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“SEEING THE INVISIBLE GOD”: JOHN RYLAND, JR.’S
SPIRITUALITY OF TRIUMPHAL LIVING IN CHRIST

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APPROVAL SHEET

“SEEING THE INVISIBLE GOD”: JOHN RYLAND, JR.’S
SPIRITUALITY OF TRIUMPHAL LIVING IN CHRIST

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For those who gave so much. To my wife, my children, and my church

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PREFACE

When I graduated with my Master of Theology in the Fall of 2014 from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), I had all intentions of ending my academic pursuits to focus full time on the pastorate and the next church that God would lead me to serve. I was reeling from the tedious task of writing my first dissertation on John Ryland, Jr., but knew there could be so much said about Ryland. My family, while sitting in the audience of the graduation, were debating how long it would take me to decide to pursue a PhD and to further study the life of Ryland. It seemed as if they knew my heart and direction before it was ever clear in my own mind.

In 2016, I entered the PhD program at SBTS with goals of finishing in the three years allotted by the seminary. Little did I know that I would endure two knee surgeries, including a full knee replacement, a near death experience at the hand of the COVID-19 virus, and leading a church through the uncharted experiences of a pandemic, all while building a new house for my family. Each of these experiences have deepened my faith in God, made me more appreciative of my family, my church staff and those who serve with me in ministry. This journey has taught me to value people in my life and to have a renewed focus on the individual lives of those God brings into my path. Needless to say, my three-year window for graduation came and went, but I remained persistent and kept on working.

As I contemplated SBTS for my ThM and PhD, I met and quickly gained much respect for Dr. Michael Haykin and his knowledge concerning church history and spirituality. I want to thank Dr. Haykin for introducing John Ryland, Jr. to me and serving as my supervisor for both my ThM and PhD. His vast wealth of knowledge and passion for the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists have been both an encouragement

to me to further my understanding of eighteenth-century Baptists and to demonstrate what it truly means to be a scholar and church historian. Let me also thank Dr. Donald Whitney and Dr. Stephen Yuille for providing me with a better understanding of biblical spirituality and the practice of my faith on a daily basis. As Ryland made a great impact on those students who had the pleasure of learning from him at the academy, I too have had the pleasure of learning from each of these men and to work out my salvation with “fear and trembling.”

I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Stephen Wellum, who along with Haykin and Yuille, agreed to serve on my dissertation committee. And a special thanks to Dr. Chris Crocker, a fellow Ryland enthusiast, for taking the time to read through my dissertation. A special thanks to the staff of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Emma Walsh of the Angus Library at Regent Park College in Oxford, and Michael Brealey of Bristol Baptist College, Bristol, England, for their important work and their help to me in my research of Ryland. I have such a renewed appreciation of librarians and the ministry for which they provide. I’m especially grateful to my church staff, who encouraged and assisted me in order to complete this project. I’m particularly grateful for the friendship of Baiyu Song, Elliot Kim, Dee Grimes, and Paul Sanchez. They have been such a blessing through this arduous task, and I pray that we will serve with one another in the Kingdom of Christ faithfully for the remainder of our lives.

This project is dedicated to my wife Victoria, who has sacrificed much to see me complete this dissertation and she has encouraged me every step of the way, even in times when I was ready to stop.

Keith A. Tillman

Powell, Tennessee

May 2022

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

While preaching the funeral sermon of John Ryland, Jr.¹ (1753–1825), Robert Hall, Jr.² (1764–1831), with great care, outlined the character of Christ and described the friendship given to Jesus by John the beloved disciple. His intent was to portray the perfect example of a life lived in God and then to compare the life of Ryland, favorably, to this perfect example. Hall spoke about the life of Christ being enjoined with his disciples in “humility, forbearance, gentleness, kindness, and the most tender sympathy with the infirmities and distresses of our fellow-creatures; and his whole life was a perfect transcript of these virtues.”³ In Hall’s comparison of Ryland’s character with the virtues ascribed to Christ, Hall said about Ryland: “It is a homage due to departed worth, whenever it rises to such a height as to render its possessor an object of general attention, to endeavor to rescue it from oblivion; that when it is removed from the observation of men, it may still live in their memory . . . it is calculated to give a fresh impulse to the desire of imitation.”⁴ Hall’s description of the character of Ryland and his call for

¹ From this point forward, John Ryland, Jr. will be known simply as Ryland or John Ryland.

² For a detailed look at the life and ministry of Robert Hall, Jr., see John Green, *Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, Late of Bristol, Angus* (London: Westley and Davis, 1832); Robert Hall, *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall* (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830); Hamilton MacCleod, “The Life and Teaching of Robert Hall, 1764–1831” (master’s thesis, University of Durham, 1957); Cody Heath McNutt, “The Ministry of Robert Hall, Jr.: The Preacher as Theological Exemplar and Cultural Celebrity” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012). From this point forward, Robert Hall, Jr. will be known simply as Hall or Robert Hall.

³ Robert Hall Jr., *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D.D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5th, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1825), 3.

⁴ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 22.

Ryland's life to be an example for the church was echoed by Ryland's son. Describing the piety of his father, Jonathan Edwards Ryland (1798–1866)⁵ said, "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.'"⁶ Ryland's commitment to evangelical truth and the practice of this truth in his life and spirituality made him such an asset among the eighteenth century Particular Baptists, that nineteenth-century historian J. C. Carlile said, "Ryland is a household name among Baptists."⁷

The journey of Ryland's spiritual life to become a prominent Baptist pastor and educator is a journey of change and influence that was "worked out" in his life through key influential mentors, theological controversies, and a love for God and his gospel message to the world. Ryland began his personal summary of Baptist beliefs by stating, "As we are directed, by the apostle Peter, to be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us; so would we wish to do the same as to every part of our religious practice; and we desire to do this also with meekness and fear."⁸ This statement described the character of Ryland as a determined defender of the faith; while at the same time, it displayed his pastoral care as he encouraged conviction of truth through "meekness and fear." Hall said, "Piety, indeed was his distinguished

⁵ For more information on the life of Jonathan Edwards Ryland, see "Ryland, Jonathan Edwards," in *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder, 1885–1900); James Culross, *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service* (London: Elliot Stock, 1897), 95–103.

⁶ John Ryland, "Memoir of Dr. Ryland," in *Pastoral Memorials: Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Revd. John Ryland, D.D. of Bristol: With a Memoir of the Author* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1828), 2:44.

⁷ J. C. Carlile, *The Story of the English Baptists* (London: J. Clarke, 1905), 162.

⁸ John Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from their Christian Brethren . . . with a Letter on the Subject of Communion, by the late W. Clarke*, 2nd ed. (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1827), 1.

characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably above the level of ordinary Christians.”⁹

Ryland, although not widely known among the contemporary church, “had a very significant ministry as a faithful pastor, mission visionary and influential educator” which greatly influenced the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists and significantly contributed to the shaping of modern Baptist churches.¹⁰ Ryland’s piety, according to Robert Hall, had a great effect on Baptist life of the eighteenth century.¹¹ As President of Bristol Baptist College, Ryland was charged with educating about two hundred students over the course of his tenure. He brought to them a Calvinism that included an Edwardsean open call to respond to the gospel, as well as a zeal for missions and evangelism. Ryland, along with other members of the Northamptonshire Association of Baptists, through the reading of Edwards, began to “throw off the shackles of hyper-Calvinism.”¹² As the result of the teaching of Edwards, and through Ryland’s relationship with John Newton (1725–1807),¹³ Ryland transitioned to the view that if only one soul was on the “way to destruction,” “there would still be a necessity for those who know the terrors of the Lord, and the worth of souls, to persuade men to flee for refuge.”¹⁴ This

⁹ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 25.

¹⁰ Grant Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” in *The British Particular Baptist: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 2:77.

¹¹ Norman S. Moon, *Education for Ministry: Bristol Baptist College, 1679–1979* (Bristol, UK: Bristol Baptist College, 1979), 37.

¹² H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, “John Ryland,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography in Association with The British Academy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48:471.

¹³ For more information concerning the life and ministry of John Newton, see Jonathan Aitkin, *John Newton: from Disgrace to Amazing Grace* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), Richard Cecil, *Memoirs of the Rev. John Newton, Late Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolchurch Haw: with General Remarks on his Life, Connections, and Character* (London: L.B. Seeley, 1820); and Bernard Martin, *John Newton: A Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1950).

¹⁴ John Ryland, *Salvation Finished, as to the 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, fen.* (London: Sold by Matthews, Vernor; Ash, and Button, 1791), 11.

theological shift from the hyper-Calvinism of his father to the Evangelical Calvinism of Edwards, along with the passion for evangelism, fueled Ryland, along with William Carey¹⁵ (1761–1834) and Andrew Fuller¹⁶ (1754–1815), as well as other Particular Baptist pastors, to contribute to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society (“BMS”)¹⁷ on October 2, 1792. Ryland also guided his students, the Association of churches, and the churches he pastored, through the difficult controversies that had made their way into the Particular Baptists; including, the Antinomian¹⁸ confrontations with William Huntington (1745–1813),¹⁹ the Modern Question²⁰ conflicts with both the high-

¹⁵ For more information concerning the life and ministry of William Carey, see S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey, D. D., Fellow of Linnaean Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923); Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope Press, 1991); William Travis, “William Carey: The Modern Missions Movement and the Sovereignty of God,” in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 323–36.

¹⁶ For more information concerning the life and theology of Andrew Fuller, see Paul Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010); Andrew Fuller, Andrew Gunton, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Works of Andrew Fuller* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2007); Michael A. G. Haykin, *Reading Andrew Fuller* (Peterborough, ON: H & E., 2020); Gilbert S. Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: Carey Press, 1942); Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815): Studies in Evangelical History and Thought* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015); Nettles, “Andrew Fuller (1754–1815),” in *The British Particular Baptists*, vol. 2; Robert Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006); John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrate; in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller* (London: Button & Son, 1816).

¹⁷ For an in-depth history of the Baptist Missionary Society see Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society: 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).

¹⁸ For a detailed analysis and history of the antinomian conflict among British Baptists, see Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001); George Melvyn Ella, *Law and Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Eggleston, England: Go Publications, 1996); Gertrude Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History: With Special Reference to the Period 1640–1660* (London: Cresset Press, 1951); Mark Jones, *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcome Guest?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013); Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists* (2006).

¹⁹ For an in-depth look at the life and theology of William Huntington, see George M. Ella, *William Huntington, Pastor of Providence* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1994); Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 112–45; Keith Alan Tillman, “‘He Worked Out His Salvation with Fear and Trembling’: The Spirituality of John Ryland, Jr.” (ThM thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014); Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Huntington, S.S.* (London: Farncombe and Son, 1909). Much of Huntington’s work can be accessed at <http://www.williamhuntington.net> (accessed October 12, 2021).

²⁰ For a detailed analysis of the Modern Question or hyper-Calvinism versus Evangelical Calvinism among British Baptists, see Curt D. Daniel, “Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel*

Calvinists and the Arminians, and the Socinians’²¹ attack on the Trinity and the deity of Christ that had plagued the Particular Baptists for many decades. For Ryland, the conflict with the Socinians and Unitarians concerning the deity of Christ was of great importance because he considered antitrinitarians to be atheists, although he also denied fellowship with Antinomians.²² Ryland utilized his sermons, lectures, association letters, as well as other writings, to guide those under his influence to maintain an orthodox Christology despite the conflicts of the long eighteenth century.

John Ryland came from a long line of Dissenters, and within this pedigree, he forged a vast array of friends and mentors that helped to shape his thoughts and theology, thus developing in him a deep Christ-centered spirituality and devotion to a Trinitarian doctrine of God.²³ As one examines Ryland’s theological foundation and beliefs, such as that of the deity of Christ as found in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, and the presence of Christ as taught through Christ’s incarnation, it becomes evident from his spirituality that his Christology was a direct foundational influence on his spiritual life. Ryland was convinced that there was a dutiful connection between faith and practice, and often spoke of the practice of “true religion.”²⁴ Hall made this point concerning the

Preaching (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995); Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*; Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian*.

²¹ For a detailed analysis of Socinians and the crisis of the Trinity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Phillip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: T and T Clark, 2003); Paul Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alan P. F. Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600–2000* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2001).

²² Robert Hall, *Help to Zion’s Travellers: Being an Attempt to Remove Various-Stumbling Blocks Out of the Way* (Boston: Lincoln, Edmands, & Co., 1833), xi.

²³ For a brief discussion of key theological mentors of Ryland, see L. G. Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences,” *Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1979): 17–29; Christopher Crocker, “The Life and Legacy of John Ryland Jr. (1753–1825): A Man of Considerable Usefulness—An Historical Biography” (PhD. Diss., The University of Bristol, 2018), 75–104; and Lon Alton Graham, “‘All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer:’ The Catholicity of John Ryland, Jr.” (PhD diss., Free University of Amsterdam, 2021).

²⁴ Ryland, “Characteristics of Divine Revelation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:168.

spiritual life of Ryland when he asked those attending Ryland's funeral, "Where will you look for another, whose whole life is a luminous commentary on his doctrine."²⁵

Thesis

In recent years, the importance of John Ryland within the Particular Baptist has been overshadowed by the mission work of Carey and by the theological prowess of John Gill (1697–1771)²⁶ and Andrew Fuller. Yet, in his day, Ryland was a powerful voice for Evangelical truth and practical religion that many sought out for counsel and wisdom. Over the past few years several academic works have surfaced on Ryland, and his work is once again being appreciated and studied. While there have been several works published on Ryland's life, missions' involvement, and theological positions, no in-depth study has been published on Ryland's Christology, especially as it relates to his understanding of the Trinity and presence of Christ through the incarnation.

For Ryland, true religion was "internal, and consists primarily in holy affections, and devout exercises of the heart."²⁷ In other words, faith in Christ produced a "true religion" that created "holy affections" towards Christ and a "heart" that was devoted to Christ. Ryland called these holy affections "Godly zeal" and asserted that Godly zeal was the "fervor of true benevolence, or of holy love, exciting the subject of that sacred affection to vigorous exertion for the good of its beloved object."²⁸ Therefore this dissertation's purpose will be to explore the many works of Ryland to discover his dedication to "Evangelical truth" as it relates to the deity and presence of Christ, and how

²⁵Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 42.

²⁶ For more information concerning the life and theology of John Gill, see Graham Harrison, *Dr. John Gill and His Teaching* (London: The Evangelical Library, 1971); Curt D. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill"; Thomas Ascol, "The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D. D.* (Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1992).

²⁷ Ryland, "Obedience the Test of Love to God," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:291.

²⁸ Ryland, "Godly Zeal Described and Recommended," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:392.

these truths had a direct bearing on his affections for Christ and how these affections lived out in Ryland's life and ministry. Ryland's Christological spirituality will be examined in the midst of the constant influence and "grand delusion" of Socinianism and other antitrinitarian doctrines among English Dissent in the eighteenth century. The primary question that this dissertation will seek to answer, in relation to Christ's deity and presence as presented in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and incarnation, is to what affect these doctrines had upon Ryland's life personally, as a pastor, and as an association leader among the Particular Baptists? Other questions that will be addressed in this dissertation are: How did the Particular Baptist remain orthodox throughout the eighteenth-century Trinitarian conflicts and how did this prepare Ryland as a pastor and educator? To what extent did Ryland's Christological views stem from key relationships and mentors? How did Ryland's theology of the deity of Christ affect him as a pastor, and how did this guide Ryland in pastoral care?

The thesis of this dissertation is that Ryland was convinced that there is a direct correlation between "Evangelical truth" and "vital holiness;" therefore, doctrines like the Trinity and the incarnation of the Son of God, as they reflect on the deity of Christ and his presence in the life of the believer, represent the greatest motives for spiritual formation. Ryland stated, "He that denies the proper divinity of the Redeemer, and his infinite dignity . . . [denies] our infinite obligations to obedience."²⁹ For Ryland, there is a connection between doctrine and spiritual formation, as was evidenced in his understanding of incarnation and the presence of the Son of God. He stated: "I set the Lord ever before me, as though I could see him that is invisible. I often think of my obligations to the Redeemer, remembering what he did and suffered for me. The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for

²⁹ Ryland, "On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:369.

me.”³⁰ For Ryland, there is no salvation apart from belief in the deity of Christ, and therefore, because Christ, the Son of God, is divinity, Ryland understood his obligations to live a life “by the faith of the Son of God.”

State of Literature

John Ryland, Jr. was a prolific publisher of his own works. “Numerous sermons and charges were published by Ryland, and he drew up many recommendatory prefaces for religious works and for biographies of his friends.”³¹ His father published young Ryland’s first theological work *The Plagues of Egypt, by a School-boy Thirteen Years of Age*,³² and this led Ryland into a ministry of publishing his sermons and hymns. It is recorded that Ryland “preached 8,691 sermons in 286 places and all this before the days of railway.”³³ The former Senior Tutor and Librarian at Bristol Baptist College, Norman Moon, recorded that Ryland published thirty-four sermons and addresses through the College, the Baptist Missionary Society, and his churches. He exercised great influence within the Baptist denomination by publishing key association sermons, prefaces of other great works, and treatises on crucial theological issues, as well as authoring numerous hymns. Essentially a pastor and educator, Ryland was widely read, concerned about accuracy in detail, and interested in subjects outside his own field.³⁴ Given all this academic notoriety, and his tenure as President of Bristol Baptist College, one would think that Ryland’s Christology would have been studied and written about extensively, but it has only been recently that serious academic articles and dissertations

³⁰ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:28.

³¹ Stephen and Lee, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 17:545.

³² John Ryland, Jr., *The Plagues of Egypt: by a School-Boy Thirteen Years of Age* (London, 1766).

³³ Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 35.

³⁴ Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 48:472.

have been published concerning Ryland's life, ministry, and theology.

John Ryland died in May 1825, and soon after his death, several essays on his life were published. The first, published in June of 1825, came from Robert Hall, Jr. Hall, a long-standing friend of the family, published his funeral sermon of Ryland that he preached on June 2, 1825. Hall's main focus of his sermon was to describe the godly character and humility of Ryland as a pastor, and the spiritual transitions and influence of Ryland within the Particular Baptists. Hall said, "Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of time to a religious regulation, he [Ryland] 'worked out his salvation with fear and trembling.'"³⁵ Hall described Ryland's meticulous practices of "looking back on the turns and vicissitudes" of life as a way of acquiring "new lessons of prudence and piety."³⁶

In 1828, the sermons of Ryland, along with other theological papers and letters, poems and songs, were published in a two-volume set entitled *Pastoral Memorials*.³⁷ Jonathan Edwards Ryland, Ryland's son from his second wife, included a fifty-six-page biography of his father. Edwards Ryland included his father's own words from letters and sermons to recount the life of Ryland, his theological transitions, pastorates, and theological confrontations with the antinomian William Huntington. The nineteenth century would also see another short biography on Ryland, in Ryland's *Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects*, produced and edited by Daniel Sedgwick (1814–1879), with an additional note by John Foster (1770–1843) on John Ryland.³⁸

³⁵ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 34.

³⁶ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 34.

³⁷ John Ryland, in *Pastoral Memorials: Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Revd. John Ryland, D.D. of Bristol: With a Memoir of the Author*, vol. 1 (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1826); John Ryland, in *Pastoral Memorials: Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Revd. John Ryland, D.D. of Bristol: With a Memoir of the Author*, vol. 2 (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1828).

³⁸ John Ryland, *Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects, with a Biographical Sketch*, ed. Daniel Sedgwick (London: Sedgwick, 1862).

As the nineteenth century came to a close, James Culross published a book about John Collett Ryland, John Ryland, Jr. and his son, Jonathan Edwards Ryland. The book, entitled *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service*, described the life and ministry of all three of the Rylands. Culross described Ryland, Jr., per the opinions of Hall and Foster, as being “a front rank among the best men of his time in England.”³⁹

In the last decade, several books have been published concerning the history of English Baptists, yet they only briefly mention the work of Ryland among the Particular Baptists. In 1905, John C. Carlile published a historical account of the English Baptists, entitled, *The Story of the English Baptists*.⁴⁰ According to Carlile, Collett Ryland stated about the academic prowess of his son: “There were only two courses open to such a boy. He must become famous or die of an overloaded brain.”⁴¹ Two other historical accounts of English Baptists were written in the early part of the twentieth century. They were William Thomas Whitley’s, *A History of British Baptists* (1923),⁴² and A. C. Underwood’s, *A History of the English Baptists* (1956).⁴³ Both were very general about Ryland and mainly noted his work with the Missions Society and his leadership in the Northamptonshire Baptist Society. In 2017, Anthony Cross published a book concerning the reception of the Evangelical revivals among the English Baptists. Cross’ book, *Useful Learning: Neglected Means of Grace in the Reception of the Evangelical Revival among*

³⁹ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 90.

⁴⁰ Carlile, *The Story of English Baptists*.

⁴¹ Carlile, *The Story of English Baptists*, 163.

⁴² William Thomas Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: C. Griffin, 1923).

⁴³ A. C. Underwood, *A History of English Baptists* (London: Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, 1947).

English Particular Baptists,⁴⁴ devotes 26 pages to both Collett Ryland and John Ryland.

In recent years, Michael Haykin served as editor of several published works on English Baptists that have included entire chapters devoted to Ryland. The first, published in 2000, was *The British Particular Baptists 1638–1910*, vol. 2, which included a very helpful outline by Grant Gordon of Ryland’s ministry and involvement in the Particular Baptists. Gordon said that Ryland “had a very significant ministry as a faithful pastor, mission visionary and influential educator” which greatly influenced the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists and significantly contributed to the shaping of modern Baptist churches.⁴⁵ The second, entitled *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the 18th Century*,⁴⁶ also included a short sketch on Ryland. In 2013, Haykin also published “A Little Band of Brothers: Friendship and revival in the life of John Ryland, Jr.” This chapter appeared in *Ardent Love to Jesus: English Baptists and the Experience of Revival in the Long Eighteen Century*.⁴⁷

In this same time period, *The Baptist Quarterly* also published several articles about the spirituality of Ryland. In 1928, H. Wheeler Robison published an article entitled “The Experience of John Ryland.”⁴⁸ It’s purpose was to understand Ryland’s devotion to ministry and his difficult decision to transfer as pastor from Northampton to Bristol. In 1980, L. G. Champion published an article concerning letters from John Newton to Ryland, that led to a much larger publication of these letters divulging the

⁴⁴ Anthony R. Cross, *Useful Learning: Neglected Means of Grace in the Reception of the Evangelical Revival among English Particular Baptists* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017).

⁴⁵ Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr.,” 2:77.

⁴⁶ Michael A. G. Haykin, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the 18th Century* (Faverdale North, Darlington, England: Evangelical Times, 2006).

⁴⁷ Michael A. G. Haykin, *Ardent Love to Jesus: English Baptists and the Experience of Revival in the Long Eighteen Century* (Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ H. Wheeler Robinson, “A Baptist Student—John Collett Ryland,” *Baptist Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1926): 25–33.

forging friendship between Newton and the much younger Ryland.⁴⁹ Perhaps the most helpful article published in *the Baptist Quarterly* came from the pen of L. G. Champion in 1979–80. It was entitled “The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences.”⁵⁰ Champion’s work demonstrated the theological influence of John Gill, John Collett Ryland, John Newton, and Jonathan Edwards on the spiritual growth of John Ryland. Champion stated that Jonathan Edwards had the most influence on Ryland’s spirituality. He said, “In summary, it may be stated that Ryland, largely under the influence of the writings of Jonathan Edwards, provided an integrated reinterpretation of Calvinism which provided a strong foundation for a concept of the obligation of mission to all mankind.”⁵¹ In 1990, Geoffrey Nuttall published letters between Robert Hall, Jr. and Ryland describing the issues among the Baptists and the Baptist Missionary Society.⁵² The letters demonstrated Hall’s displeasure with Carey’s lack of reporting and actions while serving in India as missionaries. Timothy Whelan, in 2003, published “John Ryland at School: Two Societies in Northampton Boarding School.”⁵³ Whelan examined the salvation experience of Ryland through Rylands article “Account of the Rise and Progress of the Two Society’s at Mr Rylands and at Mrs Trinders Boarding School in Northampton . . .

”⁵⁴

Several other works on Ryland’s theology and spirituality are worth

⁴⁹ L. G. Champion, “The Letters of John Newton to John Ryland,” *Baptist Quarterly* 27 (1977–78): 157–63.

⁵⁰ L. G. Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences,” *Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1979): 17–29.

⁵¹ Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland,” 4.

⁵² Geoffrey W. Nuttall, “Letters from Robert Hall to John Ryland 1791–1824,” *Baptist Quarterly* 34, no. 73 (July 1991): 127–31.

⁵³ Timothy Whelan, “John Ryland at School: Two Societies in Northampton Boarding School,” *Baptist Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (April 2003): 90–116.

⁵⁴ Cited in Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 50.

mentioning here. Michael Haykin’s article in *Churchman*, entitled “‘The Sum of All Good’: John Ryland, Jr. and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,”⁵⁵ demonstrated Ryland’s teaching on the involvement of the Holy Spirit in salvation as opposed to, as Ryland called it, “the leaven of Arminianism,”⁵⁶ and “the baneful and pernicious poison of Antinomianism.”⁵⁷ Haykin also published “John Ryland Jr. and Theological Education”.⁵⁸ In this article, Haykin briefly examined the influence of Jonathan Edwards and John Newton on the scholarly life of Ryland. Most of this article is taken from a charge given by Ryland to young ministers in the importance of their “preparatory studies.” Another helpful article, that delves into the personal piety of Ryland, was published by the *American Baptist Magazine* in 1832. The title of the article was, “Extracts from the Diary of the Late Rev. Dr. Ryland.”⁵⁹ An example of Ryland’s spirituality is found in an entry on June 12, 1781, on the occasion of Robert Hall, Jr. visiting at Ryland’s home. Ryland wrote, “Robert Hall, Jun. came here last Tuesday, and stays with us till to-morrow. I spent most of my time with him, reading or conversing on divine subjects . . . I could not but admire the savoury, solemn, and devout manner of his praying, having got him to engage in family prayer several times.”⁶⁰

In the past few years, several dissertations on Ryland have made their way into the academic world. In 2014, for my Master of Theology, I completed a work on Ryland dealing with his spirituality as a pastor and defender of the faith as he dealt with the

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ Haykin, “The Sum of All Good,” 337.

⁵⁷ Haykin, “The Sum of All Good,” 337.

⁵⁸ Michael A. G. Haykin, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) and Theological Education,” *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 70, no. 2 (1990): 173–91.

⁵⁹ D. Katterns, W. G. Lewis, Jr., and C. H. Spurgeon, eds., “Extracts from the Diary of the Late Rev. Dr. Ryland,” *American Baptist Magazine for 1861*, vol. 53 (London: Pewtress, 1861): 279–88.

⁶⁰ Katterns, “Extracts from the Diary,” 279.

antinomian conflicts, including his feud with William Huntington. The dissertation was entitled: “*He Worked Out His Salvation with Fear and Trembling: The Spirituality of John Ryland, Jr.*”⁶¹ My thesis explored the spirituality in Ryland's life, ministry, and writings. It sought to answer the questions of what influence Ryland had on the antinomianism controversy and how his theology of the law and the gospel affected his own piety. Christopher Ryan Griffith, in December 2017, published his dissertation on Ryland entitled, “Promoting Pure and undefiled Religion:” John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) and Edwardsean Evangelical Biography.”⁶² The primary purpose of this dissertation was to examine Jonathan Edwards’ writings on David Brainard and their impact on Ryland’s work, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of Andrew Fuller (1816/1818)*. Griffith stated, “This examination . . . has verified the direct and substantive influence of Jonathan Edwards on the purpose, form, and content of Ryland’s memoir of Andrew Fuller.”⁶³ He set about to prove the substantial influence of Edward’s work on David Brainard on Ryland’s life. Griffith said, “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’ example.”⁶⁴ Griffith’s work is extremely informative, original, and helpful in understanding the theology and transitions of spirituality in the life of John Ryland, Jr. In 2018, Christopher Crocker, of the University of Bristol, published a massive dissertation

⁶¹ Tillman, “He Worked Out His Salvation.”

⁶² Christopher Ryan Griffith, “‘Promoting Pure and Undefiled Religion:’ John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) and Edwardsean Evangelical Biography” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).

⁶³ Griffith, “Promoting Pure and Undefiled Religion,” 249.

⁶⁴ Griffith, “Promoting Pure and Undefiled Religion,” 250.

focused on the life of Ryland, entitled “The Life and Legacy of John Ryland Jr. (1753–1825): A Man of Considerable Usefulness—An Historical Biography.”⁶⁵ According to Crocker, “This thesis is an historical biography of Rev. Dr. John Ryland Jr. and seeks to lift the subject from evident historical neglect.”⁶⁶ Crocker explored the “considerable usefulness” of Ryland and his impact on Baptist history. The most recent dissertation on Ryland was by L. A. Graham. His title was “‘All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer:’ The Catholicity of John Ryland Jr.” Graham’s thesis examined the “context, theology, and sources of Ryland’s catholicity,” as it related to his friendships and ministry partners.⁶⁷ Graham also studied the theology behind Ryland’s catholicity and declared it to be “christocentric, pneumatological, and experiential.”⁶⁸

As this State of Literature reveals, considering the vast amount of published works by John Ryland, Jr., and his deep involvement and leadership among Particular Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, very little academic work has been completed on him. While most of the work has focused on biographies or even his mission involvement in the Baptist Missionary Society, little has been done on his spirituality, including how his orthodox Trinitarian and incarnational theology affected his life as a pastor, writer, and teacher. This lack of study on the spirituality of Ryland gives reason for deeper examination and explication of the Christological theology of Ryland and the effects of this theology on his ministry.

Methodology

This dissertation will primarily examine the writings of Ryland in order to develop a better understanding of his spirituality; specifically, his Christological thoughts

⁶⁵ Crocker, “The Life and Legacy.”

⁶⁶ Crocker, “The Life and Legacy,” iii.

⁶⁷ Graham, “All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer,” i.

⁶⁸ Graham, “All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer,” i.

concerning the deity of Christ found in the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation, and how these thoughts were lived out by faith in the life of Ryland, personally and as a pastor. The dissertation will also examine the state of Christological theology concerning the Trinity and incarnation in the seventeenth and early- to mid-eighteenth century, in order to better understand the theological culture in which Ryland was trained. This will be accomplished through the study of primary and secondary sources that outline the Trinitarian debates, as well as the issues concerning the deity of Christ. Primary sources will be mostly used in researching Gill, the elder Ryland, and Ryland, Jr.'s Christological theology.

Ryland's sermons, theological treatises, and association articles will be examined to discover his Evangelical beliefs and how these doctrines had a direct bearing on his spiritual formation. These primary resources will be supplemented by secondary sources concerning Ryland's practice of spiritual disciplines. These various sources will be studied, analyzed, and compared to the writings of Ryland to develop Ryland's orthodox interpretation of the Trinity and the incarnation, and how these doctrines affected Ryland as a follower of Christ and a pastor.

John Ryland, Jr.: A Brief Biography

In his early biography of the Rylands, entitled *The Three Rylands*, James Culross described John Ryland as an "ordinary type."⁶⁹ The person Culross described as ordinary, Robert Hall, Jr. described as a man of deep piety. Hall said, "Piety, indeed was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably above the level of ordinary Christians."⁷⁰ In his funeral sermon for Ryland, Hall asked Ryland's church at Bristol, "Where will you look for another whose whole life

⁶⁹ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 69. Culross described Collett Ryland as a "man of original talent and temperament."

⁷⁰ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 25.

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?”⁷¹ Ryland was a man of great influence within religious circles and, as Grant Gordon claimed, he “had a very significant ministry as faithful pastor, mission visionary and influential educator.”⁷²

Ryland’s Early Childhood and Salvation

John Ryland was born in 1753 at Warwick, a small town of Warwickshire, England, located about thirty miles Southeast of Birmingham, to the Reverend John Collett Ryland and Elizabeth Frith (d. 1779). This placed Ryland into a family with a long history of religious reformation and dissent from the Church of England.⁷³ Although there are few biographies of John Ryland, all of them describe him as being a precocious child, who had a propensity for learning that would become a driving force of his character throughout his life.⁷⁴ This was recognized by his father in his diary entry on August 28, 1764:

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 through Pope’s *Homer*, in eleven volumes; read Dryden’s *Virgil*, in three volumes.

⁷¹ Robert Hall and Olinthus Gregory, *The works of Robert Hall, A.M.: with a Brief Memoir of his Life, and a Critical Estimate of his Character and Writings* (London: Samuel Holdsworth, 1839), 5:73.

⁷² Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” 2:77.

⁷³ Ryland’s great-grandfather, John Ryland, of Hinton-on-the-Green, Warwickshire, a member of a nonconforming Baptist church in Alcester, lived in a time of persecution of Baptists. James Culross described him as a member of a yeoman family with strong convictions concerning religious nonconformity. He incurred fines totaling 1,200 pounds “for not attending his parish church” as was required by the law (Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 11). See Chap. 2 (pp. 21–28) of this Dissertation for a detailed description of the Clarendon Code of 1661 to 1665 during the reign of Charles II. The Clarendon Code forced Ryland’s great-grandfather into hiding on several occasions.

⁷⁴ Ryland was influenced greatly by his mother, but it was his father who was the catalyst for his son’s academic prowess. At the age of five, young Ryland could read Psalm 23 in Hebrew, and it is reported that he recited this Psalm before James Hervey (1714–1758), the noted clergyman and writer, as well as a member of the Holy Club, which included such notable Christians as John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield (Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 69–70).

He has read Rollin's ancient history, ten volumes 8vo. And he knows the Pagan mythology surprisingly.⁷⁵

Collett Ryland was extremely proud of his son's inclination towards knowledge.

According to H. Wheeler Robinson, "There is more than paternal pride in those words; there is the sense that he is giving to his boy that which he was once so eager to win for himself."⁷⁶ This hunger and inclination for knowledge led Ryland to become a teacher at his father's college at the age of fifteen and would fuel his passion for writing and publishing throughout his ministry, including becoming the Principal of Bristol Baptist College.

In Ryland's thirteenth year, he confessed that because of his father, he had head knowledge of the things of Christ, but had yet to obtain true conversion.⁷⁷ Grant Gordon records that Ryland read through Joseph Allien's *Alarm to the Unconverted*, Richard Baxter's *A Call to the Unconverted* and John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*,⁷⁸ and with much self-examination and prayer, Ryland cried out to the Lord for salvation. Over the next year, like his father, Ryland experienced much doubt in his faith, which brought him great despair, wanting to be "like the pigeon" or a "stone" in the garden with no worries of hell.⁷⁹ Yet it was through these times of doubt that God grew Ryland's faith and developed in him a hunger for God's Word. In Ryland's description of his salvation experience, he revealed that it was the reading and the preaching of the Word of God that helped his doubts subside. He wrote, "I have not been

⁷⁵ Cited in H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Life and Faith of the Baptists*, 2nd ed. (London: Kingsgate Press, 1946), 64.

⁷⁶ Cited in Haykin, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, 46.

⁷⁷ H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Experience of John Ryland," *Baptist Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (January 1928): 18.

⁷⁸ Gordon, *The Particular Baptists*, 2:79.

⁷⁹ Robinson, "The Experience of John Ryland," 22.

fed with Spoon Meat nor did the Lord give me a promised home but sent me to hunt my Venison where I could.”⁸⁰

The Call to Ryland into the Ministry and the Baptist Missionary Society

From an early age, Ryland, like his father, showed much promise for ministry. Culross argued that Ryland’s “activity in religious matters was very great.”⁸¹ This was apparent in Ryland when soon after he received assurance of salvation, he joined a group of young boys at the academy, often being asked to address his fellow school mates.⁸² John Collett recognized his son’s abilities, and on May 3, 1770, when Ryland was seventeen years of age, he preached his first sermon where his father pastored at College Lane Baptist Church in Northampton. Soon after this first preaching opportunity, Ryland “began preaching in area churches and homes and in mid-week meetings at College Lane.”⁸³ Culross described Ryland’s preaching as “a work which he did so affectionately and modestly that he won the hearts of all who knew him.”⁸⁴ In August 1771, the congregation at College Lane formally “recognized his pastoral giftedness by officially signing a written statement of his call to ministry”⁸⁵ and in 1781, when Ryland was

⁸⁰ Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 25. On September 8, 1767, Ryland heard the great Anglican preacher, George Whitefield (1714–1770), preach at Castle Hill Church in Northampton from Isaiah 61:10. Whitefield reminded Ryland of Isaiah’s words: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10 (KJV)). This encouraged Ryland in his quest for assurance, and three days later he was baptized by his father in the River Nene near Northampton (Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., “John Ryland,” in *The Dictionary of National Biography* [1885; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1921–22], 17:544).

⁸¹ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 72.

⁸² Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 72.

⁸³ Gordon, *The Particular Baptists*, 2:80.

⁸⁴ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 73.

⁸⁵ Grant Gordon, *Wise Counsel: John Newton’s Letters to John Ryland, Jr.* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 9. In 1771, the same year that College Lane officially called Ryland into the ministry, Ryland published his first full-length book entitled *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious*

twenty-eight years old, College Lane Baptist Church of Northampton called young Ryland to serve alongside his father as co-pastor. Ryland would eventually succeed his father as sole Pastor of College Lane in 1786 and would serve College Lane until he moved to Bristol in 1794.

Perhaps Ryland's greatest contribution as pastor at College Lane was his role in the creation and involvement of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS).⁸⁶ John Webster Morris (1763–1836), a Baptist minister and author, reports that William Carey posed a question in a meeting of the Northamptonshire Association in 1785.⁸⁷ Carey reportedly asked, “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.”⁸⁸ In 1791, at the Easter meeting of the Northamptonshire Baptist ministers, John Sutcliff (1752–1814) and Andrew Fuller preached messages that once again stirred the heart of William Carey. That night Carey, in discussions with Ryland, Fuller, and others, proposed the formation of a society focused on foreign missions. In May 1792, Carey seized his opportunity to again bring up the idea of a mission society before the association in a sermon he preached from Isaiah 54. His point was that God was expanding his kingdom and that it was every Christian's

Gospel, and the Various Branches of Vital Experience. For the Use of True Christians. Ryland described *Serious Essays* as “one-hundred and twenty-one Pieces in various measures; the result of four years labor and pleasure” (John Ryland, *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel and the Various Branches of the Vital Experience* [London: J. W. Pasham, 1821], A2). It was 268 pages of poetry, with many of the poems focused on controversial theological doctrines, including the soteriological debates between Calvinists and Arminians. Grant Gordon drew the following conclusions from *Serious Essays*: “The publication no doubt appeared with the support, and probably the strong encouragement, of his father, as most of the pre-publication subscribers were friends of the older Ryland (a staunch Calvinist), his church, and his school” (Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 9). Ryland garnered much praise for his work, even receiving positive reviews from the April 1771 issue of *Gospel Magazine*. They wished him great success and “that his heart may be kept humble at our dear Lord's feet” (Cited in Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 10).

⁸⁶ For an in-depth history of the Baptist Missionary Society, see Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*.

⁸⁷ J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev Andrew Fuller* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1830), 96–7.

