. 117 [January 1873]: 186).

<sup>44</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, v–vi.

## Selectivity and Structure

The structure of Morris's memoir is both chronological and thematic. Like Ryland, he devoted a chapter to tracing Fuller's early life through his ministry at Soham, and a second chapter on Fuller's removal to Kettering. Morris narratively treated Fuller's "ministerial talents," his work with the Baptist Missionary Society, and his 1805 journey to Scotland in discrete chapters. The majority of the volume, however, was devoted to a critical review of Fuller's works (two chapters) and three chapters concerning the major theological controversies in which Fuller played a significant role. In Morris's narrative style, direct quotation from correspondence or published pieces is used for the purpose of illustration rather than driving the progress of the story. Morris's selected only what supplements his portrayal of Fuller, commonly using brief quotations instead of lengthier excerpts. While Morris's access to Fuller's personal materials was comparatively limited, the paucity of direct quotation is a feature of his biographical style rather than insufficient access to material.<sup>45</sup> Morris's presence as omniscient narrator shapes the reader's understanding of the character of Andrew Fuller. While a full account of Fuller's character is reserved for the final chapter, as the preface has already hinted, Morris's view is somewhat jaundiced. While a man of extraordinary talent and usefulness, Morris's Fuller is spiritually and pastorally anemic.

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<sup>45</sup>Ryland had unparalleled access to Fuller's personal diaries and correspondence, noting that he drew the content for his eighth chapter from over three-hundred letters he had carefully preserved. Morris contends that he, too, had access to much of Fuller's personal correspondence while serving as Fuller's clerk ("amanuensis") for over a decade. In his *Miscellaneous Pieces* (1826), Morris writes "The reader may not be aware of the fact which it is now proper for me to state, and which will at once account for the variety of notes and papers left in my possession. It is this. My intimacy with Mr. Fuller continued without interruption for upwards of twenty years, during which we had an unremitting and unreserved intercourse, on every subject connected with the mission, with his numerous publications, and his epistolary correspondence... From his shorthand notes I transcribed for the press the greater part of what he intended to publish, all the missionary accounts, most of his controversial letters and other papers, and his correspondence with Scotland, America, and Bengal, making in the whole perhaps not less than fifteen volumes in octavo" (Morris, *Miscellaneous Pieces*, xii).

## Content and Theological Emphasis

Morris's use of the "rise from obscurity to greatness" motif shapes what material is related in the description of Fuller's origin and early development. Morris only notes the relative poverty of Fuller's ancestry, omitting any discussion of the spiritual heritage which Ryland sees as a significant contributing factor to Fuller's piety. Based on the content and quotation of chapter one, it is clear that Morris had access to the same series of autobiographical letters that Ryland included in chapter two of his memoir. Morris excerpts a significant portion of the first letter, but recasts the content of the rest of the series in his own words. He excludes the early exercises of Fuller's mind leading up to his baptism as well as his contemplations concerning sanctification and the modern question. In so doing, the memoir presents the "mature" Fuller and avoids drawing attention to the fluctuations of Fuller's early thought. To further the significance of Fuller's later success as a preacher, Morris quotes Fuller's friend, Joseph Diver (d. 1801), as saying that Fuller will "never make a preacher." Ryland, however, quotes Fuller's autobiographical letter to the effect that Driver *encouraged* a disheartened Fuller by offering him additional opportunities to preach.<sup>46</sup>

The second chapter continues to trace Fuller's development, noting the importance of his acquaintance with other Northamptonshire pastors "of no ordinary standard" at the start of his ministry.<sup>47</sup> Morris relates that "Mr. Fuller began to acquire considerable celebrity as an author" in his early years at Kettering, though he concedes that while Fuller may have excelled in exposition and theological discourse, the poetry

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<sup>46</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 21; Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 48. It is possible that Morris mistakes Mr. Eve's comment for Diver's. Fuller writes, "In October, 1771, our pastor, Mr. Eve, left us. I loved him, and he loved me, and took it hard, that I had, in some respects, changed my views. I learned afterwards, that he had entertained thoughts of me, as being formed for the ministry, but that this contention [over the nature of sanctification] damped his hopes on that subject" (Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 41).

<sup>47</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 40. While Morris mentions Hall, Sutcliff, Carey, and John Collett Ryland, he does not mention John Ryland who was also present at the same Northamptonshire Association meeting.

occasioned during this period could only be valued for its “artless simplicity” and not “on account of any superior poetic excellency.”<sup>48</sup> The chapter notes the emergence of Fuller’s “complaint of the lungs,” foreshadowing the illnesses that would dog much of his later ministry. Illnesses had the positive consequence, however, of increasing Fuller’s literary output.

The third chapter discusses Fuller’s ministerial talents, his labors as a pastor, and examples of his “usefulness.” Morris gives a remarkably detailed account of Fuller’s appearance, preaching style, and study habits.<sup>49</sup> His emphasis is decidedly on Fuller’s great intellectual giftedness, his “vigorous understanding” and “rich and fertile imagination,” and entertains little discussion of Fuller’s affections. This bias he saw reflected in Fuller’s preaching. Morris remarks that Fuller “could never be heard but with satisfaction; if the heart were not at all times affected, yet the judgement would be informed, and the taste gratified, by an unexpected display of some important truth, ingeniously stated and powerfully applied.”<sup>50</sup> In keeping with his emphasis on Fuller’s genius, he notes that Fuller “had no great liking” of critical commentators on Scripture and generally avoided their observations in favor of his own judgment on a text. Fuller, Morris notes, had a “contempt of such kind of learning” that would obfuscate the message of salvation with trifling over “superficies of a text.” But, despite his power in “searching its riches” and carrying the conviction of his judgment on Scripture “to the heart,” Morris notes that Fuller “was not the exact model of an orator.”<sup>51</sup> Fuller “had none

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<sup>48</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 50, 41, 45.

<sup>49</sup>Morris notes that Fuller’s approach to the sermonic form was shaped by reading Jean Claude’s (1619–1687) “Essay on the Composition of a Sermon,” which had been translated from French by Baptist Robert Robinson (1735–1790) in 1779. Fuller avoided story, background studies, and character sketches, instead “searching out [the text’s] riches, sounding its depth, comparing it with the analogy of faith.” Remarkably, according to Morris, Fuller prepared his sermons in one or two hours at the end of the week (Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 71; 73; 70).

<sup>50</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 68.

<sup>51</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 73, 67.



of that easy elocution, none of that graceful fluency, which melts upon the ear and captivates the attention of an auditor,” Morris wrote, a judgment certainly harsher but not completely contradictory to Ryland’s own estimation of Fuller’s preaching.<sup>52</sup> Morris also faults Fuller for a lack of tenderness and a severe judgement which, Morris observes, “was often in exercise, when the affections were not.” “Perhaps,” he remarks, “in the minister, the man was sometimes as visible as the Christian.”<sup>53</sup> While Morris underscores Fuller’s great zeal and ardor for the Cross of Christ, he observes that Fuller was not personally successful in the conversion of the lost and saw little numerical growth in his own congregation. Morris also notes that, whether due to Fuller’s personality or the many demands placed on his time by controversy and his leadership of the Society, he did not excel the rest of his brethren in “discharging the duties of the pastoral office.”<sup>54</sup>

The opening sentence of fourth chapter echoes that of the third, emphasizing what Fuller’s labors for the Missionary Society reflected about “this great man.”<sup>55</sup> In fact, the dizzying scope of the Mission, its logistical, theological, and financial obstacles, was a challenge was “of sufficient extent to afford the most ample scope for his abilities, and setting before him an object commensurate with the boundless desires of his heart.”<sup>56</sup> While Ryland emphasizes Fuller’s indefatigable efforts to raise support and to provide pastoral care to the missionaries on the field, Morris underscores the primacy of Fuller’s role in the birth of the Society itself. Careful to affirm William Carey’s place in the impetus and design of the Society, Morris nevertheless argues that Fuller’s 1784 sermon, *The Nature and Importance of Walking by Faith*, “contained in reality the germ of the

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<sup>52</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 66. See Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 226.

<sup>53</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 81.

<sup>54</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 75.

<sup>55</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 85.