⁸⁸ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 60.

duty to attempt to spread the gospel around the world. Carey exclaimed, “Express great things. Attempt great things.”⁸⁹ That night a resolution was made to form a Baptist society for taking the gospel to the “heathen,”⁹⁰ and on October 2, 1792, the Particular Baptist Missionary Society of the Northamptonshire Association of Ministers was formed for the express purpose of propagating the Gospel among the heathen. Ryland would be a part of the BMS for the rest of his life, and “he did not cease to his last hour to watch over its progress with parental solicitude.”⁹¹ Hall expressed that Ryland was “resolved to send the gospel to the remotest quarter of the globe.”⁹² This society would see the gospel preached throughout the world and even would have a hand in the British abolition movement.⁹³

Ryland’s Ministry at Bristol

At the same time that Ryland was helping to start the BMS, he was asked to preach a series of sermons at Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol. Broadmead’s pastor, Caleb Evans⁹⁴ (1737–1791), who was also the third principal of Bristol Baptist Academy, had died, leaving an opening for both pastor of the church and principal of the Academy.

⁸⁹ John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859), 15.

⁹⁰ John Rippon, *The Baptist annual register: for 1794, 1795, 1796–1797, including sketches of the state of religion among different denominations of good men at home and abroad* (London, 1797), 375, 419.

⁹¹ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 46.

⁹² Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 46.

⁹³ Stanley, *History of Baptist Missionary Society*, 68–105.

⁹⁴ For a comprehensive study of the life and ministry of Caleb Evans, see Norman S. Moon, “Caleb Evans, Founder of The Bristol Education Society,” *Baptist Quarterly* 24 (1971–1972): 175–190; Roger Hayden, “Evangelical Calvinism among Eighteenth-Century British Baptists with Particular Reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the Bristol Baptist Academy, 1690–1791” (PhD diss., University of Keele, 1991), 209–240; and Kirk Wellum and J. P. Salley, “Caleb Evans (1737–1791),” in *The British Particular Baptists*, 5:115–151.

Ryland found himself in a unique situation.⁹⁵ The church at Bristol recognized that Ryland was uniquely qualified to be both the pastor at Broadmead and the principal at the seminary, yet College Lane was unwilling to release Ryland to Bristol. With both churches adamant in their positions, Ryland said, “I am justly ashamed to find myself made of so much consequence and wish I may prove worth half this struggling for.”⁹⁶ With the third request from Bristol to Northampton, the church of College Lane reluctantly agreed and sent a letter to Broadmead Baptist Church with a release and a commendation for Ryland. He officially accepted the post at Broadmead as pastor of the church and principal of the seminary on January 25, 1794; within two weeks, Ryland would be in Bristol where he would remain at these posts until his death in 1825.⁹⁷

In 1792, a Doctorate of Divinity degree was conferred upon Ryland by Brown University of Rhode Island, U.S.A., and from this point on in his life, he was known simply as Dr. Ryland.⁹⁸ Culross described Ryland’s position as principal of the seminary as the “main work of his life.”⁹⁹ Like his father, Ryland was committed to the “importance of academic preparation for those entering pastoral ministry.”¹⁰⁰ He was convinced that a formal theological education was extremely important and absolutely necessary for all men seeking to become pastors. Michael Haykin noted, “Ryland could describe the academic setting as a place where the theological student could enter ‘deeply

⁹⁵ Broadmead Baptist Church of Bristol has an unusual entry on a large plaque listing their former pastors. It reads: “The Rev. John Ryland, D. D.: first invited by the Church in Broadmead, 1792; accepted the call of the Church, 1794,” cited in Grant Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.” *Baptist Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (January 1992): 214. Grant Gordon said, “These simple lines mark an eventful period in the life of John Ryland, Jr. when he was caught between the appeals of two Baptist churches” (Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.,” 214).

⁹⁶ Cited in Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.,” 221.

⁹⁷ Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.,” 223.

⁹⁸ John T. Godfrey and James Ward, *The History of Friar Lane Baptist Church, Nottingham* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1903), 83.

⁹⁹ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Haykin, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) and Theological Education,” 176.

into those treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are hid in Christ Jesus' (cf. Col. 2:3).¹⁰¹ One such student, William Rhodes of Damerham, claimed that "no tutor could be more loved or revered" than Ryland.¹⁰² Rhodes was delighted to "express the deep and tender veneration" for Ryland and his "recollections of the wisdom and excellence he manifested towards me and many others while under his care."¹⁰³ Ryland stated in *Advice to Young Ministers, respecting their preparatory Studies*,¹⁰⁴ it is "highly expedient that every large body of Christians should possess some learned ministers; and the greater their numbers and attainments the better."¹⁰⁵

Ryland's Theological Shift

Ryland was raised and theologically trained by the strong high-Calvinist convictions of his father, who was heavily influenced by John Brine (1703–1765) and John Gill.¹⁰⁶ However, it was through his father, that Ryland would be exposed to differing forms of Calvinism, especially through men like John Newton and Robert Hall,

¹⁰¹ Haykin, "John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) and Theological Education," 191.

¹⁰² Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 39.

¹⁰³ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ 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, UK: E. Bryan, 1812).

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Gordon, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:91. At the seminary, Ryland had the opportunity to teach "Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, he taught his students theology, church history, sacred antiquity, rhetoric, and logic" (Matthew and Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 48:472). In all, Ryland had the opportunity to influence and teach about 200 students during his time as president of the College. Fuller said of Ryland becoming principal of the seminary, "Your views of divine truth, I consider as of great importance in the Christian ministry. Go then, my Brother, pour them into the minds of the rising generation of ministers" (Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love*, 226). Ryland's ministry at Bristol, rooted in his evangelical Calvinism, helped fuel a revival among the Particular Baptists. Michael Haykin has said, "Ryland was thus instrumental in paving the way for the tremendous growth the Baptists were to experience in the nineteenth century" (Haykin, "The Sum of All Good, 336–7). For example, in 1816, there were twenty-two students studying at the school, and the vast majority of them became Baptist pastors or missionaries, "imbued with Ryland's evangelical Calvinism and commitment to revival." (Haykin, "John Ryland, Jr.—'O Lord, I would delight in Thee,' 13–20).

¹⁰⁶ Champion, "The Theology of John Ryland," 17.

Sr.¹⁰⁷ It was Newton, in a letter to Ryland in 1771, who questioned Ryland’s high-Calvinist preaching and thus led young Ryland to begin questioning the high-Calvinist soteriology of his father. Newton instructed Ryland “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.”¹⁰⁸ As for Hall, he would be instrumental in Ryland’s understanding of whether gospel preachers should call on sinners in general to repent of sin and come to Christ. Ryland’s conflict concerning this “open call” for sinners to repent was evident in the early part of his ministry. Ryland stated, “When I first entered on the work of the ministry, though I endeavored to say as much to sinners as my views on this subject would allow, yet was shackled by adherence to a supposed systematic consistency, and carefully avoided exhorting sinners to come to Christ for salvation.”¹⁰⁹ Ryland would find common ground in Hall’s sermon preached at the Northamptonshire Baptist Association in 1779, where Hall proclaimed:

If any one should ask, Have I a right to apply to Jesus the Saviour, simply as a poor, undone, perishing sinner, in whom there appears no good thing? I answer, Yes; the gospel proclamation is, “Whosoever will, let him come.” “To you O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.” Prov. 8:4. The way to Jesus is graciously laid open for every one who chooses to come to him.¹¹⁰

Hall, Sr. taught that the gospel presentation was to be delivered to everyone, yet Ryland was clear on Hall, Sr.’s Calvinism when he said that Hall, Sr. was “deeply convinced of human guilt and depravity, and very zealous for the honor of sovereign grace.”¹¹¹ Hall, Sr. also believed that Gospel “invitations” should be “addressed to sinners” to allow the

¹⁰⁷ John Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ No Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life: A Sermon Preached at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, at the Funeral of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, May 15, 1815* (London: Printed for W. Button, 1815), 37.

¹⁰⁸ Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 78.

¹¹⁰ Cited in Haykin, *The British Particular Baptists*, 1:207.

¹¹¹ Ryland, preface to *Help to Zion's Travellers*, viii.

sinner to “know his election, or prove his regeneration.”¹¹² Ryland agreed with Hall, Sr.’s assessment that “a change of heart must precede faith, but unknown renovation cannot be the ground of the sinner’s first encouragement to apply to the Saviour, or that on which his right to confide in him is founded, because it is unknown.”¹¹³ His point was that sinners need to know that they are sinners in order to believe they need a Savior. Ryland noted that “Mr. Hall remained as strenuous an advocate as ever for the necessity and efficacy of divine influence, to induce sinners or saints to comply cordially with their indispensable duty.”¹¹⁴

The most influential non-Baptist theology in Ryland’s life came through the writings of Jonathan Edwards.¹¹⁵ By 1776, “Ryland was all but convinced that High-

¹¹² Ryland, *Help to Zion’s Travellers*, ix.

¹¹³ Ryland, *Help to Zion’s Travellers*, ix.

¹¹⁴ Ryland, *Help to Zion’s Travellers*, viii. In addition to Newton and Hall, Sr., Ryland was influenced by several other men outside of the Baptist faith. In 1772, at his father’s request, Ryland invited Rowland Hill (1744–1833), at this point a deacon in the Church of England, to preach at College Lane. In Hill, who was described as a second George Whitefield (1714–1770), Ryland would be exposed to a Calvinist who openly urged the sinner to respond to the preached gospel. In the three visits by Hill to Northamptonshire, thousands heard Hill preach and many were converted. Ryland was greatly influenced by the evangelical spirit of Hill, and this evangelical spirit “would certainly have shown Ryland that Calvinism and fervent evangelism are not mutually exclusive” (Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 82).

¹¹⁵ Ryland wrote and published two circular letters for the Northamptonshire Association. His first letter, *The Nature, Evidences and Advantages of Humility*, was sent in 1784; and his second letter, *Godly Zeal*, was sent in 1792 (T. S. H. Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association* [London: The Carey Kinggate Press, 1964], 100). This second letter, *Godly Zeal*, addressed the possession of a “fervent disinterested affection” or “holy zeal” (John Ryland, *The Northampton Letter on Godly Zeal* [London: S.I.: s.n., 1793], 421). This theme of holy affection was of paramount importance to Ryland, and it revealed a clear indication of Jonathan Edward’s deep influence on the piety of Ryland concerning religious affections or holiness. In a diary entry dated May 12, 1786, Ryland commented on Edwards’ influence on him through *Religious Affections*: “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” (Cited in Haykin, “The Sum of All Good,” 332–53). Samuel Hopkins, the first biographer of Jonathan Edwards, said that “testing the spirits and determining the marks of genuine piety were life-long concerns of Edwards” (John E. Smith, “Testing the Spirits: Jonathan Edwards and the Religious Affections,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 27, nos. 1 & 2 [Fall/Winter 1981–1982]: 27). Likewise, Ryland said that “zeal is fervent, active benevolence” derived from the whole law of God and lived out in the believer’s life (Ryland, “Godly Zeal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:392). Ryland believed that the practice of holiness has a deep connection with the propagation of the truth of God’s Word, and that the best example of this is the demonstration or “visible influence” that the gospel has on the believer’s life. Ryland called this the “holy tendency. (Ryland, “Godly Zeal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:392). Within this holy tendency, Ryland “held in abhorrence those pretended religious affections which have their origin and termination in self” (Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 41).

Calvinism was unbiblical in its view of preaching the gospel.”¹¹⁶ A major contributor to Ryland’s change in theology came from Ryland’s in-depth study of Edwards’ *Freedom of the Will*.¹¹⁷ Edwards argued that “a person’s possession of natural faculties such as reason and will renders him or her accountable to God for the proper use of them.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, mankind, according to Edwards, has a responsibility to God for remaining in their sin even if they are unable, in their own strength, to turn from their sin and turn towards God.¹¹⁹ This was a major theological shift for Ryland, and it also demonstrated Ryland’s openness to others outside of the Particular Baptists. Ryland, like Edwards, would hold to the view that if only one soul was on the “way to destruction,” “there would still be a necessity for those who know the terrors of the Lord, and the worth of souls, to persuade men to flee for refuge.”¹²⁰

At about the same time that Andrew Fuller published his *The gospel worthy of all acceptance*, in which he “argued cogently for the congruity between divine sovereignty and human responsibility,”¹²¹ Ryland announced that he “now considered the call of the Gospel as addressed to sinners indefinitely as the elect come under that character, and no man can know them by any other, till Grace distinguishes them.”¹²² Ryland’s brother-in-law, commenting on Ryland’s theological shift, stated, “In this respect he [Ryland] now agrees with Calvin himself & all the principal Calvinistic

¹¹⁶ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 139–40.

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1754).

¹¹⁸ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 140.

¹¹⁹ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 140.

¹²⁰ Ryland, *Salvation Finished*, 11.

¹²¹ Nettles, “Andrew Fuller,” 2:102.

¹²² Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “Northamptonshire and the Modern Question: A Turning Point in Eighteenth Century Dissent,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 1965): 121–22.

Divines, as Dr. Owen, Mr. Hallyburton, Mr. Flavel, Dr. Witsius, Mr. Bunyan, Mr R. & E. Erskine, Mr. Whitefield; and those worth men once so useful in this neighbourhood Mr. Davis and Maurice of Rowel”¹²³ This would prove to be the most productive theological change in the life and ministry of John Ryland, Jr., and it would have a significant effect throughout the kingdom of God and throughout mission fields of the world.

The Death of Ryland and His Immediate Legacy

For thirty-one years, Ryland served Broadmead Baptist Church and Bristol Baptist Academy, becoming a key leader among the Calvinistic Baptist community. His influence reached from the settlements of Bristol to the entire world. Ryland traveled about 39,000 miles¹²⁴ and “preached 8,691 sermons in 286 places and all this before the days of railways!”¹²⁵ In November 1823, Ryland submitted a letter to Bristol Academy with news of his departure as resident tutor due to his “his advanced years and other circumstances related to his family.”¹²⁶ Ryland’s health took a turn for the worse in December 1824, and in in January 1825, Ryland preached his final sermon from the Broadmead pulpit on the first Sunday of January 1825. Culross described Ryland’s last days this way:

Through the month he continued to decline, and on the 30th, the day after he had entered on his seventy-third year, he completed a ministry that had extended over fifty-five years. He lingered on painlessly till May 30, when he fell asleep. The bystanders observed that he passed away with a serenity which no language could adequately describe.¹²⁷

¹²³ Nuttall, “Northamptonshire and the Modern Question,” 122.

¹²⁴ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 83.

¹²⁵ Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 35.

¹²⁶ This included the declining health of Mrs. Ryland along with his two eldest daughters (“Letter November 4, 1823,” Swaine, 295).

¹²⁷ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 89.

On June 5, 1825, Hall preached Ryland's funeral at Broadmead by focusing on Ryland's piety. Hall said of Ryland's life, "Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of time to a religious regulation, he [Ryland] 'worked out his salvation with fear and trembling.'"¹²⁸ Ryland lived his life with an Edwardsean "holy zeal," thereby encouraging his students to "study Divinity practically and devotionally."¹²⁹ Hall concluded Ryland's funeral sermon with the reading of 2 Peter 3:11–13:

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (KJV).

Hall's purpose for concluding the sermon with this scripture, was to encourage his hearers to reflect on the "holy conversation and godliness" of Ryland and be encouraged to live their life per Ryland's example.

¹²⁸ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 34.

¹²⁹ Cited in Gordon, "John Ryland, Jr.," 92.

CHAPTER 2
THE TRINITARIAN CULTURE OF THE
SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

At the completion of the Salters' Hall trinitarian debates in February of 1719 a letter was dispatched to Hubert Stogdon (1692–1728), a young antitrinitarian minister, who had sought asylum in Somerset for his theological deviations from the “received Calvinism of his day.”¹ The dispatch arrived soon after two clergymen in Exeter, James Peirce (1674–1726) and Joseph Hallet (1656–1722), had been removed from their congregations for supporting the ordination of Stogdon, a student at Hallet's Academy who had recently rejected the orthodox views on the Trinity. The letter stated:

Blessed be God, that he has stirred up such a noble spirit of Christian liberty in London: where it was carried in a meeting of above an hundred ministers, at Salters-Hall, that no human tests, articles, or interpretations should be urged as the trial of a man's orthodoxy; and that no minister should be condemned as heterodox, or an heretick, unless he taught, &c. contrary to express scripture.²

This conference at Salters' Hall proved to be the watershed moment among the eighteenth century dissent, for it demonstrated the influence of John Locke's (1632–1704) legacy of irenic Trinitarian philosophy and greater religious latitude concerning disagreements within religion, especially within the Trinitarian debates of the era.³ In

¹ Roger Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy amongst Dissenters in 1719: The Salters' Hall Debate,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 17, no. 4 (July 2–October 1953): 162.

² Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy,” 162.

³ Thomas Pfizenmaier argued that John Locke's epistemology found in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* altered the academic philosophy of seventeenth century England by arguing against humans possessing “innate ideas” in favor of empirical reasoning, thus displacing biblical orthodox theology (Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675–1729): Context, Sources, and Controversy* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997], 22). Locke's dismissal of innate ideas, as it related to the knowledge of God, and his rejection of historical definitions of words, led him to conclude that the true

Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, he stated that toleration should be "the chief characteristic mark of the true Church."⁴ Yet, Salters' Hall also revealed the unwavering dedication that Particular Baptists had for orthodox creedal Trinitarianism and would set the stage for the foundational teaching of John Gill concerning the deity of Christ in the Trinity, as well as Christ's eternal Sonship.

The doctrine of God as a Trinity, and that of Christ as deity, has ever been a source of controversy, and it has perhaps seen more disputes than any other Christian doctrine throughout church history. Alan Sell, in his *Christ and Controversy*, said, "It is not an exaggeration to say that more secessions within Nonconformity have been prompted by, or at least justified by reference to, divergent views of the person of Christ than by any other aspect of Christian doctrine."⁵ In the fourth century, the early church Fathers sought to engage heretical attacks of the deity of Christ like those of Modalism⁶

knowledge of God in men was "acquired by thought and meditation, and a right use of their faculties" (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding: In Four Books* [London: Beecroft, 1775], 1:3). Locke understood that "reason must be our last judge and guide in everything" thus toleration of differing views is right and necessary" (See quoted in Alan P. F. Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997], 154).

⁴ John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Huddersfield, UK: printed for J. Brook, 1796), 5.

⁵ Alan Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600–2000* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 1. Sell described his use of the term "Nonconformist" as "not the Roman Catholics, but the most long-standing traditions of English and Welsh historical Dissent: the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians (some of whom segue into Unitarianism); together with those later arrivals on the Nonconformist scene, the Methodists, both Calvinistic and Arminian, and the orthodox Presbyterians of varying stripes who came together in the Presbyterian Church of England (1876)."

⁶ Modalism, also called "Sabellianism," is the belief that "God is not really three distinct persons, but only one person who appears to people in different 'modes' at different times. For example, in the Old Testament God appeared as 'Father.' Throughout the Gospels, this same divine person appeared as 'the Son' as seen in the human life and ministry of Jesus. After Pentecost, this same person then revealed himself as the 'Spirit' active in the church" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 242). For more information on Modalism, see Tertullian, and Alexander Souter, *Tertullian against Praxeas*, Translations of Christian Literature, Series ii, Latin Texts (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920); Ian A. McFarland, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 316; Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984); David E. Wilhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics: Discovering Orthodoxy through Early Christological Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

and Arianism,⁷ with the development of doctrinal creeds describing God as Triune and championing belief in the deity of Christ. Robert Bowman, an Evangelical Christian theologian, has noted: “Antitrinitarians generally devote most of their efforts to debunking the belief that Jesus Christ is God, and likewise Trinitarians generally devote most of their efforts in responding to antitrinitarians defending the deity of Christ.”⁸ Yet, as time reveals, these conciliar declarations about the Trinity did not pre-empt future controversies, such as those birthed through the Age of Reason.⁹ After centuries of general subscription to the doctrine of the Trinity, the sixteenth century ushered in a theological upheaval in the “growing separation of spirituality and theology” from that of “neo-scholastic” contemplation of God as being Triune.¹⁰ This Trinitarian upheaval would also raise up various Trinitarian voices that would develop and shape Particular Baptist pastors throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including John Ryland, Jr.

Robert Hall, Jr., in his rough notes of the funeral sermon of Ryland, spoke about the influence on Ryland’s orthodox understanding of God by “firm champions” within the Dissenters of the eighteenth century. Hall said, “Early in life he formed an intimacy with a set of writers who, however they may push some theoretical views to excess, are eminent for their elevated ideas of the moral character of the Deity, and for

⁷ Arianism, also called “Docetism,” is the “heresy of denial of Christ’s divinity . . . that the Son of God and the Holy Spirit were beings willed into existence by God for the purposes of redemption. They were not eternal as God is. There was a time ‘before which they were not’” (James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive and Readable Theology*, rev. ed., Master Reference Collection (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 279. For more information on Arianism, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*; Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993); Nicholas Thompson, “Mighty in the Word: Athanasius’s Doctrine of Scripture in His War on Arianism,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 10, no. 1 (January 2018): 91–105.

⁸ Robert M. Bowman, Jr., “Cross Examination: Socinus and the Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics* 1, no. 1 (2008): 64–65.

⁹ Brian Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality: John Owen and the Doctrine of God in Western Devotion* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007), 14.

¹⁰ Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality*, 14.

the zeal with which they contend for its influence on doctrinal and practical religion.”¹¹

As to those who influenced the piety of Ryland, Hall only spoke of “the celebrated Jonathan Edwards” who instilled in Ryland a “moderate Calvinism” and “religious affections” that have their “origin and termination,” not in self, but in the “duty of loving God.”¹²

In order to understand the Trinitarian spirituality of John Ryland, Jr. and how the doctrine of the deity of Christ had a direct bearing on Ryland, it is important to understand the formulation of his Trinitarian beliefs and the polemical writings that would have shaped his theological understanding of the Trinity, as well as to examine the theological Trinitarian conflicts leading up to the Salters’ Hall conference of 1719. This chapter will analyze the deviations of the English Dissenters or Nonconformists from orthodox Trinitarianism and the toleration that was in these Trinitarian conflicts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Second, this chapter will examine the debates concerning the Trinitarian doctrinal divisions that took place at Salters’ Hall. As will be discovered, the debates will evolve into the controversy over orthodoxy and the question of subscription to the orthodox views of God as being Triune. Third, it will also explore the Trinitarianism of Ryland’s theological forefathers, like John Gill and Ryland’s father John Collett Ryland, to understand their influence on Ryland and his ministry.

The Challenge of the Socinians and the Trinitarian Conflicts of the Seventeenth Century

In 1644, the Particular Baptist of England published *The First London Confession of Faith*, which included the following concerning the Trinity:

In this Godhead, there is the Father, the Sonne, and the Spirit; being every one of them one and the same God; and therefore not divided, but distinguished one from

¹¹ Robert Hall, Jr., “Extract from Mr. Hall’s Rough Notes of the Funeral Sermon for Dr. Ryland,” in *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A. M.* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833), 2:416.

¹² Hall, *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall*, 1:220.

another by their several properties; the Father being from himselfe, the Sonne of the Father from everlasting, the holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Sonne.¹³

This mid-seventeenth century Baptist confession of faith demonstrated the Trinitarian orthodoxy of the early Particular Baptists. It was a confession of faith comprised of seven congregations in London, who sought to dispel the idea that these Baptists were Anabaptists, who were antitrinitarians, and “for the vindication of the truth and information of the ignorant.”¹⁴ These early Particular Baptists had also been accused of “holding Free-will, Falling away from grace, denying Originall sinne, disclaiming of Magistracy, denying to assist them either in persons or purse in any of their lawfull Commands, doing acts unseemly in the dispensing the Ordinance of Baptism, not to be named amongst Christians.”¹⁵ For these seventeenth century London Particular Baptists, it was of great importance for them to express their belief and adherence to Christian orthodoxy, especially the Trinitarianism of two pivotal ecumenical councils: Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381).¹⁶ For the Particular Baptist, orthodox Trinitarianism was a foundational doctrine. Benjamin Wallin (1711–1782), a Particular London Baptist pastor, described the Trinity as the “first and grand principle of revealed truth and the gospel.”¹⁷ Anne Dutton (1692–1765), the famed Particular Baptist poetess, said in her *Letters on Spiritual Subjects*, “And if the foundations (of three persons in one nature, in

¹³ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 156–57.

¹⁴ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 153.

¹⁵ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 154–55.

¹⁶ The orthodoxy of Trinitarianism of the Church was formulated and defined by the Nicene Creed which was compiled by the confessions of both the Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) councils. For more information concerning the formulation of orthodox trinitarianism, see S. J. Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1964); Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004); Stephen Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

¹⁷ Cited in Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘To Devote Ourselves to the Blessed Trinity’: Andrew Fuller and the Defense of ‘Trinitarian Communities,’” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (2013): 4.

one God, and of two natures in one person, in the person of Christ), are thus destroyed, what cant [sic] the righteous do? . . . Alas! My dear friend many are the errors which in all ages have troubled the church of God; and let us not think it strange that old errors are revived and new ones spring up in the last time.”¹⁸

While the Particular Baptists remained committed to classical fourth-century creedal Trinitarianism, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were plagued with destructive feuds among the Protestant Dissenters over the doctrine of the Trinity, especially from those called Socinians. For seventeenth-century Protestants, the Socinian’s antitrinitarian theology was considered, as Willem van Asselt put it, “the very nadir of heresy,”¹⁹ causing many English divines to write against it and “in great and earnest detail against the insidious errors of the so-called Polish Brethren and other Socinians.”²⁰

The Socinian influence, in numerical terms, remained relegated to a statistically small number of Protestantism, yet the amount of “time and energy spent by theologians in every denomination refuting them has not gone unnoticed by scholars of the period.”²¹ Lee Gattiss has noted that the writings against the Socinians were not based upon their moral failures, but upon their strict denouncing of the orthodox understanding of the Trinity, which they argued could not be proven *sola scriptura*.²² The Socinians found their formulations of doctrines concerning the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the generation of the Son of God and other Reformed doctrines of the period, attracted an

¹⁸ Anne Dutton and JoAnn Ford Watson, “Letter 74,” in *Selected Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-Century, British-Baptist, Woman Theologian* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 1:302.

¹⁹ Willem J. Van Asselt, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2001), 122.

²⁰ Lee Gattiss, “Socinianism and John Owen,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20, no. 4 (2016): 43.

²¹ Gattiss, “Socinianism and John Owen,” 45.

²² Gattiss, “Socinianism and John Owen,” 45.

onslaught of polemical opposition that would see them expelled from certain European countries and severely persecuted under anti-heresy laws enacted to combat both atheists and those who would dare challenge the orthodoxy of the Church. Gerard Reedy (1939–2016), an American Jesuit Priest, defined Socinianism as “those who followed Socinus’ teaching in various ways, e.g., ‘rationalistic scriptural interpretation; the accordance to Jesus of a high place in the divine order but not of divinity; the limiting of Jesus’ role in the drama of human redemption principally to one of moral exemplarity; the advocacy of a wide tolerance for believers of all creeds.’”²³ While the Socinian movement would have a lasting impact among English dissent, including English Baptists, several theologians coming out of Europe would greatly influence pastors concerning the doctrine of the trinity, including that of John Ryland, Jr.’s England.

The Rise and Spread of Socinianism to England

In 1533, Phillip Melanchthon (1497–1560) wrote to Joachim Camerarius the Elder (1500–1574): “You know I have always been afraid that questions concerning the Trinity would arise. Good God, what tragedies it will excite in posterity.”²⁴ Melanchthon’s words of future “tragedies” concerning the antitrinitarian movement are apparent with the spread of this teaching following the execution of the antitrinitarian Servetus. Melanchthon said, “Spain produced the hen, Italy nursed the eggs and we hear the chicks peeping.”²⁵ In Sarah Mortimer’s book, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism*, she described these “peeping chicks” settling

²³ Gerald Reedy, *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 119–20.

²⁴ William Wallace Everts, “The Rise and Spread of Socinianism,” *Review & Expositor* 11, no. 4 (October 1914): 519.

²⁵ Everts, “The Rise and Spread of Socinianism,” 520. Melanchthon had in mind Servetus as the “hen” of antitrinitarians and Lelio Francesco Maria Sozzini (1525–1562), also known as Laelius Socinus, and Fausto Paolo Sozzini (1539–1604), also known as Faustus Socinus, as the Italian “eggs.”

in a “peaceful place” on the banks of the Czarna River at Rakow, Poland. Rakow, therefore, would become the center of vigorous theological debates thus ushering into Europe impassioned conflicts centered around the Trinity, even among the Protestants of seventeenth-century England.²⁶ Racovian Socinianism, “a theological position perceived as so dangerous that it could only have been raked out of hell by men intent on blaspheming against God,”²⁷ was outlawed by Catholic and Protestant countries all throughout Europe, yet from this small town, political and theological treatises were published that captured “the attention of scholars, clerics, and educated laymen.”²⁸ These Socinians,²⁹ or antitrinitarians, would inspire “extreme” theological disputes among the Protestants, including the Church of England, as well as those among the Dissenters, and leave a lasting imprint on the religious landscape all across England.

In 1609, the Socinian *Racovian Catechism* (1605), published in Latin by Jerome Moscorovius, also known as Hieronim Moskorzowski (1560–1625), and the Polish Brethren in the sixteenth century, made its way to England.³⁰ This catechism was

²⁶ According to Unitarian historian, David Parke, “Poland, in the sixteenth century, was the leading nation in eastern Europe. Several factors made it hospitable ground for Protestant and Antitrinitarian teachings: a tradition of toleration of various religions—Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, and Mohammedan; the weakness and corruption of the Roman Church; the liberalizing influence of the Italian Renaissance on Polish culture and court life; and the enthusiasm of many young nobles for Protestant doctrines absorbed at German universities” (David B. Parke, *The Epic of Unitarianism: Original Writings from the History of Liberal Religion* [Boston, MA: Skinner House Books, 1957], 23).

²⁷ Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

²⁸ Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 1.

²⁹ Socinianism is aptly named after the Italian “free-thinking humanist” Faustus Socinus, who developed his antitrinitarian thoughts from his uncle, Lelio Sozzini, and adopted a Unitarian doctrine that held to the view that the Son of God did not exist until he was born a man. Philip Dixon explained, “Both Socinii exemplified the spirit of Renaissance humanism and individualism of northern Italy, hence its characterization of ‘Italian Atheism’ by Francis Cheynell” (Philip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* [London: T & T Clark, 2003], 39).

³⁰ In an attempt to promote the teachings of Socinus and the Polish Brethren, the *Racovian Catechism* was reprinted in 1609 into Latin and dedicated to James I (1566–1625). Parliament was not impressed and stated: “That the book, entitled *Catechesis Ecclesiarum quae in Regno Poloniae, &c.* commonly called *the Racovian Catechism*, doth contain matters that are blasphemous, erroneous, and scandalous” (Thomas Rees, *The Racovian Catechism: with Notes and Illustrations, Translated from the Latin; to which is Prefixed a Sketch of the History of Unitarianism in Poland and the Adjacent Countries* [London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818], A8). In 1614, Parliament ordered

an antitrinitarian document which denied the deity of Christ,³¹ describing him as by “nature was truly a man; a mortal man while he lived on earth, but now immortal.”³² Socinus and the Polish Brethren believed that if God was one person, known through revelation as the Father, then Jesus Christ was not part of the Godhead. This thesis was the core of Socinian beliefs, and it created a deep conflict within seventeenth century England. This antitrinitarian conflict became very apparent when Socinian views reached England through the *Catechism* and was championed by several English clerics. Socinianism and the *Racovian Catechism* became the subject of intensely passionate debates during the Trinitarian controversy of seventeenth century England.³³

The Crisis of the Trinity in England

The antitrinitarian philosophy and belief espoused by the *Racovian Catechism* was not a new development in England, but it did set the stage for a wave of

that all copies of the *Catechism* were to be collected by the sheriffs of London and Middlesex and brought to the Old Exchange London, and in the New Palace of Westminster they were to be burned. Several copies, however, survived and made their way into many Churches of England and Dissenting congregations alike (Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 12).

³¹ When the *Racovian Catechism* arrived in England, denial of the Trinity was illegal. John Lewes (d.1583) was burnt at the stake on September 18, 1583, for denying the godhead of Christ (Cited in Robert Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography: Or, Sketches of the Lives and Writings of Distinguished Antitrinitarians; Exhibiting a View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship in the Principal Nations of Europe, from the Reformation to the Close of the Seventeenth Century: To Which Is Prefixed a History of Unitarianism in England during the Same Period* [London: E.T. Whitfield, 1850], xlix).

³² Rees, *The Racovian Catechism*, 51. The Polish Brethren were converted to these Socinian beliefs when Faustus Socinus migrated from Italy to Poland in 1579. Socinus was successful in converting the Polish Brethren movement to his own theological system, which “rejected theological discourse” in favor of a concentration “on philosophy and sacred history, on understanding the literal meaning of the Scriptures in their historical context and on drawing moral lessons from them” (Diego Lucci, “Reassessing the Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England: Recent Studies by Jason Vickers, Sarah Mortimer, Paul Lim, and Others,” *Croombs* [Cyber Review of Modern Historiography 19, Firenze University Press, 2014]: 156). The *Catechism* states, “If by the terms divine nature or substance I am to understand the very essence of God; I do not acknowledge a divine nature in Christ; for this were repugnant both to right reason and to the Holy Scriptures” (Rees, *The Racovian Catechism*, 55).

³³ For more information on the Seventeenth-century Trinitarian controversy, see Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*; H. John McLachlan, *Socinianism in seventeenth-century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951); Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and religion in the English revolution: the challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1945), 2:166–235; and Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

antitrinitarian literature and tracts that would infiltrate the Protestant churches of England, thus causing a “continual anxiety in ecclesiastical circles about the unbelief and the growth of Socinianism.”³⁴ Paul Lim asserted that the “crisis of the Trinity,” that is, the Socinian and Anabaptists efforts to promote their antitrinitarian theology, re-emerged through the writings of Paul Best (1590–1657) and John Biddle (1615–1662) during the 1630s to 1650s. In England, these Socinian doctrines found refuge among the academics and elites, especially among those who met in the Oxfordshire home of Lucius Cary (1610–1643). This group, called the Great Tew Circle, promoted a “rational approach to doctrine and skepticism of religious authority.”³⁵ Nicholas Seager argued that this group did not necessarily renounce orthodox doctrines, but did espouse Socinian insights and methods.³⁶ Francis Cheynell (1608–1665), in his book *The Rise, growth, and danger of Socinianisme*, called out those Socinians of the Great Tew Circle, including William Chillingworth (1602–1644),³⁷ by stating:

The Socinian Error is Fundamentall[:] they deny Christs satisfaction, and so overthrow the foundation of our faith, the foundation of our Justification; they deny the Holy Trinity, and so take away the ever Object of our Faith; they deny the Resurrection of these Bodies, and so take away the foundation of our hope; they deny originall sinne, and so take away the ground of our Humiliation, and indeed the necessity of regeneration; they advance the power of Nature, and destroy the efficacy of Grace. It is an Antichristian error, because it takes away the very Essence and Person of Jesus Christ, for they deny him to be God, and so take away his Essence.³⁸

³⁴ Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 105.

³⁵ Nicholas Seager, “John Bunyan and Socinianism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 65, no. 3 (July 2014): 582.

³⁶ Seager, “John Bunyan and Socinianism,” 583.

³⁷ For more information on William Chillingworth, see Erwin Louis Lueker, “Chillingworth, William” *Christian Cyclopedia* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia publ. House, 2000); J. Waller, “William Chillingworth: A Study,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 6, no. 2 (1955): 175–89; H. R. Chillingworth, “William Chillingworth (1602–1644),” *Modern Churchman* 33, no. 10–12 (January–March, 1944): 333–40; William Chillingworth, *The Works of William Chillingworth* (Oxford, UK: University Press, 1838).

³⁸ Frances Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianisme* (London: Printed for Samuel Gellibrand, at the Brazen Serpent in Paul’s Church-yard, 1643), 24.

Cheynell understood the fundamental importance of the doctrine of the Trinity as it relates to all other necessary doctrines in the Church. Seager stated,

For Cheynell, Scripture is the sole reliable measure of truth, not received authority from . . . the natural faculty of reason from within (Socinianism). However, Protestant biblicism was exactly what threatened to overthrow the Trinity, as several controversialists in the 1640s and 1650s claimed that they were stripping Christianity down to the original scriptural message, rejecting the post-apostolic accretions of the fourth-century Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.³⁹

These assertions from Socinians, as well as Chillingworth's *The Religion of Protestants*, set within Cheynell a "Calvinist fear rampant among Parliamentarians."⁴⁰ Paul Lim described the vitriol that Cheynell had for the Socinian Chillingworth in a narrative of Cheynell, in 1644, walking by the graveside of Chillingworth and throwing *The Religion of Protestants* on the grave and declaring that it "rot with thy Author, and see corruption."⁴¹

Thomas Crosby (1683–1751), in his *The History of the English Baptists*, noted the persecution by the "divines of the Presbyterian persuasion" who wrote "zealously against liberty of conscience, or a toleration of different opinions in matters of religion."⁴² The toxicity of the Socinian influence in the church and the lack of toleration for all antitrinitarians is made clear by Cheynell in his *Divine Triunity*. Cheynell understood that heretical ideas like that of the Socinians and antitrinitarians, not only were polemical, but also effected the social fabric of England.⁴³ His fear lay in his assessment that if Socinian theology continued to spread among the churches, then it would produce a "cold and rational divinity" and would usher into the church a "formal

³⁹ Seager, "John Bunyan and Socinianism," 583.

⁴⁰ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 174–75.

⁴¹ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 175.

⁴² Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists: From the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I* (London: printed and sold by the Editor, 1738), 1:176.

⁴³ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 178.

religion, devoid of heart.”⁴⁴ For Cheynell, the doctrine of the Trinity was “far from being ‘a School-point,’ or a ‘meer speculative doctrine,’ the Trinity set forth the delightful pathway of encountering daily to learn of the Father’s love, ‘drawn by the Spirit,’ thereby ‘coming unto the Son.’”⁴⁵ Therefore, antitrinitarians like the Socinians and some of the Anabaptists were truly idolaters who worshiped the Father only, while treating “Christ as a creature,” thus subordinating the deity of Christ. In this assertion from Cheynell, he is declaring that Christ is to be worshiped, because he is divine. Cheynell closed out his *Divine Triunity* by declaring antitrinitarians as heretics and for the church to “avoid holding ‘Communion with such as those who pretend’ to be Christian but are not.”⁴⁶ With this, Cheynell defines anyone who denies the deity of Christ, as well as the Triune God, to be “Practical Atheists” and are undeserving of the moniker of “Christian,” and are deserving of being hunted down, captured and charged with a “Capitall crime.”⁴⁷ In 1648, the Presbyterian ministers at Lancashire published a paper on toleration:

A toleration would be the putting a sword in a madman’s hand; a cup of poison into the hand of a child; a letting loose of madmen with firebrands in their hands; and appointing a city of refuge in men’s consciences, for the Devil to fly to; a laying of a stumbling-block before the blind; a proclaiming liberty to the wolves to come into Christ’s fold, to prey upon the lambs: Neither would it be to provide for tender consciences, but to take away all conscience.⁴⁸

Particular Baptist: Orthodox Creedal Trinitarians

Among the seventeenth century English Dissent, the doctrine of the Trinity occupied a prominent place in their spirituality. It was deeply embedded in their liturgical formulas, creeds, and understanding of the person of God as their center of worship. For

⁴⁴ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 178.

⁴⁵ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 178.

⁴⁶ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 179.

⁴⁷ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 180.

⁴⁸ Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, 190.

the growing rejection of the Trinity and the deity of Christ, removing these doctrines out of Christian tradition proved to be divisive and even painful among the Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists. Orthodox Trinitarianism, for the most part, identified “the God of Christian allegiance; [it specified] the God whom Christians worship and for whom they yearn; [it singled] out the God who is genuinely God as opposed to the imagined gods whom human beings, whether individually or collectively, devise for themselves.”⁴⁹ As John Calvin argued in his *Institutes*, if the church fails to recognize God as triune, then this God is “only the bare and empty name of God flits about in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God.”⁵⁰ For the seventeenth century Particular Baptists, orthodox Trinitarianism, in addition to displaying itself in the wheelhouse of Calvinism, was a matter of great importance. In this toxic antitrinitarian culture of the seventeenth century, the Particular Baptist, along with the Presbyterians and the Church of England, would all solidify their confessions of faith to be clearly Trinitarian, thus separating themselves from all antitrinitarians.

First London Baptist Confession

As noted earlier, in 1644, the Particular Baptist, consisting of seven churches in and around London, attempted to set forth their seminal theological statement in the document that is called the 1644 Baptist Confession of Faith or the First London Baptist Confession;⁵¹ this document would be expanded in 1646. James Renihan, in his book concerning reformed Baptist documents and confessions, said, the *First London Confession* was “A product of the political and religious upheavals of early 1640s

⁴⁹ William S. Babcock, “A Changing of the Christian God: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century,” *Interpretation* 45, no. 2 (April 1991): 133.

⁵⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.2. The translation is from Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1:122.

⁵¹ Unless otherwise noted, all mentioning of the First London Baptist Confession will refer to the 1646 edition.

London, it was an attempt by seven small and relatively new churches in the metropolis to mitigate grown concerns about their doctrines and intentions.”⁵² Historian William L. Lumpkin, stated, “in spite of its incompleteness and its infelicity of wording at points, [it] is one of the noblest of all Baptist confessions.”⁵³ Leon McBeth stated in *The Baptist Heritage* that “This First London Confession wielded vast influence upon the future shape of Baptist life and thought.”⁵⁴ The First London Confession of Faith, according to B. R. White, had “considerable significance for the early development of the Particular Baptist churches and for their doctrine of the church,” and that this document provided for the Baptist “the doctrinal standard for the first period of their expansion.”⁵⁵

The First London Baptist Confession was drawn up to distinguish the newly organized Particular Baptists, who were staunch Calvinists and trinitarians, from both the General Baptists and the antitrinitarian Anabaptists. This first Confession was introduced as a pamphlet entitled “The Confession of Faith of those churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists,”⁵⁶ “mainly to defend themselves against various false charges that were circulated in the capital.”⁵⁷ According to *Antitrinitarian Biography: or Sketches of the Lives and Writings of Distinguished Antitrinitarians*, the Anabaptist had established a rather large contingency in Bristol, where Ryland would pastor from 1793

⁵² James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Owensboro, KY: RBAP, 2004), 3.

⁵³ Lumpkin, *Baptists Confessions of Faith*, 146. Lumpkin stated, “Perhaps no Confession of Faith has had so formative an influence on Baptist Life than this one . . . Harold Brown well says, ‘This significant document of 1644 embodies practically every doctrine that present-day Baptists hold dear, and is, therefore vastly important in Baptist history’” (Lumpkin, *Baptists Confessions of Faith*, 152).

⁵⁴ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 22.

⁵⁵ B. R. White, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 19, no. 2 (October 1968): 570.

⁵⁶ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 156.

⁵⁷ Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffen, Knollys, and Keach: Rediscovering the English Calvinistic Baptist Heritage of the Seventeenth Century* (Peterborough, Canada: H&E, 2019), 31–32.

until his death in 1825, and in the town of Bath.⁵⁸ The authors of the First London Baptist Confession were not identified, but a list of fifteen signers were included in the introductory preface, all from the Particular Baptist churches in London.⁵⁹

As stated, the main purpose for this introductory confession, was to distance themselves from the Anabaptists and to defend the orthodoxy of the Particular Baptists against the accusations of these Particular Baptists “lying under the calumny and black brand of Heretickes, and sowers of division.”⁶⁰ Robert Baillie (1602–1662), a Scottish minister who served as a Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly to assess the parameters of orthodoxy, wrote against the Anabaptist in a “heresiographical” piece in 1647. Baillie stated,

But many anabaptists are now begun to make havock of all. The Trinity they abominate, they will not only have Paul Bests blasphemy to go without any censure, but they do also join in with him to preach down the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Person of the Holy Ghost . . . as their old Father the Anabaptist Servetus does lead them the way.⁶¹

Baillie compared Anabaptists’ antitrinitarian theology to that of Socinian Paul Best (1590–1657) and to “their Father the Anabaptist Servetus.” In his *Anabaptism the True Fountaine*, Baillie singled out Best as the “arch-heretic” of the antitrinitarian movement that also permeated Anabaptists teachings, thus creating the “perfect storm of heresy and irreligion” in the mid-seventeenth century.⁶² Therefore, as Lim argued, to not “censure” Best, per his argument against the Anabaptist, they were declaring support for Best and other antitrinitarian radicals.

⁵⁸ Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, 65.

⁵⁹ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 156.

⁶⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 154–55.

⁶¹ Robert Baillie, Miles Flesher, and Samuel Gellibrand, *Anabaptism, the True Fountaine of Independency, Brownism, Antinomy, Familisme, and the Most of the Other Errours, Which for the Time Doe Trouble the Church of England, Unsealed: Also the Question of Pædobaptisme and Dipping Handled from Scripture. In a Second Part of the Disswasive from the Errors of the Time* (London: Printed by M.F. for Samuel Gellibrand, at the Brazen serpent in Paul’s Church-yard, 1647), 97.

⁶² Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 89.

In seventeenth century England, the term Anabaptist was typically used to refer to, according to Keith Sprunger, “any separatist radicalism extending beyond mainstream Puritanism.”⁶³ Michael Haykin, seemingly agreeing with this assessment, said that the term Anabaptists “covers a wide number of theological communities”⁶⁴ that find their origins in the Reformation era. To be Anabaptists in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, declared Sprunger, “was an epithet of contempt.”⁶⁵ Musing, Sprunger summed up the seventeenth century attitude towards Anabaptists: “The first step into nonconformity was Puritanism, a term usually connoting Calvinist dissent operating within the Church of England. The next step was Separatism, also called Brownism. The ultimate extremists were the Anabaptists. After Anabaptism, only unspeakable heresy remained: The Family of Love, Socinianism, and the like, and then Hell.”⁶⁶ For Particular Baptist, as Hercules Collins (d.1702) would argue in his preface to his *The Orthodox Catechism*, it was imperative that they separate themselves out from all religious movements that do not “concenter with the most Orthodox Divines in the Fundamental Principles and Articles of the Christian Faith.”⁶⁷ In the Forward to the Second London Confession, the authors wrote:

It is now many years since divers of us (with other sober Christians then living and walking in the way of the Lord that we professe) did conceive our selves to be under a necessity of Publishing a Confession of our Faith, for the information, and satisfaction of those, that did not thoroughly understand what our principles were, or had entertained prejudices against our Profession, by reason of the strange representation of them, by some men of note, who had taken very wrong measures, and accordingly led others into misapprehensions, of us, and them: and this was first

⁶³ Keith Sprunger, “English Puritans and Anabaptists in Early Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 46, no. 2 (April 1972): 113.

⁶⁴ Michael A. G. Haykin, “Anabaptists and the Radical Reformation,” audio (paper presented at the 2017 The Gospel Coalition National Conference, October 27, 2017), accessed November 6, 2020, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/anabaptists-radical-reformation/.

⁶⁵ Sprunger, “English Puritans and Anabaptists,” 113.

⁶⁶ Sprunger, “English Puritans and Anabaptists,” 113.

⁶⁷ Cited in James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Owensboro, KY: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004), 236.

put forth about the year, 1643. in the name of seven Congregations then gathered in London; since which time, diverse impressions thereof have been dispersed abroad, and our end proposed, in good measure answered, inasmuch as many (and some of those men eminent, both for piety and learning) were thereby satisfied, that we were no way guilty of those Heterodoxies and fundamental errors, which had too frequently been charged upon us without ground, or occasion given on our part.⁶⁸

In the midst of the Socinian havoc of the Anabaptists in the mid-seventeenth century, the London Particular Baptists were determined to differentiate themselves from the Anabaptists, as well as to demonstrate that their own doctrinal convictions concerning the Trinity and the deity of Christ mirrored the orthodox views of Chalcedon, as well as the ruling English Presbyterians in the 1640s. In doing this, the Particular Baptists demonstrated that they had more in common, theologically, with the Presbyterians than with the Brethren of the Anabaptists. James Renihan argued that the First London Confession of Faith was thoroughly vetted by Presbyterian “heresy-hunters” Thomas Edwards (1599–1647), Robert Baillie (1602–1662) and Daniel Featley (1582–1645), who “left no stone unturned in seeking to prove that the Particular Baptists were heretical. And yet they never give indication that the Baptists or their Confession were unorthodox in terms of Covenant theology, the perpetuity of the moral law, or the abiding validity of the Lord’s day Sabbath.”⁶⁹

In speaking of the Trinity, the 1646 London Baptist Confession stated:

That God is of himself, that is, neither from another, nor of another, nor by another, nor for another: But is a Spirit, who as his being is of himself, so he gives being moving, and preservation to all other things, being in himself eternall, most holy, every way infinite in greatnesse, wisdom, power, justice, goodnesse, truth, &c. In this God-head, there is the Father, the Sonne, and the Spirit; being every one of them one and the same God; and therefore, not divided, but distinguished one from another by their several properties; the Father being from himselfe the Sonne of the Father from everlasting, the holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Sonne.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Cited James M. Renihan, “No Substantial Theological Difference between the First and Second London Baptist Confessions,” Founders Ministries, accessed November 6, 2020, <https://founders.org/2017/07/05/there-is-no-substantial-theological-difference-between-the-first-and-second-london-baptist-confessions/>.

⁶⁹ Renihan, “No Substantial Theological Difference.”

⁷⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 156–57.

This first Baptist confession concerning God established and rooted the Particular Baptists' understanding of God as being triune. It also clearly demonstrated to the reader the deity and eternity of Jesus Christ. Michael Haykin stated that "these Baptists were desirous of declaring their complete solidarity with the mainstream of classical Christianity that was rooted in the fourth-century Trinitarian creedal declarations and that also included the medieval Western Church's commitment to the *Filioque*."⁷¹ It is also important for our understanding of Ryland's historical/theological background, that this document is not a *de novo* production, but an expansion of other confessions that have preceded this 1646 confession. In his article entitled "Sources of the First Calvinistic Baptist Confession of Faith," W. J. McGlothlin "was the first to suggest the *True Confession* of 1596 as the major source for the London Confession of 1644."⁷² *True Confession*, probably written by Henry Ainsworth⁷³ (1571–1622), stated that "there is but one God, one Christ, one Spirit . . . and that in this Godhead there be three distinct persons . . . coeternal, coequal and coessential, being every one of them one and the same God . . ."⁷⁴ The seven churches of the First London Baptist Confession demonstrated their orthodox understanding of God as trinity by combining the available sources for "one specific purpose: to prove that they had a great deal in common with the churches and ministers around them"⁷⁵ and that they had no affiliation with the theological havoc

⁷¹ Haykin, "To Devote Ourselves to the Blessed Trinity," 4–19. *Filioque* is a Latin term that means "and from the Son." It was not part of the original Nicene Creed depicting that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father." The "*filioque* clause" was added to the Nicene Creed at the Toledo Council in 1054, thus rendering that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and from the Son." It has been the source of division and controversy between eastern and western Christianity and it still exists today. For more information concerning the filioque clause, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 246.

⁷² Cited in Jay Travis Collier, "The Sources Behind the First London Confession," *American Baptist Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (June 2002): 199.

⁷³ Collier, "The Sources Behind the First London Confession," 199.

⁷⁴ Renihan, *True Confessions*, 6.

⁷⁵ James M. Renihan, "Confessing the Faith in 1644 and 1689," *The Reformed Reader*, accessed November 6, 2020, <http://www.reformedreader.org/ctf.htm>.

of the Anabaptists. James M. Renihan, of the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies at Westminster Seminary, said about the purpose for the 1646 Baptist Confession of Faith, “They were not wild-eyed fanatics intent on overthrowing society as it was known. To the contrary, they were reformed Christians, seeking to advance the principles on which the reformation had been built to their logical conclusion.”⁷⁶ Jay Travis Collier noted that the “primary purpose was to ‘give answer to’ accusations of heresy and misconduct so as to show their solidarity with the larger body of Protestant orthodoxy.”⁷⁷ In the mid-seventeenth century England, much was at stake for future Particular Baptists pastors like Ryland, “especially their on-going freedom in the face of rising Presbyterian anti-toleration political power.”⁷⁸ Renihan argued that subscription to orthodox Trinitarianism was not a “nicety,” as will be demonstrated at Salters’ Hall in the eighteenth century, but “it was a sober, serious and public proclamation that they were orthodox Christians.”⁷⁹

The lack of religious toleration against Baptists and Baptists ministers was not eradicated with the publishing of the 1644/6 Confession. Parliament issued an ordinance in 1645 against all non-ordained ministers in the Protestant church thus leading to the arrest of several Baptist lay-preachers. In 1646, another, more severe, ordinance was passed that outlawed non-ordained preachers from the preaching of Scriptures. Crosby explained that these non-ordained preachers “must be tied from speaking or writing any thing against or contrary to the directory and discipline established; and this restrain to extend, not only to ministers, but all other persons.”⁸⁰ Daniel Featley, a member of the

⁷⁶ Renihan, “Confessing the Faith.”

⁷⁷ Collier, “The Sources Behind the First London Confession,” 198.

⁷⁸ Renihan, “Confessing the Faith.”

⁷⁹ Renihan, “Confessing the Faith.”

⁸⁰ Crosby, *The History of English Baptists*, 195.

Westminster Assembly and a self-appointed heresy-hunter, said about the Baptist and their 1644/6 Confession:

If we give credit to this Confession and the Preface thereof, those who among us are branded with that title [i.e. Anabaptist], are neither Hereticks, nor Schismatics, but tender hearted Christians: upon whom, through false suggestions, the hand of authority fell heavy, whilst the Hierarchy stood: for, they neither teach free-will; nor falling away from grace with the *Arminians*, nor deny originall sinne with the *Pelagians*, nor disclaim Magistracy with the *Jesuites*, nor maintain plurality of Wives with the *Polygamists*, nor community of goods with the *Apostolici*, nor going naked with the *Adamites*, much less aver the mortality of the soul with the *Epicures* and *Psychophannichists*: and to this purpose they have published this confession of Faith, subscribed by sixteen persons, in the name of seven Churches in *London*.⁸¹

According to Featley, he understood that the Particular Baptists were trying to separate themselves from the General Baptist and the Anabaptists, but Featley supposed that these “Heretiques and Schismatiques”⁸² did not believe their own confession. He said, “they cover a little rats-bane in a great quantity of sugar, that it may not be discerned: for, among the fifty three Articles of their Confession, there are not above six but may passe with a fair construction: and in those six, none of the foulest and most odious positions, wherewith that Sect is aspersed, are expressed.”⁸³ Featley’s insidious attacks would lead to the Particular Baptists revising the *First London Confession* in 1646, and then again in 1651.

Second London Baptist Confession

In 1647, while in prison, the Socinian John Biddle, often called the Father of Unitarianism, published his *Twelve Arguments* and in the following year, he published A

⁸¹ Daniel Featley and Westminster Assembly (1643–1652), *Katabaptistai Kataptystoi: The Dippers Dipt. or, the Anabaptists Duck'd and Plung'd Over Head and Ears, at a Disputation in Southwark. Also a Large and Full Discourse of Their 1. Originall. 2. Severall Sorts. 3. Peculiar Errours. 4. High Attempts against the State. 5. Capitall Punishments, 4th ed.* (London: Printed for Nicholas Borne and Richard Royston in Ivy-lane, 1646), 177–78.

⁸² Featley, *The Dippers Dipt*, A3.

⁸³ Renihan, “Confessing the Faith.”

Confession of Faith.⁸⁴ Nicholas Seager summarized the latter by stating that *A Confession of Faith* “sets out six proto-Unitarian principles, as Biddle argues for ‘the different nature, order and dignity of the three persons’ of the Godhead, and established a hierarchy wherein the Father is ‘the first person of the Holy Trinity.’”⁸⁵ Dixon, in his *Nice and Hot Disputes*, said, “The 1640s marked a watershed in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity as we find for the first time in England incontrovertible evidence of systematic attacks upon the doctrine.”⁸⁶ For example, Biddle denied “Christ’s pre-existence (prior, that is, to the Creation) and his consubstantiality and equality with his father and creator.”⁸⁷ Biddle’s argument was that Christ cannot, in his human nature, be divine. Although no one had been executed for denying the Trinity since 1612, the English Long Parliament, in 1648, enacted another ordinance which made the denial of the Trinity a capital offence,⁸⁸ yet Biddle was only imprisoned and would be released after the *Act of Pardon and Oblivion* passed in 1652. Dixon stated, “The de facto collapse of censorship meant that ‘deviant’ views could be canvassed as never before.”⁸⁹

The 1640s and 50s would also be a time of harmony of creedal orthodoxy among the Dissenters and Independents of England with the creation of the

⁸⁴ John Biddle, *XII Arguments Drawn Out of the Scripture: Wherein the Commonly-Received Opinion Touching the Deity of the Holy Spirit is Clearly and Fully Refuted: To Which is Prefixed a Letter Tending to the Same Purpose, Written to a Member of the Parliament* (London, 1647). Other antitrinitarian works by Biddle include, John A. Biddle, *A Confession of Faith Touching the Holy Trinity, According to the Scripture* (London, 1648); John Biddle, *The Apostolical and True Opinion Concerning the Holy Trinity, Revived and Asserted: Partly by Twelve Arguments Levied Against the Traditional and False Opinion About the Godhead of the Holy Spirit: Partly by a Confession of Faith Touching the Three Persons* (London, 1653); John Biddle, *A Twofold Catechism: The One Simply Called A Scripture-Catechism; the Other, A Brief Scripture-Catechism for Children* (London: Rich. Moone, 1654).

⁸⁵ Seager, “John Bunyan and Socinianism,” 584.

⁸⁶ Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 64.

⁸⁷ Seager, “John Bunyan and Socinianism,” 584.

⁸⁸ “May 1648: An Ordinance for the punishing of Blasphemies and Heresies, with the several penalties therein expressed,” in C. H. Firth and Robert S Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1911), 1133–36.

⁸⁹ Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 64.

Presbyterian's Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) and the Independents or Congregationalist's Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order (1658). In the occasion of presenting the Savoy Confession to the Lord Proctor of England, Richard Cromwell (1626–1712), Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680), Congregationalist clergyman and a chaplain to Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), clearly declared this theological harmony with the Westminster Confession by stating the intention of the writers of the Savoy Declaration. He said,

And to shew our harmony with the most orthodox at home and abroad, we have expressed our assent to that Confession of Faith which is the latest and best . . . namely, the Articles of Religion approved and passed by both Houses of Parliament after advice had with the Assembly of Divines, to which Confession for the substance of it, we have unanimously and through the grace of Christ, without the least contradiction, assented and agreed.⁹⁰

When Charles II ascended to the throne of England in 1660, there was great promise of religious toleration among the Dissenters, including the Particular Baptists of England. Richard Greaves, in his *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663*, argued that Charles II's ascension to the throne "brought no cessation of revolutionary thinking or acting."⁹¹ While some historians argue that Charles II actually intended to champion religious toleration, like Michael R. Watts who said that Charles had a "real desire for religious toleration,"⁹² yet, if this argument is true, Charles' intentions were short-lived. In 1661, the ascendant Anglican Church had gained control of the "machinery and endowments of the Church of England"⁹³ and had begun to work

⁹⁰ Cited in Peter Toon, "The Westminster and Savoy Confessions: A Brief Comparison," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 15:3 (Summer 1972): 153. The *Articles of Religion*, mentioned by Goodwin, is a reference to the shortened form of the Westminster Confession of Faith approved by the Scottish Kirk in August 1647 and by the Estates of Parliament in February 1649.

⁹¹ Richard L. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3.

⁹² Michael R. Watts and Chris Wrigley, *The Dissenters* (Oxford England: Clarendon Press, 1978), 221–22.

⁹³ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 235.

towards religious conformity in England. In an effort to achieve this religious conformity, a series of four legal statutes, called the Clarendon Code, were enacted as law in England between 1661 and 1665, and were designed to trap all “Dissenters in a legal vice.”⁹⁴ First, the Corporation Act of 1661, established that only those who had received the Lord’s Supper through the Church of England could be elected and serve in a government office. Second, in 1662, the Act of Uniformity demanded that all ministers subscribe to the *The Book of Common Prayer*. This forced subscription led to the ejection of thousands of Puritan pastors from their pulpits. Third, Charles II enacted the Conventicle Act of 1664. This Act outlawed all non-Church of England worship gatherings of five or more, therefore, outlawing all religious dissent gatherings, including the Particular Baptists. The final act of the Clarendon Code was called the Five-Mile Act of 1665. This Act forbade all nonconforming ministers from coming within five miles of a city that they had previously served as a pastor or minister. This code was particularly difficult on the Particular Baptists pastors. Tim Harris estimated that about 4,000 dissenting pastors and ministers were arrested in and around London during this time, including Baptist pastor Hanserd Knollys (1599–1691),⁹⁵ an original signer of the First London Baptist Confession.

In the 1670s, because of the Anglican instituted Clarendon Code and passage of the second Conventicle Act by Parliament, which increased the fines on pastors and meeting house owners, the Particular Baptist churches found themselves in similar situations of persecution and intolerance with both the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. William Lumpkin, in his *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, argued that because the Presbyterians had been the “dominant ecclesiastical group under the

⁹⁴ Malcom B. Yarness, “Christopher Blackwood (1605–1670),” in *The British Particular Baptists: A Series of Biographical Essays on Notable Figures*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Terry Wolever, (Springfield, IL: Particular Baptist Press, 2019), 132.

⁹⁵ Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 66.

Commonwealth,” it made the enforcement of parts of the Clarendon Code “all but impossible.”⁹⁶ Lumpkin argued that this empowered other Dissenters and created a need for a united theological front between the Particular Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians.⁹⁷ This united theological front prompted the Particular Baptist churches to develop a new confession of faith over the First London Baptist Confession. James Renihan suggested that there have been several reasons argued as to why there was a need for this second confession, including the lack of copies still in existence from the original 1644 Confession and the need to theologically expand key elements of Baptist doctrine, including addressing a “small but growing movement advocating the observance of the 7th day as the Sabbath.”⁹⁸ Robert Oliver and Michael Haykin argued that the “challenge presented by the changes in the teachings of Thomas Collier” (1634?–1691), that is his defection from orthodox trinitarianism, became the “most pressing doctrinal reason for a new confession” among the Particular Baptists.⁹⁹ Collier was a Calvinistic evangelist sent out from William Kiffin’s church in the 1640s and became a prominent Particular Baptist figure. Thomas Edwards (1599–1647), a Presbyterian with “deep-seated antipathy towards Baptists,” described Collier as a “great sectary in the west of England, a mechanical fellow [i.e. a vulgar fellow belonging to the lower classes], and a great emissary, a dipper who goes about Surrey, Hampshire, and those countries, preaching and dipping.”¹⁰⁰ By 1674, however, Collier had adopted “a strange mixture of heresies, including a denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ.”¹⁰¹ While several Particular

⁹⁶ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 226.

⁹⁷ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 226.

⁹⁸ Renihan, “Confessing the Faith.”

⁹⁹ Robert W. Oliver, “Baptist Confession Making,” rev. (a paper presented to the Strict Baptist Historical Society, March 17, 1989), 13; Haykin, *Kiffen Knollys, and Keach*, 113.

¹⁰⁰ Haykin, *Kiffen, Knollys, and Keach*, 113.

¹⁰¹ Oliver, “Baptist Confession Making,” 13.

Baptist pastors sought to confront and restore Collier, including Coxe and Kiffen, Collier continued to publish antitrinitarian literature “in quantity and quality,”¹⁰² under the guise of a Particular Baptist. The London Particular Baptists, who were already “liable to slander, misrepresentation, persecution, and accusations of all kinds of heterodoxy,”¹⁰³ chose to foster their credibility and distance themselves from Collier by defining a “heretic” and applying this definition to Collier. The accusation of Collier’s heresies was made known on August 2, 1677, one month before the Particular Baptist published their Second London Baptist Confession of Faith. The accusation read: “We conceive that he is an Heretick that chooseth an Opinion by which some fundamental Article of the Christian Religion is subverted.”¹⁰⁴ One of the specific points of heresy that the Particular Baptists charged against Collier was that:

He asserts that Christ is the Son of God, only as considered in both Natures, which with other notions in Chap. 1. of his *Additional Word*, doth subvert the Faith concerning the Person of Christ, with respect to his eternal subsisting in the Divine Nature, in the incommunicable property of a Son, as is more abundantly manifest in the answer all ready returned thereunto.¹⁰⁵

In a work designed to display denominational unity, clarify the trinitarian views of the Particular Baptists, and to clearly assert the adherence of the Particular Baptist to Calvinistic theology, Nehemiah Coxe (d.1689) wrote a 136 page rebuttal of twenty heretical assertions by Thomas Collier in his *Additional Word*, which was written to clarify his *Body of Divinity*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² “Confessional Orthodoxy and Evangelical Union,” Petty France (blog), July 5, 2016, <https://pettyfrance.wordpress.com/2016/07/05/confessional-orthodoxy-and-evangelical-union/>.

¹⁰³ “Confessional Orthodoxy.”

¹⁰⁴ “Confessional Orthodoxy.”

¹⁰⁵ “Confessional Orthodoxy.”

¹⁰⁶ Nehemiah Coxe, *Vindiciæ veritatis, or, A Confutation of the Heresies and Gross Errours Asserted by Thomas Collier in his Additional Word to his Body of Divinity* (London: Printed for Nath. Ponder, 1677). Six other Particular Baptist pastors signed and affirmed Coxe’s rebuttal of Thomas Collier’s anti-Trinitarian doctrines. They were William Kiffen (1616–1701), Joseph Maisters (d.1717), Henry Forty (d.1692/3), Daniel Dyke (1617–1688), James Fitton, and William Collins (d.1702).

As already discussed, the underlying reason for the Second London Baptist Confession was to demonstrate a common orthodoxy among Calvinistic and Trinitarian Dissenters amid renewed persecution brought about by the Clarendon Codes. This pursuit of common orthodoxy by the Particular Baptists in their new confession is evident in the heavy dependence on previous sources, such as the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration. In the Preface of the Second London Baptist Confession, the writers clearly demonstrate their purpose to remain faithful to the First Confession, yet they also wanted to demonstrate the similarities between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. Robert Oliver stated: “The Baptist Confession can be clearly seen to be in the stream of evangelical theology, which flowed from the Westminster Assembly.”¹⁰⁷ Although the writers¹⁰⁸ of the Second Confession set out to “explain our sense, and belief of” orthodox Particular Baptist doctrine, they found “no defect, in this regard, in that fixed on by the assembly [i.e. the Westminster Assembly], and after them by those of the Congregational way [i.e. the Savoy Synod].”¹⁰⁹ They made it clear in the Preface that they structured this new confession in “the same order” as Westminster and Savoy, as well as utilizing “the very same words” when appropriate to explain Baptist doctrine.¹¹⁰ Their purpose for these similarities is to:

...more abundantly, to manifest our consent with both, in all fundamental articles of the Christian Religion, as also with many others, whose orthodox confessions have been published to the world; on the behalf of the Protestants in divers Nations and Cities: and also to convince all, that we have no itch to clogge Religion with new words, but do readily acquiesce in that form of sound words, which hath been, in consent with the holy Scriptures, used by others before us, hereby declaring before

¹⁰⁷ Oliver, “Baptist Confession Making,” 21.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Haykin speculates that Nehemiah Coxe and William Collins anonymously penned the Second London Baptist Confession issued in 1677. Haykin, *Kiffen, Knollys, and Keach*, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Lumpkin, *Baptists Confessions of Faith*, 245.

¹¹⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 245.

God, Angels, & Men. our hearty agreement with them, in that wholesome Protestant Doctrine...¹¹¹

In 1689, the year that William III and Mary II ascended to the Great Britain throne, “the Act of Toleration was set forth on May 24.”¹¹² Within the next two months, a circular letter was sent out to the Particular Baptist churches calling for a general meeting. Lumpkin stated that “Practical objects of the meeting were to consider the loss of the churches and to deal with the problem of ministerial scarcity.”¹¹³ The call of the letter brought together 107 churches to the meeting in London, and on September 12, 1689, the first English Particular Baptist General Assembly approved the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith. The adoption of this expanded declaration of faith would also prove to be, as Michael Haykin claimed, “the classic expression of Calvinistic Baptist doctrine.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Lumpkin, *Baptists Confessions of Faith*, 245. The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith: Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity.” “1. The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty. 2. God, having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he hath most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth; in his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain; he is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands; to him is due from angels and men, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them. 3. In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him” (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 252–53).

¹¹² Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 238

¹¹³ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 238.

¹¹⁴ Haykin, *Kiffen, Knollys, and Keach*, 103.

The Salters' Hall Debates: A Call for Toleration

In 1688, one year after William III began his reign as King of England, and one year prior to the 1689 Act of Toleration, Stephen Nye (1648–1719), English Unitarian clergyman and rector of Little Hornead, Hertfordshire, republished the works of the Unitarian John Biddle.¹¹⁵ This republishing of antitrinitarian theology created a “spate of publishing on all sides of the Christological question, and from all quarters.”¹¹⁶ It also revealed that anti-Trinitarianism was still brewing among Dissenters and the Church of England alike, and this would set in motion a meeting of extreme importance for those seeking religious toleration and for the Particular Baptist seeking to remain faithful to orthodox trinitarian creeds.

A “Spate” of Antitrinitarian Publishing

Stephen Nye’s book, *A Brief History of the Unitarians, Called Also Socinians*,¹¹⁷ reintroduced the antitrinitarian beliefs in an effort to “combat tritheism, to which charge William Sherlock (1641–1707), English rector of St. George’s and Dean of St. Paul’s, had laid himself open in his *Vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity* (1691).”¹¹⁸ In Sherlock’s *Vindication of . . . Trinity*, he sought to explain the Trinity in simple terms, but merely accomplished “one of the biggest crises of modern theology.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 188.

¹¹⁶ Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 20. For more information concerning the pamphlet wars of the late seventeenth century, see Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*; Ulrich Lehner, “The Trinity in the Early Modern Era (c.1550–1770),” in *Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, eds. Giles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 240–53; and Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008).

¹¹⁷ Stephen Nye, *A Brief History of the Unitarians Called also Socinians: In Four Letters Written to a Friend* (London, 1687). Nye’s 1688 apology on the *Unitarian doctrine of the Trinity*, was published as a free book in 1689, with a second edition coming in 1691. Alan Sell stated that Nye was the first to use the term “Unitarian” on the title page of a book published in England (Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 20).

¹¹⁸ Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 20.

¹¹⁹ For a detailed examination of this crisis, see Lehner, “Trinitarian Thought in the Early Modern Era,” 240–53.

Sherlock described the Trinity in terms of three persons with three infinite minds, “each of which has a self-consciousness of its own, which is distinct from the others. The unity of the three persons lies in the fact that these three minds are aware of each other, in a mutual-consciousness, which ‘ensures that *ad extra* is one will, energy and power.’”¹²⁰ Critics of Sherlock, including Nye, argued that Sherlock created a tritheistic argument in which “consciousness” determined deistic individualism, thus negating monotheism. Nye, whose uncle was the anti-Socinian Philip Nye (1595–1672) of the Westminster Assembly and Savoy Declaration (1658), wrote:

They [the Socinians] affirm, God is only one person, not three. They make our Lord Christ to be the Messenger, Minister, Servant, and Creature of God; they confess he is also the Son of God, because he was begotten in blessed Mary by the Spirit of Power of God But they deny that he or any other Person but the Father (of the said our Lord Christ) is God Almighty and Eternal.¹²¹

Each of the four letters that make up Nye’s *A Brief History of the Unitarians*, demonstrated his devotion to the Unitarian and Socinian thought concerning the incarnation of Christ. In his first letter, Nye introduced eleven arguments in favor of rejecting the deity of Christ. For example, in argument one, Nye stated, “If our Lord Christ were himself God, there could be no Person greater than he; none that might be called his head, or his God; none that could in any respect command him.”¹²² Nye argued that Scriptures teach that the Father is greater than Christ, and is the “head” and “God” of Christ. Citing for proof, Nye utilized 1 Corinthians 11:3: “The head of Christ, is God.” He also noted that the Scriptures describe Jesus as the Creature of God (Colossians 1:15), the Possession of God (Hebrews 3:1-2), and the Servant of God (Matthew 12:17-18). Nye concluded Letter One by stating: “Theirs (they say) is an accountable and reasonable

¹²⁰ Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 114.

¹²¹ Nye, *A Brief History*, 3–4.

¹²² Nye, *A Brief History*, 4.

faith; but that of the Trinitarians is absurd, and contrary both to reason and to it self, and therefore, not only false, but impossible.”¹²³

In 1690, an acrimonious dispute arose among the Rector and fellows at Exeter College, Oxford, concerning the publishing of the Rector Arthur Bury’s *The Naked Gospel*. *The Naked Gospel*, according to John Redwood, “was widely condemned as a Socinian tract, and confined to the flames by an irate Oxford convocation.”¹²⁴ Bury was accused of denying the deity of Christ by the convocation who “publicly condemned the book and its doctrines.”¹²⁵ Bury was also accused of trying to “undress the Church of all the Councils, decrees and dogmas in his search for purity and style;”¹²⁶ therefore, the convocations’ official record against *The Naked Gospel* contained a “history of the rival creeds and rival views of the Trinity in the primitive Church, and argues why that of Athanasius came to prevail.”¹²⁷ Although Bury repented for his causing an offense within the church community, he remained convinced in his understanding that a belief in the “eternal generation of the Son” was not essential to salvation. Bury’s conclusions set off a series of books and tracts with the intention of denouncing *The Naked Gospel* and correcting the orthodox views of the trinity.

In the early part of the eighteenth-century, rationalist philosophy contributed greatly to the marginalization of the Trinity. In 1710, William Whiston (1667–1752), successor to Isaac Newton (1643–1727) and mathematics professor at Cambridge University, was deprived of his chair for his antitrinitarian beliefs following his publication of *Sermons and Essays* (1709). In 1711, Whiston published a massive four

¹²³ Nye, *A Brief History*, 24.

¹²⁴ John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996), 157.

¹²⁵ Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion*, 157.

¹²⁶ Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion*, 159.

¹²⁷ Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion*, 158.

volume treatise called *Primitive Christianity Revived* (1711). Volume four of this work concentrated on how God and the incarnation were understood according to the first two centuries of the church. Whiston declared about the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, “These divine persons are so nearly related to God; are His Son, and His Spirit; not only produced by Him at first, as all other BEINGS were; but produced to be ever His instruments, His messengers, His deputies among His subordinate creatures.”¹²⁸ This volume confirmed the anti-orthodox Trinitarian views of Whiston, and demonstrated the ongoing disputes between orthodox Trinitarians and those who rejected the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ.

One year later, Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), English philosopher and Anglican Rector of St. James, Westminster, published *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). Understanding the seriousness of orthodox Trinitarians in early eighteenth century England, Clarke stated about this work: “I have, according to the weight and dignity of the subject, considered it throughout as carefully and distinctly as I was able; and desire only, that the reader, when he begins the book, would peruse it all, and consider seriously every part, and compare the whole part of what is here said, with other whole schemes, before he passes his judgment on it.”¹²⁹ Clarke’s opponents branded him an Arian, which plagued him the rest of his life.

Although Clarke denied that he held Arian views, his doctrine of the subordination of Christ to the Father is clearly a theme that he pursued in *The Scripture-Doctrine*. Clarke stated that the “The Father alone is God of Himself, or self-existent.”¹³⁰ Historically, according to Clarke, the early Church Fathers “before the time of the

¹²⁸ William Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd: In Four Volumes. Vol. 1. Containing the Epistles of Ignatius . . . Vol. 2. the Apostolical Constitutions, in Greek and English. Vol. 3. an Essay on Those Apostolical Constitutions. Vol. 4. an Account of the Primitive Faith, Concerning the Trinity and Incarnation* (London: Printed for the Author, 1711), 399.

¹²⁹ Samuel Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Knapton, 1712), A3.

¹³⁰ Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine*, 270.

Council of Nice [Nicaea], when they mention the Father and the Son together, generally give the name, God, to the Father.”¹³¹ Therefore, according to Clarke, “The Son (or second person) is not Self-existent, but derives his being or essence, and all his attributes, from the Father, as from the Supreme cause.”¹³² Steven Godet, in his dissertation work on John Gill, speaking of Clarke, said, “Clarke did not expound on the meaning of the Son’s derivation from the Father, commenting that the Scriptures are silent, but he did reject those that say the Son was ‘made out of nothing,’ and those that affirm the Son is ‘the self-existent substance.’”¹³³ Clarke’s “ambiguity” in his arguments concerning the self-existence of the Father, as well as rejecting the self-existence of the Son, caused great opposition against Clarke. Clarke was challenged by Daniel Waterland (1683–1740) on the basis that Waterland accused Clarke of teaching that the Son was a mere creature or was not “consubstantial” to the Father. Waterland said, “In truth and reality, every Man that disowns the Consubstantiality, rightly understood, is as much as Arian, as Euonomius (335–394), or Aetius (flourished fourth century), or any of the Ancient Arians were; or even as Arius himself, excepting only some few particulars, which were not his standing and settled Opinions.”¹³⁴ For Waterland, “the Son was either (1) man alone, (2) ‘more than man, yet a precarious dependent being,’ which is really to say that he is a creature, and thus Arianism, or (3) he is fully and truly God, necessarily-existing and uncreated.”¹³⁵ Waterland, frustrated with Clarke’s ambiguity on subordination, said, “If the Doctor will be content with a real subordination, (admitting no inferiority, no

¹³¹ Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine*, 270.

¹³² Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine*, 270.

¹³³ Steven Tshombe Godet, “The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill (1697–1771): Context, Sources, and Controversy” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 108.

¹³⁴ Daniel Waterland, *A Vindication of Christ's Divinity: Being a Defense of Some Queries, Relating to Dr. Clarke's Scheme of the H. Trinity, in Answer to a Clergy-man in the Country* (Cambridge, UK: Corn, Crownfield, 1719), 224.

¹³⁵ Godet, “The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill,” 120.

inequality of nature) he and I need not differ. But if he carries the point one tittle further, I desire to know what sense or meaning he can possibly have in it; without making the Son of God a creature.”¹³⁶ Clarke’s failure to satisfy Waterland continued until Clarke died in 1729.

In 1719, the growing “agitation” concerning the wave of antitrinitarian publishing of Clarke and Bury “became a storm that broke over the head of James Peirce (1674?–1726) of Exeter.”¹³⁷ As previously noted, Peirce served as a tutor at Hallet’s Academy and came to reject his trinitarian orthodoxy by stating that there is “but one God the Father, because the Scriptures are express in saying so, but we cannot be so certain that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, because the Scripture never so much as once says so.”¹³⁸ As a Presbyterian elder, Peirce’s defection from orthodox trinitarianism and his doctrine of the subordination of the Son to the Father created a regional dispute in Exeter that would evolve into a major controversy among the Trinitarian Dissenters. In Benjamin Dutton’s (1691/2–1747) biography of Peirce he noted, “He [Peirce] seem'd then to b'e a Baxterian, but for aught we knew was clear in the Doctrine of the Trinity. But after I left Newbury, he left that Church, and went to Exeter, where he declar'd himself to be an Arian.”¹³⁹ Peirce’s rejection of orthodox trinitarianism and Stogdon’s ordination, caused some to question the state of affairs in the Academy and “the falling away of younger ministers from orthodoxy.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Waterland, *A Vindication of Christ’s Divinity*, xvii.