<sup>56</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 86.

future mission, and was the prelude to that event.”<sup>57</sup> Morris heavily excerpts the sermon to show how its theme undergirded Carey’s connection between God’s glory and Christ’s kingdom.<sup>58</sup> Morris also notes how Carey deduced from Fuller’s *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* that “if it be the duty of all men where the gospel comes to believe until salvation, then it is the duty of those who are entrusted with the gospel to make it known among all nations for the obedience of faith.”<sup>59</sup> The fifth chapter recounts Fuller’s third trip to Scotland on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society. While Fuller had journaled his personal reflections during previous trips to Scotland and passed many of his observations on to his friends in the Society, his 1805 diary was composed with the intention of a broader audience. Where Ryland only briefly excerpts from this diary, Morris reprints it in full—casting it in the style of a travel journal, a popular literary genre of the time.<sup>60</sup> Like Ryland, he attributes the growth of the mission to Fuller’s herculean work. “All of its principal transactions,” Morris writes, “must be referred to his agency.”<sup>61</sup>

The sixth and seventh chapters of Morris’s memoir constitute both the bulk of the work as well as the most significant contrast with Ryland’s content. Together, the chapters review twenty-one of Fuller’s published works in chronological order. Unlike Ryland, Morris provides critical reflection on the works in addition to their historical context. He notes that although Fuller was a writer of “times past,” negligent and coarse

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<sup>57</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 88–9, 107.

<sup>58</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 93.

<sup>59</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 96.

<sup>60</sup>See Rebecca Steinitz, “Diaries,” in *Literature of Travel and Exploration*, ed. Jennifer Speake (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2003), 1:332–333. While Fuller’s diary largely lacks the vivid landscape descriptions which epitomize romanticist travel journals, its narrative style, descriptions of events, personal reflections, record of specific locations, and explanation of local (mostly religious) custom are in keeping with the genre’s conventions. For an account of eighteenth-century travel narratives, see Jean Viviès, *English Travel Narratives in the Eighteenth Century: Exploring Genres* (Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>61</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 156.

in style, he won deserved acclaim through the precision and weight of his argumentation. Where Ryland provides no engagement with Fuller’s writing, Morris restates the thesis of each work, briefly describing Fuller’s argument and conclusion, and offers his own judgment of the argument’s validity and efficacy. This distinguishes Morris’s memoir as a literary biography and reinforces the critical distance between the author and his subject. While it may seem presumptuous for Morris—who lacked extensive formal theological training and who was not known for any contribution to the theological controversies of the day—to judge Fuller’s works, he nevertheless considers himself qualified to do so.

Morris establishes this qualification through his thorough and insightful descriptions of Fuller’s theological controversies in chapters eight through ten. These chapters masterfully define high-Calvinism (which Morris calls hyper-Calvinism), Sandemanianism, Socinianism, Universalism, and Deism, identify the principal proponents of each, and address Fuller’s defense of orthodoxy through his published writings and personal communication. Morris examines each of Fuller’s most important works (which he reserved for these two chapters) with reference to the theological controversies they addressed. These writings, Morris argues, are the basis for the “distinction which Mr. Fuller acquired amongst the theological writers of the day.”<sup>62</sup> Morris also underscores Fuller’s remarkable ability to address the theological controversy at root without impugning the motives of his opponents. Fuller could write both to “rectify the errors of a mistaken friend” as well as sound “the alarm of an enemy in the camp. . . to unite all parties in the cause of God and the truth.”<sup>63</sup> The combination of these five chapters (two on Fuller’s works and three on various theological controversies) far surpass Ryland’s treatment of the same matters. Ryland’s historical introduction in chapter one notwithstanding, his commitment to foregrounding Fuller’s voice severely

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<sup>62</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 262.

<sup>63</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 326.

limit his memoir's ability to define and explain the origin and nature of the theological controversies Fuller engaged.

Despite Morris's critical distance, it is clear that he, like Ryland, shares Fuller's theological convictions. While Morris exercises greater restraint than Ryland in inserting extended comment on theological controversies, he nonetheless makes his judgements known—sometimes in colorful ways. Surveying the “tribe of advocates of various descriptions” which had taken up the cause of high-Calvinism in response to Fuller's controversy with John Martin (1741–1820), Morris wryly quips, “some of them had learned to write, and others could read English; but they all helped to sound the alarm and to preserve the stump of dagon.”<sup>64</sup> He later apologizes for excerpting the writing of high-Calvinist William Wales (1773–1826), writing “we hope to have the reader's forgiveness in having for one moment exhibited such a collection of ivory, apes, and peacocks, assuring him that graver matter will speedily demand his attention.”<sup>65</sup> While these occasional satirical comments secure the reader's notice, they signal a tone distinct from Fuller's way of engaging his theological opponents and foreground the memoir's author rather than its subject.

Morris surveys Fuller's involvement in the same theological controversies (Sandemanianism, high-Calvinism, the Socinian, Universalist, and Deist controversies) addressed in Ryland's memoir. Morris, however, is generally more expansive and thorough in his treatment. For instance, while Ryland's eighth chapter mentions Fuller's dispute with Abraham Booth (1734–1806), he neither relates the context nor describes what was ultimately at issue. Ryland includes a letter recounting Fuller's conversation with Booth, but doesn't make clear how Booth saw his own work as an attempt to chart a middle way between the high-Calvinist understanding of the nature of faith and Fuller's

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<sup>64</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 303.

<sup>65</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 308.

view. Morris helpfully notes that Booth grew concerned that Fuller and his friends “were too much attached to the sentiments of President Edwards and other American divines of later date,” fearing that their influence would undermine orthodoxy. Morris notes that Booth misunderstood both Fuller and Samuel Hopkins, most likely grounded in a subtle prejudice against the American writers. Fuller patiently labored to show Booth that they agreed on both the fundamental moral warrant of creaturely obedience to and love for God and the necessity of the Spirit’s work to produce the disposition to believe. Morris highlights Fuller’s care to defend Booth to Hopkins as an “upright, godly, learned man” who was “utterly incapable” of any “unworthy design” as well as Fuller’s freedom to disagree with Hopkins’s judgements.<sup>66</sup> In each of the various controversies in which Fuller was engaged, Morris accurately and (for the most part) evenhandedly describes the circumstances, the point at issue, how Fuller addressed the matter in correspondence and publication, and the outcome of the controversy. In this way, Morris provides a critical resource on each major controversy that is simply unmatched in Ryland’s memoir.

Nevertheless, Morris pays less heed to the impact of Edwards on Fuller. Fuller and his connections “certainly had a very high esteem for the writings of President Edwards and others of the New-England school,” Morris wrote, “but that he indiscriminately adopted the sentiments of these writers or admitted of all their reasonings is far from being true.”<sup>67</sup> Morris staunchly defended Fuller’s intellectual independence and distanced Fuller from the influence of Edwards’s work.<sup>68</sup> Despite its influence on Fuller’s deepest theological convictions, Morris only once mentions

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<sup>66</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 382–5.

<sup>67</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 383.

<sup>68</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 482.

*Religious Affections*, and then only to say that Fuller constantly recommended it as “delineating the genuine nature of experimental religion.”<sup>69</sup>

### **The Character of Andrew Fuller**

The weakness of Ryland’s memoir is the consequence of his focus on displaying his subject’s spirituality by foregrounding Fuller’s voice. This approach, while influenced by Ryland’s selectivity, allows the reader to inductively form his own judgement of Fuller’s character and expects that a spiritually-minded reader will imitate what is virtuous. Morris’s dominant narrative presence, while providing more context and greater detail, mutes Fuller’s voice and shapes the presentation of his character according to Morris’s judgement. Morris essentially tells his readers what is imitable and what should be rejected. This is the most significant difference between the memoirs. Ryland does not give a discrete account of Fuller’s character. In contrast, Morris’s twenty-six-page character sketch is the final word on Fuller’s life.<sup>70</sup>

Before this final chapter sketching Fuller’s character, Morris reviews the circumstances surrounding Fuller’s final illness and death. He notes that Fuller “did not expect a long life,” even predicting that “probably he should never live to the age of three score and ten.”<sup>71</sup> Like Ryland, he traces Fuller’s last illness to much earlier precursors in complaints of the respiratory system. While the chapter is materially similar to Ryland’s

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<sup>69</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 478.