¹³⁷ Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 36. For an account of the events and pamphlets issued at Exeter, see Allan Brockett, *Nonconformity in Exeter, 1650–1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), 74–95, 235–37.

¹³⁸ Cited in Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 36.

¹³⁹ Benjamin Dutton, *The Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free-Grace, towards the Chief of the Chief of Sinners: Shewn forth in the Lord’s Gracious Dealings with that Poor, Unworthy, Hell-deserving Worm, Benjamin Dutton: Minister of the Gospel, and Pastor of a Church of Christ, at Great Gransden, Huntingdonshire* (London: J. Hart, 1743), 26.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy,” 164.

Subscription vs. Non-Subscription: The Debate

In mid-February and early March, 1719, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, both General and Particular, gathered at Salters' Hall¹⁴¹ to “discuss a range of views which included not simply classic trinitarian formulations, but also the principle of whether a human definition or creed should be subscribed to, or whether a commitment to scripture was the measure for all matters of faith and practice.”¹⁴² The intent of this gathering was to “endorse the advice that was to be sent to Exeter to heal the doctrinal differences that had arisen among the leading ministers there.”¹⁴³ The topic of subscription to orthodox trinitarianism, stemmed from a call to the four ministers of Exeter¹⁴⁴ to “fall into line with the orthodox requirements expressed”¹⁴⁵ in the Trinitarian articles of the Westminster Catechism. The “Advice” sent to Exeter expressed: “Now we jointly agreed before we communicated this to the above named thirteen gentlemen, to propound the same to others of our brethren in this country, and desire their concurrence.”¹⁴⁶ Upon receiving this call from the thirteen to “fall into line”, Thomas stated that “Peirce and Hallett refused; John Withers and John Lavington agreed, Withers not without misgivings.”¹⁴⁷ Alan Sell said in his *Christ and Controversy*, “The

¹⁴¹ For an in-depth study of the events at Salters' Hall, see Charles Scott Sealy, “Church Authority and Non-Subscription Controversies in Early 18th Century Presbyterianism” (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2010), 36–65; Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy Amongst Dissenters in 1719,” 162–86.

¹⁴² Stephen Copson and Peter J. Morden, *Challenge and Change: English Baptist Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Didcot, UK: The Baptist Historical Society, 2017), 48.

¹⁴³ David L. Wykes, “Subscribers and non-subscribers at the Salters' Hall debate act. 1719,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published online May 21, 2009.

¹⁴⁴ The four ministers at Exeter that were recipients of the “Advice” letter from John Barrington and the thirteen ministers were James Peirce, Joseph Hallett (1656–1722), John Withers (d.1729), and John Lavington (1690?–1759).

¹⁴⁵ Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy amongst Dissenters,” 165.

¹⁴⁶ Cited in James Peirce, *The Western Inquisition, or, A relation of the controversy which has been lately among the Dissenters in the West of England* (London: Printed for John Clark at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry near Cheapside, 1720), 171.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy amongst Dissenters,” 165.

participants in fact divided over whether or not formal subscription to the doctrine of the Trinity [was] appropriate.”¹⁴⁸ David Steers argued that the debate was not over the doctrine of the Trinity, but the “reluctance to set up a new form of either institutional or theological authority based beyond the Bible and the person of Christ.”¹⁴⁹

On February 19, 1719, John Shute Barrington’s (1678–1734) *Paper of advices for Peace*¹⁵⁰ was presented to the 110 voting ministers and delegates at Salters’ Hall. Barrington, an English dissenting theologian and a member of the English House of Commons, expressed that these Advices “are the result of serious Prayer, as well as long and mature deliberation. They have taken rise from no Party-Views, and aim at nothing but the common Good: We have calculated them for Peace, as to secure Truth together with it.”¹⁵¹ The “Advices for Peace” were quickly rejected as a whole and the delegation decided to examine the “Advices” paragraph by paragraph. When the ministers and delegates regathered on February 24, a testy debate over the requirements of subscribing to human creeds ensued and lasted for several hours. When the vote was held, the congregation of pastors and delegates split into two groups: Fifty-three voted in favor of subscription to the Trinitarian articles found in the Westminster Catechism, as opposed to fifty-seven who voted that the Bible was the only source of orthodoxy.¹⁵² Joseph Jekyl

¹⁴⁸ Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 37.

¹⁴⁹ David Steers, “The Tercentenary of the Salters’ Hall Debates,” *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* 27, no. 1 (April, 2019), posted March 28, 2019, <https://velvethummingbee.com/2019/03/28/the-tercentenary-of-the-salters-hall-debates/>. David Steers served as the minister of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian churches of Downpatrick, Ballee and Clough in county Down, Northern Ireland. He currently serves as editor of the *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* (unitarianhistory.org.uk/hstrans4.html) and the Oxford based *Unitarian Theological Journal Faith and Freedom* (faithandfreedom.org.uk/).

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Benjamin Grosvenor, *An Authentic Account of Several Things Done and Agreed Upon by the Dissenting Ministers lately Assembled at Salters’ Hall* (London: Printed for John Clark at the Bible and Crown, 1719). Grosvenor’s *Authentic Account . . . at Salters’ Hall* reprinted Harrington’s Advices to the ministers at Exeter, as well as the letter that was to be sent to these ministers. A third aspect of Grosvenor’s *Authentic Account* dealt with the reasons for not “subscribing” to the Advices.

¹⁵¹ Barrington, “Advices for Peace,” 14.

¹⁵² Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 37.

(1663–1738), Master of Rolls in the House of Commons, said, “The Bible carried it by four.”¹⁵³ Roger Thomas, in his article on the non-subscription controversy, argued that “the vote was indeed a majority of four against the imposition of any other test than that of Scripture.”¹⁵⁴

The Salters’ Hall meetings proved to be a watershed moment for Dissenters, including both the General and Particular Baptists. First, the Salters’ Hall debates demonstrated an inclusive spirit among the Presbyterians and Independent churches with the Baptists, both the General and Particular. This inclusion at Salters’ Hall demonstrated, at least for the Baptist, that it “was the occasion when the Baptists asserted a right to meet with the Two Denominations, and maintained it in the face of opposition.”¹⁵⁵ As the Salters’ Hall meetings divided up into two groups, subscribers and non-subscribers, Baptists were gathered with each and they were allowed to vote. One tract noted, “When a new Fraternal was formed: in 1723–4, it assumed the title of Board, in imitation of the Boards of the Two Denominations. And with 1727 the Three Denominations were formally recognized at court, being granted the right of united access.”¹⁵⁶ Second, as David Steers argued, “For Dissenters, whose whole existence was based upon a rejection of Anglican authority, there was a reluctance to set up a new form of either institutional or theological authority based beyond the Bible and the person of Jesus.”¹⁵⁷ For the non-Subscribers, according to Sell, they had “a variety of motives” in their reasoning for rejecting subscription to an external description of God as Trinity, including “their appeal to the sufficiency of Scripture and their perceived obligation to

¹⁵³ Cited in Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 37.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy,” 171.

¹⁵⁵ “Salters’ Hall 1719 and the Baptists,” *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 5, no. 3 (April 1917): 172.

¹⁵⁶ “Salters’ Hall 1719 and the Baptists,” 172.

¹⁵⁷ Steers, “The Tercentenary of the Salters’ Hall Debates.”

bring reason to bear upon their belief systems.”¹⁵⁸ For the Particular Baptists, they “opted overwhelmingly for some form of confessional definition of doctrine.”¹⁵⁹ Third, Salters’ Hall demonstrated the existence of an “almost impassable” gulf separating the General and Particular Baptists.¹⁶⁰ W. T. Whitney described that out of the fifteen General Baptists at Salters’ Hall, fourteen declined to subscribe. Whereas, out of the sixteen Particular Baptists attending, fourteen voted to subscribe.¹⁶¹ Sell stated that “a number of Baptists began to draw firmer doctrinal lines in the wake of Salters’ Hall,”¹⁶² and by 1724, the Particular Baptists completely withdrew fellowship with the General Baptists. Raymond Brown described this heightening division after Salters’ Hall as the product of an “increasing fear of Arianism and Socinianism” among the General Baptists.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 30. An anonymous letter was sent to Benjamin Robinson (1666–1724), a Presbyterian minister and lecturer at Salters’ Hall, concerning his former writing denouncing “imposed liturgy” upon the Presbyterian Church from the Church of England. Robinson wrote: “I have consider’d at large; on the occasion of Mr. Bennet’s pleading for the imposition of a liturgy. And this I did the rather, because I was sensible, that there are other Impositions besides the use of precompos’d set forms of prayer, which we must comply with, before we can (under the present Establishment) be admitted to public service in the church?” (Benjamin Robinson, *A Review of the Case of Liturgies and their Imposition: In Answer to Mr. Bennet’s brief History of Precompos’d set Forms of Prayer: and His Discourse of Joint-Prayers* [London: printed by R. Tookey by J. Clark, 1710], vii). The letter, entitled *A Letter to Mr. Robinson. Wherein the Consistency of his late Conduct at Salters-Hall with a former Declaration of his own is consider’d. With a Postscript Concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Defended by Mr. Tong, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Reynolds* (London: T. Warner, 1719), pointed out the suggested hypocrisy of Robinson to force subscription upon other churches concerning the doctrine of Trinity as inscribed by the Thirty-Eight Articles and Westminster Catechism, but argue against subscription to “imposition of liturgy.”

¹⁵⁹ Copson, *Challenge and Change*, 48. Copson stated, “Whilst the situation is not straightforward, it is fair to say that the non-subscribers won the day and have been credited by historians of Dissent with ushering in a theological shift towards the acceptance of heterodox views” (Copson, *Challenge and Change*, 48).

¹⁶⁰ W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1932), 202–03.

¹⁶¹ Whitley, *A History of British Baptists*, 202. The Particular Baptist Subscribers included Thomas Harrison, John Skepp, William Curtis, David Rees, John Noble, Edward Wallin, Thomas Dewhurst, Mark Key, Edward Ridgway, John Sharpe, Richard Pain, William Benson, John Toms, Richard Glover, and Joseph Matthews. The lone General Baptist Subscriber was Abraham Mulliner of the White’s Alley Church. (Curtis W. Freeman, “God in Three Persons: Baptist Unitarianism and the Trinity,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33, no. 3 [Fall 2006]: 330).

¹⁶² Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 38.

¹⁶³ Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century. A History of the English Baptists* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 2:41.

The Particular Baptist Source: Trinitarian Theology

In 1719, the same year that the Dissenting ministers met at Salters' Hall, Daniel Waterland (1683–1740) responded to the Socinian writings of Samuel Clarke and thirty-one 'Queries' from John Jackson (1686–1763) that related to Clarke's arguments in *Scripture Doctrine*.¹⁶⁴ Waterland demonstrated the continual effects of the antitrinitarian movement among the Dissenters and the continual influence of the Socinians among English Protestants.¹⁶⁵ As for the Particular Baptists, the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries showed to be a proving ground for their commitment to both theological orthodoxy and a confessional spirituality. Michael Haykin said, "Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Particular Baptists in the British Isles tenaciously confessed a Trinitarian understanding of the Godhead and so, while other communities, such as the Presbyterians and General Baptists largely ceased to be Trinitarian, the Particular Baptists continued to regard themselves, and that rightly, as a Trinitarian community."¹⁶⁶ A great example of the Particular Baptist commitment to Trinitarianism is found in the case of two London Baptist pastors in the 1730s, brothers John and Sayer Rudd (d.1757), who declared that the doctrine of the Trinity was "entirely consisting of words and phrases of

¹⁶⁴ For more information on Daniel Waterland's responses to Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine*, see John Jackson, *A Collection of Queries: Wherein the Most Material Objections from Scripture, Reason, and Antiquity Which Have as Yet Been Alledged Against Dr. Clarke's Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, and the Defenses of It Are Proposed and Answered* (London: James Knapton, 1716); Steven Tshombe Godet, "The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill (1697–1771): Context, Sources, and Controversy, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, PhD diss., (May 2015): 116–20; and Daniel Waterland, *Vindication of Christ's Divinity: Being a Defense of Some Queries, Relating to Dr. Clarke's Scheme of the H. Trinity, in Answer to a Clergy-man in the Country* (Cambridge: Printed for Corn. Crownfield, 1721).

¹⁶⁵ John Collett Ryland said of Waterland, "Dr. Daniel Waterland justly observes, that the true doctrine of the Trinity, and the atonement of Christ, have been kept up in the Christian church, by the institutions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, more than by any other means whatsoever; and, humanly speaking, these glorious truths, which are essential to salvation, would have been lost long ago, if the two positive institutions had been totally neglected and disused amongst professors of Christianity. In this point of view, Baptism and the Lord's Supper appear to be of importance to the glory of God and the very being of the true church of Christ on earth." (John Ryland, and Northamptonshire Baptist Association [England], *The Beauty of Social Religion, or, the Nature and Glory of a Gospel Church: Represented in a Circular Letter from the Baptist Ministers and Messengers [of Northamptonshire Association] Assembled at Oakham . . . May 20, 21, 1777* [England?: publisher not identified, 1777], 10.)

¹⁶⁶ Haykin, "To Devote Ourselves to the Blessed Trinity," 5

men's own inventing."¹⁶⁷ As Sayer Rudd was seeking to fill the pastor vacancy at Maze Pond Church in London, the church censured him for his unorthodox views on the Trinity, and they stated, the:

Trinity of the Persons in the Godhead and the divinity of the Mediator which are errors of so dangerous a nature and so pernicious and destructive in their consequences, that they undermine and turn up the foundation of the Christian religion, overthrowing the hope and comfort of every believer and destroying that faith which we ought above all things to earnestly contend for.¹⁶⁸

The brothers were expelled from the London Baptist Association, and this affirmed, as the Particular Baptist emerged from the meetings at Salters' Hall, that they had found a great need among themselves for a systematic study of orthodox Trinitarianism. As attacks on the trinity and the eternal generation of the Son continued, Sell stated that such attacks "managed to fire up the redoubtable Baptist John Gill,"¹⁶⁹ who would go on to become one of the most important Particular Baptist scholars of the 18th century.

John Gill and the Particular Baptists

In March of 1745, John Gill wrote a letter to John Davis (1702–1778), the Welsh pastor of the Baptist Church in the Great Valley, Devon, Pennsylvania. He wrote:

Jesus Christ is the Son of God by nature and not office, ... he is the eternal Son of God by ineffable filiation and not by constitution or as mediator in which respect he is a servant, and not a Son. And of this mind are all our churches of the particular Baptist persuasion nor will they admit to communion, nor continue in communion [with] such as are of a different judgment. ... I have some years ago published a treatise upon the doctrine of the Trinity, in which I have particularly handled the point of Christ's sonship, have established the orthodox sense of it, and refuted the

¹⁶⁷ R. Philip Roberts, *Continuity and Change: London Calvinistic Baptists and The Evangelical Revival 1760–1820* (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1989), 35–36.

¹⁶⁸ *Minute Book of London Maze Pond, 1722–43*, MSS 2 (Angus Library, Regent Park Library, Oxford, England).

¹⁶⁹ Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 41.

other notion, which tho' it may be held by some, as not downright Sabeleanism [sic], yet it tends to it.¹⁷⁰

For the eighteenth century Particular Baptists, there was no greater defender of rationalist attacks on Protestant orthodoxy than John Gill.¹⁷¹ Baptist historian Peter J. Morden argued that Gill was the “most important Particular Baptist theologian of the eighteenth century.”¹⁷² Gregory Wills, a noted church historian, said, “Gill’s influence was considerable among the English and the American Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,”¹⁷³ and he effectively defended Calvinist doctrine with his own rigorous rationalism. Michael Haykin described Gill as a man “out of sync with conservative theological trends.”¹⁷⁴ His point was that Gill existed within the ideological matrix of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which did not produce many systematic summaries of the Christian faith. According to Haykin, Gill’s systematic theology found in his *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity (1769)* was the “major theological reference work”¹⁷⁵ for Baptist pastors, including Ryland’s father, John Collett, who introduced the writings of Gill to John Ryland, Jr. Haykin recorded that “Either in 1768 or 1769 Ryland spent an entire year reading some of his father’s most cherished theological works by divines such as Brine and Gill.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Cited in Haykin, “To Devote Ourselves to the Blessed Trinity,” 6.

¹⁷¹ Gregory A. Wills, “A Fire that Burns Within: The Spirituality of John Gill,” in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (New York: Brill, 1997), 191.

¹⁷² Peter J. Morden, “Continuity and Change: Particular Baptists in the ‘Long Eighteenth Century’ 1689–1815,” *Challenge and Change: English Life in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. S. L. Copson and Peter J. Morden (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2017), 9.

¹⁷³ Wills, “A Fire that Burns,” 191.

¹⁷⁴ Haykin, “To Devote Ourselves,” 4.

¹⁷⁵ Michael A. G. Haykin, “Baptist Trinitarianism in the Long Eighteenth Century: Context and Issues with Particular Reference to the Thought of Andrew Fuller” (paper presented at the Alumni Academy of The Southern Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, Fall, 2016), 6.

¹⁷⁶ Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, his Friends and his Times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994), 77.

As the Particular Baptist emerged from the debates at Salters' Hall, Gill became their leading theologian to champion their orthodox Trinitarianism. Robert Lucas Stamps, in his helpful article on Gill's Trinitarianism, said, "In many ways, Gill provides a theological harvest of the period of Post-Reformation Reformed Orthodoxy."¹⁷⁷¹⁷⁸ There is no better illustration of Gill's prominence as a theological leader in the Particular Baptist than his defense of orthodoxy during the Trinitarian conflicts of the eighteenth century. Haykin remarked, "In the midst of significant controversy and confusion about the Trinity in the 18th century, Gill's trinitarian thought thus played a vital role in shepherding the English Particular Baptist community along the pathway of biblical orthodoxy."¹⁷⁹ By the end of the eighteenth century, Particular Baptists were still staunch orthodox Trinitarians, while "the majority of both Presbyterian and General Baptist churches in England had lapsed into Unitarianism."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Robert Lucas Stamps, "John Gill's Reformed Dyothelitism," *Reformed Theological Review* 74:2 (August, 2015): 80.

¹⁷⁸ Cited in footnotes, Stamps, "John Gill's Reformed Dyothelitism," 81. "Reformed theology, as the term is used here, is not limited to those churches denominated under the rubric 'Reformed' or 'Presbyterian.' The term 'Reformed' can be construed in a narrower sense and in a broader sense. In the narrower construal, 'Reformed' refers to those ecclesial traditions that hold to the historic Reformed confessions of faith—doctrinal statements which are both paedobaptistic and Presbyterian in their ecclesiological distinctives. In the broader construal, 'Reformed' can refer to the more wide-ranging Calvinistic heritage, which extends its influence into various denominations and encompasses a more diverse array of ecclesiological convictions. Those in this broader circle are Calvinistic in their soteriology (the so-called 'five points of Calvinism') and in some aspects of their broader biblical theology (e.g., some elements of covenant theology), but they part ways with Calvin and the narrower circle of Reformed theologians on some ecclesiological matters (such as the proper subjects of baptism or the proper form of church polity). In this broader sense, Calvinistic Congregationalists (such as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards) and Calvinistic Baptists (such as John Gill and Andrew Fuller) can rightly be called 'Reformed,' even if they do not belong to a 'Reformed' or Presbyterian ecclesial body. Some in the narrower circle have sought to restrict the meaning of 'Reformed' to exclude the broader circles. For example, see R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008). To exclude the broader circle is to impoverish our understanding of the influence of the Reformed faith in Christian history as well as its abiding significance for the contemporary church." Stamps, "John Gill's Reformed Dyothelitism," 80.

¹⁷⁹ Michael A. G. Haykin, "Defending the Trinity," *enEvangelicals Now* (Nov. 5, 2016), <https://www.e-n.org.uk/2016/11/regular-columns/defending-the-trinity/?search=1>.

¹⁸⁰ Timothy George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael Haykin (New York, Brill, 1997), 225.

The Doctrine of the Trinity (1731) – essence and person. In 1730, amidst the challenge from Socinians against orthodox-Trinitarians, William Coward (d.1738), a wealthy merchant from London, “took the initiative in establishing a lectureship through the winter and spring of 1730 and 1731.”¹⁸¹ These weekly lectures, which would become known as the Lime Street Lectures, included John Gill as one of the nine ministers who participated as a lecturer.¹⁸² According to an advertisement for the reprinting of these lectures in 1844, the purpose for Coward’s Lime Street Lectures was thusly expressed:

The occasion of composing these discourses, arose from a number of gentleman in London, firmly attached to the interest of our divine Redeemer, and filled with a fervent zeal for the purity of the doctrines of revelation, taking into their consideration, that many Evangelical Truths, of the last importance, were not only secretly undermined, but violently opposed in their day, by subtle adversaries to the Gospel scheme, and, accordingly, they judged it proper to set up a Public Lecture, that a course of Sermons might be preached in DEFENSE of sundry cardinal doctrines, then so openly impugned.¹⁸³

Soon after the start of these lectures defending orthodox Calvinism and repudiating those who “violently opposed” and “impugned” these doctrines, Gill published his book, *The Doctrine of the Trinity (1731)*. Raymond Brown argued that Gill’s purpose for *The Doctrine of the Trinity* was to write “against Socinianism.”¹⁸⁴ He said Gill was “determined to keep” churches who denied the Trinity or were

¹⁸¹ Robert W. Oliver, “John Gill (1697–1771): His Life and Ministry,” in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael Haykin (New York, Brill, 1997), 22. The 23 weekly lectures at the Church of Paved-Alley, Lime Street, began on November 12, 1730 and ran until April 8, 1731. According to Walter Wilson (1781–1847), the Lime Street Lectures were published under two volumes and are “esteemed among the best defenses of Calvinism.” (Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses, in London, Westminster, and Southwark: Including the Lives of their Ministers, from the Rise of Nonconformity to the Present Time. With an Appendix on the Origin, Progress, and Present State of Christianity in Britain* [London: Printed for the author; sold by W. Button and Son . . . T. Williams and Son . . . and J. Conder, Bucklersbury, 1808], 212).

¹⁸² Walter Wilson records that the nine ministers who participated in the 23 Lime Street Lectures at Paved-Alley were, “Mr. Robert Bragge, Dr. Abraham Taylor, Mr. John Sladen, Mr. Peter Goodwin, Mr. John Hurrion, Mr. Thomas Bradbury, Mr. Thomas Hall, Mr. Samuel Wilson, and Dr. John Gill. The two last were of the Baptist denomination.” (Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches*, 212).

¹⁸³ By Several Eminent Ministers, *A Defence of some Important Doctrines of the Gospel: In Twenty-six Sermons, Preached at the Lime-Street Lecture* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1840), Advertisement following Title Page.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 75.

“theologically mixed” out of the Particular Baptist Fund.¹⁸⁵ Tom Nettles, describing Gill’s purpose for this book, said, “His design was to serve the entire evangelical community because of the pervasive threat of this error [Sabellianism] as well as Socinianism.”¹⁸⁶ In 1757, in a book entitled *The Christian Preacher Delineated*, J. C. Ryland described Gill’s work on the “Sacred Trinity” as a work every preacher should have in their library. Ryland also stated that this work on the Trinity by Gill is the “best book on the subject.”¹⁸⁷ Michael Haykin described Gill’s *The Doctrine of the Trinity* as “probably the major Baptist defense of the doctrine of the Trinity in the first half of the eighteenth century.”¹⁸⁸

As a theologian and a pastor, Gill understood that the doctrine of the Trinity was a grand fundamental of the Christian faith, although often neglected as merely being a “speculative point, of no great moment whether it is believed or no, too mysterious and curious to be pryed into, and that it had better be let alone than meddled with.”¹⁸⁹ As Gill was preaching a charge at the ordination of John Reynolds (1730–1792), he spoke of the Trinity as an essential doctrine of Christianity. He said, “The doctrine of the Trinity of persons in one God . . . is the foundation of religion, and of the economy of man’s salvation; it is what enters into every truth of the gospel, and without which no truth can be truly understood, nor rightly explained.”¹⁹⁰ Gill’s foundational principle for the

¹⁸⁵ Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 75.

¹⁸⁶ Tom J. Nettles. “John Gill and the Evangelical Awakening,” in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (New York, Brill, 1997), 142.

¹⁸⁷ John Collett Ryland, *The Christian Preacher Delineated* (London: Printed by D. Nottage, for Mess. Ward, Dodsley, Buckland, Robinson, Keith, Field, Dilly, and Law, 1757), 13.

¹⁸⁸ Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘Glory to the Three Eternal:’ Benjamin Beddome and the Teaching of Trinitarian Theology in the Eighteenth Century,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 73.

¹⁸⁹ John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, or A System of Evangelical Truths Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures [BDD]* (London, 1767; repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2000), 1:138.

¹⁹⁰ John Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts in Two Volumes* (London: George Keith, 1773), 2:53.

importance of orthodox Trinitarianism centered around the Biblical understanding of God consisting of three distinct divine persons: Father, Son, and Spirit who are “equally the object of divine worship.”¹⁹¹ Therefore, Gill contended, “that as long as men and women are required to render worship to God, and the God that is to be worshipped is trinitarian, the doctrine of Trinity is a fundamental doctrine. It is of the highest importance.”¹⁹² Gill was convinced that the doctrine of the Trinity, especially the issue of the eternal sonship of Christ, was the truest test of orthodoxy. Gill said, “This then being the case, if the article of the Son’s generation cannot be maintained, as then there can be no distinction of person, we must unavoidably sink into Sabellian folly.”¹⁹³ Gill’s orthodox trinitarian spirituality led his church at Carter Lane, Southwark to strengthen its doctrinal statement of faith concerning the Trinity and the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.¹⁹⁴ This statement of faith concludes:

These three divine persons are distinguished from each other, by peculiar relative properties. The distinguishing character and relative property of the first person is begetting; he has begotten a Son of the same nature with him, and who is the express image of his person; (Psalm 2:7, Hebrews 1:3) and therefore is with great propriety called the Father. The distinguishing character and relative property of the second person is that he is begotten; and he is called the only begotten of the Father, and his own proper Son; (John 1:14, Romans 8:3, 32) not a Son by creation, as angels and men are, nor by adoption, as saints are, nor by office, as civil magistrates; but by nature, by the Father’s eternal generation (Psalm 2:7) of him is the divine nature; and therefore he is truly called the Son These three distinct divine persons, we profess to reverence, serve, and worship as the one true God.¹⁹⁵

For Gill, his *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, first published in 1731 and then again in 1752, was a foundational treatise for the Particular Baptist in defending the idea that there is but “one God, who is a Being possess of all divine perfections, may be known by

¹⁹¹ Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 698.

¹⁹² Godet, “The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill,” 186.

¹⁹³ Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:63.

¹⁹⁴ Oliver, “John Gill (1697–1771): His Life,” 32.

¹⁹⁵ John Gill, “A Declaration of the Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ, in Carter Lane, Southwark,” in *Sermons and Tracts of John Gill* (London: George Keith, 1764), 2–3.

the light of nature: but that there is a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, who are distinct, tho' not divided from each other”¹⁹⁶ Gill was expressly interested in his treatise on the Trinity to present an “extremely effective defence of the fact that there is ‘but one God; that there is a plurality in the Godhead; that there are three divine Persons in it; that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God; that these are distinct in Personality, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.’”¹⁹⁷ Gill’s defense of orthodox Trinitarianism rested in his systematic study of key terms used by Trinitarians and rejected by the Socinians who argued against God as Trinity by the lack of scriptural orthodox trinitarian terms utilized to describe God as being Trinity. Gill understood that many who argued against the existence of the Trinity, do so because they cannot reconcile in their own minds certain Trinitarian terms used in describing God. These words, according to Gill, include “Trinity, Unity, Essence, and person; because they are not literally, and syllabically expressed in Scripture.”¹⁹⁸ In Gill’s *the Doctrine of the Trinity*, he went to great lengths to systematically define and describe God in terms of “essence” and “person” when describing God as being a Trinity, and this would prove to be the foundation for the first three chapters of Gill’s Trinitarian treatise.

John Gill stated in his *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, that his intentions were to “prove the unity of the divine essence, or that there is but one God.”¹⁹⁹ In the *1677 Baptist Confession*, the term “essence” in relation to the Trinity, described God as being “divine” and “undivided.”²⁰⁰ Gill agreed that the term “essence” is not found in Scripture, but he utilized this term, in relation to God, to describe the existence of God; it was part

¹⁹⁶ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 2.

¹⁹⁷ Cited in Haykin, *Glory to the Three Eternal*, 37.

¹⁹⁸ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 53.

¹⁹⁹ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 4.

²⁰⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 252–53.

of his defense of Trinitarianism. Gill stated, “God is that he is, [‘I am’], which is, and was, and is to come; and if God is, then he has an essence.”²⁰¹ Therefore the nature of God, according to Gill, is that He exists. In Gill’s argument, he interchanged the idea of God’s “nature” and God’s “essence” in order to argue God’s existence and God’s oneness. Gill wrote, “As God is one in his nature or essence, and cannot be multiplied or divided, so he is one”²⁰² For Gill the term for God’s oneness is “divine essence.” Therefore, Gill argued, “that there is but one divine essence, which is common and undivided to Father, Son and Spirit; and in this sense we assert that there is but one God. There’s but one essence, though there are different modes of subsisting in it.”²⁰³ In Gill’s treatise on *Baptism*, he said, “The form in which this ordinance is to be administered; which is ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19), which contains in it a proof of a Trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine essence, of the Deity of each Person, and of their equality to, and distinction from each other.”²⁰⁴ For Gill, essence is “that by which a person is, and seeing God is, essence may be truly predicated of him.”²⁰⁵ For the Particular Baptist, the word “essence” is key in describing the unity of God in Trinity, and thus, Gill utilized this term fifty-one times in his defense of the Trinity.

At issue among many who questioned the validity of God as Trinity, “was not the question of contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity but rather the more basic matter of the very language that made it possible to pose the question of contradiction in

²⁰¹ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 54.

²⁰² Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 10.

²⁰³ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 15.

²⁰⁴ John Gill, “Baptism: A Public Ordinance of Divine Worship,” in *Sermons and Tracts of John Gill* (London, George Keith, 1770), 2:34.

²⁰⁵ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 54.

the first place.”²⁰⁶ In the seventeenth-century, the Anglican Bishop Edward Stillingfleet (1635–1699) defended of the doctrine of the Trinity, especially against “Locke’s analysis of the idea of substance,” by stating, “All our Notions of the Doctrine of the Trinity depend upon the right understanding” of “the Distinction between Nature [i.e., essence] and Person.”²⁰⁷ Steelingfleet argued that the defense of the Trinity will be incomprehensible “unless we have clear and distinct apprehensions concerning Nature and Person, and the grounds of Identity and Distinction.”²⁰⁸ Gill also defended the revelatory understanding of “The Doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence.”²⁰⁹ In his efforts to demonstrate the orthodoxy of his own theological understanding of the Trinity, Gill began his defense of utilizing the word “person” by referencing Justin Martyr’s (100–165) abundant usage of the term in his *Expositio Fidei* and *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos*, and Tertullian’s (160–240) frequent use of the word “person” in his defense of the Trinity.²¹⁰ Gill also mentioned his reflections on the sixth century definition by the philosopher Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (477–526?). Gill recorded Boethius’ definition of “person” in his *Treatise on the Trinity*: “An individual substance or subsistence of rational nature.”²¹¹ Gill followed, in his *Treatise*, Boethius’ definition of person with the German reformer, Markus Freidrich Wendelin’s (1584–1652) ideas on a person being an “individual, that subsists, is living,

²⁰⁶ Babcock, “A Changing of the Christian God,” 142.

²⁰⁷ Babcock, “A Changing of the Christian God,” 143.

²⁰⁸ Edward Steelingfleet, *A Discourse in Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London, 1697), 252.

²⁰⁹ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1.

²¹⁰ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 55. Gill included in his *The Doctrine of the Trinity* Tertullian’s definition of “person”: “Whatsoever, says he, was the substance of the word, that I call a person; and to it I give the name of a Son: And whilst I own a Son, I maintain a second from the Father” (55–56).

²¹¹ Cited in Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 56.

intelligent, incommunicable, is not sustained by another; nor is a part of another.”²¹² As Gill approached his own definition, he reflected on Waterland’s understanding of Person: “That each divine person is an individual intelligent agent: But as subsisting in one undivided substance; they are altogether, in that respect, but one undivided intelligent agent” “A single person is an intelligent agent, having the distinctive characters of I, Thou, he, and not divided or distinguished into more intelligent agents, capable of the same characters.”²¹³ Gill then summarized his own understanding of the word “person” in his description of God. He said, “A person is an individual, that subsists, lives, understands, etc. but such is the Father, therefore a person; such is the Son, therefore a person; such is the Holy Ghost, and therefore a person. From the whole, there seems no reason to lay aside the use of this word.”²¹⁴ It was not that Gill was unwilling to part with the word “Person” in relation to the Trinity, “but that I could part with it, provided a more apt and suitable word was substituted in its room; whereby a real distinction in the Deity, might be maintained.”²¹⁵ Gill feared the altering of the orthodox use of “Persons” could “diminish . . . the glory of the eternal Three” to “mere names and characters.”²¹⁶

The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christ’s deity. For Gill, the doctrine of the deity Christ was an essential element in his defense of the Trinity. Gill wrote in *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (1769), “That the Son of God is a person, and a divine person from the Father and the Spirit, cannot be doubted.”²¹⁷ At a time when General Baptists were denying orthodox Christology, including the divinity of Christ,

²¹² Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 56.

²¹³ Cited in Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 56–57.

²¹⁴ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 57.

²¹⁵ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 57.

²¹⁶ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 58.

²¹⁷ John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (Atlanta: Turner Lassetter, 1950), 162.

Gill was unwavering in his commitment to preserving Christ's deity as the Son of God. In his *Treatise on the Trinity*, Gill devoted almost half of this major Baptist defense of the Trinity to Christ's deity. This devotion to Christ's deity is evident in Gill's description of Jesus as the Son of God. He said that Jesus is

an individual, distinct, though not separate from the divine nature, he has in common with the Father and the Spirit; he subsists of himself in that nature distinctly, and independently; is not a part of another, the whole fulness of the Godhead dwells in him; nor is his human nature, which he assumed in time, a part of his person, nor adds anything to his personality; but being taken up into union with his person, subsists in it; he has life in himself, and is the living God; is intelligent, has understanding and will; knows himself, his Father and the Spirit, and all creatures and things, and does whatsoever he pleases.²¹⁸

With this description of Jesus, alluding to the doctrines of Christ's deity and humanity, as well as his eternal Sonship, Gill specifically had the Arians and Socinians in mind. The Arian Samuel Bourn (1689–1754), also known as Samuel Bourn the Younger, decried,

For my Part, I hold Jesus Christ to be God, or a God . . . But I can't bring myself to believe in his Supreme Deity, because I believe in the same supreme Deity of God the Father; and it appears to me a plain contradiction to say that there are two Persons or Beings who are both of 'em Supreme or most High God, and I never yet had Faith eno' to believe two contradictory Propositions.²¹⁹

Gill, in his *An answer to the Birmingham dialogue-writer's second part*, questioned Bourn's reasoning by stating that "deity is either fictitious or true, nominal or real, proper or metaphorical."²²⁰ He said of Bourn, "I take him to be a Heathen, and not a Christian, much less a consistent one, since he gives strong indication of his belief of a supreme and subordinate Deity, a superior God and an inferior one, and both as the objects of religious

²¹⁸ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 162.

²¹⁹ Samuel Bourn, *A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman. Occasion'd by the Baptists Opening a New Meeting-House, for Reviving Old Calvinistical Doctrines, and Spreading Antinomian, and Other Errors at Birmingham . . . By a Consistent Christian [I.E. Samuel Bourn], Part I* (London: For J. Roberts, 1737), 10–11.

²²⁰ John Gill, *An Answer to the Birmingham Dialogue-Writer's Second Part: Upon the Following Subjects: the Divinity of Christ, Election, Original Sin, Free-Grace, Free Will, Imputed Righteousness, Perseverance, and Baptism: to Which Is Added a Postscript, Occasioned by Mr. Henry Heywood's Introduction to His Translation of Dr. Whitby's Treatise of Original Sin* (London: Printed for, and sold by Aaron Ward, at the King's-Arms in Little Britain, 1739), 4.

worship.”²²¹ As Jesus is the object of worship, Gill argued that “All the angels of God are called upon to worship him, as they accordingly have, both before and after his incarnation; yea, all men are required to honour the Son, and to give the same homage and worship to him as they do the Father.”²²² This worship of Christ, according to Gill, demonstrates that Jesus is not merely a “creature,” but the object of worship, which could not be permitted by the Father, unless the Son is God.

In Gill’s commentary on *The Gospel of John*, speaking on John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word,” he wrote: “That this is said not of the written Word, but of the essential Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is clear, from all that is said from hence, to verse 14, as that this Word was ‘in the beginning,’ was with God, and is God.”²²³ The idea of the deity of Christ, for Gill, would dispel the Arian’s doctrine that “He was made flesh, and made of a woman; but not made God;” and the Socinian thought that he is “Nor God, by office . . . for then he would be God only in an improper sense; as magistrates are called gods.”²²⁴

A major emphasis for Gill’s defense of Christ’s deity was the eternal Sonship of Christ. In Chapters Four through Six of the *Doctrine*, Gill argued the deity and personality of each person of the Trinity, and it is within these chapters that Gill discussed the eternal Sonship of Christ. The eternal Sonship doctrine starts with the idea that Jesus is God. Again using John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” Gill proclaimed, “Which words manifestly declare the Deity, and Eternity of the Word; his co-existence with God, b.e. [sic] the

²²¹ John Gill, *An Answer to the Birmingham Dialogue-Writer, Upon the Following Subjects: The Divinity of Christ, Election, Original Sin, Free Will, Irresistible Grace, Imputed Righteousness, Perseverance, and Baptism* (London: Printed for and sold by Aaron Ward, at the Kings Arms in Little Britain, 1737), 6.

²²² Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 139.

²²³ John Gill, *An Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, in *The Newport Commentary Series* (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2003), 2.

²²⁴ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 163.

Father; as is manifest from I John i.2. and his being a distinct person from him.”²²⁵ For Gill, deity of Christ denotes the eternality of the Son of God. In a sermon entitled, “The Only God of Faith and Matters,” Gill stated:

If the question is concerning the Deity of Christ, his eternal Sonship and distinct personality, look to your way-marks; inquire into the sacred records, and there you will find, that he is the mighty God, God over all, blessed for ever; the great God, the true God, and eternal life (Isa. 9:6; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20); that all divine perfections are in him; that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him; that he is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person; to whom all divine works are ascribed, and all divine worship is given; that he is the only begotten of the Father, the firstborn of every creature; or was begotten before any creature was in being (Heb. 1:31; Col. 2:9; 1:15); of whom the Father says, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee (Ps .2:7); that he is the Word which was in the beginning with God; and must be distinct from him with whom he was; and in the fullness of time was made flesh; which neither the Father nor the Spirit were (John 1:1, 14).²²⁶

Although the Socinians opposed the idea of the deity of Christ, Gill was convinced from Scripture, as well from the miracles, divine attributes, divine names, and the call from Scripture to worship Christ, that the Son of God is God.²²⁷ Gill said, “But he [Christ – the Son of God] is God by nature; as these were not; having the whole essence and nature of God in him.”²²⁸

In his introduction of Gill in *Christ and Controversy*, Alan Sell noted that “He [Gill] is especially concerned to defend the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son” and was “convinced that if eternal generation were denied the distinction between the persons of the Trinity, and the relation between the first and second persons, would be lost.”²²⁹ When Gill was asked by the Particular Baptists to engage Bourn’s *A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman*, he took up the challenge to defend orthodox

²²⁵ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 98.

²²⁶ Gill, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:483.

²²⁷ For an in-depth study of Gill’s thoughts concerning the “way-marks” of the deity of Christ, see *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, pages 163–67.

²²⁸ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 163.

²²⁹ Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 22.

Trinitarianism, as well as the eternal Sonship of Christ. For Gill, the eternal generation of Christ's Sonship was imperative to a proper defense of the Trinity. Gill wrote:

I have said, that 'the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence, depends upon the article of the son's generation, and therefore if this cannot be maintained, the other must fall of course;' and for my own part, could I be prevailed upon to part with this article of faith, I would at once give up the doctrine of the trinity, as quite indefensible; and indeed it would be the height of folly to talk of a distinction of persons in the Deity, when the foundation of such distinction is removed; for we pretend to no other distinction in it, but what arises from the internal relative properties in God, as paternity, filiation and spiration, the ground of which is, the eternal generation of the Son; for without that there can be neither Father, nor Son, nor Spirit.²³⁰

For Gill, to call Jesus the Son of God required "generation," but unlike the Socinians, Gill championed the doctrine of eternal generation. He defined eternal generation as "nothing else than an eternal communion of the same nature and co-existence with the first person."²³¹ Gill continued, "And also, that those names, Father and Son, chiefly signify a communion of the same nature, yet so as to respect and have a singular regard to the manner in which the sacred Trinity would manifest it, by the wonderful economy of persons, especially in the work of man's redemption."²³²

"Peculiar Relative Properties" – eternal sonship. John Rippon (1751–1836), speaking of the faithfulness of Gill to the doctrine of the Trinity and the filiation of the Son, said, "The Doctor not only watched over his people, 'with great affection, fidelity, and love,' but he watched his pulpit also. He would not, if he knew it, admit anyone to preach for him, who was either cold-hearted to the doctrine of the Trinity, or who denied

²³⁰ Gill, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:56. "Of such absurdity and inconsistency the late Dr. Ridgley was guilty; exploding the doctrine of the generation of the Son of God, and adopting the Socinian notion of sonship by office; and yet at the same time declaring for a distinction of three divine persons in the Godhead. A strange paradox this! and it is a disgrace to that body of men of whole denomination the Doctor was, that none of his brethren attempted to refute him, though they in general disliked his opinion and dissented from him; perhaps they thought the contradiction was so glaring, that his own notions confuted themselves; this is the best apology I can make for them," footnote, 56.

²³¹ Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 172.

²³² Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 172.

the divine filiation of Son of God.”²³³ Particular Baptists, through their confessions, have agreed that the Son of God is God; therefore, he is eternal; they have also agreed with the classical understanding that it is the ‘personal relations’ that serve as the only means of distinction between the divine persons. The *First London Baptist Confession* states concisely:

In this divine and infinite Being there is the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; each having the whole divine Essence, yet the Essence undivided; all infinite without any beginning, therefore but one God; who is not to be divided in nature, and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties.²³⁴

The use of “relative properties” of God also appears in Gill’s church at Carter Lane’s “Declaration of Faith and Practice.” In its declaration of the Trinity, as being one God in three persons, it stated: “These three divine persons are distinguished from each other, by peculiar relative properties.”²³⁵ In his sermon at Reynolds ordination, Gill said, “We pretend to no other distinction in it, but what arises from the internal relative properties in God; for without that there can be neither Father, nor Son, nor Spirit.”²³⁶ Gill’s point is that the works that are done by God, “such as those of creation, redemption and grace, and offices bore, serve to illustrate the distinctions made, but could never make any: the works of God are *ad extra*, and are common to the three persons.”²³⁷ What Gill does not mean by this is that there are no distinctions in the Godhead, “as when the Sabellians say, God is one Person, having three names, Father, Son, and Spirit; here is no distinction.”²³⁸ He said, “Though there are modes of subsisting in the Deity, and each

²³³ Oliver, “John Gill (1697–1771),” 32.

²³⁴ Modified version of *First London Baptist Confession*. Jon English Lee, “Some Baptist Thoughts on Trinitarian Relations,” Founders Ministries, entry post June 21, 2016. <https://founders.org/2016/06/21/some-baptist-thoughts-on-trinitarian-relations/>.

²³⁵ Gill, “Declaration of the Faith,” 627.

²³⁶ Gill, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:56.

²³⁷ Gill, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:56

²³⁸ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 141.

Person has a distinct mode, yet the phrase seems not strong enough; for the distinction is real and personal; the Three in the Godhead are not barely three modes, but three distinct Persons in a different mode of subsisting, who are really distinct from each other.”²³⁹ He described this by stating: “The Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son.”²⁴⁰ Therefore, what distinguishes the divine persons “must be as early as the existence of God itself,”²⁴¹ and since God is eternal, and if the three Persons are the one God, they must exist from eternity, and exist as distinct Persons; “and consequently what gives them their distinction must exist as early.”²⁴² For Gill, distinctions in the Godhead are distinctive relative properties; that is, “paternity in the first person, filiation in the second, and spiration in the third.”²⁴³

According to the Carter Lane Church’s statement of faith, “The distinguishing character and relative property of the first person is begetting; he has begotten a Son of the same nature with him, and who is the express image of his person; (Ps. 2:7; Heb. 1:3) and therefore is with great propriety called the Father;”²⁴⁴ in other words, paternity is more plainly understood as begetting, or generation. Gill argued this through Psalm 2:7, “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I *begotten* thee” [emphasis added]. Therefore, the distinctive relative property of the Father is begetting or generation. Gill understood that the property of begetting from the Father was not that of creation, adoption, redemption, or regeneration; these acts of God do not distinctively define the Father as the Father. Gill said,

²³⁹ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 141.

²⁴⁰ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 141.

²⁴¹ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 141.

²⁴² Gill, *A Complete Body*, 142.

²⁴³ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 142

²⁴⁴ Gill, “A Declaration of Faith,” 2–3.

The grand distinctive personal act of the Father, is his eternal act of begetting the Son in the divine nature or essence; which though unconceivable, and unaccountable by us, yet is plainly revealed in the sacred scriptures; and is the true reason of his bearing the character and relation of a Father; and is what distinguished him from the Son and Spirit. The Son is never said to beget, either the Father or the Spirit: And the Spirit is never said to beget either the Son or the Father: The act of begetting, is peculiar to the Father.²⁴⁵

The Son of God's distinctive relative property, according to Carter Lane's statement of faith, is "that he is begotten; and he is called the only begotten of the Father, and his own proper Son; (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3, 32) not a Son by creation, as angels and men are, nor by adoption, as saints are, nor by office, as civil magistrates; but by nature, by the Father's eternal generation (Ps. 2:7) of him in the divine nature; and therefore he is truly called the Son."²⁴⁶ Like that of the Father, the eternal Sonship of Christ is not dependent upon his miracles, divine birth or his resurrection; Sonship is by eternal generation. In Thomas Ridgley's (1667–1734) *Body of Divinity*, he argued against Gill's teaching on eternal generation. Ridgley expressed that "these properties, begetting, begotten, and proceeding, plainly prove the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be distinct Persons, why then should they be laid aside? and especially, since without them there is no proof to be made of their being distinct Persons in the divine nature."²⁴⁷ Ridgley held that the account of the Sonship of Christ, that is, by his office and not his nature, does not negate or disprove the deity of Christ. Gill denied Ridgley's assertion that the deity of Christ resides in his office, including the office of Mediator. Gill said, "But without his eternal generation no proof can be made of his being a distinct divine Person in the Godhead, and so not of his deity."²⁴⁸ Gill also asserted that the Son must first be proved to be the divine Person, before he would ever be considered Mediator.²⁴⁹ He stated, "The

²⁴⁵ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 97.

²⁴⁶ Gill, "A Declaration of Faith," 2–3.

²⁴⁷ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 144.

²⁴⁸ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 144.

²⁴⁹ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 144.

doctrines of redemption, justification, atonement, and pardon of sin, depend upon the divinity of the Person of Christ, as the Son of God, Gal. iv.4, Rom. viii.3, 4. Heb. i.2, 3. 1 John i.7.”²⁵⁰

Through his interpretation of Psalm 2:7, Gill found it unimageable that anyone would object to the term eternal generation as applied to the Sonship of Christ. Gill argued that the doctrine of Trinity is dependent upon the eternal generation of Christ by the Father.²⁵¹ For Gill, “beget and generate are the same; and that also to be begotten and generated are the same.”²⁵² Therefore, Gill reasoned that generation is an acceptable description of divine persons, and such, generation is an acceptable description of the divine nature.²⁵³ If the Father begets eternally in the divine nature, and the Son is begotten eternally in the divine nature, then Gill asserts that “there being nothing in the divine nature but what is eternal, then this generation must be eternal generation.”²⁵⁴

Gill noted in his *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, that Socinians were unwilling to “own the eternal Sonship of Christ, or that he was the Son of God before he was the Son of Mary.”²⁵⁵ They argued that the Sonship of Christ was grounded in a particular act of the Father upon Jesus at a particular time in history; that is, at the conception and birth of Christ,²⁵⁶ the resurrection of Christ²⁵⁷ or within the Mediatorial office of Christ.²⁵⁸ Gill argued that nowhere in Scripture does one find that the Son of

²⁵⁰ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 144.

²⁵¹ Gill, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:56.

²⁵² Gill, *A Complete Body*, 144.

²⁵³ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 144.

²⁵⁴ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 144.

²⁵⁵ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 149.

²⁵⁶ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 150.

²⁵⁷ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 151.

²⁵⁸ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 152.

God, “neither in eternity nor in time,” was not the begotten Son of the Father.²⁵⁹

Therefore, since there is no evidence that the Son of God did not exist prior to a given point in time, “he must be eternally begotten of him [Father]; or, in other words, be the Son of the Father by eternal generation.”²⁶⁰ Gill supported this argument by offering his readers an illustration utilizing the sun. He said:

The sun generates its own ray of light, without any change, corruption, division, and diminution; it never was without its ray of light, as it must have been had it been prior to it; they commenced together and co-exist, and will as long as the sun endures; and to this there seems to be an allusion, when Christ is called the brightness, ἀπαύγασμα, the effulgence, the beaming forth of his Father’s glory, Heb. 1.3 *ut radius ex sole*, as the ray from the sun, as Tertullian expresses it.²⁶¹

Gill understood that “such allusions” are not to be “stretched” too far in their meaning, but, without introducing the imperfections of earthly illustrations as they apply to the Trinity, Gill was expressing that at no time did the sun exist, wherein the generated rays did not also exist. In an interesting expression of this argument of begetting and time, Gill stated, “God the Father begets a person existing by himself; the mind begins to beget in time, but God begins not to beget, but always begets from eternity.”²⁶²

In 1768, Gill wrote *The Dissertation Concerning the Eternal Sonship of Christ*.

He opened his treatise by stating:

The eternal Sonship of Christ, or that he is the Son of God by eternal generation, or that he was the Son of God before he was the son of Mary, even from all eternity, which is denied by the Socinians, and others akin to them, was known by the saints under the Old Testament; by David (Ps. 2:7, 12); by Solomon (Prov. 8:22, 30), by the prophet Micah, chapter 2, verse 2. His Sonship was known by Daniel, from whom it is probable Nebuchadnezzar had it (Dan. 3:25), from which it appears he was, and was known to be, the Son of God before he was born of the virgin, or before his incarnation, and therefore not called so on that account. This truth is written as with a sun-beam in the New Testament; but my design in what I am about is, not to give the proof of this doctrine from the sacred scriptures, but to show who first set themselves against it, and who have continued the opposition to it, more or

²⁵⁹ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 145.

²⁶⁰ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 145.

²⁶¹ Gill, *A Complete Body*, 146.

²⁶² Gill, *A Complete Body*, 146.

less, to this time; and on the other hand, to show that sound and orthodox Christians, from the earliest times of Christianity to the present, have asserted and defended it.²⁶³

The point of Gill's treatise is to defend both *The Doctrine of the Trinity* and *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, as being orthodox teaching on the Trinity. Rippon recalls that Gill stated that after forty years following his theological writings on the Trinity, he would alter nothing, except for a few verses that "did not stand so clear in my mind as proofs of the eternal generation of the of the Son of God."²⁶⁴

In his *Treatise*, Gill introduced church leaders and theologians in most every century who championed the eternal Sonship of Christ and those who introduced heresies into the church. His point was to distinguish those early church fathers who affirmed eternal Sonship from the very beginning of the Church. Gill mentioned Trinitarians like, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine, who affirmed the eternal Sonship, "and asserted that all the sound divines in Evangelical churches after the Reformation have held to this teaching."²⁶⁵ He concluded his *Treatise* with a list of names who affirmed the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ and those who opposed this doctrine, including several contemporaries of Gill, Thomas Ridgeley and Isaac Watts. Gill closed his *Treatise* with the following:

Now since it appears that all the sound and orthodox writers have unanimously declared for the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ in all ages, and that those only of an unsound mind and judgment, and corrupt in other things as well as this, and many of them men of impure lives and vile principles, have declared against it, such must be guilty of great temerity and rashness to join in an opposition with the one against the other; and to oppose a doctrine the Church of God has always held, and especially being what the scriptures abundantly bear testimony unto, and is a matter of such moment and importance, being a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, and indeed what distinguishes it from all other religions, from those of Pagans, Jews and Mahometans, who all believe in God, and generally in

²⁶³ Gill, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:534.

²⁶⁴ Oliver, "John Gill (1696–1771)," 37.

²⁶⁵ Godet, "The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill," 257.

one God, but none of them believe in the Son of God: that is peculiar to the Christian religion.²⁶⁶

John Collett Ryland and the Particular Baptists

In the Preface of Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "The Excellency of Christ," Collett Ryland, who published this sermon, stated: "It [the "excellence of Christ"] is the first grand truth of divine revelation in point of dignity, beauty, and usefulness; and therefore it demands and deserves the utmost regard and affection from every true Christian on earth."²⁶⁷ For Collett Ryland, the "excellence of Christ," and by this he means the "nature and actions of Christ," including his deity, is a worthy subject to be contemplated by "Every man that loves God and his own soul."²⁶⁸ Collett Ryland was so convinced of the need for Edward's expressions of the Christ deity, that he published Edward's sermon for "a very low price," in order to make it available for "the churches of Christ, and younger ministers of the gospel."²⁶⁹

Collett Ryland was born October 12, 1723 to Joseph Ryland, a prosperous cattle farmer, and Freeloze Collett (d. 1729), "a woman of a sweet and godly character."²⁷⁰ Collett Ryland was described by historian H. Wheeler Robinson as having a head-strong and passionate character.²⁷¹ William Newman, the first principal of

²⁶⁶ John Gill, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:564.

²⁶⁷ John Ryland, preface in Jonathan Edwards, *The Excellency of Christ: A Sermon, Preached at Northampton, in New England, In the Time of the Wonderful Work of Grace, there in the year 1738*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Re-printed at Northampton, England by Thomas Dicey, 1780), 3.

²⁶⁸ Ryland, *The Excellency of Christ*, 3–4.

²⁶⁹ Ryland, *The Excellency of Christ*, 6.

²⁷⁰ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 12.

²⁷¹ H. Wheeler Robinson, "A Baptist Student—John Collett Ryland," in *Baptist Quarterly* 3 no. 1 (1926): 25–33.

Stepney College, recalled, in Newman's *Rylandiana*,²⁷² an incident involving Collett Ryland and his father. Newman said,

“At twelve years of age he (Collett Ryland) teased his father so much for a gun that he knocked him down with a stick; and then, to make it up with him, he gave him one. Soon after, as he was setting it down (not regarding the trigger) against a box, the whole charge went into the ceiling. After this his father gave him a horse. He bought spurs; and the faster the horse galloped the more he spurred him. At length the horse threw him against a bank, and left him there bleeding most profusely.”²⁷³

This head-strong characteristic of Collett Ryland defined how he approached everything, including his spiritual life as a Baptist. He was a staunch Calvinist along the lines of his good friend and spiritual mentor John Gill and gave proof of this with “blandishments of Wesley's Arminian theology.”²⁷⁴ Northamptonshire pastor, John T. Brown, speaking in 1862, said of the elder Ryland,

From every relic that we have, from the margins of books where his genius has expressed itself; from the orations that he delivered, from the books that he wrote, from the anecdotes circulate respecting him, from all the traditions and everything we can gain, he seems to have been a man with enough stuff in him, and vigour of brain, and fiery energy, and real genius, to have made many men.²⁷⁵

John Rippon, speaking at Collett Ryland's funeral, said, “God grant that when we come to die, our defects may be as few as his, and our Christian virtues half as many.”²⁷⁶ He was a man of “original talent and temperament”²⁷⁷ and “for zeal and fidelity he had few equals, and none could surpass the bold and daring nature of his eloquence.”²⁷⁸ William Field, in his book *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town and Castle of*

²⁷² Newman, *Rylandiana*, 1835.

²⁷³ Cited in Robinson, “A Baptist Student,” 26.

²⁷⁴ T. S. H. Elwyn, *The Northampton Baptist Association* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1964), 30.

²⁷⁵ Elwyn, *The Northampton Baptist Association*, 30.

²⁷⁶ Cited in Nalor, *The British Particular Baptists*, 185.

²⁷⁷ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 69

²⁷⁸ Nalor, *The British Particular Baptist*, 200.

Warwick,²⁷⁹ said that Collett Ryland “possessed . . . considerable abilities.”²⁸⁰ Collett Ryland was a man with a strong personality who had a creative and eccentric mind, and he “saw clearly that if England was to be saved the children must be educated.”²⁸¹

Collett Ryland’s zeal for the education of pastors was probably his greatest gift to the Particular Baptist Churches. He argued that the “greatest men what ever lived, were preachers of the gospel,”²⁸² and he asked, “What preparation then, does this office deserve, and demand, and how serious, how attentive, how active, and unweariedly diligent, ought every student to be, who desires and designs to employ himself in this glorious work to the end of his life!”²⁸³ He was consistent to the Reformed tradition of the Calvinistic Baptists and was convinced of the importance to Christianity of the spiritual growth of the mind. Collett Ryland had a passion for learning which is displayed throughout his personal diary that he kept while a student at the Baptist Academy at Bristol. In a June 7, 1744 entry, Collett Ryland wrote:

I beg if ever the most High God sends me forth into the Publick Work of the Ministry, I may go well Qualified, if it please His gracious Majesty to give me Large and Exact Skill in 5 Languages, and Large Skill and Knowledge of about 20 Arts and Sciences, Including that one which is above them all, viz. DIVINITY.²⁸⁴

As an example of Collett Ryland’s passion for education and for educators, some forty years after his training at Bristol Baptist Academy, he still held resentment towards his mentor and teacher, Benard Foskett (1685–1758), for not preparing him better for ministry. Collett Ryland wrote: “Foskett should have spared no pains to educate our souls

²⁷⁹ William Field, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town and Castle of Warwick* (Wakefield: S. R., 1969).

²⁸⁰ Cited in Nalor, *The British Particular Baptists*, 200–01.

²⁸¹ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 25.

²⁸² John Ryland, preface in John Cotton, *Student and Preacher: Intituled, Manuctio ad Ministerium; or Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry* (London: Printed by Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, 1781), xii.

²⁸³ Ryland, *Student and Preacher*, xii–xiii.

²⁸⁴ Cited in Robinson, “A Baptist Student,” 30.

in grandeur, and to have enriched and impregnated them with great and generous ideas of God in His whole natural and moral character, relations and actions, to us and the universe. This was thy business, thy duty, thy honour, O Foskett! and this thou didst totally neglect.”²⁸⁵

Collett Ryland was one of the faithful defenders of the traditional orthodox Christology among the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists. Unlike Gill, Collett Ryland’s Christological influence was less prominent, but his influence among pastors through his Christian mentoring, writing and academic instruction played a vital role in the churches where he supplied them pastors from his academies. Nicolas Roe, utilizing the writing of J. W. Morris, described Collett Ryland as a “progressive educationist” who was a “humane person of enormous energy which he directed into evangelical preaching, teaching, and numerous religious and educational publications.”²⁸⁶ Michael Haykin said of Collett Ryland that he “shared to the full these convictions about the importance of academic preparation for those entering pastoral ministry.” For the Particular Baptists in mid-1700s, “theological education” for pastors was a major concern,²⁸⁷ and Collett Ryland’s focus on the doctrine of Christ’s divinity, which occupied a great deal of his extant writings, proved to be a vital source for his son John Ryland, Jr., as well as the Particular Baptists themselves. This belief in the “divinity of Christ,” for Collett Ryland, was at the core of his theological understanding of God as Trinity, because it expressed the biblical commands to worship Jesus Christ as God. Collett Ryland stated,

²⁸⁵ Cited in Robinson, “A Baptist Student,” 27. It seems that John Rippon agreed with Ryland’s assessment of Foskett’s teaching skills. Rippon said, “His method of education was limited rather than liberal; severe rather than enchanting; employing the memory more than the genius, the reasoning more than the softer powers of the mind; Mr. Foskett was not the first of tutors” (John Rippon, *A Brief Essay Towards an History of the Baptist Academy at Bristol: Read before the Bristol Education Society, at their anniversary meeting, in Broadmead, August 26th, 1795* [London: sold by Dilly and Button, 1796], 22).

²⁸⁶ Nicolas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1997), 29–30.

²⁸⁷ Brown, *The English Baptists*, 83.

If we find a person in Scripture to whom there are given the names Jehovah, Lord, God, the sovereign Lord God – to whom are ascribed all the possible perfections that are ever given to compleat the scriptural idea of God – to whom are ascribed all divine works of creation, providence, redemption, regeneration, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, the final distribution of rewards in heaven, and punishment in hell to eternity – to whom are paid all possible acts of divine worship, consisting of adoration-invocation-self-dedication-subjection of soul and conscience-delight-gratitude and praise: if we find that all these names, titles, attributes, actions, or glorious works and worship are ascribed to this person, I mean the Lord Jesus Christ, in as full and compleat a sense as to God the Father, then he must be, and can not be otherwise, than the true, sovereign, and most high God over all, blessed for evermore.²⁸⁸

Contemplations on the Divinity of Christ (1782). In describing the Socinians and their “grounds and reasons” for rejecting the divinity of Christ, Collett Ryland described them as being the “fiercest enemies to the eternal divinity and dominion of Christ.”²⁸⁹ For the Socinians themselves, Collett Ryland stated that they were “men of the highest intellectual powers, and of the greatest human learning,” but they were “destitute of the grace of God.”²⁹⁰ Collett Ryland argued that the Socinians of the past, like Faustus Socinus, defended their “rebellious” defamation of Christ with worldly “carnal wisdom and learning,” producing massive volumes of arguments against the divinity of Christ, but the Socinians of Collett Ryland’s day were “far beneath” their forefather’s intellectual acuteness.²⁹¹

In 1782, Collett Ryland published his *Contemplations on the Divinity of Christ* with his purpose “to display the glorious character of God . . . and this we effect by shewing that all the lost prospects of divine goodness and beauty are restored with infinite advantage in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁹² His argument was that one

²⁸⁸ John Ryland, *Contemplations on the Beauties of Creation, and on All the Principal Truths and Blessings of the Glorious Gospel* (Northampton: Thomas Dicey, 1779–82), 4.

²⁸⁹ John Ryland, *Contemplations on the Divinity of Christ* (Northampton: Printed by T. Dicey, and sold by C. Dilly in London, 1782), 3:233.

²⁹⁰ Ryland, *Contemplations on the Divinity of Christ*, 233.

²⁹¹ Ryland, *Contemplations on the Divinity of Christ*, 233.

²⁹² Ryland, *Contemplations on the Divinity of Christ*, iii.

cannot honor and worship the Father without the demonstration of the “divinity, grandeur, fulness and beauty of the eternal Son.”²⁹³ Collett Ryland’s focus on Christ’s divinity was vital in his understanding of holiness and religion. He stated, “His [Jesus’] eternal person is the source, the origin, the fountain of all godliness: it’s nature is the resemblance of Christ: and in all its properties and operations, it is nourished by an intense union with the person of Christ.”²⁹⁴ Therefore, there is no Christianity, argued Collett Ryland, without Christ being divine. He said, “All forms of religion are meer moonshine and amusement, if Christ be not in them by his spiritual presence.”²⁹⁵

For Collett Ryland, the idea of Christ’s divinity and the worship of Christ that is found throughout the Bible, including throughout the Old Testament, was the “greatest truth, which is the life, strength and glory of the whole revelation of God.”²⁹⁶ As for the Socinians, this lack of worship of Jesus Christ as deity, was an “amazing” difficulty that “clog the Socinian scheme, and sink it for ever.”²⁹⁷ In a parody of Socinian thought, Collett Ryland argued from the position of the Socinian: “We [the Socinians] charge our opponents with this absurdity, which loads their scheme, that the writers of the Scriptures have expressed themselves like strange, wild, irrational men, ascribing Deity to a meer man in a vast variety of places in their writings.”²⁹⁸ Collett Ryland stated that the Socinian argument against the language used in Scripture ascribing deity to Jesus Christ, was “figurative and metaphorical” and that these “few men [Socinians] only have known

²⁹³ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, iii.

²⁹⁴ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, v. For Collett Ryland, “religion is the serious and delightful sense of God in the soul, producing in us a consciousness of our incessant dependence upon his agency as God of nature, and the God of grace; and of our obligations to adore his perfections, admire his beauty, and be grateful for all his blessings” (Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, v).

²⁹⁵ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, x.

²⁹⁶ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 4.

²⁹⁷ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 448.

²⁹⁸ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 448.

the truth.”²⁹⁹ Therefore, according to Collett Ryland’s parody of Socinian rejection of the Trinity, those who argued from orthodox Trinitarianism, like Waterland, were, according to Socinian logic, all blind, mistaken idolaters with thousands and millions more in all ages of the Christian church.”³⁰⁰

Collett Ryland’s purpose for his *Contemplations* was to demonstrate that the Trinitarian interpretation of Scripture was infinitely more advantageous than the “Socinian scheme.” He recognized that upon the whole, the high view of Christ as deity, displays a “brighter” understanding of the “glorious character of God;” that is, “the utmost glory to the natural and immutable justice of God.”³⁰¹ Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ demonstrated, according to Collett Ryland, the true depth of the evil of sin and the “offense against God” as well as “infinite good” of the “redemption, the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ.”³⁰² His first argument in favor of the deity of Christ in his *Contemplations* centered around the names and titles attributed to Jesus throughout Scripture.

Collett Ryland demonstrated the deity of Christ through the attribution of the name Jehovah in the Old Testament as it applies to Jesus the Son of God. He examined the passages of the Old Testament “which are applied clearly to Christ, by the infallible writers of the new testament.”³⁰³ For example when Jehovah appeared before Moses in the third chapter of Exodus, as “the bush burning with fire and not consumed.” Collett Ryland argued from the Hebrew attributing the name Jehovah to the One residing in the bush being the Sovereign God or the “Angel Jehovah.”³⁰⁴ God called out from the Bush

²⁹⁹ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 449.

³⁰⁰ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 449

³⁰¹ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 455.

³⁰² Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 455.

³⁰³ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 4.

³⁰⁴ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 6.

and declared that “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”³⁰⁵ Collett Ryland’s point was that “it is absolutely certain, that the divine father never didst from the creation of the world to this day, make any visible appearance, as an angel, a man, or in any form or office whatsoever: he ever has been invisible to all mankind, in all ages and nations; therefore, it could not be the first person in the incomprehensible divine nature, but it must be the second person.”³⁰⁶ Collett Ryland declared, “Therefore the clear unavoidable consequence is this, that Christ is truly and properly Jehovah, the most high GOD over all, blessed for evermore.”³⁰⁷ In order to make his point concerning the importance of the name Jehovah being bestowed upon Jesus, Collett Ryland said, “Upon the whole, you clearly see, that this name signifies the being and self-existence of God; his eternity, immutability, his absolute independence, and his compleat perfection, happiness, and glory: it is a name never given to creatures, but belongs to God alone.”³⁰⁸

Another aspect of the worship of Christ as being divine, according to Collett Ryland, is found in the “infinite perfections ascribed to Christ in Scripture.”³⁰⁹ Collett Ryland described the “perfections” or “attributes” of Christ as a “superior capacity of feeling the highest pleasures . . . a superior capacity of virtue or holiness is a superior perfection: this capacity of pleasure and holiness in GOD is infinite.”³¹⁰ Collett Ryland’s argument was that when Scriptures describe the perfections of Christ, they describes him in terms of having “superior capacity” that is far beyond angels or human perfections.³¹¹

³⁰⁵ Exodus 3:6, (KJV).

³⁰⁶ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 4.

³⁰⁷ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 6.

³⁰⁸ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 8.

³⁰⁹ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 59.

³¹⁰ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 64.

³¹¹ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 64.

He said, “When we apply the word perfection to Christ, we mean it in the highest, noblest, richest sense it can possibly bear; we mean it in the very selfsame sense as we do when we apply to God the father; or to the eternal, divine nature, essentially considered in the most absolute sense.”³¹² For Collett Ryland, this demanded the worship of Jesus Christ as God and for those Socinians who rejected the worship of Christ, they “must resolve to be more obstinate than the devil, and more outrageously unbelieving than the damned in hell, if he shall finally oppose it, and continue scornfully to reject it.”³¹³

A key attribute assigned to Jesus Christ by Collett Ryland is the eternality of Christ the Son of God. Collett Ryland stated, “Eternity, in the highest sense of the word, belongs only to God.”³¹⁴ Therefore, for Collett Ryland, to know that Jesus is eternal and “without beginning and without succession or end in his duration,” was to argue that he is “the most absolute and eternal Lord God, possessed of all possible and infinite perfections.”³¹⁵ Collett Ryland said,

His omnipresence is eternal; his life and omnipotence are eternal; his knowledge and dominion are eternal. There is no one attribute of Christ which appears more venerable than that of absolute, independent eternity: 'tis the life of all the attributes, purposes, promises, and actions of Christ: 'tis the life and glory of all the grand works of Christ in Creation, providence, and redemption: it is the eternity of his attributes which-enlivens and supports them all. The salvation of souls would wither and die without the eternity of Christ to spread life and glory through them all forever.³¹⁶

All in all, Collett Ryland developed his arguments for the divinity of Christ through nine separate contemplations intent on strengthening the “grand fundamental principles of Christianity.”³¹⁷ He felt that the most effective scheme of sinking the

³¹² Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 64–65.

³¹³ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 65.

³¹⁴ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 68.

³¹⁵ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 8.

³¹⁶ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 75.

³¹⁷ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 448.

Socinian rejection of the divinity of Christ was to “study more than ever to know Christ in his whole character as God and man,” as developed in a systematic study of Scripture.³¹⁸ Collett Ryland closed out his massive work and argument on the divinity of Christ with a charge to his reader concerning vast spiritual superiority of believing in Christ as being divine:

Our scheme furnishes all possible encouragement to awakened sinners and distressed consciences; and nourishes, in the richest manner, all the power and glory of vital religion in the soul: it provides for the utmost dignity and pleasure of all the parts of public worship; and represents Christ’s three offices as full of wisdom, worthiness, grace, and efficacy, for all the purposes of happiness; and invincibly secures for us an happy issue of all our transactions with God for eternity.³¹⁹

A Body of Divinity (1790). As a Particular Baptist educator, Collett Ryland seemed to agonize over the lack of quality Christian education for pastors and serious young Christians.³²⁰ In his *Body of Divinity in Miniature*, which was Collett Ryland’s system designed to instruct the youth of the basic tenets of the Christian faith, he stated “It is a real and awful consideration, that the evidences of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and the grand context of the Christian religion, are not attended to as they ought to be in our public and private schools.”³²¹ Collett Ryland expressed his disappointment in his students who had arrived from all across Europe who could not express why the Bible was the inspired Word of God. He said, “It is impossible for me to describe and declare the bitterness and indignation that I have felt at this radical neglect of the grand essential of a good education.”³²² For Collett Ryland, a good education for young pastors included the fundamentals of the Trinity, as well as a “proper and right”

³¹⁸ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 448.

³¹⁹ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 455–56.

³²⁰ John Ryland, *A Body of Divinity in Miniature: Designed for the use of the Youth of Great Britain and France* (London: Printed by T. Chapman, 1790), 9.

³²¹ Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 8.

³²² Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 9.

understanding of “the amazing difficulties which clog the Socinian scheme, and sink it for ever.”³²³

Collett Ryland’s *Body of Divinity* was a compilation of prose and verses designed to teach and highlight key principles of the Christian faith. This “system of Christianity” was designed for the youth of Britain to memorize as part of their private and public education. Collett Ryland argued that his “system” of learning through prose and verses was superior to other methods of teaching through subjects that relied upon “a clear scheme of knowledge” that are found upon “sure principles, and sound deductions drawn from those principles;” including science and divinity.³²⁴ Collett Ryland chose to include twenty-four doctrinal subjects in his system of divinity including a section for the understanding of the deity of Christ through the doctrine of the Incarnation of God.

For Collett Ryland, the purpose of discussing the doctrine of the Incarnation of God was to prove the deity of Christ. He believed it to be an important part of the spiritual growth of the believer and encouraged believers to meditate on the thought that Jesus was the incarnate God. He said, “See! See! The glory of our Incarnate God, this is He that lately hung like a criminal on the cross.”³²⁵ In his *Body of Divinity*, Collett Ryland devoted his “Principle XII” to the “Person of Christ as the Incarnate God, and how He lived on Earth.”³²⁶ Collett Ryland’s thesis for the incarnation of God is that “The person of Christ is God the Son; God, the eternal Son, co-equal with the Father.”³²⁷ Like Gill, Collett Ryland wanted to argue the deity of Christ through the idea that God the

³²³ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, 448.

³²⁴ Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 5.

³²⁵ John Collett Ryland, *The Wonderful Extremes United in the Person of Christ, Proposed as Brief Hints of Thought and Materials of Meditation for True Christians: to Which are Added, Easy and Beautiful Demonstrations of the Immortality of the Soul, extracted from Dr. Doddridge: also, the Foreknowledge of the Holy Spirit a Glorious Evidence of His Divinity* (London: sold by M. Lewis, No. 1, Pater-Noster Row, 1772), 2.

³²⁶ Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 21.

³²⁷ Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 5.

Father and God the Son are of the same “eternal essence.”³²⁸ Collett Ryland felt like the scheme of the Socinians and Arians was filled with “absurdity” because they held as their belief that there was “One divine person in the deity, and two creatures which have a rank far above the angels.”³²⁹ In his prose, Collett Ryland argued for the deity of Christ as being of the same essence as the Father. He said, “Jesus! How bright his glories shine? The great Emanuel is divine; One with the Father he appears, and all his Father’s honors shares.”³³⁰ Collett Ryland was adamant that the Son of God is “co-equal with the Father,” which directly contradicted the principles of Socinianism. According to Collett Ryland, the Socinians robbed Jesus of glory by denying his eternal existence and the incarnation of God: “Now, on their principles, a creature, i.e. the Holy Spirit, made the noblest and highest creature in the universe, i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ: and this creature the Spirit, furnishes Jesus with all his powers, gifts, graces, and miracles, which is a greater work than God the Father has ever done since the foundation of the world.”³³¹ In stark contradiction of the Socinian belief, Collett Ryland stated that Jesus is

God of the same essence with the Father, Jehovah, God, Jesus, Emmanuel; God with us, God in our nature, for us, God in us, God the Son in human nature, whose conception and birth is the wonder and glory of revelation, the wonder and beauty of the universe, the glory of heaven, the joy of earth, the terror of devils, and all lost souls; he is the true God and eternal life, the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the light, teacher, atonement, and righteousness; the ruler, governor, life and joy of all true believers.³³²

Conclusion

The complexity of the important battle over Trinitarianism in the seventeenth century, along with the need to solidify and unite the church doctrinally, spurred the

³²⁸ Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 21.

³²⁹ Ryland, *Contemplations on the Divinity of Christ*, xv.

³³⁰ Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 22.

³³¹ Ryland, *Contemplations of the Divinity of Christ*, xv.

³³² Ryland, *A Body of Divinity*, 21.

leadership of the Particular Baptists to develop critical confessions of faith that set the theological framework for the Particular Baptists. These confessions would be used by various Baptist churches to strengthen their doctrinal commitment to the Trinity and to distinguish themselves from the various other churches who utilized the moniker of being Baptist. This commitment for the Particular Baptist was solidified through the Trinitarian debates at Salters' Hall, thus opening the door for John Gill and his monumental Trinitarian influence on many pastors among the Particular Baptists, including John Collett Ryland and John Ryland, Jr.

The remainder of this dissertation will examine the Christological spirituality of John Ryland, Jr. and his commitment to orthodox Trinitarianism, as well as the importance of the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ. As a pastor, Ryland sought to keep Christ's deity at the forefront of his pastoral teaching, leadership, and care for the churches of which he pastored. This examination will show that Ryland held steadfastly to his orthodox heritage and his Christological spirituality as rooted in the deity of Christ and remained constant among the "grand delusion" of the antitrinitarianism of the Socinians and Unitarians of the latter part of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 3
RYLAND’S CHRIST-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY:
THE TRINITY AND THE DEITY OF CHRIST

On June 15, 1800, at the Baptist meeting-house at Carter’s Lane, Southwark, a church where John Gill had pastored until his death in 1771, John Ryland, Jr. preached a sermon entitled “The First Lye Refuted.” Ryland’s thesis for this sermon was to expose the “grand delusion” of Satan to mankind concerning Satan’s words to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, “thou shalt not surely die,” and to assert that mankind was “strongly inclined” to reject the notion of its need for Christ’s atonement for sin.¹ While the sermon dealt with the doctrine of God’s holiness and mankind’s need for redemption, it was a footnote that was included within the printed sermon that caused quite a stir among the English Socinians, especially from the Unitarian John Rowe (1764–1832). Rowe, who like Ryland also lived in Bristol, took offense from Ryland’s broad statement against the Socinians: “They account it their chief duty, to try to make men think less of Christ, than serious Christians generally do.”² Rowe, who felt as if Ryland had misinterpreted the Socinian position on Christ, issued a public response, entitled *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland, in Refutation to the Note Contained in His Sermon, entitled ‘The First Lye Refuted,’*³ in order to “repel the unfounded and injurious imputations of a gentleman,

¹ John Ryland, *The First Lye Refuted, or The Grand Delusion Exposed: A Sermon Preached at the Rev. Dr. Rippon’s Meeting-House in Carter-Lane, Southwark on Lord’s Day, June 15, 1800* (Clipstone Northamptonshire, England: printed by J. W. Morris, 1800), 32.

² Ryland, *The First Lye Refuted*, 32.