<sup>70</sup>Morris’s description of Fuller’s character was so elegant that it was frequently mentioned in literary reviews. See Anonymous, review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *Magazine of the Dutch Reformed Church* 1, no. 12 (March 1827), 374. In the 1884 Philadelphia edition of the *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, an unidentified editor (later than Joseph Belcher [1794–1859]) inserts a lengthy excerpt from Morris’s biography near the end of Andrew Gunton Fuller’s biographical memoir. The editor writes, “Perhaps this is a proper place to introduce a general view of Mr. Fuller’s person, habits, and character, which I regret my valued brother [Andrew Gunton Fuller] has not incorporated into the memoir. No one knew Mr. Fuller better than his earliest biographer, the Rev. J. W. Morris” (Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life*, ed. Joseph Belcher, [Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1884], 1:105).

<sup>71</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 441.

account, Morris pauses over a particular aspect of Fuller's reaction to the death of John Sutcliff. Fuller remarked in a conversation,

I have been thinking of what brother Sutcliffe [*sic*] said to me a few days before his death: 'I wish I had prayed more.' So I wish that I had prayed more. I do not suppose that brother Sutcliffe meant that he wished that he had prayed more frequently, but more spiritually. I wish I had prayed more for the influence of the Holy Spirit; I might have enjoyed more of the power of vital godliness.<sup>72</sup>

While Morris takes little note of this statement in the narration of Fuller's decline, it is another indicator of his evaluation of Fuller's spirituality, one which he returns to in the sketch of Fuller's character. Through similar excerpts and passing comments throughout the memoir, Morris crafts an impression of Fuller's character: a rough but brilliant man who, through persistence and his own intellectual genius, raised himself up among his peers to become a leading light among Baptist ministers. Morris's Fuller is a man of uncompromising integrity, rigorous logic, and remarkable discernment. His aggressive pursuit of truth, often involving disputes with other ministers, reinforced a Calvinistic and evangelical orthodoxy and provoked deeper theological convictions among Particular Baptists through his publications and personal network. Fuller's capacious intellect, expansive vision, and energetic industry found greatest exercise in his labors for the Baptist Missionary Society. In Morris's account, Fuller, while a profoundly influential theologian, visionary, and catalyst, has notable deficiencies. Fuller's "unrefined nature" and ability to endure hardness "left but little room for the expressions of hospitality."<sup>73</sup> His ability to endure hardness translated into an impatience with others who could not endure similar rigor. While emotionally stable and not unkind, his "even flow of spirits" only "border[ed] on cheerfulness."<sup>74</sup> While noting that Fuller's "fire of

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<sup>72</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 443.

<sup>73</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 473.

<sup>74</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 473.

original genius was constantly fed by pure and rich supplies” from the “boundless source of intelligence” found in the Scriptures, Morris expresses some disappointment Fuller’s occupations prevented him from being more widely read. In an age of unprecedented access, Fuller’s personal library “was not much larger than John Bunyan’s” and consisted “chiefly of a scanty collection of the writings of the Puritans, and those of the New-England school.”<sup>75</sup> Instead, the Bible “was his library, his treasury of knowledge and to that he repaired with ever new delight.”

Consistent with the shape of his memoir, Morris emphasizes Fuller’s unrivaled intellect. “The fertility of his genius,” Morris writes, “is universally acknowledged,” and such mental prowess had both benefits and liabilities.<sup>76</sup> He possessed an unparalleled ability to “improve the occurrences of life to sacred purposes” such that his observations on nature and circumstances became the source of countless sermon illustrations. Contrary to any assumptions of intellectual reliance, Morris contends for Fuller’s independency of thought. He argues that Fuller’s agreement with the thought of Richard Baxter (1615–1691) was coincidental, since Fuller read Baxter after “he had published what others called his Baxterianism.” What is more, Morris notes, Fuller was critical of what he later found in Baxter, noting that his writings were “tedious and crabbed in extreme.” “It is obvious enough,” Morris concludes, “that his manner of thinking and mode of expression were entirely his own; he had no models, nor did he so much as possess the power of imitation.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 477.

<sup>76</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 479.

<sup>77</sup> Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 483. Morris’s characterization of Fuller is reminiscent of Hopkins on Edwards: “He took his religious principles from the Bible and not any System or Body of Divinity. Tho’ his Principles were *Calvinistic*, yet he called no Man, Father. He thought and judged for himself, and was truly very much of an Original” (Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, 1765, 41).



At the same time, Fuller's acuity was also reflected in a wit and a flair for repartee that occasionally devolved to severe sarcasm and satire; a propensity that was "one of his besetting sins."<sup>78</sup> Morris asserts that Fuller's "mental and moral energy" were also "evidently applied to something like misanthropy," a disposition to "indulge the most unbounded suspicions of human nature, which in too many cases produced rashness and dogmatism in the opinion he formed of others."<sup>79</sup> Morris surmised that Fuller's constitutional hardness and his convictions regarding the "abstract doctrine of human depravity" combined to produce a critical spirit and a propensity to ill-formed judgments about others. While neither being "churlish nor morose," Fuller possessed a "sturdiness" which gave the appearance of "roughness and severity" to his behavior. Morris asserts that his natural temper "was not distinguished by gentleness, meekness, affability, nor kindness."<sup>80</sup> Morris contended that Fuller's "stern behavior," had become "rather a general subject of complaint."<sup>81</sup> These characteristics "infused into his preaching and conversation a style of malediction, neither the most favorable to usefulness nor adapted to form an amiable trait in the christian character."<sup>82</sup> Fuller's severity was such an issue that

he could not be faithful without being severe, nor display his zeal against principles and practices which he disapproved, whether justly or not, without exceeding the restraints of ordinary prudence, and retrenching some of the duties of religion and humanity<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 480.

<sup>79</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 488.

<sup>80</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 489.

<sup>81</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 489.

<sup>82</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 488.

<sup>83</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 490.

Morris argues that in this way Fuller “bore no resemblance to the examples in Scripture” in giving reproof. “Instead of seeking that which is broken,” he continued, Fuller’s “dispensatory contained no emollients, and he seems to have had no idea that a wound could be healed, except by the immediate application of a caustic.”<sup>84</sup> In reading Morris’s critique, one cannot help but think of the tension which had arisen between himself and Fuller. Morris speaks autobiographically:

He could never penetrate those shades which misrepresentation had formed around him, nor view an injured character any otherwise than through a fog, which magnified every distortion into the most hideous caricature.<sup>85</sup>

Morris’s harsh judgement of Fuller’s character does not comport with the sentiments expressed by many others who knew Fuller well. Instead, his assessment must be considered in light of the devastating and ongoing relational breach between Morris, Fuller, and other pastors in the Northamptonshire association. Morris’s impenitence and the resulting ostracism hardened his perspective on both Fuller and his former friends. He was thus prone to uncharitable judgements, writing that Fuller’s force of personality was so strong that others readily deferred to his judgement. “Mr. Fuller did not assume the dictatorship,” Morris asserts, “it was freely given him; the deference paid to his judgment decided everything and from it there was no appeal.” Morris waves away other accounts of Fuller’s character by arguing that the slavish admiration of Fuller’s friends resulted in a “timidity in examining character, the disposition to give too high a coloring to biographical sketches,” and the tendency “to confound every just distinction with indiscriminate praise.”<sup>86</sup> Additionally, it is difficult to square Fuller’s earnest letter to Morris pleading for his repentance and promising restored affection and full reconciliation with Morris’s characterization of Fuller’s misanthropy and skepticism.

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<sup>84</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 491.

<sup>85</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 491.

<sup>86</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 488.

However, the facet of Morris's Fuller that stands in starkest contrast with Ryland's depiction is his assertion that Fuller's intellectual preoccupation resulted in a profound lack of devotional fervor. "If spirituality consists in an aptness for spiritual exercises or in the prevalence of devout affections," Morris wrote, "in this, Mr. Fuller was not eminent." According to Morris, Fuller's remarks on religious matters centered on how they afforded "grounds for rational belief" rather than "any remarkable degree of spirituality" displayed in their discussion "or any immediate or successful effort to impress the heart and kindle the fire of devotion." The absence of cordial spirituality "was the general complexion of his religious constitution." This, Morris asserts, was the fundamental cause of "the want of adequate success" in the discharge of his pastoral ministry.<sup>87</sup> In essence, this assertion assaults the thesis of Ryland's biography—that Fuller was a man in whom a love for sound doctrine resulted in a life of vibrant piety.