³ John Rowe, *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland, in Refutation to the Note Contained in His Sermon, entitled ‘The First Lye Refuted’* (Bristol, UK: Biggs and Cottle Johnson, 1801). Rowe was a unitarian minister, who was educated in Exeter under the Unitarian educator Joseph Bretland (1742–1819). Rowe’s main place of service was Lewin’s Mead Chapel in Bristol. “He was an impressive extempore preacher, and became a power in Bristol, both in charitable and in political movements. He was a founder

whose station and respectability will, very naturally, give currency and influence to his assertions.”⁴ Rowe denied Ryland’s accusations that Socinians were “endeavoring men to make less of Christ than [he] and other serious Christians generally do,” and found Ryland’s accusations to be a misrepresentation of the Socinians’ view of Christ’s status.⁵ Rowe argued that Socinians merely were attempting to “make men think justly, rationally, and scripturally, both of him and his religion.”⁶ Rowe outlined his Unitarian Christology in a footnote in his rebuttal letter to Ryland:

Unitarians, in the comprehensive sense of the word, are those, who believe in the Unity of God, but not in the Trinity. Unitarians, in a more restricted sense, or, as they are commonly called, Socinians, do not believe in the pre-existence of Christ, but they do believe, nevertheless, in his divine mission. Both unite in saying, with the Apostle, ‘though there be that be called Gods . . . unto us there is but one God, the Father;’ whom Christ calls his Father and our Father, his God and our God. Both, when they pray, worship the Father only; and, whatever human creeds may contain, or men may say to the contrary, Christ, who alone is our master, in things pertaining to Religion, hath told us, that if we worship the Father in spirit and in truth, we are the true worshippers.⁷

Rowe closed out his letter to Ryland by requesting that he and other Trinitarians develop a “benevolent spirit” towards those Socinians or Unitarians who deny the deity of Christ, yet they consider themselves as “fellow-labourer[s] in the gospel.”⁸ He also called upon Ryland to reconsider his account of the Socinians and questioned Ryland’s “authority” to speak on behalf of the Socinians. Rowe said, “There are hundreds, in this city, and I have the pleasure to say, not a few of them ‘serious Christians’ too, who can confute me, if I do not aver as truly, as I do positively, that you have none, no, nor the shadow of

of the Western Unitarian Society, which was established in 1792, on principles which many of his congregation thought too narrow” (Alexander Gordon, “Rowe, John,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Sidney Lee [London: Smith, Elder, 1897] 49:341).

⁴ Rowe, *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland*, 5.

⁵ Rowe, *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland*, 14.

⁶ Rowe, *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland*, 14.

⁷ Rowe, *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland*, 18–19.

⁸ Rowe, *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland*, 20.

authority.”⁹ Rowe’s challenge of Ryland’s authoritative position concerning the Socinians misinterpretation of the nature of Christ did not go unnoticed by Ryland and he would respond quickly with an 83-page reply entitled *The Partiality and Unscriptural Direction of Socinian Zeal*.¹⁰

In Ryland’s polemical reply to Rowe, he declared that he was shocked that Rowe took offense to Ryland’s declaration of the Socinian practice of stripping Christ of his divinity. Ryland wrote, “When I wrote this Note, I was so fully persuaded of the truth of the whole of it, that I acknowledge I felt considerable surprise upon hearing how much it displeased you.”¹¹ Ryland’s surprised reflections on Rowe’s displeasure stemmed from his understanding of the “acrimony of invective [which] many Socinians have long been accustomed to treat the Calvinists.”¹² Although Rowe called for Ryland’s temperance in his broad statements concerning the Socinians’ treatment of the divinity of Christ and the unity of the Godhead, Ryland refused to yield and remained convinced that one can maintain “a personal distinction in the Deity” of Christ without denying “the essential Unity of the Godhead.”¹³

While Ryland has not been recognized as a premier theologian among the Particular Baptists as have been John Gill and Andrew Fuller, he was noted in his day as a champion of Edwardsean Evangelical Calvinism, revivalism and prayer, denominational leadership, and, along with fellow Particular Baptist William Carey

⁹ Rowe, *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ryland*, 16.

¹⁰ John Ryland, *The Partiality and Unscriptural Direction of Socinian Zeal: Being a Reply to the Rev. Mr Rowe’s Letter, Occasioned by a Note Contained in a Sermon Entitled “The First Lye Refuted”* (Bristol, UK: Briggs and Cottle, 1801).

¹¹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 5.

¹² Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 6.

¹³ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 5.

(1761–1834),¹⁴ international missions. Though long neglected, Ryland’s sermons and polemical writings have recently received academic attention, thus revealing his important theological contributions in matters dealing with the antinomian debates, open communion, and the Modern Question controversy.¹⁵ Since there is no single systematic theological work written by Ryland concerning his beliefs in the Trinity, this chapter will examine Ryland’s sermons, association letters, and polemical writings in order to understand his orthodox Trinitarianism, including his commitment to the deity of Christ. The chapter will also discover how these doctrines had a direct bearing on the spiritual life of Ryland as a pastor, hymn writer, and leader among the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists.

Ryland’s Doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ

As a Christian educator tasked with the training of young ministers, Ryland encountered many theological challenges, including issues regarding the Trinity and the deity of Christ. In the “Memoir of the Late Rev. Robert Aspland,” printed in the 1847 issue of the Unitarian periodical *The Christian Reformer*, it discussed the theological path of the Unitarian Robert Aspland (1782–1845) from his Trinitarian convictions to become a leading Unitarian writer and educator in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1798, when Aspland was a young student already espousing non-orthodox views of God, he was assigned to Ryland to be mentored by him at Bristol Academy. Aspland, who was already

¹⁴ For more information concerning the life and ministry of William Carey, see S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey, D. D., Fellow of Linnaean Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923); Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope Press, 1991); William Travis, “William Carey: The Modern Missions Movement and the Sovereignty of God” in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 323–36.

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of the Modern Question or hyper-Calvinism versus Evangelical Calvinism among British Baptists, see Curt D. Daniel, “Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995); Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*; Paul L. Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010).

struggling with the doctrine of the Trinity, said in a letter that Ryland was not “one of the most liberal Calvinists,” and for a brief period, Ryland restored Aspland’s faith in the Trinity.¹⁶ In his journal entry on February 9, 1799, Aspland described Ryland’s theological influence on him by stating: “Since I have been with the Dr., my religious sentiments have been much settled. Religious research only ends with life, but I hope I have been enabled to form some basis on which future opinions may safely rest.”¹⁷ Based upon Aspland’s journal entry, he demonstrated his hope that he would be settled in his beliefs concerning the Trinity and that Ryland’s instruction to him would not “altogether been lost on [him].”¹⁸

As a Particular Baptist, as was evident from the purpose of the Western Baptist Association Circular Letter “Maintaining the important Doctrines of three equal Persons in the Godhead,”¹⁹ Ryland was committed to the doctrine of the trinity and the deity of Christ. In a letter addressed to “dear Brothers” in the United States, dated “March 15, 1815, Ryland commended “Dr. West” for amending his book “on the Atonement, respecting the Divinity of Christ,”²⁰ and Ryland stated that he “lent the book to Mr. Kinghorne (1766–1832) of Norwich, one of the most learned men of our denomination, and a very excellent, godly man.”²¹ Ryland understood that “no one could believe the

¹⁶ R. Brook Aspland, *Memoir of the Life, Works and Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Aspland of Hackney* (London: Edward T. Whitfield, 1850), 53.

¹⁷ Aspland, *Memoir of the Life*, 60.

¹⁸ Aspland, *Memoir of the Life*, 60.

¹⁹ John Ryland, “The Circular Letter from the Elders, Ministers, and Messengers, of the Several Baptist Churches of the Western Association, Assembled at BATH, June 7 and 8, 1797,” *Circular Letters, Western Baptist Association (1769–1814)* (Bristol Baptist College Archives: 19857), 1.

²⁰ John Ryland, “Original Letter of Dr. Ryland,” in *Spirit of the Pilgrims* (Boston: Peirce and Williams, 1829), 2:343.

²¹ Ryland, “Original Letter of Dr. Ryland,” 343.

atonement to be of infinite worth, who denies the infinite dignity of the Savior.”²² In a letter discussing the Trinity with a Unitarian, Ryland wrote:

If, therefore, you reject the doctrine of the Trinity, you must also reject the divinity of Christ, the need and the efficacy of his atonement, and all that constitutes the gospel, or glad tidings of salvation to the lost and the guilty. You must also, in full contradiction to the whole tenor of scripture, deny that men are lost and guilty, and deserving of being made the objects of the divine displeasure. You must also lose sight of the extent and spirituality of God's law, and entertain very different ideas of the moral government and moral attributes of God, from those which are evidently taught us in the scriptures.²³

From the above statement, it is obvious that Ryland was adamant that belief in the Divinity of Christ was essential to belief in the atonement, the evils of sin, obedience to God's commands, and “the infinite loveliness and absolute perfection of God.”²⁴ In a Western Baptist Association's circular letter concerning church discipline, Ryland argued that to deny the “divinity of Christ” would be a conduct that was “notoriously criminal” and blasphemous against Christ.²⁵ He added, “An avowed renunciation of evangelical principles, and especially an open opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, is sufficient ground for exclusion.”²⁶ Ryland argued that inclusion in the fellowship of the church was dependent upon whether the Son was honored “as they honor the Father.”²⁷ Therefore, for Ryland, belief in the Trinity was a foundationally orthodox doctrine that could not be compromised. In his letter to Rowe, he made this abundantly clear: “I would not have

²² John Ryland, *Christ Manifested and Satan Frustrated: A Sermon Preached at the Meeting-House in College Lane, Northampton, December 25, 1781* (Northampton, UK: Printed by Thomas Dicey and Co., 1782), A1–2.

²³ John Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *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), 2:384–85.

²⁴ Ryland, *Christ Manifested and Satan Frustrated*, 2.

²⁵ John Ryland, “The Circular Letter from the Elders, Ministers and Messengers of the Several Baptist Churches of the Western Association Assembled in Shortwood, in the Parish of Horsley, in Gloucestershire, May 23rd & 24th, 1804,” *Circular Letters, Western Baptist Association (1769–1814)*, (Bristol Baptist College Archives, 19857), 3–4.

²⁶ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . May 23rd & 24th, 1804,” 4.

²⁷ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . May 23rd & 24th, 1804,” 4.

entered thus far into this controversy, if I did not feel it to be of very great importance; for my time is exceedingly occupied with the necessary duties of my station.”²⁸ For Ryland, the belief in the deity of Christ was an essential tenet for salvation, and a doctrine of great importance for inclusion in the church.

On April 8, 1781, after serving alongside his father at College Lane Church, Ryland was invited to become the co-pastor of College Lane, along with his father, and was ordained by the church on June 8, 1781.²⁹ In *The Constitution and Order of A Gospel Church Considered*, John Fawcett (1739–1817) said of an ordination candidate that his “qualifications must be known by the society to which he belongs.”³⁰ According to Fawcett, this examination would include the candidate’s gifts within the church, his spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and the study of the Word, and his “Confession of Faith.”³¹ In his “Relating to the Usual Methods of Ordination among the Protestant Dissenters,” Phillip Doddridge (1702–1751) maintained that a typical ordination service, would include a time for the reading and discussion of the candidate’s Confession of Faith.³² Ryland’s Confession of Faith³³ would have been submitted to the Church and to all involved in the ordination service and read aloud by Ryland. In his Introduction to his

²⁸ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 77.

²⁹ 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, UK: Taylor and Son, 1897), 31. The *College Lane Church Book* recorded: “This day being fixed upon by the Church for the Ordination of J. Ryland junr. As Co Pastor with his Father. A meeting of prayer was attended by the Members from 6 till 8 in the morning. Public worship began at ten o’clock in the forenoon” (Taylor, *History of College Street Church*, 31). For an in-depth examination of the ordination of Ryland, see Chris W. Crocker, “The Life and Legacy of John Ryland Jr.: A Man of Considerable Usefulness – an Historical Biography” (PhD diss., University of Bristol and Bristol Baptist College, 2018), 105–11.

³⁰ John Fawcett, *The Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church Considered* (Printed and sold at Ewood Hall, near Halifax, 1797), 34.

³¹ Fawcett, *The Constitution and Order*, 35–36.

³² Philip Doddridge, “An Appendix, Relating to the Usual Methods of Ordination among the Protestant Dissenters” in *The Miscellaneous Works of Philip Doddridge* (London: William Ball, 1839), 884–85.

³³ John Ryland, “A Confession of Faith Delivered by John Ryland Jun 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 (Bristol Baptist College, Acc. No. 14884), 12.

Confession, Ryland was confident that hearers understood his commitment to orthodox divinity. He said, “It must be supposed that this people among whom I have labored according to the measure of my ability, from the beginning of my ministry until now, are already acquainted with my sentiments on the various heads of divinity.”³⁴

Ryland’s Confession of Faith, as was customary among the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth century, was ordered according to the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 and revealed his commitment to his understanding of God being a Trinity. In his “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,” he stated:

I believe upon his Testimony who is best acquainted with his own Nature, the Unity of the Godhead and at the same Time the true, proper, and equal Divinity of the FATHER, the SON, and the Holy SPIRIT—ascribing with the Scripture the very same Perfections to the SON and divine SPIRIT in the same sense and equal Extent as to the FATHER, as well as attributing to them Works equally honorable and glorious. It would ill become me who cannot explain how my Body, Soul and Spirit are one Man, to attempt explaining how the three that bear record in Heaven are one God. But surely I should act a most irrational Part, when there are mysteries to me inexplicable in every creature around me, to refuse my Assent to Gods Account of himself because I cannot understand the Essence of my Maker. It seems to me the greatest of Absurdities to suppose there should be nothing mysterious in the Nature of God, when there is so much of Mystery in every thing else.³⁵

For Ryland, describing God was not an exercise “of using ambiguous words, like the priests of the heathen in delivering the oracles of devils;” therefore his Confession of Faith concerning the nature of God was based upon his convictions that “the scriptures teach us the unity of the godhead, or the divine essence; and yet teach us to believe a Trinity in the godhead.”³⁶

³⁴ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 1.

³⁵ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 6.

³⁶ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

Like his father before him, Ryland was deeply committed to the centrality of Scripture as the basis for his confession of faith, including his commitment to the doctrine of the Trinity. Ryland argued that the Bible was a “Godbreath’d Book” and was “a full and sufficient directory respecting faith and practice.”³⁷ For Ryland, God’s Testimony possessed authority over “all ancient traditions and all new revelations,” including the “idolatrous” practices of the Socinians neglecting Scripture as their source of truth.³⁸ In Ryland’s letter to Rowe, he argued that the “principles” of Socinianism were “in a contrary direction to the Writers of the New Testament.”³⁹ Ryland rebuked Rowe and other Socinians who interjected false teaching contrary to the Bible as early as a few centuries after the death of the apostles, and their continuous labor, “century after century, in opposition to the too great exaltation of Him, whom all the penmen of the sacred volume endeavored continually to extol!”⁴⁰ Ryland’s commitment to orthodoxy according to Scripture was found in his challenge 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.”⁴¹ It was upon this “testimony” of God, on which Ryland built his understanding of God, for, as he stated, “I believe upon his Testimony who is best acquainted with his own Nature.”⁴²

The Nature of God as Trinity: Unity and Equality

Ryland stated in his Confession: “I am not convinced of The Existence of God, by the same immediate and sensible Consciousness which convinces me of my own

³⁷ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 5.

³⁸ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 52.

³⁹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 7.

⁴⁰ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 8.

⁴¹ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 5.

⁴² Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 6.

Existence, but yet I am quite as sure of it.”⁴³ Ryland held that the “light of nature” sufficed for proof of the existence of God and that sinners were without excuse concerning their need for salvation from God, although they would not have full knowledge of “how sin may be pardoned, and sinners be prepared for inner happiness.”⁴⁴ Ryland also believed that a “rational creature,” with no other revelations of God’s existence other than his own reasoning, who had no “faulty Disposition of heart,” could find enough evidence to perceive “his [God’s] Excellence, and [choose] Him as the supreme Good.”⁴⁵ Ryland argued for the existence of God from various people groups, including from, as he called them, the “heathen nations,” who have stolen the idea of revelation from nature that God exist, and then “cry up the sufficiency of the light of nature” as being their understanding that there is one “supreme being.”⁴⁶

In his Confession of Faith, Ryland argued that God’s testimony, or God’s Word, was not mysterious in his presentation of himself as existing and that his nature was clearly defined in this “Testimony.” Ryland stated:

I believe that God is a spiritual, eternal, self existent, independent and unchangeable Being—possessed of all possible Excellencies natural and moral—that he is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient; infinitely great, great and amiable in Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth. I believe that he is infinitely blessed, being self-sufficient to his own Happiness—that he is the first cause and last end of all Things—that he is the supreme Good, and is all sufficient for the Happiness of his Creatures and for the Government of the Universe.⁴⁷

What Ryland meant by the “nature of God” was the complex attributes or characteristics that belong to God, or that which related to God, which distinguished him as being God.⁴⁸

⁴³ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 2.

⁴⁴ Ryland, “On Missions to the Heathens,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:201.

⁴⁵ Cited in Yeager, *Early Evangelicalism*, 294.

⁴⁶ Ryland, “The Practical Atheism of Mankind,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:142.

⁴⁷ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 5–6.

⁴⁸ Ryland, “The Purchase of Truth,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:141.

In his defense of the Trinity, Ryland stated in his Confession that by nature there was one God who was in “Unity of the Godhead,” but yet this one God existed with “equal divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁹ For Ryland, he was convinced in both the existence of God and in the orthodox position that this one God exists as three persons, who were all equally divine.

One in essence. In his rebuttal letter to Rowe concerning “Socinian zeal,” Ryland asserted that the “Father, Son, and Spirit” were “one in essence”⁵⁰ and that he does not concede to the thoughts of the Socinians, who argued that those who believe a personal distinction in the Deity, deny the essential Unity of the Godhead.”⁵¹ Ryland’s use of the word “Godhead” demonstrated his commitment to orthodox language regarding the Trinity, including that of the First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1644/46): “In [the] . . . God-head, there is the Father, the Sonne, and the Spirit; being every one of them one and the same God; and therefore not divided”⁵² For Ryland, the oneness or unity of the Godhead was “a truth, which revelation alone could discover, but that which right reason cannot contradict.”⁵³ In a sermon, entitled “The Love of the Spirit,” Ryland stated, “Sober reason must admit numberless facts, which we can no more explain than we can explain the trinity. It is a mystery, but not an absurdity; for we do not say that God is three and one in the same sense; but that he unites in his nature perfect unity and complete society.”⁵⁴ He described “Unity of the Godhead,” in his response to

⁴⁹ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 6.

⁵⁰ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

⁵¹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 5.

⁵² William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 144.

⁵³ Ryland, “The Love of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:41.

⁵⁴ Ryland, “The Love of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:40.

Rowe, as the “Unity of the Divine Nature in the Sacred Three.”⁵⁵ Therefore, for Ryland, the Divine Nature of God was that God was One in “Essence.” He asserted, “As we believe the Father, son and Spirit, to be one in essence, so we view them as one in disposition.”⁵⁶ For Ryland, the “Unity of the Godhead” declared that God exists as one in divine essence, and like Gill before him, Ryland understood the essence of God in relation to the Trinity to mean that God was “undivided.”⁵⁷ Ryland argued that the “scriptures teach us the unity of the godhead, or the divine essence; and yet teach us to believe a Trinity in the godhead.”⁵⁸ Therefore, Ryland’s understanding that God existed as a Trinity in “disposition” or nature, was that the “undivided” God, who existed in the plurality of persons, were all equally God, but yet God was One in essence.

Plurality. As Ryland consistently argued for the oneness of God, in his letter to the Indian Unitarian Rammohan Roy⁵⁹ (1772–1833), known as the “Father of Indian Renaissance” and a social religious reformer, Ryland rhetorically answered a perceived question concerning the one essence of God as existing in plurality. He asked, “Who dares to affirm, that it is impossible that there should be a distinction in the divine nature, which is more than nominal or official, and yet does not amount to the existence of three separate Gods?”⁶⁰ Ryland clearly affirmed both the unity of God in one essence, and the plurality of God in Trinity, but yet not existing as three separate Gods, as he claimed the

⁵⁵ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 72.

⁵⁶ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

⁵⁷ Ryland, “The True Doctrine of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:154.

⁵⁸ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mahon-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382.

⁵⁹ For more information on Rammahon Roy, see Ram Chandra Bose, *Brahmoism, or: History of Reformed Hinduism, from Its Origin in 1830, Under Rajah Mohun Roy, to the Present Time, with a Particular Account of Babu Keshub Chunder Sen's Connection with the Movement* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884); Joshua Marshman, *A Defence of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ: In Reply to Ram-Mohun Roy of Calcutta* (London: Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, 1822); “Theology of the Hindoos, As Taught by Ram Mohun Roy,” *North-American Review and Miscellaneous Journal* 6, no. 18 (1818): 386–93.

⁶⁰ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382.

Socinians were accusing the Trinitarians of doing. Ryland said, “Let it be particularly kept in mind, that we do not say that God is three in the same sense in which he is one; and therefore it does not involve any contradiction.”⁶¹ If God existed as three God’s, Ryland contemplated, and they were all “co-equal, co-eternal, possessing the very same natural and moral perfections; so that where one is, there the others are; what the one knows, that the others know; what the one loves, that the others love; what the one wills, the others will,” it would have been difficult to understand the distinctiveness of each Person in the Godhead.⁶² While the Bible does teach the unity of Godhead, Ryland argued, it does not teach that there are three equal gods, but a Trinity in the Godhead.⁶³ He also stated to Roy that three equal gods is “infinitely different from three Beings of different abilities, and even of opposite dispositions,” and that it would only lead to arguing according to their differences, and not their unity.⁶⁴

In Ryland’s Postscript to his letter to Roy, he made it clear that within the entire corpus of Scripture, the plurality of God was clearly taught, including in the Old Testament.⁶⁵ In 1824, Ryland sent a copy of his original manuscript, entitled *Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament and an Examination of the Targums Respecting the*

⁶¹ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382.

⁶² Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382. “Tritheism is an anti-Trinitarian heresy. Tritheism is the belief in three gods, as opposed to the Trinitarian doctrine of three Persons in One Godhead. Tritheism understands that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three separate gods. It accepts the threeness of God, but ignores the unity of God” (Joseph R. Nally, “What is Tritheism,” Third Millennium Ministries, accessed August 2, 2021, <http://reformedanswers.org/answer.asp/file/46681>).

⁶³ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382.

⁶⁴ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382.

⁶⁵ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:389.

Memra Daihovah,⁶⁶ to John Pye-Smith⁶⁷ (1774–1851), Divinity Tutor at the Old College, Homerton.⁶⁸ Pye-Smith, who stated that Ryland gave him permission to copy the manuscript, produced a hand-written copy of *Traces of the Trinity* in June 1826 in his personal “common place book.”⁶⁹ W. J. Kidd, of Didsbury, a student of Pye-Smith’s, copied from Pye-Smith’s commonplace book the extract of Ryland’s *Traces of the Trinity*, along with several other articles, and made them available in 1828(?).⁷⁰ The extract of Ryland’s *Traces of the Trinity* was an examination of evidences of the Trinity located in the Old Testament, as well as a study in the Aramaic interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, the *Targum of Onkelos*.⁷¹ The extract began with Ryland’s main argument of the evidence of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Ryland, wrote:

The writings of Moses, as well as those of the preceding Jewish Prophets, were evidently intended to oppose Polytheism; or, to guard the people of Israel against the idea that there are more gods than one. It would, therefore, appear, if there were no peculiarity in the Divine nature, which rendered it proper, very strange that Moses should generally use a plural noun, as the most common name of the True

⁶⁶ John Ryland and W. T. Kidd, “Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament and an Examination of the Targums Respecting the Memra Daihovah,” in *Extracts from a common place book of Dr. J. Pye-Smith, containing a copy of a MS cent [i.e. sent] to him by Dr. John Ryland in 1824, on traces of the Trinity in the O.T. & Targums made by Rev. W.T. Kidd* (London: J. Russell, Jr., 1828). A hand-written manuscript of this extract is found in the archives of the Angus Library at Regent Park College, Oxford.

⁶⁷ For a detailed look at the life and ministry of John Pye-Smith, see John Medway, *Memoirs of the Life and Writing of John Pye-Smith, D.D., LL.D: Late Theological Tutor of the Old College, Homerton* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1853).

⁶⁸ Ryland, “Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament,” 1.

⁶⁹ Ryland, “Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament,” 1. The commonplace book has its origins in antiquity and has been the preferred method for writing down and remembering personal ideas, arguments, and extracts of important documents, especially theological documents, for many years. The Harvard University Library’s Open Collection Program states that “Commonplace books flourished during the Renaissance and early modern period: students and scholars were encouraged to keep commonplace books for study, and printed commonplace books offered models for organizing and arranging excerpts.” Typically, a commonplace book was a collection of significant or well-known extracts of passages to serve as a memory aid or a quick reference for the compiler. For a brief summary of Commonplace Books, see “Commonplace Books,” Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, accessed May 8, 2018, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/reading/commonplace.html>.

⁷⁰ Ryland, “Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament,” 1.

⁷¹ For an overview on Onkelos, see Tov Rose, *Targum Onkelos: The First Five Books of the Bible* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).

God; and the very same which he often uses in reference to the many other gods of the heathen.⁷²

Ryland's theme throughout this manuscript was that the Old Testament repeatedly utilized plural nouns and names, like Elohim, to describe God. Ryland pointed out that the name Elohim "appears in the very first verse of Genesis" and that it appears "thirty times more in the same chapter & many hundred times in the Pentateuch; & occurs, both in the absolute form, & in the constructive form."⁷³ It was clear from this statement that Ryland wanted his reader to be aware of the specific choice of Moses and the prophets of a plural noun used for God, while a singular noun could have been chosen by the writers. Therefore, Ryland's goal in his *Traces of the Trinity* was to give scriptural evidence of the plurality of God in the Old Testament in order to argue for the existence of the Trinity through Scripture. To bolster his argument, Ryland also utilized many Old Testament passages from the Polyglot Bible,⁷⁴ a text that consisted of translations of the Bible in various languages arranged in parallel columns. This arrangement of various languages allowed his readers to compare ancient and modern versions, as well as to examine closely the translation from one language to another. Therefore, Ryland was able to translate the verses on the plurality of God from the Hebrew, the Greek *Septuagint*, and the Aramaic text, the *Targum of Onkelos*, which allowed Ryland to examine every instance of evidence of the plurality of God from Job 1:2 to Malachi 2:7 through the *Targum*. This revealed his depth of study and passion for the truth of the Trinity.⁷⁵ It was

⁷² Ryland, "Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament," 1.

⁷³ Ryland, "Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament," 1. The absolute form of a Hebrew noun is in an independent form, while the construct form is a dependent word. For a detail description of the absolute and construct Hebrew nouns, see J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 43–49.

⁷⁴ For more information on the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible*, see the *Encyclopedia Britannica* article at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/polyglot-Bible>.

⁷⁵ Although Kidd and Pye-Smith did not include all of Ryland's commentary on the Targum, they did record Ryland's examination of another Targum found in the 1657 *Walton Polyglot*. This six-volume *Polyglot*, compiled by Brian Walton (1600–1661), consisted of the Old Testament paralleled and translated into nine different languages: Hebrew, Samaritan, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Ethiopic, Syriac, Arabic, and Persian (For a brief description of the *Walton Polyglot Bible*, see

clear from Ryland's "Traces of the Trinity" that he understood that the evidence of the Trinity in the Old Testament was only sufficient in light of the use of the plural name of God. In "Traces," Ryland stated the following:

As we have seen that the language of the O.T. favours the idea of some kind of plurality in the Godhead, so there are passages which indicate a Trinity not very securely: though, as might be expected in an introductory dissertation of religion (like that of Moses), they are rendered much clearer by comparing them with the fuller discoveries of the N. T.⁷⁶

Persons. As Ryland affirmed the unity of God, even in His plurality, he also recognized the distinction of "persons" within this unity. Philip Dixon, in his *Nice and Hot Disputes*, made note of the arguments that arose in the seventeenth century concerning the term "person" in relation to the Trinity. Dixon noted several reasons for these issues: "(1) the 'changing nature and function of language,' (2) redefinition of

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/polyglot-Bible#ref57531>. [access May 8, 2018]. In Ryland's examination into the *Walton Polyglot* volume four, on the Pentateuch, he argued that Walton mistakenly ascribed the *Targum on the Pentateuch*, called the Jerusalem Targum, to Jonathan Ben Uzziel, a contemporary of Onkelos (Ryland, "The Traces of the Trinity," 9). Ryland contended, "It is supposed that the *Targum on the Pentateuch* is falsely ascribed to him [Uzziel], the style being much inferior to that of his *Targum on the Prophets*: it is evidently of much later date, as he mentions Constantinople (which took its name from Constantine in the early fourth century after Christ) on Numbers 24:19" (Ryland, "The Traces of the Trinity," 9). Ryland's accusations stated that the Targum in the *Walton Polyglot* is filled with many "ridiculous fables," thus bringing into question the validity of the *Walton Polyglot* (Ryland, "The Traces of the Trinity," 9). Ryland made this argument to demonstrate that both the Unitarian Joseph Priestley's (1733–1804), *History of Early Opinions*, and John Pye-Smith's, *The Scriptures Testimony of the Messiah*, relied heavily on the *Walton Polyglot*, which, on several occasions, did not render the Aramaic Memra or word, as the Messiah (Ryland, "The Traces of the Trinity," 10–11). Ryland said, "The Targumists seem not to have understood v.ii [John 1:2]. That is to say, they speak of the Word, and of one who was in the beginning with God, was God; but they understood not that the Word was to become incarnate" (Ryland, "The Traces of the Trinity," 11).

⁷⁶ Ryland, "Traces of the Trinity," 4. Another interesting note concerning Ryland's argument for the Trinity being evident from the use of the plural name Elohim, is Ryland's use of other writers to make his case, including Unitarian writers, such as Lant Carpenter's *Examination of the Charges made Against Unitarians and Unitarianism* (Lant Carpenter, *An Examination of the Charges made Against Unitarians and Unitarianism and the Improved Version, by the Right Rev. Dr. Magee, Bishop of Raphoe* (Bristol, UK: T. J. Machee, 1820). Ryland wrote, "Dr. Carpenter, in his *Examination of _____*, says, '(with the exception of about three passages, in which Jehovah is represented as using plural pronouns) he speaks of himself, and is addressed by others, as One.' But Dr. C. takes no notice of Elohim being repeatedly used with plural verbs and adjectives" (Ryland, "Traces of the Trinity," 2). Another interesting twist with Ryland quoting Carpenter, is that Carpenter utilized writings of John Pye-Smith in his *Examination of the Charges*. This may give indication as to why Ryland sent his manuscript to Pye-Smith on *Traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament* and as to why Ryland mentioned Pye-Smith in his *Traces of the Trinity* argument (Ryland, "Traces of the Trinity," 4). Carpenter's *Examination* was, in part, a response to Pye-Smith's and other's "anti-Unitarian publications," which Carpenter described as a "crowded" genre, "that is difficult to keep pace with them" (Carpenter, *An Examination of the Charges*, xix).

person due primarily to the influence of Hobbes and Locke, and (3) trinitarian's lack of consensus on the meaning of person."⁷⁷ In the eighteenth century, Ryland engaged with many Unitarians and Socinians to defend the orthodox views of utilizing the term "person" in relation to God. Ryland, engaging with Richard Watson (1737–1816) concerning his claim of Calvinists displaying impiety in worship, stated, "Impiety is surely a heavy charge. Can it be brought against all who believe, as they apprehend at least, on the authority of divine revelation, that there is a mysterious distinction in the divine nature, so that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons . . . ?"⁷⁸ In his defense of the deity of the Holy Spirit, Ryland defended the use of "person" by arguing that Scripture "strongly intimates the personality of the Holy Spirit."⁷⁹ He understood that the language of Scripture concerning the "personality" of the Holy Spirit was "somewhat figurative," but not so much that one would conclude that the Holy Spirit was "not a person, but merely a quality" or "power of God" or even a "sanctifying influence of the Father."⁸⁰ Ryland, like many orthodox Trinitarians before him, understood that the "distinction" within the Godhead as "persons" was found in the scriptures, although the term itself was never used. He said, "Doubtless, the Holy Spirit of God, who is mentioned in nearly three hundred places in the Bible, by whom we understand, not one of the angels, nor any created super-angelic spirit, nor barely the divine power personified, nor a property of God; but a divine person, or a single subsistency in the Godhead."⁸¹ Ryland defined a "divine person, or a single subsistency" as one who had "understanding, will, and power of distinct operation," yet one who was complete in the

⁷⁷ Noted in Peter Tshombe Godet, "The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill (1697–1771): Context, Sources, and Controversy" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 201.

⁷⁸ Ryland, "On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:355.

⁷⁹ Ryland, "On Grieving the Holy Spirit," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:156.

⁸⁰ Ryland, "On Grieving the Holy Spirit," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:157.

⁸¹ Ryland, "The Love of the Spirit," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:41.

“essence, nature, and will” within the Godhead.⁸² He argued for the term “person,” because “person” expressed “the distinction, not the unity.”⁸³ Ryland conveyed to Roy that there was no “better term than a distinction of persons” when describing both the unity of God and the distinction of God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁸⁴ Ryland utilized John 14 to argue that the term “persons,” when used in reference to “Trinity in the godhead,” was the best term available to properly recognize the “distinction of persons.”⁸⁵ Ryland drew Roy’s attention to verse 16: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”⁸⁶ Ryland’s point was that within this verse, “there are three to whom the personal pronouns, I, thou, he, are applied.”⁸⁷ This was the same argument used by Daniel Waterland, according to Gill, to define “person” in relation to the Godhead. Gill, quoting Waterland, stated that “a single person is an intelligent agent, having the distinctive characters of I, thou, He, and not divided or distinguished into more intelligent agents, capable of the same characters.”⁸⁸

The distinction of persons among the Godhead was especially important to Ryland. He said, “For to us it appears a truth clearly revealed in the word of God, that there is a threefold distinction in the Deity more than nominal, or barely official, yet not of essence.”⁸⁹ Throughout his reply to Rowe and the Socinians, Ryland referenced Jesus as being a “divine person” among the Godhead, especially as it dealt with the Socinian

⁸² Ryland, “The Love of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:41

⁸³ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

⁸⁴ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

⁸⁵ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382–83.

⁸⁶ John 14:16 (KJV).

⁸⁷ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:382.

⁸⁸ John Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity, Stated and Vindicated. Being the Substance of Several Discourses on that Important Subject; reduc’d into the form of a Treatise* (London: printed and sold by Aaron War; and H. Whitridge, 1731), 57.

⁸⁹ Ryland, “The Love of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:40.

accusations that Particular Baptists “making too much of Christ.”⁹⁰ This distinction, according to Ryland, answered the “mystery” of Scripture’s requirement to baptize in the “name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” as well as its repeated contributions of “divine attributes and divine works repeatedly ascribed to each of these persons.”⁹¹ Ryland understood that the term “person” was mysterious, but it was an important description of the “complete society” of God. By the “complete society” of God, Ryland probably meant a single union of the three persons of God who exist as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁹² He argued that the terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were used in Scripture to “express the distinction” between the “Persons; and doubtless were chosen as the best adapted to our understandings, to point out the difference.”⁹³ Ryland expressed the “complete society” of the Godhead, like Gill before him, as a means of “subsisting” with one another, but not in terms of “succession.”⁹⁴ For Ryland, the terms referring to the Godhead as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit “express the distinction” of God, and “not the unity.”⁹⁵ In other words, these terms used to describe God’s persons, were terms to imply “correlation.”⁹⁶ In his letter to Rammohun Roy, Ryland made it clear that Christ was the Son of God, and the Father “is not a father, who has no Son.”⁹⁷ In other words, Ryland stated, “We believe that the First Person was always the Father, and the

⁹⁰ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 46.

⁹¹ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

⁹² Samuel Johnson, Moses Thomas, James Maxwell, Gideon Fairman, and John Walker, ed., “Society,” *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words Are Deduced from Their Originals, and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers: To Which Are Prefixed a History of the Language, and an English Grammar First American, from the eleventh London edition, to which are added, Walker’s Principles of English pronunciation* (Philadelphia, PA: Published by Moses Thomas [Johnson’s Head] no. 52 Chesnut-Street, 1818), 877.

⁹³ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

⁹⁴ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383–84.

⁹⁵ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

⁹⁶ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383–84.

⁹⁷ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

Second was always the Son.”⁹⁸ This Ryland stated so that there was no confusion of equating the “creatures” distinctions of father and son with God. He said, “We believe the Father to be God, and the Son to be God; but yet the Son is not the Father, because that is the term employed to express the distinction, not the unity.”⁹⁹

Ryland on the Deity of Christ

As Ryland’s doctrine of the Trinity has been explored, his understanding of Christ’s deity must also be studied in order to realize how these doctrines affected his spirituality. In 1770, Ryland penned his experience as a fourteen-year-old boy struggling with the “convictions” brought upon him by God and the ensuing doubt that plagued his “soul.”¹⁰⁰ Ryland found comfort in hearing a conversation between his father, John Collett Ryland, John Edwards (1714–1785), and Robert Hall (1728–1791), in which they discussed their own seasons of doubt. Collett Ryland “had been 12 Yrs in the dark, Mr. Edwards 4, [and] Mr. Hall 6.”¹⁰¹ Ryland would not find comfort or his “season of sweetness” until May 1768, but even then he admitted that he found great comfort from “violent doubt,” but still had doubt that would arise from the “corruption in [his] heart.”¹⁰² Ryland also addressed his doubts concerning key issues of the character of God, including the deity of Christ. He said, “I may know my state safe if there be a God & question whether there be or no—I have done so—I have a World of Atheism in my Heart—The Fool hath sd. in his Heart there is no God—I am yt Fool—I have been tempted to doubt of every thing in Religion from the Existence of a God down to Church

⁹⁸ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

⁹⁹ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

¹⁰⁰ H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” *Baptist Quarterly* n.s., 4 (1928–1929): 18.

¹⁰¹ Robinson, “The Experience of Ryland,” 21.

¹⁰² Robinson, “The Experience of Ryland,” 25.

Government & true Baptism.”¹⁰³ Ryland also admitted that it was at this time that he found himself in agreement with similar doubts experienced by the eighteenth-century Calvinist theologian, Joseph Hussey (1660–1726). Ryland cited Hussey’s acknowledgement that it was “natural for me to be an Arminian as it is to breathe.”¹⁰⁴ Ryland confessed, “I have been within this last Year very much troubled at the Doubts of others as bad almost as if they were my own souls Troubles—especially my dear young Brethren here—about ye time of the Meeting of Ministers I was much troubled wth. evil Questionings about ye Self-origination & personality of Christ.”¹⁰⁵ Ryland admitted that early on in his faith, he doubted the eternal Sonship or “self-origination” of Christ and His deity. Ryland’s doubts were erased through a sermon preached by Robert Hall, Sr. in which Hall declared from Genesis 19:24: “The Lord rained fire from the Lord,” and from Hebrews 1:8, “To the Son he saith ‘thy throne O God is for ever & ever.”¹⁰⁶ As for Ryland’s confession concerning his doubt of the deity of Jesus Christ, he said, “I have never been so plagued since.”¹⁰⁷

As we have already discussed, Ryland was thoroughly convinced in his Trinitarian convictions and in his understanding of the divinity of the Triune God. In his confession of faith, Ryland confirmed the “equal Divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” and that Scripture ascribed “the very same Perfections to the Son and divine Spirit in the same sense and equal Extent as to the Father.”¹⁰⁸ Ryland was committed to the distinct personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, as well as the deity of each person of the Godhead and considered the doctrine of the divinity of the persons of the godhead

¹⁰³ Robinson, “The Experience of Ryland,” 25.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of Ryland,” 25.