Morris's sketch stood not only at variance with that of Ryland, but with a number of others with strong claims to intimate knowledge of Fuller. Robert Hall, Charles Stuart, and Thomas Toller (1765–1819) saw Fuller in countless seasons of his pastoral ministry, but make no mention of such serious deficiencies. Soon after news of Fuller's death reached India in the Fall of 1815, William Ward preached a "funeral sermon" in his honor. Ward's earlier political activism had been a dangerous liability for English Baptists, but Fuller had patiently counseled the youth to maturity and, eventually, placement with the Baptist Missionary Society. Even despite Ward's first missteps in foreign service, Fuller had remained confident in Ward's character and utility, writing to him with both warmth and firmness. In his funeral sermon, Ward described Fuller's spirituality as "a most fervent and solid piety," which was "equally removed from irrational enthusiasm and irrational torpidity."<sup>88</sup> Ward continued,

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<sup>87</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 478–9.

<sup>88</sup>William Ward, *A Sketch of the Character of the Late Andrew Fuller in a Sermon Preached at the Lal Bazar Chapel, Calcutta, on Lord's-Day October 1, 1815* (Bristol, England: J.G. Fuller, 1817), 9.

Nothing was more apparent in him than that he was a man whose whole soul was imbued with the spirit of devotion, and in whom the whole word of God dwelt richly. His public and family exercises of devotion afforded “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” and his public discourses as well as his writings show that he was a scribe well-instructed not only in the letter of scripture, but that he had profoundly studied its doctrines and precepts, the tendency of its history and its characters, and above all had drank deeply of those wells of salvation which sanctify the soul and prepare it for a perfect state.<sup>89</sup>

The question remains as to why Morris’s depiction of Fuller was such a contrast to that of his other biographers. Was it a result of a deeper intimacy with Fuller and a broader exposure to his daily life? This is unlikely, not least given their long separation during the final decade of Fuller’s life. Was Morris simply a more objective biographer? Did his strained relationship with Fuller permit a clearer assessment of Fuller’s weaknesses? While Morris contends for the necessity of including even Fuller’s most painful and embarrassing errors, since “truth, justice, honour, and impartiality...imperiously demand it,” his anger and resentment over the protracted tension in their friendship is never far from the surface.<sup>90</sup> He is quick to magnify Fuller’s shortcomings, but finds very little virtue for imitation. Ryland is not averse to presenting Fuller’s weaknesses and frequently uses Fuller’s own self-assessment to do so. He also contends that critical evaluation of spiritual life is a characteristic of true friendship—and that both he and Fuller made a practice of commending virtue and condemning sin in each other’s lives. But Ryland argues that public criticism must be bounded by biblical constraints:

If I knew of his making a golden calf, or in any degree countenancing idolatry, I would acknowledge and reprobate his conduct; or if I knew of his denying his Lord three times over, or even once only, I would both own and lament it. But the sacred writers, though they recorded every material fact impartially, yet did not needlessly repeat and exaggerate the imperfections of upright men, nor aim to show their own acumen in nicely criticising their characters: their impartiality was real, but not ostentatious.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ward, *A Sketch of the Character of the Late Andrew Fuller*, 10.

<sup>90</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 493.

<sup>91</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 560.

For this reason, Ryland took strong issue with Morris's particular assessment of Fuller's character:

Luke entered into no discussion of the controversy between Paul and Barnabas, though he had full opportunity of knowing one side of the story, and that from far the greatest man of the two: and, as I am not divinely inspired to distinguish accurately who was right and who was wrong, wherein Mr. Fuller was separated from some who once had a share in his friendship, and from whom he thought it his duty to withdraw it; I shall leave them to write of his faults, who refused to acknowledge any of their own. Though I may have strong grounds for an opinion on that subject, yet I am not eager to show them. I leave such things to an infallible Judge.<sup>92</sup>

While bitterness and wistfulness pervade Morris's character sketch, the dominant note of the memoir is Fuller's remarkable genius and his important intellectual and missionary legacy. Morris's style and approach, however, does suggest a strong ambition; a desire, perhaps, to trade in on Fuller's celebrity through a landmark literary biography. Such a motive seemed apparent to William Carey some years later. In a letter to his sisters in October of 1831, Carey expressed deep concern over Morris's eagerness to present Carey as a celebrity missionary,

Dear Morris wrote to me for letters and other documents to assist him in writing memoirs of me after my death, but there was a spirit in his letter which I must disapprove. I therefore told him so in my reply, and absolutely refused to send anything. Indeed, I have no wish that anyone should write or say anything about me; let my memorial sleep with my body in the dust and at the last great day all the good or evil which belongs to my character will be fully known.<sup>93</sup>

## Reception

A reviewer captured the surprise many felt when Morris's memoir appeared:

The family of the departed immediately announced that arrangements were made, by which a Memoir would be given to the world by Mr. Fuller's most intimate friend, the Rev. Dr. Ryland of Bristol. This produced high expectations. But before the publication of this work could possibly take place, *The Memoirs of the Life and*

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<sup>92</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 560.

<sup>93</sup>Earnest A. Payne, "A Carey Letter of 1831," *The Baptist Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (October 1938): 240.

*Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, late Pastor of the Baptist church at Kettering, &c. &c. By J. W. Morris*, appeared from the press.<sup>94</sup>

Many reviews lauded Morris's work. The *New Evangelical Magazine and Theological Review* concluded that Morris had "produced one of the most finished pieces of individual biography that is to be found in the English language," a work they judged, "if we are not egregiously mistaken, will stand the test of ages."<sup>95</sup> The *Eclectic Review* agreed that Morris's review of Fuller's works displayed an exceptional "sagacity...in seizing and unfolding the point at issue" which "could be acquired only by great familiarity with the subjects in debate."<sup>96</sup> Morris's writing indisputably possessed a "positive beauty and force of diction" which reminded some reviewers of the landmark literary biographies of Samuel Johnson.<sup>97</sup> Rufus Babcock noted in the preface to the first American edition of Morris's work, however, that the "more judicious and discriminating... have earnestly desired a more striking delineation of those powers of mind and habits of life" than Ryland had provided.<sup>98</sup>

When comparing Morris and Ryland's works, the *American Baptist Magazine* captured a common sentiment, "It has been said of these two volumes, that Morris gives his readers the intellect of Fuller, while Ryland presents you with his heart."<sup>99</sup> Morris is

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<sup>94</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *American Baptist Magazine* 10, no. 10 (October 1830): 303. The review references the advertisement announcing a new collection of Fuller's *Works* of which Ryland's Memoir was to be published separately. See John G. Fuller and John Ryland, "Proposal for Publishing by Subscription: The Works of Andrew Fuller" (J.G. Fuller, 1815), Special Collections, Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering.

<sup>95</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The New Evangelical Magazine and Theological Review* 2 (March 1816): 93.

<sup>96</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The Eclectic Review* 5 (May 1816): 491.

<sup>97</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The New Evangelical Magazine and Theological Review* 2 (March 1816): 89; Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *American Baptist Magazine* 10, no. 10 (October 1830): 307.

<sup>98</sup>J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. Rufus Babcock Jr. (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1830), iv.

<sup>99</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *American Baptist Magazine* 10, no. 10 (October 1830): 303.

concerned with showing a great man—a man, Ryland asserts, who is already well-enough known by his works. Morris largely affirms the familiar picture of Fuller—intelligent, strong-willed, driven, theologically-precise, a controversialist whose love for truth pressed him into service in multiple religious controversies; an able organizer and indefatigable supporter of the work of foreign missions. Ryland is concerned to show the sides of Fuller not likely to be seen in the public eye: his awareness of his own inadequacy, his watch-care over his heart, his sincere affection for his congregants, his abiding and tender love for family and relations, his earnest longing for the salvation of the lost, and his delight in the beauty and glory of God.