¹⁰⁵ Robinson, “The Experience of Ryland,” 26.

¹⁰⁶ Robinson, “The Experience of Ryland,” 26.

¹⁰⁷ Robinson, “The Experience of Ryland,” 26.

¹⁰⁸ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 6.

to be matter of Christian fellowship. He believed that “no man can entertain right ideas of God and his moral perfections” without a proper understanding of the “divinity of the Redeemer, and his infinite dignity.”¹⁰⁹ He argued that “prudent and humble Christians will not make a man an offender for a word; nor will they expect a perfect agreement in judgment, on every theological question, among a number of professors, who may yet give comfortable evidence that they hold the principle truths of revelation,” but this catholic spirit of Ryland did not apply to the Trinity or the deity among the persons of the godhead.¹¹⁰ In a footnote to his sermon before the Western Baptist Association, Ryland stated: “Hence the generality of those who reject the doctrine of our Lord’s divinity, evidently set up their depraved reason above Revelation: treating it as a thing incredible, even upon divine testimony, that there should be any such personal distinctions in the Deity, as they cannot comprehend.”¹¹¹ Ryland utilized John 5:35 to argue against the Socinian viewpoint that Scripture does not teach the deity of Christ by stating that “it is a fact, which many of them cannot wholly conceal from their consciences, that the Bible favors our idea, only they think it’s obvious sense so mysterious, that any violence should be offered to the language of the inspired writers, rather than that this doctrine should be admitted.”¹¹² Therefore, as Ryland explained, many who deny the deity of Christ also deny the “inspiration” and “infallibility of Scripture testimony.”¹¹³ In response to the Socinians who deny Christ, Ryland replied, “O that they would consider 1 John 5:10 ‘He

¹⁰⁹ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:368–69.

¹¹⁰ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . May 23rd & 24th, 1804,” 4.

¹¹¹ John Ryland, *The Certain Increase of the Glory and Kingdom of Jesus: A Sermon Preached as Chard, Somersetshire, on Wednesday Evening, July 11, 1794, at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Association* (Printed by John Rose, 1794), 35.

¹¹² Ryland, *The Certain Increase*, 35.

¹¹³ Ryland, *The Certain Increase*, 35.

that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which Gd gave his Son.”¹¹⁴

As noted, Ryland was convinced of Christ’s deity, and this commitment was obvious in his rebuttal to Rowe, in which he declared that to deny Christ’s deity was “blasphemy” and should be considered worse than “Atheism.”¹¹⁵ Ryland believed that the charge of “downright atheism” was a preferable allegation as compared to the Unitarian thought of degrading Christ of His deity, which he labeled as “downright blasphemy.”¹¹⁶ He declared, “If Jesus is but a fallible, peccable man, it never was in the power of Payne or Voltaire to degrade him so much below his true rank in the universe, as all of us, who believe him to be God manifest in the flesh, exalt him above it!”¹¹⁷ Ryland believed that to deny the deity of Christ, is to be relegated “into total Infidelity,”¹¹⁸ and that Christian churches had the right to “defend” their “creed by the sword of the Spirit.”¹¹⁹ Ryland’s argument was that a “Christian Society” cannot “flourish where important truth is sacrificed to worldly policy, under the specious names of candor and liberality.”¹²⁰ He said, “If we deny the divinity of Christ, and deny, or lessen his atonement, we must deny, or proportionably lessen, the evil of sin the importance of the law and the authority,

¹¹⁴ 1 John 5:10 (KJV).

¹¹⁵ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 31.

¹¹⁶ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 31.

¹¹⁷ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 8–9. Ryland mentioned the influence of Thomas Payne (1737–1809) and François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778), better known by his pen name, Voltaire, who both denied the deity of Christ. Payne’s *The Age of Reason* (1793/4) focused on his criticism of the miracles of Jesus, including his divine birth and resurrection. For Voltaire, he argued: “. . . Christians spent three whole centuries in constructing little by little the apotheosis [raising to the status of a god] of Jesus. . . Jesus was regarded merely as a man inspired by God, then as a creature more perfect than the others. Some time after he was given a place above the angels, as says Saint Paul. Every day added to his stature. He became an emanation of God manifested in time. That was not enough: he was held to be born before time itself. Finally he was made God, consubstantial with God” (Voltaire, “The Divinity of Christ,” *A Philosophical Dictionary* 3 [London: C. H. Reynell, Broad-Street, Golden-Square, 1824], 20).

¹¹⁸ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 9.

¹¹⁹ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . May 23rd & 24th, 1804,” 5.

¹²⁰ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . May 23rd & 24th, 1804,” 5.

majesty, and infinite amiableness of God.”¹²¹ For Ryland, if Christ was not honored as the Father was honored, then every Christian doctrine, including the governance of the Father, was in question.¹²² Concerning the debasing of Christ by the Socinians, Ryland stated that “we must extract from the dignity of the Lawgiver and moral Governor, in exact proportion as we do from the Savior.”¹²³ Since Ryland was convinced of the deity of Christ, if someone diminished Christ, then they were also diminishing the Father.

In a sermon entitled “The Influence of the Love of Christ, found in First Corinthians 5:14,” Ryland demonstrated both the unity and distinction between the Father and the Son through the charge of blasphemy handed down by the Pharisees against Jesus.¹²⁴ Ryland asked, “And after He was put to death for claiming equality with God, wouldst thou had raised him up and given him glory, and a name above every name?”¹²⁵ Ryland reasoned that the Father bestowed upon Jesus “a name above every name,” knowing that if the Pharisees were correct in their assumption of Jesus claiming to be God, then God honored Jesus who was merely a man claiming to be God. Therefore, according to Ryland, “it is the Father’s design, ‘that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father who sent him.’”¹²⁶ In his sermon concerning Christ as Mediator, Ryland described Jesus as “Noble, glorious, excellent; (Ex. 20.6) glorious in power; glorious in holiness; the brightness of the Father’s glory. The knowledge of him is excellent; to know him is eternal life. He thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and humbled himself by assuming the form

¹²¹ Ryland, *The Certain Increase*, 35.

¹²² Ryland, *The Certain Increase*, 35.

¹²³ Ryland, *The Certain Increase*, 35.

¹²⁴ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:90

¹²⁵ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:90.

¹²⁶ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 72.

of a servant.”¹²⁷ Ryland stated that “they who deny his proper deity, and definite original dignity, take off all the force” away from Christ’s humility of Philippians 2:5–7, “and leave little room to admire his condescension.”¹²⁸ He stated that Socinians’ making out Jesus to be merely a man, claim that only His humility was equal to God.¹²⁹ Ryland, opposing this line of reasoning, stated, “O Jesus! I believe thou art the Word, the true God and eternal life.”¹³⁰

Christ’s superior nature. In a series of sermons where Ryland compared Jesus to specific Old Testament prophets and kings, he wanted to demonstrate that Jesus was the “greatest pattern” for the New Testament church to follow and to honor with their life. Ryland utilized Matthew 12 to demonstrate that Jesus was greater than Jonah, Solomon, Moses, and Abraham. This line of teaching, according to Ryland, demonstrated the deity of Christ by elevating him above all others and revealed the “superior nature” of Christ over all creation.¹³¹ In his sermon “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” Ryland quoted Jesus as stating, “and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”¹³² Ryland recognized that even Jesus spoke of himself as being “superior;” therefore, he said, “Yea, had he been but a mere man, our text itself would seem sufficiently arrogant.”¹³³ Ryland also argued for the divinity of Christ through Christ’s statement that “Before Abraham was, I am

¹²⁷ Ryland, “The Furtherance of the Gospel,” in *Pastoral Memorials: Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Revd. John Ryland, D.D. of Bristol: With a Memoir of the Author* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1826), 1:177.

¹²⁸ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:236

¹²⁹ Ryland, “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:236–37.

¹³⁰ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:90.

¹³¹ Ryland, “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:237.

¹³² Matt. 12:32 (KJV). Cited in Ryland, “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:237.

¹³³ Ryland, “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:237.

Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”¹³⁴ Because Jesus was greater than Abraham and Solomon, Ryland exclaimed, “Let us admire the glory of our blessed Lord, submit to his authority, delight in his service, and pay diligent attention to his instructions.”¹³⁵

In a letter to the churches of the Western Association who had assembled at Bath in 1797, Ryland declared that Jesus Christ was the “alone Lord of Conscience, and the Head of the Church.”¹³⁶ For Ryland, the divinity of Christ, much like the doctrine of the Trinity, surpassed “our comprehension.”¹³⁷ Ryland, in his funeral sermon of Joshua Symonds (1741–1792), who was a Baptist minister in Old Bedford of John Bunyan’s church, stated that “the knowledge of Christ’s person, is intimately connected with our knowledge of the personal distinctions in the Deity.”¹³⁸ As for the “knowledge of Christ,” Ryland had in mind not knowledge that was taught, “but knowledge of which Christ himself was the grand object.”¹³⁹ Ryland derived this “grand” idea of Christ from Philippians 3:10: “that I may know Him, i.e. who he is, and what he is to us. Or, know him in his personal glories, and his relative characters.”¹⁴⁰ He continued his Trinitarian thought, by saying “that there are three who bear record in heaven, in whose names we are baptized and by whose grace, love and fellowship we are blessed.” His point was that as the doctrine of the Trinity was “not discoverable without revelation,” so was the

¹³⁴ John 8:56, 58 (KJV).

¹³⁵ Ryland, “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:239.

¹³⁶ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . May 23rd & 24th, 1804,” 4.

¹³⁷ 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: Sold by Buckland, Pater-noster-Row; and J. Pl. Lepard, 1787), 6.

¹³⁸ Ryland, *Christ, The Great Source*, 6.

¹³⁹ Ryland, *Christ, The Great Source*, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Ryland, *Christ, The Great Source*, 6.

doctrine of Christ divinity that He is our “grand object.”¹⁴¹ As for the person of Christ, Ryland argued:

If the fact be, as you maintain, that Jesus was a mere man, and never pretended to be any thing more, and that none of the apostles ever imagined him to be God as well as man; how came it to pass that both he and they should be so strangely misunderstood? How is it that thousands and myriads of his most serious and conscientious followers, have been led to give him that worship which he would have trembled to receive? And have paid him that regard, which, if he knows what has passed upon earth since his ascension, must almost cause him to regret that he ever came into the world?¹⁴²

In other words, the charge against Jesus and the Apostles, because they did not advise against calling Jesus a “mere man,” would have been to promote idolatry. Based upon the Socinians arguments against the deity of Christ and the Trinity, and the denial of these doctrines in the Bible, Ryland concluded that “the whole of the sacred writings must be pulled to pieces, to get rid of the doctrines connected with the divinity of Christ, and consequently with the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.”¹⁴³

The Trinitarian Spirituality of Ryland: The Deity of Christ

In his sermon “The Written Word Opposed to Impressions on the Imagination,” Ryland argued that the Scriptures were a perfect rule for life; that is, the doctrine taught in the Bible are the basis for the believers “faith and practice.”¹⁴⁴ For Ryland, the divine revelation of God was a “prize” from God in order to obtain “extensive wisdom and knowledge” for it was wisdom that comes, not from the world, but from above.¹⁴⁵ With much pastoral urging, he proclaimed:

¹⁴¹ Ryland, *Christ, The Great Source*, 6.

¹⁴² Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinians Zeal*, 46.

¹⁴³ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:375.

¹⁴⁴ Ryland, “The Written Word Opposed to Impressions on the Imagination,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:171.

¹⁴⁵ Ryland, “The Sorrow of Wisdom,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:150.

Let them prize divine revelation, and submit to its instructions. Account all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Implore and follow the light of the Holy Spirit, whose illuminations we need, not to reveal new truths which were not contained in the written word; but to show us the glory of the old revelation, which our depraved hearts would otherwise reject, on account of the humbling and holy tendency of its genuine doctrines.¹⁴⁶

Ryland called for the church to desire the “divine revelation” of God through the Scriptures, but he also called upon them to “examine” that their “knowledge be spiritual, humiliating, sanctifying, and experimental.”¹⁴⁷ In his sermon concerning authentic Christianity, Ryland often utilized the term “experimental knowledge” of Christ or of religion. His point for this term related to the internal sanctification of the Word on the believer and the working out of that word in the life of the believer. In a sermon entitled “Professors the Epistles of Christ,” a study of the “distinctions between real and nominal Christians,”¹⁴⁸ Ryland said, “Learn the internal, experimental, practical nature of true Christianity. It is seated in the inner man: it takes possession of the heart; but it must, and if it be genuine, it will appear in the life; so that men will be forced to see somewhat of its happy effects.”¹⁴⁹ While Ryland clearly appreciated his mentors and they added much to his theology and academic prowess, he must be first viewed as a Bible-centered pastor who preached in such a way to use biblical philosophy and theology as avenues to communicate the theology, such as the Trinity, and how this affects the life a believer. For Ryland, this was one of the characteristics of applied divine revelation. He understood that Scripture was “true and faithful, not false and delusive;” therefore,

¹⁴⁶ Ryland, “The Sorrow of Wisdom,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:150–51.

¹⁴⁷ Ryland, “The Sorrow of Wisdom,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:151.

¹⁴⁸ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:79.

¹⁴⁹ Ryland, “Professors the Epistles of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:83. Ryland said, “inward religion, if it be genuine, will show itself, not only in our words, our profession, our attendance on public worship, and ordinances, but also in our deportment among men, by acts of righteousness, self-denial, meekness, and true benevolence; delight in the communion of saints, readiness to sympathize with our Christian brethren; in taking complacency in the image of Christ, labouring to extend his cause, pitying the souls of men, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior; and in doing good to the bodies of men, with the farther view to their spiritual benefit, that we may recommend religion to them, and bring them to a conviction of reality and importance” (Ryland, “Christian Fruitfulness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:340).

Scripture was “connected with the practice of true religion.”¹⁵⁰ This connection was why Ryland charged the “communicants” of the Gospel, who he calls “professors,” “not to rest satisfied with once putting on Christ, but [to] exhort them so to walk as to evince that they abide in him.”¹⁵¹ In a 1798 circular letter to the Baptist Ministers and Messengers of the Northamptonshire Association, Ryland’s discussed the topic of “Godly Zeal.” Ryland wrote:

Unite zeal for principle and for practice. All evangelical truth is of a holy tendency, and is either misunderstood, or you do not enter into the spirit of it, if it does not regulate your tempers and influence your lives. On the other hand, nothing can so happily promote beneficence, integrity, and equity towards men, and piety towards God, as evangelical truth. Indeed there can be no genuine piety, without faith in Christ Jesus. And our regard to fellow-men, will prove essentially defective, and will be found to flow merely from worldly policy, or some modification of self-love, if it has not vital faith for its source.¹⁵²

Ryland described “zeal” as “a fervent, vehement motion of the mind, enflamed with love to some peculiar object, whereby it is excited to exert itself with earnestness and vigour on its behalf, and warmly to oppose every thing that threatens its injury.”¹⁵³ Godly zeal, according to Ryland, was “genuine piety” that was promoted and fostered through faith in Christ and founded upon the very word of God. He explained that zeal can be true and false, depending upon the object of affection. Therefore, according to Ryland, “Godly zeal expands the heart, and unites with the whole empire of God, pursuing a good of which all its members may partake without envious competition . . . therefore, it is the fervor of true benevolence, on of Holy Love, exciting the subject of the sacred affection to vigorous exertion for the good of its beloved object, and to strenuous opposition of

¹⁵⁰ Ryland, “Characteristics of Divine Revelation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:168.

¹⁵¹ Ryland, “Professors the Epistles of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:80.

¹⁵² Ryland, “Godly Zeal Decried and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:403.

¹⁵³ Ryland, “Remarks upon the Notion of Extraordinary Impulses and Impressions on the Imaginations,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:421.

whatever tends to its injury.”¹⁵⁴ According to Ryland, a true affection for Christ produces Godly zeal that influences the activities of a believer’s life.

In Ryland’s *Advice to Young Ministers*, he encouraged his young students to dedicate themselves to the study of Scripture and to pursue their studies in order to develop a deeper love for God. He instructed his students to “view all truth in connection with its central point. Remember the import of those emphatic, scriptural phrases Let every antecedent truth be pursued till it leads your hearers to the cross of Christ.”¹⁵⁵

Ryland’s concern for the study of Christ for young ministers extended out to the student both practically and devotionally.¹⁵⁶ He advised the following methodology for his students: “Enquire, what affections towards God should this truth incite? For what purpose was it revealed in the divine Word? [and] What use can I make of it in my own practice?”¹⁵⁷ For Ryland, the doctrine of the Trinity, especially as it relates to the deity of Christ, abounds with practical effects upon the spirituality of the believer, including himself as a pastor. In his arguments with Bishop Watson concerning the “impiety of Calvinism,” he defended the Trinity and the unity of the Godhead by reminding the Bishop of the practical command of God for baptism and the works of the Trinity in redemption.¹⁵⁸ For Ryland, the Trinity and Deity of Christ were far from being a distant and abstract theological construct, for he believed that the “knowledge of Christ” as the

¹⁵⁴ Ryland, “Remarks upon the Notion of Extraordinary Impulses and Impressions on the Imaginations,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:421.

¹⁵⁵ 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, UK: E. Bryan, 1812), 15.

¹⁵⁶ Ryland, *Advice to Young Ministers*, 15.

¹⁵⁷ Ryland, *Advice to Young Ministers*, 15–16.

¹⁵⁸ Ryland, “On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:355.

“grand object” was necessary for the hope of a sinner,¹⁵⁹ as well as producing in the believer an experiential knowledge in Christ for the purpose of “faith and practice.”

Worship of the Son of God

For Ryland, true worship was Trinitarian, which included the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. He said, “He that is now manifested in the flesh . . . is the Word, without whom not one was made that is made.”¹⁶⁰ Ryland was speaking of the angels, which were created by the Second Person of the Trinity, and thus received a “commandment to worship him.”¹⁶¹ In his sermon *Christ Manifested, and Satan Frustrated*, Ryland spoke about the “gratitude” that believers were to have for the Son of God and to “consider how noble is the design of the Son of God.”¹⁶² For Ryland, worship was directed towards the grand object of the believers faith and so he called upon his readers to “let praise for ever flow from our grateful hearts.”¹⁶³ In his sermon regarding Christ as the Mediator, Ryland addressed Christ with titles of authority. He called Jesus “A Captayne” of our salvation, a “Noble Ruler,” and the “ruler of Israel.”¹⁶⁴ In his sermon “Christ, the Great Source of the Believer’s Consolation,” Ryland demonstrated his elevated thoughts of Christ by calling Jesus the “eternal son of God,” “Jehovah,” “God’s fellow,” “Chief Shepherd,” “Good Shepherd,” “Husband of the Church,” “King

¹⁵⁹ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 6.

¹⁶⁰ Ryland, “Jesus Seen of Angels,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:213.

¹⁶¹ Ryland, “Jesus Seen of Angels,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:213.

¹⁶² Ryland, *Christ Manifested, and Satan Frustrated*, 48.

¹⁶³ Ryland, *Christ Manifested, and Satan Frustrated*, 49.

¹⁶⁴ Ryland, “The Reasonableness of Christ’s Mediation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:175. Ryland thought that the King James Version’s use of the term “governor” in Jeremiah 30:21, deviated from the Hebrew in favor of the Greek Septuagint (LXX). This was why Ryland utilized the word “Captayne” from the Bishops’ Bible (1568) and “Noble Ruler” from the Geneva Bible (1599) to make his case of Jesus being the “Captain of our Salvation” and the “Ruler of Israel” (Ryland, “The Reasonableness of Christ’s Mediation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:175).

of the Kingdom of Grace,” “Life of His people,” and the “All in All.”¹⁶⁵ Ryland’s evaluation of Christ was made clear in his sermon “The Brightness of God’s Glory.” He said, Jesus “must increase. He must reign, and be exalted in his own strength.”¹⁶⁶ The accusation from Rowe towards Ryland was that he made too much of Christ or that he had an “over-evaluation of Christ,” especially as it related to His deity and the worship of the Son of God.¹⁶⁷ However, Ryland pointed out to Rowe the elevated language used to describe Jesus by John in the Revelation. Ryland exclaimed, “How much is there to lead us astray, in the very last book of the Canon, if they that prostrate themselves in humble adoration before the Lamb that was slain, are indeed chargeable with idolatry!”¹⁶⁸ In his rebuttal to Rowe, Ryland noted that Socinian literature publicly warned the Socinian brethren to “refrain from Trinitarian worship”¹⁶⁹ and that Christ was merely a “teacher sent from God, a fallible, peccable man.”¹⁷⁰ Yet Ryland asked Rowe whether the Son of Man, whom John described in Revelation 1:15–16, was a mere man.¹⁷¹ Ryland argued that this description of Jesus Christ “nearly” resembled Ezekiel’s description of “the glory of the God of Israel” whose “voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory.”¹⁷² Describing Jesus’ own words, Ryland reasoned,

¹⁶⁵ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 9.

¹⁶⁶ Ryland, “The Brightness of God’s Glory, and the Hidings of God’s Power,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:202.

¹⁶⁷ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 65.

¹⁶⁸ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 54.

¹⁶⁹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 58.

¹⁷⁰ Ryland, “On the Connexion on the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:377.

¹⁷¹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 54. Rev. 1:15–16: “And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength” (KJV).

¹⁷² Ezek. 43:2 (KJV).

Was this the language of the lowliest of men, who never wished to be thought any thing more than man? “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death?” Rev. 1.8, 11, 17, 18.¹⁷³

If Jesus Christ was not God and “worthy to be considered as the head and husband of the whole body,”¹⁷⁴ then His expressions of forgiving sin and “calling himself the Son of God, so as to be understood by his countrymen as making himself equal with God” would justify “a cruel death on himself, by his incautious expressions.”¹⁷⁵ To demonstrate his commitment to the deity of Christ and the fact that he deserves to be worshiped as God, Ryland asserted,

Surely, sir, if I did not believe Jesus to be the Son of the Father, in that sense which imports real divinity, I never could persuade myself that he was a wise and good man! If he is not God incarnate, I must give up all hope, all faith, all dependance on revelation; I must grope through the world in darkness, and at death take ‘a leap in the dark,’ unable to guess what will become of me! But, thanks be to God for the expectation of joining the everlasting song, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! Thou wast slain, and has redeemed us unto God by thy blood!—Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and had made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.’¹⁷⁶

According to Ryland, this “great multitude” surrounding the throne of the Lamb of God of Revelation 5, demonstrated that salvation was both from the Father and the Son, and toward the close of the book, the Son, the Lamb of God, was the “temple of the new Jerusalem,” the “light,” and the “river of the water of life.”¹⁷⁷

Addressing the Socinians, Ryland said, “We think so very differently respecting the object of worship.”¹⁷⁸ Ryland accused the Socinians of entertaining a “far

¹⁷³ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 53–54.

¹⁷⁴ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 9.

¹⁷⁵ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 55.

¹⁷⁶ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 55.

¹⁷⁷ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 56.

¹⁷⁸ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 13. Ryland recalled being invited to attend a “Meeting of Ministers” upon his arrival to Bristol that included a “Mr. Jarnine,” “Who read to the Almighty

too diminutive . . . idea of the person of Christ”¹⁷⁹ because they only interpreted the existence of Christ in human terms. Ryland argued that the New Testament presented Jesus as being God, thus making him the appropriate beneficiary of divine worship. For example, when the Apostles and the disciples of Jesus appropriately honored Christ in worship, Jesus never rebuked them. According to Ryland, “They were employed in continually exalting him,” while the Socinians argued that the Apostles “ever imagined him to be God as well as a man.”¹⁸⁰ According to Ryland, it was the Apostle John who described Thomas’ assertion of praise towards Jesus, by declaring to Jesus, “my Lord and my God.”¹⁸¹ Ryland also mentioned the Apostle Paul who spoke of Christ’s love for the Church and “our obligations to love him,” as well as “for calling him God over all; and for saying, that all the angels of God were commanded to worship him.”¹⁸² Ryland also challenged the Socinians through Paul’s words to the church at Corinth, when he “determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”¹⁸³ He continued his argument utilizing Paul’s words that Jesus Christ was the foundation of the Church and the object of the Church’s love. Paul said, “‘If any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him anathema maranatha.’ What doom could he have denounced against them who love not God?”¹⁸⁴ Ryland reasoned whether God the Father would “have stiled

an accusation against the worshippers of our Lord Jesus, and requested that this idolatry, as he termed it as well as all other, might be abolished” (15). He continued, “On almost all occasions they labor to blacken and misrepresent every friend to the Calvinistic system; and no talents however respectable no piety however eminent, no regard to practical religion, can lessen the intemperance of their zeal” (16).

¹⁷⁹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 11.

¹⁸⁰ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 46.

¹⁸¹ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:89.

¹⁸² Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:89.

¹⁸³ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:379. Ryland quoted from First Corinthians 2:2 (KJV).

¹⁸⁴ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:379.

him thine only-begotten Son, if he had only been a son by adoption?”¹⁸⁵ Ryland believed that this claim of Jesus being the Son of God merely by adoption was exactly what Rowe was arguing concerning the person of Jesus Christ. He contended, “Mr. Rowe speaks of Christ as the Son of God by Adoption” and that Jesus was only a “very little higher, than that in which all good men are [God’s] children.”¹⁸⁶ Ryland rejected this notion by arguing that “men do not adopt their own children, but those who had naturally another parent. Christ therefore is not a Son by Adoption, but God’s only begotten Son. John 3. 16, 18.”¹⁸⁷ One last compelling argument from Ryland concerning the worship of the deity of the Son of God was found in the resurrection of Jesus. Ryland asked of the Father, “Wouldst thou have committed all judgment to the Son, if thou hadst not intended that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father? And after he was put to death for claiming equality with God, wouldst thou have raised him up, and given him glory, and a name above every name?”¹⁸⁸ In the closing arguments of Ryland’s “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” he made his compelling argument for the worship of Christ, the Son of God:

No other prophet ever became the rival of God; the object of most extensive and long continued idolatrous worship, but Jesus. Either he is truly the only-begotten Son of God, in such a sense as imports a participation of divinity; or he is an idol. If he be the latter, how ill does he deserve the appellations of “a light to enlighten the Gentiles,” who has actually, even if it could be unintentionally, led almost all Christendom astray, from the only living and true God?¹⁸⁹

Ryland reasoned that it was God the Father who bestowed upon the Son such appellations that would lead the church in the worship of the Son of God. He asked, if Christ was not

¹⁸⁵ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:89–90.

¹⁸⁶ Ryland, *The partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 49.

¹⁸⁷ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 49.

¹⁸⁸ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:89–90.

¹⁸⁹ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:379.

God and fit for worship, then, Ryland argued, the Father was leading the church astray in the worship of an idol.

Ryland also utilized church history to make his case for the worship of Christ. He argued that a “great majority of Christians” in the first two centuries had worshiped Christ and He has been divinely honored “ever since that period.”¹⁹⁰ Ryland stated that if the Socinians were right in their assessment of Christ being merely a man and not the object of worship, then “Christ has been idolized for at least sixteen hundred years; and consequently, it has been the main duty of the faithful servants of the true God, for all this long period, to endeavor to pull Jesus Christ down to his proper place, and to warn the most serious Christians against making too much of him, either as to the dignity of his person, or as to the design of his mission.”¹⁹¹ If the Socinians were correct in their assessment of Jesus, Ryland argued, then Jesus has been the “most unfortunate of all the servants of God. He has had far worse success than Moses, or any of the Jewish prophets They never were supposed to have claimed equality with God.”¹⁹² Ryland stated that if this be true, that the Trinitarians made more of the deity of Jesus Christ than scripture allowed, then the Socinians accusations against Trinitarians of having “mental debility, want of good sense, and partial insanity, mere defects of the HEAD,” were not strong enough objections.¹⁹³ Notwithstanding, Ryland, with great confidence in the worship of Christ, told Rowe that he did not strip liberty away from his sentiments concerning the worship of Christ, but assured him that by the authority and inspiration of Scripture, he

¹⁹⁰ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 47.

¹⁹¹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 47.

¹⁹² Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 48.

¹⁹³ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 51.

would defend what he called “the most important articles of my creed,” including the worship of the Son of God.¹⁹⁴

Worship of the Son for salvation. For Ryland, since the incarnated Son of God was the source of atonement and salvation, he was also the grand object of faith and worship. Ryland understood that salvation was an act of the “sovereign, distinguishing and efficacious grace of God.”¹⁹⁵ It was also a work of the Trinity. He said, “You should be humble indeed, who admit that eternal misery would have been your certain doom, had it not been for the free and self-moved grace of Father, the full and costly redemption of the Son, and the special and effectual influence of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹⁶ In the Trinitarian economy of redemption, stated Ryland,

We consider the Father as acting the part of the assertor of the rights of Deity, and also sending his Son to seek and save the lost, and to lay down his life a ransom for many; we view the Son as the great agent in obtaining redemption for us, by his becoming incarnate, and obedient unto death; and the Holy Spirit, as especially concerned in the applying salvation to the heart, and renewing sinners in the temper of their minds.¹⁹⁷

Ryland’s argument is that since Christ, who, a divine person, “hath purchased the church with his own blood,” the Father has designed that the Son be honored, “as they honor the Father.”¹⁹⁸ In making this point to Rowe, Ryland utilized the term “Lamb” or “Lamb of God” ten times in *The Partiality and Unscriptural Direction of Socinian Zeal*, thusly “ascribing Salvation conjointly to God and the Lamb.”¹⁹⁹ Ryland’s argument proceeded to Revelation 7, where the object of worship was the “Lamb of God.” John wrote, “After

¹⁹⁴ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 58.

¹⁹⁵ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . June 7 and 8, 1797,” 2.

¹⁹⁶ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . June 7 and 8, 1797,” 3.

¹⁹⁷ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

¹⁹⁸ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 72.

¹⁹⁹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal* 56.

this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”²⁰⁰ Ryland, speaking of the worshipers around the throne, said, “They are persons who have washed their robes, and given them this conspicuous whiteness and lustre, by means of the effusion of the Lamb’s blood.”²⁰¹ In an interview with Ryland, the Baptist pastor Daniel Turner (1710–1798) also made note of these worshippers around the throne of Christ. Taylor, also speaking against the Socinians, stated, that if Christ was not deity, then “the blood of Jesus Christ had no more to do with our salvation, than the blood of Alexander the Great.” Taylor then said, “Where should I be then? With the sins of fourscore years and ten! But oh . . . it is precious blood!”²⁰² For Ryland, the atoning works of Christ in salvation, demanded that he be worshiped, and like “all the saints in glory confess the same in their song, to him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his blood,” Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, was to be worshiped as the Father was worshiped.²⁰³

Worship of the Son through the ordinances. For the Particular Baptists, as well as for Ryland, the church ordinances were important parts of corporate worship, and in both, the Trinity was the foundation of this worship. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith stated: “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world.” Ryland also professed in his confession that the New Testament

²⁰⁰ Rev. 7:9–10 (KJV).

²⁰¹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 56.

²⁰² Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:375.

²⁰³ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:375.

prescribed to the Church “two positive Institutions which are of standing obligation upon his disciples and followers,” that is, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.²⁰⁴ Ryland believed that the ordinances were given to the church by Christ and that these ordinances in the church belonged to Christ. In *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer’s Consolation*, he instructed the church that everyone in the church was “bound to walk with the church in all love, and in the ordinances of Jesus Christ our Lord”²⁰⁵ Ryland saw the ordinances of Christ as “positive” precepts that were to be obeyed. He told the church:

Man was first ruined by violating a positive precept. Do you not seem to call in question the authority, wisdom, and kindness of Christ, who said, Do this in remembrance of me? Will you say, ‘I can remember him well enough, without using the means he has appointed?’ As long as I can hope to be saved without it, I do not regard his precept? This is not the spirit of a disciple.²⁰⁶

Ryland’s Confession of Faith concerning the ordinance of baptism revealed his commitment to the Trinity as equal participants in his salvation. In it, he declared:

Baptism or Immersion in Water in the Name of the sacred Three, being designed as a public acknowledgement of our Faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and as a striking emblem of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ our surety, who cleanses us from sin in the fountain of his blood, and as a solemn avowal of our obligations to die unto sin as buried with him, and to live here in newness of life, whilst we also expect a future resurrection to eternal Glory.²⁰⁷

In 1814, Ryland published an important work on Christian baptism, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from their Christian Brethren,*” to address some differences in specific beliefs concerning the Baptists and other denominations in relation to baptism. Ryland compiled this publication from a series of sermons that he had preached and set forth to “answer, for myself, the question once proposed on this subject, to him who first introduced the practice of

²⁰⁴ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 20.

²⁰⁵ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 47.

²⁰⁶ Ryland, “Requisites for Communion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:66.

²⁰⁷ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 20–21.

baptism into the church of God.”²⁰⁸ The question posed by the pharisees to John the Baptist was “Why then baptizest thou?”²⁰⁹

As Ryland examined this question, he argued that it was a valid question since every practice in the church must be examined against scripture.²¹⁰ He went on to state “that we ought to admit nothing into our system of religion for which we have not divine authority.”²¹¹ In other words, Baptism as an ordinance comes from the authority of Scripture and has been given to the church as a “commission from above.”²¹² In his 1797 address to the Western Association of Baptists, Ryland said, “You durst not have them baptized, without authority from Christ to administer that ordinance to them.”²¹³ He then quoted Jesus from Luke 20, when Jesus asked the Jewish leaders: “The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?”²¹⁴ Ryland’s point in this exploration of John’s baptism was to inform his readers that baptism was not of men, but from heaven and was sanctioned by Jesus, when he said, “All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”²¹⁵ For Ryland, baptizing in the name of the Trinity, authorized him to “practice” the ordinance and to not “neglect it, or deviate in any respect from the original institution of our only Legislator.”²¹⁶ Therefore, based upon the

²⁰⁸ John Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from their Christian Brethren . . . with a Letter on the Subject of Communion, by the late W. Clarke*, 2nd ed. (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1827), 1.

²⁰⁹ John 1:25 (KJV).

²¹⁰ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 2.

²¹¹ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 3.

²¹² Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 3.

²¹³ Ryland, “The Circular Letter . . . June 7 and 8, 1797,” 8.

²¹⁴ Luke 20:4 (KJV).

²¹⁵ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 4.

²¹⁶ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 4–5.

example of Christ, baptism, according to Ryland, was only by “immersion; and that Christian baptism was neither more nor less than an immersion of the whole body in water, solemnly performed, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”²¹⁷ For Ryland, immersion was an important aspect of biblical baptism, because it fit the “very significant expression, ‘Buried with him by baptism into death.’”²¹⁸

Another aspect of baptism as worship, according to Ryland, dealt with his rejection of infant baptism in favor of “believer’s baptism.” The practice of Ryland, as a Pastor, as well as a Particular Baptist, was to baptize only those who “make a credible profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,” and who demonstrate this profession by “bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.”²¹⁹ Since Ryland interpreted the ordinances according to the economy of redemption, he answered the question, “Who ought to be baptized?” by stating, “We think in our consciences that none ought to be admitted to this ordinance, any more than to the table of the Lord, but such as in the judgment of charity are partakers of true repentance and vital faith.”²²⁰ Ryland also restricted the rite of baptism from any who have not fully embraced Christ as the “Lamb of God” and who have not brought forth fruits meet for repentance, or from any who can not faithfully declare, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that “Jesus is Lord.”²²¹

²¹⁷ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 5. Ryland stated, “Our idea is confirmed by scripture examples, and the circumstances attending the baptism there recorded, as well as by the avowed signification of the institution, of which I shall take more notice by and by. They that went out to John were baptized of him in the Jordan, whither Jesus came to be baptized, and when he was baptized he went up straightway out of the water” (Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 10).

²¹⁸ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 12.

²¹⁹ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 13. To understand Ryland’s aversion to infant or pedobaptism, and the outward sign of circumcision in relation to infant baptism, see Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 13–20.

²²⁰ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 20.

²²¹ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 21.

As a manner of practice for Ryland, as a pastor administering the ordinance of baptism, he spent time with each candidate for baptism, to examine their faith and have an assurance that this person has “already” been “born of God.”²²² In Ryland’s examination, he would ask if the candidate for baptism understood that the “solemn act of worship” was only in the acknowledgement of the “Triune Jehovah, as the only living and true God; and, as their own act and deed, to devote themselves to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”²²³ Therefore, Ryland would not baptize unless the candidate affirmed the Trinity and the deity of Christ. A second question from Ryland dealt with the candidates understanding of “total depravity” and “they are come to a place where much water is, that they may, by being washed all over, indicate a deep conviction of their entire pollution, and need of universal cleansing.”²²⁴ Now, Ryland was not arguing for baptism as an action for the remission of sins; rather it was a demonstration through immersion, that the whole person was guilty and in need of an “abundant pardon,” as well as the person’s deep need for “abundant purification.”²²⁵ This deep conviction of being totally depraved, led Ryland to ask if the baptismal candidate had genuinely avowed “their faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.” Ryland would then remind the candidates that they have been “planted together in the likeness of his death, being buried with him by baptism into death: he also was raised again for their justification, and they hope to be planted together in the likeness of his resurrection.”²²⁶ Ryland’s argument concerning the ordinance of baptism was that it was a display of one having “communion with [Christ].”²²⁷ In this communion, Christians were to disavow sin and separate

²²² Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 26.

²²³ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 26–27.

²²⁴ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 27.

²²⁵ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 27.

²²⁶ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 27–28.

²²⁷ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 28.

themselves from the sinful practices of the world. Finally, Ryland would make one last pastoral statement about the baptismal candidate's object of their faith concerning Christ's resurrected body and "their hope of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."²²⁸ In this statement, Ryland reminded them of their eternal gratitude towards Christ for his vicarious death on the cross for their sins. Ryland stated that baptism was an "emblem of death."²²⁹ He described to the candidate for baptism that he would immerse them for a moment, "in the name of our blessed Lord," and "will easily and instantly raise you out of the water."²³⁰ Baptism, according to Ryland, was a reminder that it was Christ who took on death and

for your sakes, will be with you when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, which the light of his countenance shall turn into the morning of glory; and he will, with a word, raise up your bodies at the last day, transformed into the likeness of his own glorified and immortal body, in which he now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high.²³¹

For Ryland, baptism was a demonstration of Christ's presence in the life of the believer and his promise of his eternal presence with that believer through death and throughout eternity.

Clearly, Ryland was committed to the ordinance of baptism as an act of worship of the Triune God. In his beliefs concerning the act of baptism and reasons for baptism, Ryland also demonstrated his affections for his Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, he declared, that the ordinance of baptism "demands . . . serious examination into the proper mode of its administration; the proper subjects to who it should be administered; and the important ends for which it has been appointed."²³² Ryland rejected all modes and

²²⁸ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 31.

²²⁹ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 31.

²³⁰ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 31.

²³¹ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 32.

²³² Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 33.

reasons for baptism that did not properly align with Scripture, and as an avenue of worship and remembrance, he was careful to attend to the ordinance as an important part of the church.