Reviewers zeroed in on their starkly different approaches. Some found Morris's failure to include Fuller's voice a significant weakness: "Mr. Morris's materials for the personal Memoir of his once intimate and interesting friend, were obviously very scanty. His narrative is well managed; but much remains to be supplied in this department."<sup>100</sup> Others found that "the excellent doctor" excerpted Fuller "more copiously than good taste will justify," and without regard to "the use to which [Fuller's diary] was originally destined as the repository of secret thoughts."<sup>101</sup> While Ryland's documentary style and thematic organization was a deliberate strategy, it also left "the history of Mr. Fuller in some degree of obscurity." Neither did the "marks of haste," whether caused by Morris's rival volume or the new responsibilities occasioned by Fuller's death, go unnoticed by readers. In terms of literary features, Ryland's volume was simply eclipsed by Morris's memoir. Soon after the release of his revised edition in 1826, the *New Baptist Magazine* wrote,

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<sup>100</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The Eclectic Review* 5 (May 1816): 491.

<sup>101</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, rev. ed., by J. W. Morris, *New Baptist Magazine* 2, no. 23 (October 1826): 390.

In everything relating to literary workmanship, Mr. Morris has undoubtedly won the palm. Respecting the truth of this assertion there can be scarcely a question. He has arranged his plan with judgment, condensed his material with skill, and expressed his ideas with uniform neatness and vigour. His narrative is perspicuous and lively, and in pourtraying [sic] character, he shews extraordinary power.<sup>102</sup>

The magazine concluded, “if asked which of the two limners has furnished the most accurate likeness...we must give preference to the less flattering, but more finished delineation of Mr. Morris.”<sup>103</sup>

For many reviewers, however, the representation of Fuller’s character was of greatest concern. While some lauded Morris’s criticism of Fuller as “a bold exposure of what he considers to be error even in his own friends,” others regarded it as possessing “a spirit and temper by which we no means admire.”<sup>104</sup> Ryland and Hall’s fears that Morris’s bitter impenitence would result in a skewed depiction of Fuller were confirmed by reviewers. The *Eclectic Review* rebuked Morris for the vindictive way he presented Fuller’s “severer virtues”:

We cannot part with Mr. Morris, without admonishing him on the voluntary peril to which he has exposed himself in undertaking to write the memoirs of a man, “whose misjudging and misguided conduct tended to inflict upon him an irreparable injury”...But the exposure of those severer virtues, was a task gratuitously undertaken by Mr. Morris, and we have regretted in our perusal of his volume, to observe too often the indications of a smothered resentment. Perhaps it was too much to expect, that under all the circumstances of the case, Mr. Morris should entirely divest his narrative of personal feeling and personal allusion. He supposes himself to have been deeply wronged, and in his zeal to be accounted an impartial biographer, he is not unmindful of the wounded man. We, of course, are perfect strangers to the grounds of those dissensions which separated him from the subject

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<sup>102</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, rev. ed., by J. W. Morris, *New Baptist Magazine* 2, no. 23 (October 1826): 389.

<sup>103</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, rev. ed., by J. W. Morris, *New Baptist Magazine* 2, no. 23 (October 1826): 389.

<sup>104</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* 11, no. 124 (April 1816): 235; Review of *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by John Ryland, *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 26 (February 1818): 68. The *New Evangelical Magazine and Theological Review* concluded that Morris’s sketch was the *most accurate* account of Fuller’s character yet published: “we ourselves have no doubt of the fidelity of the picture which [Morris] has drawn, nor will there be any wisdom in those who dispute it, challenging the proof” (Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The New Evangelical Magazine and Theological Review* 2 [March 1816]: 92).



of these Memoirs, whose death we all deplore; but we cannot forbear to remind him, that there is probably as much guilt in the impenitent pride which scorns to say I have sinned, as in the want of a chastised courtesy of manner, or a tender consideration of human frailty.<sup>105</sup>

By contrast, Ryland's depiction of Fuller brought "satisfaction and delight" to readers.<sup>106</sup> Not all were convinced that its style was an inherent weakness. The *Eclectic Review*'s assessment of the 1818 edition argued that Ryland "has certainly succeeded in giving a real, vivid, expanded representation of the man, by means of bringing into confirmation a multiplicity of smaller and larger fragments in which [Fuller] had...so forcibly and characteristically displayed himself."<sup>107</sup> Timothy Edwards Jr. (1774–1851) wrote to Ryland on January 17, 1819, informing Ryland that he had read the memoir and was "much affected with Mr. Fuller's life."<sup>108</sup> In reviewing the complete *Works of Andrew Fuller* of which Ryland's memoir served as the first volume, the *London Christian Instructor* wrote,

Of Dr. Ryland's Memoir, public approbation has rendered it unnecessary for us to say anything by way of recommendation. It is rather deficient in analysis and criticism, but it presents as complete a picture as can be desired, if not of the intellectual habits, of the social and spiritual character, of Andrew Fuller.<sup>109</sup>

The *Eclectic Review* asserted that Ryland's presentation of Fuller's personal spirituality illuminated the pious dimensions of the "rougher" qualities for which Fuller was widely known:

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<sup>105</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The Eclectic Review* 5 (May 1816): 491.

<sup>106</sup>Review of *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by John Ryland, *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 26 (February 1818): 68.

<sup>107</sup>Review of *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by John Ryland, *The Eclectic Review* 9 (February 1818): 185.

<sup>108</sup>Edwards Jr. to Ryland, January 27, 1819.

<sup>109</sup>Review of *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, by J. W. Morris, *The London Christian Instructor or Congregational Magazine* VII, no. 84 (December 1824): 648.

The ample manifestation here made of his possessing so much of the softer qualities, when taken, as they ought to be, into the account of those rougher ones, will strongly tend to show that, in all probable justice of estimate, there was in many of these exhibitions of these latter ones [bluntness, inflexibility, and even sternness], something better than the mere indulgence of natural disposition—that there was a principle of honest, resolute integrity, an unyielding sense of the right, not seldom a conscientious prompting of duty. We must even acknowledge, that our own previous impressions of his character have been considerably modified by reading the present work.<sup>110</sup>

In the end, the memoirs accomplished their respective aims. Ryland’s zeal to “promote pure and undefiled religion” by “showing what manner of man” Fuller was and “exciting others to follow him so far as he followed Christ” was reflected in the *Eclectic Review*’s concluding remarks:

Taking comprehensively the display here presented of the ardent, disinterested, indefatigable zeal, for the promotion, in every way, of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, we own we should greatly envy the reader who has a right to close the book without some very mortifying feelings of self-reproach. And that it is eminently *adapted* to make this impression, may be a strong testimony to the judgment and the spirit with which it is written and compiled, and a promise, we hope, of its extensive utility.<sup>111</sup>

Morris’s memoir became a landmark, albeit in a lower literary orbit than the one to which he aspired. Morris would, in fact, go on to have a prolific career in writing and publishing. He published a second edition of Fuller’s *Memoirs* in 1826, as well as a collection of Fuller’s writings in the same year.<sup>112</sup> In the following years, he published a two-volume *History of the Christian Church from the Apostolic Age to the Times of Wycliffe the Reformer* (1827) and edited both an abridgment of William Gurnall’s (1616–1679) *Spiritual Warfare* and *The Complete Works of Robert Hall* in 1828. By 1833, he had completed *Biographical Recollections of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.* and a biography

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<sup>110</sup>Foster and Ryland, *Critical Essays Contributed to the Eclectic Review by John Foster*, 2:410.

<sup>111</sup>Foster and Ryland, *Critical Essays Contributed to the Eclectic Review by John Foster*, 2:411.

<sup>112</sup>Most of the pieces in this collection were articles Fuller contributed to Morris’s *Biblical Magazine*. Morris notes that some of them were “unceremoniously” included in Ryland and J. G. Fuller’s *Works of Andrew Fuller* (Morris, *Miscellaneous Pieces*, x).

of the Scriptures entitled *Sacred Biography, forming a Connected History of the Old and New Testament*.<sup>113</sup> While evidence of his resentment persists in his later works, by the end of his life, he had at least outrun the financial troubles that dogged the first decade of his career.

## Conclusion

While the two memoirs do not present materially different images of the same man, the contrast is significant. Morris's narrative is unique in the way that it highlights unflattering aspects of Fuller's character alongside his indefatigable zeal, powerful intellect, and uncompromising commitment to the truth of the gospel. While Morris's emphasis on Fuller's "shades" may be disproportionate and even unfair, they do not comprehend the total of his assessment. Ryland's portrait is more indulgent of Fuller's virtues. Yet there is strong reason to believe that Ryland took the chastening remark in Robert Hall's October 1815 letter into consideration prior to publishing the memoir. Ryland's comments on Fuller's character in the preface and in chapter ten portray Ryland's sensitivity to the charge of only showing Fuller's "lights." Nevertheless, while he knew Fuller's faults, he was cautious to "not *needlessly* expose them."<sup>114</sup> Rather than making cursory judgments, Ryland uses Fuller's personal writings to illustrate his friend's uprightness and his practice of acknowledging sin and pursuing growth in areas of weakness.<sup>115</sup>

In the final analysis, Robert Hall's hopeful expectation was also prophetic. Undoubtedly, generations of readers possess a "juster idea" of Fuller's character as a

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<sup>113</sup>Perkins and Lauer, "Morris, John Webster."

<sup>114</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, 559.

<sup>115</sup>For example, Ryland excerpts a letter from January of 1813 where Fuller writes: "If I know a little of your blind side, you know as much or more of mine. I hope we shall get on together, and see reason to love and warn each other, as occasion requires. I wish to shun all strife, but what cannot, in justice, be avoided" (Ryland, 1816, 409).

result of Morris and Ryland's complementary biographies.

CHAPTER 7  
CONCLUSION

**Edwardsean Evangelical Biography**

The primary purpose of this dissertation has been to examine the impact of Jonathan Edwards on John Ryland's *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of Andrew Fuller* (1816/1818). In order to do so, a cluster of related questions was addressed: How was the genre of biography developing among evangelicals in the long eighteenth century? Is it possible to prove the influence of Jonathan Edwards on later biographies written by his theological heirs? Specifically, is it possible to demonstrate that John Ryland consciously modeled his biography of Andrew Fuller in light of Edwards's *Life of Brainerd*? What were the circumstances that caused John Ryland and J. W. Morris, two close friends of Fuller, to knowingly publish biographies within the same year? Additionally, what are the differences between the two competing biographies of Fuller and what historical, theological, and pedagogical concerns do these differences belie?

This examination of these research questions has verified the direct and substantive influence of Jonathan Edwards on the purpose, form, and content of Ryland's memoir of Andrew Fuller. Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate the undeniable influence of Edwards on Ryland's theological development, as witnessed by his personal diary, publications, and unique doctrinal emphases. By his own admission, one of the most significant influences on his Christian life was Edwards's biography of David Brainerd, a volume which he not only repeatedly read but also recommended to others. After tracing the history of biography, Chapter 4 argued that eighteenth-century evangelical biography,

of which Edwards's *Brainerd* was a prominent example, blended the Enlightenment's obsession with intimate personal detail with the Christian legacy of exemplary lives. Rather than focusing on unparalleled feats of personal discipline, prodigious ministry accomplishments, or landmark doctrinal discoveries, eighteenth-century evangelical biography tended to focus on the inner life displayed through correspondence, personal diaries, and the testimony of intimate witnesses. While its aims were, in some sense, similar to memetic aims of the long tradition of saints' lives, eighteenth-century evangelical lives portrayed more vividly the vital connection between doctrine and piety. The preface of Ryland's memoir underscores their fundamentally similar aim—to illustrate and commend Christian piety through imperfect but exemplary men. Additionally, careful comparison of the memoirs reveals that Ryland not only adopted a similar method and style, but consciously modeled parts of his biography after Edwards's example.

What was distinctively Edwardsean about Edwards's *Brainerd* and the biographies of his heirs was a particular link between doctrine and life. In the face of religious enthusiasm on the one hand and intellectual fideism on the other, Edwards and his followers were burdened to demonstrate the importance and nature of true religious affection through their biographies. Edwards considered Brainerd's life an epitome of genuine religious affections and shaped his biography with the conscious aim of commending the spirituality he had defended in *Religious Affections*. Fundamental to Edwards's theological anthropology was the conviction that the human person was, as McClymond has argued, "a bundle of affections that determine nearly everything that [a] person thinks, feels, or does."<sup>1</sup> These affections were not to be identified with mere emotions, but "the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald R. McDermott and Michael J. McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 311.

soul.”<sup>2</sup> Edwards recognized that all ideas were simultaneously intellectual and affective—one not only mentally conceived of an idea or object, but his will was inclined or disinclined towards it. Humans were a unity of the understanding and the will. Thus, Edwards argued that it was insufficient to describe true religion merely in terms of “doctrinal knowledge and speculation.”<sup>3</sup> Instead, the mind needed to be “enlightened, rightly and spiritually, to understand or apprehend divine things” which resulted in a new “sense” consisting in “a fervent, vigorous, engagement of the heart” in the things of God.<sup>4</sup> This new sense was brought about by the Spirit’s sovereign and free act in regeneration. The result of this transformation was an ever-increasing desire for knowledge of and joy in God—himself the limitless source of all true delight. Truly gracious affections were supremely displayed in a life of increasing conformance to the image of Christ. This radical pursuit of holiness was the chief sign—both to the believer and to the world—that the affections had a divine and spiritual origin.

Fuller and Ryland were convinced that Edwards’s theological anthropology had both biblical merit and explanatory power. Chapter 5 examined the theological emphases of Ryland’s biography of Fuller and demonstrated that Edwards’s framing of the Christian life provided needed language and concepts to remedy various errors in eighteenth-century English Protestantism. Fuller found Edwards’s understanding of the affections, coupled with his understanding of natural and moral inability, to be the antidote to the “frigid scheme” of Sandemanianism. Mere intellectual assent to truths about God, while perhaps avoiding the emotional flights of enthusiasm, was no indicator of true saving faith. Archibald MacLean’s notion that religious affections would eventually attend mental consent not only clouded the definition of saving faith, but made

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<sup>2</sup>*WJE* 2:96.

<sup>3</sup>*WJE* 2:101.

<sup>4</sup>*WJE* 2:266, 99–100.

those under such suasion vulnerable to Antinomian sentiments. For this reason, Ryland and Fuller both saw that the Sandemanian system was, at best, an anemic orthodoxy and, at worst, a disease capable of compromising biblical spirituality.

Edwards's spirituality also swept the legs out from underneath the Antinomianism which shadowed some strains of Calvinism. What passed for evidence of true conversion was exposed as fraudulent if it was not attended by a life of increasing holiness. A robust embrace of the doctrines of grace, however, was always accompanied by "evangelical humiliation" and a vibrant pursuit of holiness. Additionally, Edwards demonstrated while true believers must rest on the laurels of Christ rather than their own, justification had clear evidences in the life of the believer. *Religious Affections* demonstrated that some commonly-held signs, including those common to both enthusiasts and intellectualists, were no "true signs" at all. These insights helped Fuller and Ryland combat the smug high-Calvinism that tenaciously gripped Particular Baptist life in the eighteenth-century as well as guard against spiritual declension in the midst of the era's subjectivist turn.

Brainerd served as an epitome. In Ryland's personal copy of Edwards's *Life of Brainerd*, he underlined Edwards's conclusion that Brainerd's life afforded "instruction to *Christians in general*" because it showed

the right way of practising [sic] religion, in order to obtaining the ends of it, and receiving the benefits of it; or how Christians should "run the race set before them," if they would not "run in vain, or run as uncertainly," but would honour God in the world, adorn their profession, be serviceable to mankind, have the comforts of religion while they live, be free from disquieting doubts and dark apprehensions about the state of their souls; enjoy peace in the approaches of death, and "finish their course with joy."<sup>5</sup>

A generation after Edwards's *Life of Brainerd*, Ryland considered Fuller a similar model of true piety. Chapter Five traced several ways in which Edwards's *Brainerd* served as a

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<sup>5</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd* (Edinburgh: John Gray & Gavin Alston), 1765, 309.



model for Ryland's *Fuller*. Ryland's introduction explicitly stated that his aim was to represent Fuller in the same manner and he does this both in terms of presentation and format. Ryland's is a spiritual biography, framed by a documentary approach to Fuller's life. Ryland posited that the summons to imitate Fuller's life required the reader's experience of it through Fuller's own eyes, rather than through those of an omniscient narrator. As such, Ryland's approach reflected a fundamental dependence on the Spirit's activity to take the truth displayed through Fuller's life and bring the reader to imitation in affection and action. Ryland, then, was less concerned to rehearse all of Fuller's theological controversies or provide critical review of Fuller's controversial writings. Instead, he aimed to show Fuller's response to the vicissitudes of ordinary Christian life—ease and hardship, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. While Ryland knew that none of his readers could (or should) *be* Andrew Fuller, he also knew that experimental religion was fundamentally the same for all Christians. Reading Fuller's life was for the purpose of exciting others “to follow him, so far as he followed Christ” in all of life.

Ryland's portrait of Fuller, whether deliberately or accidentally, also reinforced the argument of Edwards's *Religious Affections*. As evidenced by Fuller's autobiographical letters in the memoir, Fuller's spirituality was characterized by a Spirit-wrought new “sense of the heart” which radically recalibrated his affections, and inclined his heart towards the beauty and excellency of God. This affection for God also consisted in “disinterested love,” a relish of God as God, not primarily as a response to God's work in Fuller's salvation. Fuller's life displayed an ever-increasing desire to know and delight in of God as the limitless source of all true delight. These motions were also attended by Fuller's increasing self-awareness—an “evangelical humility” which recognized the complexity of temptation and sin and responded in reliance on the Spirit for the power of transformation. For Ryland, however, the supreme indicator that Fuller's religious affections were truly gracious, was his life of increasing conformance to the image of

Christ. Fuller's radical pursuit of holiness was the chief sign—both to Fuller and to the world—that his affections had a spiritual origin. In these ways, Fuller's life is vindicated as a model worthy of imitation.

Chapter 6 argued that the competing biography of John Webster Morris had an altogether different aim—it sought to memorialize Fuller's theological genius rather than commend his piety as a model for imitation. Morris's memoir is, therefore, dominated by discussion on Fuller's writings and their context. Morris demonstrated how Fuller's logic and biblical exposition obliterated his opponents' arguments and rescued evangelical Calvinism from error and decline. This is the great strength of Morris's memoir. Coupled with his fluid and engaging prose and his careful organization of content, the biography is a fitting witness to the man later generations referred to as the “elephant of Kettering.”<sup>6</sup>

Fuller's inner life, by contrast, is a muted feature of Morris's biography. This has several likely causes. First, Morris had less access than Ryland to Fuller's personal writings. Despite serving as Fuller's “amanuensis” for a number of years, Morris did not possess Fuller's diaries. While documentary evidence of Morris's life is scanty, it also does not appear that Morris and Fuller shared as intimate a friendship as Fuller and Ryland. There are no letters between Morris and Fuller which bear the level of self-disclosure evident in Fuller's correspondence with Ryland. Morris however, argues that this documentary limitation had little tangible effect on his depiction, supplemented as it was by Morris's long acquaintance and perfect familiarity with Fuller.

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<sup>6</sup>David Phillips, biographer of Christmas Evans (1766–1838), reported that when Evans read Fuller's *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, he saw the “saw the Rhinoceros of Edinburgh [Archibald McLean] beginning to give way, notwithstanding the strength and keenness of his horn, before the Elephant of Kettering” (David Phillips, *Memoir of the Life, Labors and Extensive Usefulness of the Rev. Christmas Evans: A Distinguished Minister of the Baptist Denomination in Wales* [New York: M.W. Dodd, 1843], 74).

Second, although Morris shared Fuller’s theological convictions, he was not transformed in the same way by Edwards’s thought. The memoir neither emphasizes Edwards’s importance to Fuller’s understanding of the affections—a dominant theme in both Fuller’s life and in Ryland’s biography—nor the degree to which Fuller’s understanding of the affections shaped his theology.<sup>7</sup> Morris, therefore, did not have the convictions nor the conceptual language to express what shaped Fuller’s inner life.

Third, Morris did not share Ryland’s conviction that Fuller’s character was worthy of commendation. Chapter 5 argued that Morris, despite his claim to the contrary, was not an unbiased observer of Fuller’s character. Instead, he was profoundly influenced by the dissolution of his friendship with Fuller and his bitterness seems to only have grown over time. This relational fracture contributed to Morris’s negative assessment and portrayal of Fuller’s spirituality where he emphasized Fuller’s “shades” rather than his “lights.” By contrast, Ryland saw little benefit in rehearsing Fuller’s faults, since even the sacred writers impartially recorded material facts, “yet did not needlessly repeat and exaggerate the imperfections of upright men.”<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, Morris and Ryland differed in their approach to describing Fuller’s character. Ryland’s burden was to highlight Fuller’s Edwardsean spirituality in an Edwardsean way—representing Fuller’s life through his subject’s correspondence and intimate reflections rather than through a choreographed narrative. He, therefore, produced no distilled assessment of Fuller’s character. On the other hand, Morris fashioned a detailed character sketch which, in essence, told the reader what to believe

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<sup>7</sup>While Morris mentions that “Mr. Fuller and his connections certainly had a very high esteem for the writings of President Edwards,” in the same sentence he distances Fuller from Edwards’s thought by denying that Fuller “indiscriminately adopted the sentiments of [Edwards and the New Divinity men], or admitted all their reasonings” (Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 382–3). Ironically, Morris’s only mention of *Religious Affections*, which Fuller “constantly recommended” as “delineating the genuine nature of experimental religion,” comes immediately before his condemnation of Fuller’s spirituality (Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 478).

<sup>8</sup>Ryland, *Work of Faith, the Labor of Love, and the Patience of Hope*, 1816, 559.

about Fuller. Whether owing to lingering resentment or his attempt to maintain a critical distance, his picture was not flattering. Nevertheless, Chapter 6 concluded that Robert Hall's sanguine expectation was realized—the two competing biographies have given history “a juster idea” of the character of Andrew Fuller.

### **The Legacy of John Ryland**

A secondary purpose of this dissertation was to revive the legacy of Ryland as one of the most significant figures of eighteenth-century Baptist history. Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated the remarkable scope and depth of Ryland's ministry as friend, pastor, educator, advocate, theologian, and biographer. In his own day, his intentional cultivation of deep Christian friendships bore fruit in the strengthening of churches, the adorning of the gospel, and the salvation of the lost. Ryland's pastoral ministry and gospel proclamation in the power of the Spirit sustained two happy churches at College Lane in Northampton and Broadmead in Bristol for over half a century. The significance of this aspect of his legacy is surely reflected by the fact that the two-volume collection of his works was entitled *Pastoral Memorials*. His educational leadership stabilized the only Baptist College of the era and preserved its commitment to Trinitarian orthodoxy and evangelical Calvinism in the midst of shifting theological convictions. Without Ryland's diligence and steady example at the Baptist Mission Society after Fuller's death, one wonders if the Society's relationship with the Serampore missionaries would have survived. Robert Hall remarked, “it is not easy to determine whether the success of our mission is most to be ascribed to the vigour of Fuller, the prudence of Sutcliff, or the piety of Ryland.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Norman S. Moon, *Education for Ministry: Bristol Baptist College, 1679-1979* (Bristol: Bristol Baptist College, 1979), 37.

Chapters 2 and 3 also argued that Ryland, if not initially responsible for the introduction, was the strongest early proponent of Edwards's thought among the Northamptonshire Baptists. He recommended Edwards's books to Fuller and others in conversation, correspondence, and print, sought their publication in Bristol and London, corresponded with fellow Edwardseans both near and far, and even carried on a decades-long correspondence with Edwards's New Divinity heirs in New England. He scrutinized Edwards's thought, embracing what he found to be biblical and compelling, and sought to help others adopt the same. The impact of this advocacy is as significant as it is immeasurable: Edwards's writings transformed Particular Baptist thought, rescuing it from the logical rigidity of high-Calvinism and infusing it with a dynamic, globally-minded activism which produced both a new wave of domestic evangelical preaching and the launch of the modern Protestant missions movement. By the early nineteenth century, Fuller could write:

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." 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. It is very singular, that the Mission to the East should have originated with men of these principles; and without pretending to be a prophet, I may say, if ever it falls into the hands of men who talk in this strain, it will soon come to nothing.<sup>10</sup>

While his literary output pales in comparison with his prolific preaching ministry, several of his publications on theological subjects were nonetheless significant.<sup>11</sup> After the death of Fuller, Ryland deeply felt his responsibility to defend the

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<sup>10</sup>John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, from Its Commencement, in 1792* (London: Button & Son, 1816), 332.

<sup>11</sup>An advertisement at the beginning of the first volume of *Pastoral Memorials* suggests that some interest had arisen for the collection of "the most important" of Ryland's "Sermons and Tracts (most of which have been for some time out of print)" as well as "many papers on interesting theological subjects, in periodical works" into a third volume. This volume, however, never appeared—perhaps because it was unable to gather a sufficient number of subscribers (John Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Rev. John Ryland D.D. of Bristol with a Memoir of the Author in Two Volumes*

theological convictions they had jointly contended for. He was unafraid to address pressing issues of Socinianism and Antinomianism or contend for his Calvinistic and baptistic convictions.<sup>12</sup> He also rose to defend the Edwardsean legacy which had so transformed his life and the lives of his friends. In a letter to Stephen West in September of 1815, Ryland wrote,

My dear brother Fuller is gone, and I shall now have to bear the brunt of them that cry out against American divinity. An angry attack has already been made on the funeral sermon I published, in the *New Evangelical Magazine*, which is chiefly conducted by one Jones, who wrote the History of the Waldenses. He has a little tinge of the Sandemanian sourness, though not so much as he had some years ago. Still, he is disposed to cavil at the idea of disinterested love, and in fact, will not try to understand what we mean by it. Many infer at once that we would have people regardless of their own salvation. I have unspeakable difficulty to make some understand me, who, I cannot doubt, possessed the sincerest love to Christ for his own excellency, and who delighted in the law of God after the inner man.<sup>13</sup>

Historian Norman Moon concluded that, as shortsighted Ryland may have been physically, “in spiritual terms he had a telescopic vision.”<sup>14</sup> In God’s providence, perhaps no one of this era had a more profound, albeit subtle, influence in shaping English Particular Baptist convictions than John Ryland. Yet, the fact is, we would know very little of John Ryland if it were not for his biography of Andrew Fuller. In recent decades, this two-hundred-year-old biography has been a vehicle for the re-discovery of

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(London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1826], 1: n.p.). Apart from his memoir of Fuller, the most significant of Ryland’s published works were likely *God’s Experimental Probation of Intelligent Agents* (1780), *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ* (1815), *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to differ in Opinion and Practice from so many of their Christian Brethren* (which appeared in two editions, 1814, 1827), *Serious Remarks on the Different Representations of Evangelical Doctrine by the Professed Friends of the Gospel* (in two parts, 1817–1818), *The Practical Influence of Evangelical Religion* (1819), and *Christianae Militae Viaticum* (in six editions, 1795–1825).

<sup>12</sup>See especially *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to differ in Opinion and Practice from so many of their Christian Brethren* (which appeared in two editions, 1814, 1827), *Serious Remarks on the Different Representations of Evangelical Doctrine by the Professed Friends of the Gospel* (in two parts, 1817–1818).

<sup>13</sup>Edwards Amasa Park, “Contributions to History: Letters of John Ryland to Stephen West” in *The Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Eclectic* 30, no. 117 (January 1873): 185.

<sup>14</sup>Norman S. Moon, quoted in Grant Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753-1825)” in *The British Particular Baptists, 1638-1910*, edited by Michael A. G. Haykin, (Springfield, MA: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 86.

Fuller's inner-life and the profound importance of this era of Christian history for the present.<sup>15</sup> Ryland, however, has remained veiled in the mists of obscurity.<sup>16</sup>

Ryland, most likely, would have had it this way. Robert Hall wrote that Ryland's "mental opulence was much greater than his modesty would permit him to reveal; his disposition to conceal his attainments being nearly as strong as that of some men to display them."<sup>17</sup> His humility was, in fact, "the most remarkable feature of his character," Hall wrote, "he might most truly be said, in the language of scripture, to be *clothed* with it."<sup>18</sup> While his administrative, prophetic, literary, and theological attainments were significant, Hall concluded that "his religion appeared *in its fruits*; in gentleness, humility, and benevolence; in a steady, conscientious performance of every duty; and a careful abstinence from every appearance of evil."<sup>19</sup>

On December 30, 1824, Ryland preached his final sermon at Broadmead from Psalm 86:5: "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." After a long period of physical decline, the "Doctor" died on Wednesday May 25, 1825. Businesses closed and the ships in Bristol's harbor flew their flags at half-mast in his honor.<sup>20</sup> His funeral was widely attended. Hall, his longtime friend and successor, gave the funeral sermon. He lucidly noted both the results of Ryland's extensive ministry and the end of an era of Baptist history,

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<sup>15</sup>For a survey of the resurgence of interest in Fuller, see Nathan A Finn, "The Renaissance in Andrew Fuller Studies: A Bibliographic Essay," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (2013): 44–61.

<sup>16</sup>Finn, "The Renaissance in Andrew Fuller Studies: A Bibliographic Essay," 44, 54.

<sup>17</sup>*WRH*, 5:404.

<sup>18</sup>*WRH*, 5:393.

<sup>19</sup>*WRH*, 5:392.

<sup>20</sup>James Culross, *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service* (London: Elliot Stock, 1897), 89.

his loss will be deeply lamented, and not without reason; for though the faithful dispensers of evangelical instruction may now be reckoned by thousands, how few are left who can sustain a comparison with him, in all the qualities which adorn the gospel, and give the possessor power with God.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>*WRH*, 5:409.



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## ABSTRACT

### “PROMOTING PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION”: JOHN RYLAND, JR. (1753–1825) AND EDWARDSEAN EVANGELICAL BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Ryan Griffith, Ph.D.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017  
Chair: Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin

In the preface to the 1749 publication of *The Life of David Brainerd*, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) explains the benefit of recounting exemplary lives: “There are two ways of representing and recommending true religion and virtue to the world, which God hath made use of: the one is by doctrine and precept; the other is by instance and example.” Edwards and his heirs made strategic use of the eighteenth-century convention of biography as a vehicle for teaching Christian doctrine and piety. This dissertation argues that John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) consciously adopted Edwards’s aims in his biography of Baptist theologian, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), “with the hope of promoting pure and undefiled religion, founded on truly scriptural and evangelical principles.” The introductory chapter highlights the significance of John Ryland, Jr., particularly as it relates to the legacy of Jonathan Edwards among British Particular Baptists. Chapter 2 describes the life and spiritual formation of John Ryland, Jr., tracing Ryland’s theological influences and demonstrating how his early life and spiritual formation shaped his writing and ministry. The third chapter surveys Ryland’s extensive ministry, emphasizing his ecumenical friendships, his pastoral ministry in Northampton and Bristol, his efforts in training pastors at Bristol Academy, his advocacy for the Baptist Mission Society, and his participation in several important theological controversies. Chapter 4 describes the development of eighteenth-century biography,

particularly focusing on the adaptation of the genre by Jonathan Edwards and his New Divinity and English Baptist heirs. Chapters 5 and 6 build on the examination of Ryland's life and the development of Edwardsean evangelical biography, by arguing that Ryland deliberately shaped his memoir of Fuller on Edward's *Life of David Brainerd*. Like Edwards's portrayal of Brainerd, Ryland sought to use Fuller's life to illustrate true religious affection. Chapter 6 compares the biographies of Ryland and J. W. Morris (1763–1836) with special attention to their selectivity and theological emphases. A final chapter summarizes the ways in which John Ryland's biography adopted Edwards's aims and emphasized Fuller's Edwardseanism, and concludes by arguing for the ongoing significance of John Ryland's legacy.

## VITA

Christopher Ryan Griffith

### EDUCATION

- BA Wheaton College, 2001
- MA Wheaton College Graduate School, 2005
- MA Bethlehem College & Seminary, 2012

### ACADEMIC

- Instructor, The Bethlehem Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2005–2006
- Adjunct Instructor, Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minnesota, 2006–2009
- Director of Undergraduate Studies, Bethlehem College & Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2009–2014
- Assistant Professor, Bethlehem College & Seminary, 2009–
- Director of Integrated Curriculum, Bethlehem College & Seminary, 2014–

### MINISTERIAL

- College Ministry Intern, Grace Church of DuPage, Warrenville, Illinois, 2002–2005
- Global Missions Intern, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2005–2007

### PUBLICATIONS

- Review of *Jonathan Edwards on the Christian Life*, by Dane C. Ortlund. *Themelios* 39, no. 2 (July 2014): 348–9.
- Review of *The History of Theological Education*, by Justo González. *Journal of Global Christianity* 1, no. 2 (July 2015): 102–6.
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- “Spiritual Gifts” in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, edited by Harry Stout. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.

### ORGANIZATIONAL

- American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
- Evangelical Theological Society