Much like today, Ryland existed in a time when Baptists disagreed on a variety of topics, and the way they expressed these variations differed depending upon the group that disagreed or the topic in which they disagreed. Ryland acknowledged that there was some who disagreed with him concerning the Lord's Supper or Communion and who "react[ed] violently against him, even if this [was] the only issue of disagreement."²³³ While at College Lane Church, Ryland was part of a communion controversy involving "Strict and Open Communion."²³⁴ College Lane's covenant described itself as a mixed-communion church; that is, they accepted at the Lord's Table, those who had been baptized by immersion or those who were paedobaptists.²³⁵ Ryland stated in his *A Candid*

²³³ Yeager, *Early Evangelicalism*, 298. In his Confession, Ryland stated, "And in the Lord Supper I believe that by the receiving of bread and wine as appointed by the dear Redeemer we shew forth the Lords Death, commemorating his sufferings for our sake and being encouraged to expect the communication of all spiritual blessings from him, are edified in the faith and in love to him and to each other as fellow members of his mystical Body" (Ryland, "A Confession of Faith," 21).

²³⁴ Ryland, *A candid statement*, X. While discussing the communion controversy among Baptists, Lon Alton Graham wrote, "'Open communion' has gone by other names, such as mixed (or mixt) communion and free communion. Those who have opposed the practice have adopted the name strict (or restricted) communion or closed communion. The more well-known works advocating an open communion position include John Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment about Water-Baptism, No Bar to Communion* (London: John Wilkins, 1673); Robert Robinson, *The General Doctrine of Toleration Applied to the Particular Case of Free Communion* (Cambridge: Francis Hodson, 1781); and Robert Hall Jr., *On Terms of Communion* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1816). Other advocates of the practice include Henry Jessey, John Ryland Jr., and Charles Spurgeon. Well-known works against the practice include William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (London: George Larkin, 1681); Daniel Taylor [as Philalethes], *Candidus Examined with Candor. Or, a Modest Inquiry into the Propriety and Force of what is contained in a late Pamphlet; intituled, A Modest Plea for Free Communion at the Lord's Table* (London: G. Keith, 1772); Abraham Booth, *An Apology for the Baptists. In Which they are Vindicated from the Imputation of Laying an Unwarrantable Stress on the Ordinance of Baptism; and against the Charge of Bigotry in Refusing Communion at the Lord's Table to Paedobaptists* (London: Dilly, 1778); and Joseph Kinghorn, *Baptism a Term of Communion at the Lord's Supper* (Norwich: Bacon, Kinnebrook, 1816)" Cited in Lon Alton Graham, "John Collett Ryland, Daniel Turner, and A Modest Plea," *Baptist Quarterly* 52, no.1 (34–42, 2021), DOI: 10.1080/0005576X.2020.1775441.

²³⁵ John Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton, with Biographies of Pastors, Missionaries, and Preachers; and Notes on Sunday Schools, Branch Churches, and Workers* (Northampton: Taylor and Son, 1897), 22.

Statement, that he had been in favor of open communion since around 1767.²³⁶ He defended his position by stating: “It is Lord’s Table, and not mine; therefore I dare not refuse those whom he has accepted, (however mistaken they may be respecting the other ordinances) unless he had commanded me.”²³⁷

Ryland wrote a sermon entitled “Requisites for Communion,” which focused on Paul’s words to the Church at Corinth found in First Corinthians 11. Ryland understood the purpose of the Lord’s Supper was a time within the church set aside for the memorial of the incarnation of Christ and his death.²³⁸ He focused on Paul’s warning to the church “for ‘not discerning the Lord’s Body,’ or not discriminating the Lord’s Body; not making a proper distinction between the Lord’s Supper and an ordinary meal.”²³⁹ Ryland made a distinction that the “ordinary meal” was for “support of the corporeal frame,” while the “Lord’s Supper” was “for the benefit and refreshment of the soul.”²⁴⁰ Ryland argued that the phrase “not discerning the Lord’s Body” was written by Paul for the instruction “that they only partake worthily of the Lord’s body, who duly discern the Lord’s Body, as it is therein exhibited to our faith.”²⁴¹ In his sermon, Ryland addressed the reasons why the church was to “duly discern the Lord’s Body.” Ryland

²³⁶ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, X. The published date of the first edition of Ryland’s *A Candid Statement* was published in 1814. Ryland stated that he had practiced Open Communion for “nearly seven and forty years” (Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, X). Ryland’s father, John Collett, at some time became an open communionist, but it is unclear when. L. A. Graham argued that “The Articles of Faith of the Warwick Baptist Church, hand-written in the script of J.C. Ryland, include a section on baptism and the Lord’s supper, in which a closed communion doctrine is clearly stated: ‘We believe that Baptism and the Lords supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his Second Coming and that the former is absolutely requisite to the latter, that is to say, that those only are to be admitted into the Communion of the C[h]urch, and to Participate of all ordinances in it who upon profession of their faith, have been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’” (Cited in Graham, “All who Love our Blessed Redeemer,” 198–99).

²³⁷ Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, X.

²³⁸ Ryland, “Requisites for Communion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:63.

²³⁹ 1 Cor. 11:29 (KJV).

²⁴⁰ Ryland, “Requisites for Communion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:64.

²⁴¹ Ryland, “Requisites for Communion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:64.

began with the understanding that the Lord’s Supper was a time for the church to acknowledge in worship that Jesus Christ was Lord and that he was truly a divine person.²⁴² Therefore, the belief in the deity of Christ was imperative in “duly discerning the Lord’s Body” during the Supper, which would have prevented the Socinians from properly partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Ryland taught the church that Jesus was “our rightful sovereign,” who had the power to lay his own life down, and the power to resurrect from the dead.²⁴³ This belief led Ryland to discuss the incarnation of the Son of God, and that the Lord’s Body represented that Jesus was God in the flesh, who had come to save through His sacrifice of his body and blood. This deep “self-abasement” of Christ on account of sin should, according to Ryland, bring the church into a time of reverence for Christ, to submit to the authority of Christ, and to be obedient to the will of Christ.²⁴⁴ Ryland concluded his sermon “Advice to Young Ministers” with this reminder concerning the Lord’s Supper: “May we ever inculcate the necessity of making redemption by the Lamb of God the daily food for the soul, which imparts consolation to our hearts, and invigorates every holy disposition.”²⁴⁵

Worship of the Son through hymn writing.²⁴⁶ Ryland, like his father before him, honored the dignity of Christ through poetry and the writing of hymns. In 1771,

²⁴² Ryland, “Requisites for Communion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:64.

²⁴³ Ryland, “Requisites for Communion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:64.

²⁴⁴ Ryland, “Requisites for Communion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:64–66.

²⁴⁵ Ryland, *Advice to Young Ministers*, 29.

²⁴⁶ For more information on hymnody during this period see: Joseph V. Carmichael, *The Sung Theology of the English Particular Baptist Revival: A Theological Analysis of Anne Steele’s Hymns in Rippon’s Hymnal* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2021); Donald Davie, *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Elsie Houghton, *Christian Hymn-Writers* (Bryntirion, Bridgened, Mid Glamorgan: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1982); John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology: Setting Forth the Origin and History of Christian Hymns of all Ages and Nations*, vol. 2, P to Z (New York: Dover Publications, 1957); Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2011); Daniel Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects, by the Late Rev. John Ryland, D.D. of Bristol, The Greater Part of Which are now Published for the First Time from the Original* (London: Daniel

Ryland published his first book entitled *Serious Essays*, which consisted of 121 of Ryland's poems.²⁴⁷ Overall, Ryland wrote and published 799 poems,²⁴⁸ with many of these being converted to hymns, although very few received wide-spread circulation. John Julian, in his *Dictionary of Hymnology*, described Ryland's hymns as being "plain and simple,"²⁴⁹ while Daniel Sedgewick described Ryland's hymns as being "straight from the experience of the writer's heart."²⁵⁰ Sedgewick, in his biography of John Ryland, said, "Dr. Ryland often indulged a taste for poetical compositions Indeed his first appearance as an author was in a poetic garb."²⁵¹

In 1848, Sedgewick published ninety-four hymns by Ryland, and included a few poems written by Ryland on his deathbed. In many of his hymns, Ryland demonstrated his Trinitarian convictions by amplifying the deity of Christ. In the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord Self-Existent Deity," Ryland expressed his dedication and convictions in a verse concerning the Trinity, especially as they relate to Christ's deity. He wrote about the Trinity:

HOLY, holy, holy Lord!
Self-existent deity,
By the hosts of heaven ador'd,
Teach us how to worship thee,
Only uncreated mind,
Wonders in thy nature meet;
Perfect unity combin'd
With society complete.²⁵²

Sedgewick; Hamilton, Adams, Paternoster Row, 1842); and J.R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

²⁴⁷ John Ryland, *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel, and the Various Branches of Vital Experience. For the Use of True Christians* (London: J.W. Pasham, 1771).

²⁴⁸ Cited in Crocker, "The Life and Legacy of John Ryland, Jr.," 372.

²⁴⁹ Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, 2:984.

²⁵⁰ Houghton, *Christian Hymn-Writers*, 168.

²⁵¹ Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses*, ix.

²⁵² Cited in Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses*, 32.

In his first verse, Ryland clearly demonstrated his dedication of the worship to God and the declaration that this God was holy, yet, by the end of the verse, Ryland begins to insert worship as being Trinitarian. He stated, “Perfect unity combin’d with society complete.” Ryland’s use of the word “society” in describing God was likely pulling language from Jonathan Edwards,’ “Discourse on the Trinity.” Edwards utilized the term “society” to better understand “the equality of the persons among themselves, and that they are every way equal in the society or family of the three.”²⁵³ The term was used in this hymn to demonstrate a “perfect unity” in the godhead and the equal honor that was due to each person. In verse two, Ryland defined the society of God by expressing the Trinity poetically:

All perfection dwells in thee . . .
Three in one, and one in three,
Great Jehovah, God alone!
Be our all, Lord divine!
Father, Saviour, vital breath!²⁵⁴

Ryland clearly stated that there was one God in three persons, and then defined God as being “Great Jehovah, God alone” and “Father Savior, vital breath!” As for the deity of Christ, Ryland stated:

Fearful thou in praises, too,
Loving Saviour, slaughter' d Lamb!
We, with joy and reverence, view
All thy glory, all thy shame!
— Be thy death the death of sin,
Be thy life the sinner's plea:
Save me, teach me, rule within, —
Prophet, priest, and king, to me.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, vol. 21: Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards Series (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 21:136.

²⁵⁴ Cited in Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses*, 33

²⁵⁵ Cited in Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses*, 32.

This verse declared that Jesus was worthy of “praises,” for He was the “Loving Saviour” and the “slaughter’d Lamb.” For Ryland, the redemptive work of Christ as the “Lamb of God,” was worthy of giving honor and reverence to Christ, and he even mentioned that it was Jesus Christ who saves, teaches and rules within a believer.

In “Let us Sing the King Messiah,” which Ryland wrote in 1790, he devoted much of the language to the worship of Christ. He wrote, “Let us sing the King Messiah, King of righteousness and peace”²⁵⁶ In these first two lines, Ryland clearly demonstrated that the object of his worship was “King Messiah,” the “King of righteousness and peace.” In Ryland’s sermon “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” he declared that Jesus was “greater” than Solomon and David, who Ryland stated was the “first monarch in the world.”²⁵⁷ Jesus was also the object of worship, for He was the “King of Righteousness and Peace.” This was an obvious comparison by Ryland to Melchizedek, the “priest of the Most High God,” who blessed Abraham.²⁵⁸ Melchizedek was called the “king of salem,” or “king of peace,” and the “king of righteousness.” In Ryland’s “A Supposed Dialogue between Nathan the Prophet and Absalom,” Ryland spoke on behalf of Nathan on the superiority of Messiah, “who should crush the serpent’s head . . . promised to our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . and be from the earthly lineage of David.”²⁵⁹ It was this Messiah, Ryland proclaimed, that David built his hope upon for the forgiveness of sins and through the Messiah “the way of reconciliation shall be more fully manifested.”²⁶⁰ Ryland, speaking on behalf of David, said, “I have no hope

²⁵⁶ Cited in Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses*, 33.

²⁵⁷ Ryland, “Jesus and Solomon Compared,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:237.

²⁵⁸ Ryland, “A Supposed Dialogue between the Prophet and Absalom,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:320.

²⁵⁹ Ryland, “A Supposed Dialogue between the Prophet and Absalom,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:322.

²⁶⁰ Ryland, “A Supposed Dialogue between the Prophet and Absalom,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:322.

of salvation but on the same footing; that is, all my hope is founded on underserved mercy, and on the promised Messiah.”²⁶¹ This was why Ryland followed up the first two lines with such an expression of worship:

Hail him, all his happy subjects,
Never let his praises cease;
Ever hail him,
Never let his praises cease.²⁶²

Ryland’s hymns focused on many Particular Baptist and Calvinist themes, including Ryland’s passion for his adoration of the Son of God. In 1777, he penned the hymn “O Lord, I would delight in Thee,” which focused on a desire to love and depend more upon Christ. He wrote:

1. O LORD! I would delight in thee,
And on thy care depend;
To thee in every trouble flee,
— My best, my only friend!
2. When all created streams are dried,
Thy fulness is the same;
May I with this be satisfied,
And glory in thy name!
3. Why should the soul a drop bemoan,
Who has a fountain near,
— A fountain which will ever run
With waters sweet and clear?
4. No good in creatures can he found,
But may be found in thee;
I must have all things, and abound,
While God is God to me.
5. Oh, that I had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil,
— To credit what my Saviour saith,
Whose word can never fail!
6. He, that has made my heaven secure,
Will here all good provide:

²⁶¹ Ryland, “A Supposed Dialogue between the Prophet and Absalom,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:322.

²⁶² Cited in Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses*, 33

While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I want beside?

7. Lord! I cast my care on thee;
I triumph and adore:
Henceforth my great concern shall be
To love and please thee more. Dec. 3, 1777.²⁶³

Ryland stated that, while composing this hymn, he was overwhelmed by “deeper feelings of mind” concerning the person of Christ. The hymn revealed Ryland’s great affections for Christ and his belief in Christ’s deity. He wrote on the original manuscript: “I recollect deeper feelings of mind in composing this hymn, than perhaps I ever felt in making any other.”²⁶⁴ For Ryland, the deity of Christ, as well as the Trinity, developed in him deep affections for God and worship.

Preaching the Son of God

In his *The Three Rylands*, James Culross stated that Ryland’s preaching was “highly vigorous and intellectual, as well as of a very devotional, cast.”²⁶⁵ He also spoke of the “great topics of Divine truth” that filled Ryland’s sermons. When Ryland’s sermons are examined, it clearly reveals his commitment to the “great topics” of the Trinity and the deity of Christ, for these doctrines are woven throughout his sermons and polemical writings. At the 1813 Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Baptists, Ryland equated preaching with the sound of a trumpet. Utilizing Paul’s words to the church at Corinth, he stated: “For if the Trumpet give an uncertain Sound, who shall prepare himself to the Battle?”²⁶⁶ Ryland said, “The faithful Preaching of the Gospel is justly comparable to the Sound of the Trumpet, whereby persons were excited to prepare

²⁶³ Cited in Sedgewick, *Hymns and Verses*, 29.

²⁶⁴ Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, 983.

²⁶⁵ James Culross, *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service* (London: Elliot Stock, 1897), 85.

²⁶⁶ 1 Cor. 14:8 (KJV).

for battle.”²⁶⁷ In was the purpose of the trumpet, according to Ryland, to sound the alarm in such a way that the troops in the field “were directed when to march, when to charge the foe, and when to retreat.”²⁶⁸ For Ryland, the proclaimer of the Word of God had a great responsibility for the church, to both sound off with the Word, and to make sure that the Word of God preached has a certain sound—“faithfully published and rightfully explained.”²⁶⁹ Ryland exclaimed, “I preach the truth with a loud voice, and sometimes labour to come close to the consciences of my hearers.”²⁷⁰ As a Trumpeter of the Gospel, Ryland was concerned that he proclaimed a “certain sound” concerning the practical implications of the Trinity and the deity of Christ in the life of the believer. In his 1798 sermon before the Western Association of Baptists, Ryland spoke of “the infinite Dignity of his Person;” that is, the “Excellence of Christ.”²⁷¹ This was a common theme throughout the preaching ministry of Ryland. He asserted that Christ must be worshiped and “that the Angels of God were commanded to worship him.”²⁷² He said, “The Prophets foretold that his Name should be called Immanuel, Jehovah our Righteousness, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and they asserted that he, who should be born in Bethlehem, was one whose goings forth had been from of old, from everlasting.”²⁷³ For Ryland, an important part of his preaching was to proclaim the

²⁶⁷ John Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet’s giving a Certain Sound: A Sermon Preached before the Ministers and Messengers of the Baptist Churches belonging to the Western Association, at their Annual Meeting Held at Lyme* (Bristol, UK: E. Bryan, 51, Corn Street, 1813), 7.

²⁶⁸ Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet*, 8.

²⁶⁹ Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet*, 8. Former professor and pastor, Thomas McKibbens, said, “People loved John Ryland foremost because of his transparent piety. No sham, no affectation, no pretense—he was aglow with the gospel.” (Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr., *The Forgotten Heritage: A Lineage of Great Baptist Preaching* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986], 59).

²⁷⁰ Ryland, “The Relation of Christ to Believers,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:54.

²⁷¹ John Ryland, *The Dependence of the Whole Law and the Prophets, on the two Primary Commandments: A Sermon Preached Before the Ministers and Messengers of the Baptist Churches, belonging to the Western Association; at their Annual Meeting* (Bristol, UK: Biggs and Cottle, 1798), 29.

²⁷² Ryland, *The Dependence of the Whole Law*, 28.

²⁷³ Ryland, *The Dependence of the Whole Law*, 28.

excellency and knowledge of Christ, including the truth of the Trinity. Both the Trinity and the deity of Christ permeated every aspect of Ryland's sermons.

In discussing the excellencies of Christ, Ryland would often speak of knowing Christ, especially knowing Christ in his deity. In his sermon at the funeral of Joshua Symonds, Ryland spoke of having "consolation" in knowing Christ as our "grand object" of worship, for the purpose of knowing who Christ is, and "what he is to us."²⁷⁴ Ryland's intent in this funeral sermon, was to express the church's hope in Christ, as One of the "three who bear record in heaven," as well as to describe to them Christ's identity. Ryland used Symonds' own words, regarding the identity of Christ, to bring comfort to the church. In a letter Symonds had written to Ryland, he stated, "The Lord is immensely kind to the vilest of the vile; he takes delight in bestowing the choicest blessing upon an object the most base and unworthy O the peace of God the Father, the love of the dear Immanuel and the grace of the Holy Spirit, all surpass knowledge."²⁷⁵ It was evident from Symonds' letter to Ryland that Symonds found great comfort in the economy of the Trinity, and that his eternal hope and joy was found in the expressed "glorious connection" that God's people have with the Trinity through Christ. Symonds claimed that when he contemplated Christ, he was "steady" in a "constant peace," because, as he put it, "I am just going to my blessed Redeemer, with unutterable joy and transport."²⁷⁶

Preaching: A Trinitarian vocabulary. All throughout Ryland's sermons and polemical writings, he was consistent in his use of Trinitarian language in his references to God. Typically, Ryland referred to the members of the Trinity utilizing the language given in Scripture. For example, in his sermon "The Reasonableness of Christ's Mediation," he said, "The Mediator between God and man is a person of the most exalted

²⁷⁴ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 6.

²⁷⁵ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 6.

²⁷⁶ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 5.

dignity.”²⁷⁷ However, when Ryland spoke of God in relation to His Persons, he was consistent in speaking of God the Father and God the Son, as well as God the Spirit. If one were to examine Ryland’s sermons, taking note of his description of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one would find that he consistently confirmed the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity throughout Scripture. In his writings, Ryland often used phrases such as “God the Father” or “God the Son,” while he typically referred to the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of God.” On rare occasions, especially when Ryland was speaking about the distinct nature of the Trinity, he used the distinctions of “First Person” or “Second Person” or “Third Person” of the Trinity. These numeric distinctions were used sparingly by Ryland and seem to only be used in descriptions of the economy of God. For example, in Ryland’s sermon, “The Indwelling of the Spirit,” he stated, “By the Spirit, is to be understood the Holy Spirit, the third person in the ever blessed Trinity; to whom, in the economy of redemption, the application of salvation is allotted.”²⁷⁸ Ryland’s consistency of Trinitarian language in his sermons and writings, as well as his use of these terms for his entire ministry, demonstrated his commitment to orthodox and Particular Baptist doctrines, and his effectiveness of a pastor in training the church.

Another aspect of Ryland’s vocabulary was his commitment to speaking of the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For example, as Ryland spoke of the mediatory work of Christ, whom Ryland described as “a person of the most exalted dignity,”²⁷⁹ he also maintained the equal divinity of the Father and Son. He said, “He [Christ] is unspeakably near and dear to the Father; his associate; the joint partaker of Deity; his only-begotten and beloved Son”²⁸⁰ As for the Holy Spirit of God, Ryland also used

²⁷⁷ Ryland, “The Reasonableness of Christ’s Mediation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:177.

²⁷⁸ Ryland, “The Indwelling of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:16.

²⁷⁹ Ryland, “The Reasonableness of Christ’s Mediation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:177.

²⁸⁰ Ryland, “The Reasonableness of Christ’s Mediation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:177.

terms like “divine person,” and in his sermon to the church concerning the “The Love of the Spirit,” he said, “Hold fast the scripture doctrine of his divine personality, or of his personality and divinity.”²⁸¹ Ryland was consistent in his exaltation of the Trinity, and his vocabulary of their divinity was consistent throughout his life of preaching.

Preaching the economy of the Trinity in redemption. In his sermon on the connection between the Trinity and redemption, Ryland stated that properly viewed, the Trinity was “in connexion with the whole plan of human redemption, its importance appears to be very great,”²⁸² In the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, it stated, that God exists in three Persons and “is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties;” that is, “the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son.”²⁸³ Within the scope of redemption, these relative properties describe the economic functions and activities that were distinct among the persons of the Trinity. In Ryland’s sermons and writings, he often drew attention to this “economy of redemption” or the “economy of salvation” to discuss the various roles that each Person of the Trinity performs in the activity of redemption. In Ryland’s sermon, “The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction,” he gave several examples of the distinct roles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as they relate to the redemption of the elect. He preached: “The Father asserts the rights of Deity common to the sacred Trinity.”²⁸⁴ In the economy of redemption, Ryland taught that it was the Father who was the “assertor” of the redemption plan, and this revealed the “true character” of

²⁸¹ Ryland, “The Love of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:45.

²⁸² Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:368.

²⁸³ William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 237.

²⁸⁴ Ryland, “The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction,” in *Pastoral, Memorials*, 1:342.

God the Father.²⁸⁵ Ryland stated that the Father’s assertion of the redemptive plan revealed that the Father was equally the “friend to sinners,” as was the Son. Also, continued Ryland, “the undivided Trinity unite in design”²⁸⁶ of the redemptive plan of God; that is, the Father “gratefully unites with Christ in the design of his redemption, and is pleased with his whole plan of redemption.”²⁸⁷ The assertion by the Father, which expressed the depth of this salvation, was an activity of the Trinity from eternity past. After reading the essays of Thomas Gisborne (1758–1846), the Anglican priest and abolitionist, Ryland felt compelled to engage Gisborne concerning the sovereignty of God in salvation. He spoke of the “determination” of God the Father to bring the elect unto “genuine repentance and vital faith,” and his putting the “Spirit within them; to inspire them with godly fear, that they may not depart from him.” He also said, “We believe the elect of God were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world . . . that they might be, by the influence of his grace, holy and blameless before him in love: that they were predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.”²⁸⁸ Ryland declared that this important truth of activity of the Trinity in salvation was revealed in John 5:26–27: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” Ryland stated, “According to the covenant of redemption, it is conceded that he should, in consequences in his obedience unto death, give eternal life to all his elect.”²⁸⁹ In this line of preaching, Ryland demonstrated the true nature of God, and the determination of the Father when planning for sinners’ redemption.

²⁸⁵ Ryland, “Christian Fruitfulness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:339.

²⁸⁶ Ryland, “The True Doctrine of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:154.

²⁸⁷ Ryland, “Christian Fruitfulness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:339.

²⁸⁸ Ryland, “Remarks on a Passage in Gisborne’s Essays,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:310.

²⁸⁹ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

Ryland also explained, that within the economy of redemption, “the Son becoming incarnate, satisfies divine justice”²⁹⁰ and was the “agent in obtaining redemption.”²⁹¹ In his rebuttal to Rowe, Ryland stated that it was the Father that sent “his Son to seek and save the lost, and to lay down his life a ransom for many.”²⁹² Ryland, in his sermon “None Rejected by Christ,” said that Christ, in the economy of redemption, was revealed in the “character of the great high priest” in order for the Son of God to “offer gifts and sacrifice for sin, and make intercession for all them that come unto God by him.”²⁹³ Now, how did Christ become this offering of sacrifice or atonement for sin? Ryland preached that this redemption by the Son was accomplished through His being “obedient unto death.”²⁹⁴ Ryland said, “Now he [Christ] hath put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself; for he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; he made his soul an offering for sin; and now his blood cleanses from all sin; for he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; he has obtained eternal redemption, and is able to save to the uttermost.”²⁹⁵ As for Christ being God, Ryland stated that the “dignity of the Redeemer’s person enhanced the value” of the redemptive work of Christ.²⁹⁶ It was through Christ’s deity, according to Ryland, that it was said that the church has been purchased or redeemed “with his own blood.”²⁹⁷ Ryland preached that the difference in the sacrificial system of bulls and goats was found in the dignity of Christ. He stated, “It

²⁹⁰ Ryland, “The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:342.

²⁹¹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

²⁹² Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

²⁹³ Ryland, “None Rejected by Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:304.

²⁹⁴ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

²⁹⁵ Ryland, “None Rejected by Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:304.

²⁹⁶ John Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse of the Law: A Sermon Preached at Cheltenham, Sept. 13th, 1820, at the Opening of the New Meeting-house Belonging to the Baptist Church, Under the Pastoral Care of the Rev. Mr. Walton* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1820), 26.

²⁹⁷ Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse of the Law*, 26.

was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin . . . they made a typical atonement,” thus providing “temporal judgments” from the penalties of sin.²⁹⁸ Again, this was why Ryland declared Christ to be the “agent of obtaining” redemption in the economy of the Trinity.

Ryland’s primary theme in terms of the economy of redemption was the salvific work of Christ, as God, in the life of the elect. He said, “None of the fallen race of Man can entertain a rational hope of glory, but what must be found on Christ alone, that Anointed Saviour who died without the gates of Jerusalem, who lives and reigns in the glory now, and lives and reigns with the breast of every sincere believer.”²⁹⁹ In his sermon concerning the preacher as the Trumpet of God, Ryland stated that Christ was the “Great Captain of our Salvation.” He added, “Surely it is necessary that we should be clear and determinate in our account of the person of Christ.”³⁰⁰ Ryland believed that the Socinians made an “uncertain sound” with their philosophy of Christ being a mere man. He reasoned, “If Christ is a mere man like ourselves, how can he ensure us the victory? How can he expiate our guilt, and save our souls from hell? They, indeed, who assert that he is only a man, deny that he made any Atonement for sin; and affirm that none was necessary.”³⁰¹ Ryland understood that the atonement demanded that Christ be more than a mere man and that the assurance of the completed work of the atonement rests on this fact.

The Socinian tenet of Christ being merely a man was in stark contradiction to Ryland’s examination of John’s account of the Word or Christ found in Ryland’s sermon “Christ the Life of Men.” Citing John 1:14, that Christ was the “only-begotten of the

²⁹⁸ Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse of the Law*, 26.

²⁹⁹ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 4.

³⁰⁰ Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet*, 16.

³⁰¹ Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet*, 16.

Father,” Ryland argued that the divinity of Christ was clearly “maintained . . . in the strongest terms” and that “life resides” in Christ, “the true and living God.”³⁰² This was why, according to Ryland, John could move so quickly from the Word being Creator and the Word being Life through redemption; “since the latter is the chief end of the former, and is that which chiefly displays the ineffable glory of the Son of God.”³⁰³ What is apparent in this line of Ryland’s reasoning is that it is important for one to know who Christ is; therefore, like Paul, Ryland stated: “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”³⁰⁴ Ryland preached that this Christ-centered gospel was an “often declared” message of the New Testament.³⁰⁵ Quoting from John 10:26, Ryland commented, “‘The Father hath given the Son to have life in himself.’ i.e. According to the covenant of redemption, it is conceded that he should, in consequence of his obedience unto death, give eternal life to all his elect.”³⁰⁶ Therefore, Ryland noted, Christ is the “Prince of Life. Acts 3:15. The Tree of Life. Prov. 3:18, Rev. 2:7. The Bread of Life. John 6:33. 35. 48. The Word of Life. 1 Joh1:1. Thus life was in him, who was set up from everlasting as the federal head of his people, who were chosen in him, and to whom, God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life, before the world began.”³⁰⁷ For Ryland, he understood the importance of Christ and the cross at the center of atonement for sin. He preached, “Life appeared to be in him, when in the fullness of time he came into the world, to redeem his people from death, to publish the words of eternal life, declaring himself to be the way, the truth and the life.”³⁰⁸ As noted earlier in this chapter,

³⁰² Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:290.

³⁰³ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:290–91.

³⁰⁴ 1 Cor. 2:2 (KJV).

³⁰⁵ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

³⁰⁶ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

³⁰⁷ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

³⁰⁸ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

Ryland stated that if one rejected the Trinity, then one would also have to reject the “need for atonement.” The reason for this was that when one denies the Trinity, one also denies the deity of Christ, therefore, Ryland stated if the deity of Christ was denied, then so was the “infinite worth of his atonement.”³⁰⁹ Rowe opposed Ryland in his views of the atonement by claiming that the term “atonement” is not frequently used in Scripture, only occurring in Romans 5:11. In his sermon “Reconciliation by the Death of Christ,” Ryland demonstrated his commitment to both the need for Christ’s atoning works for the sinner, and the work of the Father and the Son in the divine superintendence of atonement. Utilizing Romans 5:11,³¹⁰ Ryland said, “I am fully convinced; and, whether you call it atonement or reconciliation, I believe 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 had made reconciliation for transgressors, and that they who are interested in his atonement, or reconciliation, have reason to rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”³¹¹ Ryland made this same point, as well as his commitment to the Trinity, in numerous other sermons, including Christ’s divinity in his preaching of the doctrine of atonement. He said:

God has wisely secured all the glory to himself. The glory of planning salvation is due to his infinite wisdom, and we can put in for no share. The glory of providing the Saviour is due to God; he provided for himself a lamb . . . Great misrepresentation is used, when we are charged with representing the Father as all sternness and severity, and the Son as all pity and compassion . . . The glory of effecting this reconciliation is due to a divine person, who is one in essence with the Father, though personally distinct, who became incarnate for this very purpose.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:368. Ryland’s connecting the plan of redemption with the Trinity and deity of Christ, sounds much like Gill. Gill said, “As Gill admonished John Reynolds (1730–92) at his ordination to remember that the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental article of revealed religion: “The doctrine of the Trinity of persons in one God . . . is the foundation of religion, and of the economy of man’s salvation; it is what enters into every truth of the gospel, and without which no truth can be truly understood, nor rightly explained” (John Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts in Two Volumes* [London: George Keith, 1773], 2:53).

³¹⁰ “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom. 5:11 (KJV)).

³¹¹ Ryland, “Reconciliation by the Death of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:1–2.

³¹² Ryland, “Reconciliation by the Death of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:4.

As for the Holy Spirit's role within the economy of redemption, Ryland stated that the Spirit "operates in man for God; leading the soul into the knowledge of the truth; by renewing and sanctifying grace; working conviction in the mind, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."³¹³ In other words, the Spirit applies "salvation to the heart" and is responsible for renewing the sinner with the new life and a new mind.³¹⁴ Ryland stated that the Holy Spirit, in relation to the economy of redemption was the "agent of application."³¹⁵ Ryland asserted that without the "agent of application," "we should have rejected the counsel of God against ourselves; but [he] made us willing in the day of his power to return to God."³¹⁶ Ryland's sermons consistently highlighted the different tasks that the Father, Son, and Spirit perform to help his hearers have a better understanding of the economy of the Trinity because he understood redemption to be a trinitarian affair.

Conclusion

Throughout the Trinitarian conflicts of his lifetime, Ryland stood firmly upon his convictions, but displayed this candor humbly before his disputants. Culross described Ryland as being as "firm as he was courteous."³¹⁷ Ryland explained, "I simply wish to state my own views of the subject, that no one may conceive of them as either better or worse than they actually are. Let the reasons I have given of my opinions be impartially examined, that everyone who reads them may either accede to them or reject them, as conscience shall dictate."³¹⁸ Hall portrayed Ryland's character as having a

³¹³ Ryland, "The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:342.

³¹⁴ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

³¹⁵ Ryland, "Reconciliation by the Death of Christ," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:4-5.

³¹⁶ Ryland, "Reconciliation by the Death of Christ," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:5.

³¹⁷ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 86.

³¹⁸ Ryland, *A candid statement*, v-vi.

“certain timidity of spirit,”³¹⁹ yet it never caused him to shrink from speaking out against doctrinal errors nor from neglecting his leadership qualities that would have affected many in that generation. Ryland began his personal summary of Baptist beliefs by stating, “As we are directed, by the apostle Peter, to be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us; so would we wish to do the same as to every part of our religious practice; and we desire to do this also with meekness and fear.”³²⁰ Throughout Ryland’s sermons and writings, he consistently demonstrated his commitment to Trinitarian orthodoxy, even when he was opposed by Rowe and other spiritual leaders of the eighteenth century. Ryland was a champion of the “efficacy of the Redeemer’s sacrifice” and diligently preached on the importance of Christ’s dignity within the sacrificial atonement provided by the Lamb of God. He asked, “What is He? What can he do for us? And what honor should we render to him? How shall we be assured that we not attribute too much to him or to his mediation?”³²¹ Ryland also spoke about and demonstrated how the doctrine of the Trinity and Christ’s deity had a direct bearing on his ministry as a pastor. He was faithful to show how to apply these doctrines to his preaching and to his worship, both corporately, through his leadership in baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and personally, which was revealed in his poems and hymnody. As Ryland concluded his sermon “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity with other Truths,” he made this observation:

If we conceive of Christ merely as a teacher sent from God, a fallible, peccable man, why is the kingdom of heaven said to be like a King, who celebrated the nuptials of his Son? Matt. 22. Does this accord with the idea of the king’s son being co-ordinate with the servants, or with those who were invited to the feast? Or does it not present

³¹⁹ Robert Hall, Jr. *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D.D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5th, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1825), 35.

³²⁰ Ryland, *A candid statement*, 1.

³²¹ Ryland, *The Necessity of the Trumpet*, 18.

him as a unique character? All the propriety of the parable seems lost, if we lose sight of the incarnation of Christ, and of the work of redemption.”³²²

Like John the Baptist, Ryland understood and was convinced of Christ deity and the need for humanity to increase Christ, while decreasing self. Ryland, quoting from John 3:30–31, said, “He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.”³²³ Ryland concluded this sermon on the Trinity and other doctrines of faith, by sarcastically stating that he has “no doubt” in his “own mind,” that even if the Socinians and Unitarians had only recently discovered the Epistles of the Apostle Paul and his claims of the deity of Christ, they would have still rejected the notion of the deity of Christ and would attribute this “new discovery” as the work of “some rank Calvinist.”³²⁴

³²² Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:378.

³²³ John 3:31–32 (KJV).

³²⁴ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:379.

CHAPTER 4

RYLAND'S CHRIST-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY: THE INCARNATION AND PRESENCE OF CHRIST

On January 23, 1787, John Ryland, Jr. received a letter from his friend and mentor, John Newton (1725–1807), regarding the grave sickness of Ryland's first wife, Elizabeth (d. 1787). Newton wrote, "How often have we told our hearers, that our all-sufficient and faithful Lord can and will make good every want and loss! How often have we spoken of the light of his countenance as a full compensation for every suffering, and that trials of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the exceeding abundant and eternal weight of glory to which they are leading."¹ Newton encouraged Ryland to "glorify" God and to encourage his church through his faith in the truths of Scripture that Ryland had diligently taught his congregation.² When Newton learned of Mrs. Ryland's death, he immediately penned another letter to his friend pointing him toward the narrative of Second Samuel 12:22–23, regarding the death of David's son and the faith of David through his grief. Newton wrote these words for the grieving Ryland: "You have received a wound, but faithful is the Friend who has wounded you Your wound must be painful for a time, but the Lord will not leave you; he will condescend to visit you; he will, if I may so speak, dress your wound, till it be effectually healed."³ Newton's encouragement to his young protégé was rooted in Scripture and the promise of God that

¹ Grant Gordon, ed., *Wise Counsel: John Newton's Letters to John Ryland, Jr.* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 186–87. John Newton and John Ryland developed a life-long friendship that included at least eighty-three letters of correspondence between the two men. None of the letters written by John Ryland survived, but Grant Gordon has gathered together the eighty-three letters from Newton to Ryland.

² Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 186.

³ Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 189.

his presence was continuous and faithful in the lives of the elect. He also reminded Ryland of a future “presence” with God and the anticipation of the “exceeding abundant and eternal weight of glory” that will be revealed to him in the last days.⁴ These letters from Newton to Ryland demonstrated the importance of the doctrine of both the presence of Christ in the life of the believer and his power as the incarnated God-Man.

In his sermon “Jesus Seen of Angels,” Ryland’s premise involved his “mere curiosity” of the reaction towards the incarnation of the Son of God by both the fallen angels, who existed among mankind tempting them to sin, and the angels kept by God through his “gracious election,” who existed among mankind as ministering spirits.⁵ Ryland rejoiced with hope knowing that, although other created beings rejected God and fell, only mankind, as a “whole species,” fell into sin. The angels, who were with the Lord from the beginning, witnessed the incarnation of the Son of God among mankind and they observed the shepherds “praising and glorifying God” as a response to the presence of God in the flesh.⁶ Ryland said, “The incarnation of Jesus, and his triumph on the cross, is the certain pledge of the happy issue of all the events of time; and the eternal security of the empire of God.”⁷ In this sermon concerning the angels, Ryland often called his hearers to consider the “impressions” made on the angels of the “condescension” of the Son of God, “his love, his grace, truth, justice and all his perfections,” through the incarnated Christ for his elect.⁸ He stated, “It must inflame their love to God . . . so their love will admit of increase. It must also strengthen their sensible confidence in God. It must increase their humility too. What service can they decline,

⁴ Rom. 8:18 (KJV).

⁵ John Ryland, “Jesus Seen of Angels,” in *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), 2:210.

⁶ Ryland, “Jesus Seen of Angels,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:211.

⁷ Ryland, “Jesus Seen of Angels,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:213.

⁸ Ryland, “Jesus Seen of Angels,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:213.

when the Son of God stooped so much lower than they? A little lower in his birth, much in his death!”⁹ Although Ryland’s sermon was based upon the spiritual reaction of the angels viewing the incarnated Son of God, it demonstrated his commitment to the importance of the doctrine of the incarnation and his presence among the elect, as well as the effects this doctrine has on the spirituality of the church. For this reason, this chapter will examine Ryland’s theological understanding of the incarnation of Christ and demonstrate the direct bearing of the presence of Christ through his incarnation with Ryland’s understanding of the “beauty of Christian experience.”¹⁰ Ryland’s spirituality was affected by his understanding of the incarnation of Christ and the promise of his presence in the church. He spoke of his life in the flesh that he lives out based upon his “faith in the Son of God.” “I set the Lord ever before me, as though I could see him that is invisible. I often think of my obligations to the Redeemer, remembering what he did and suffered for me. The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”¹¹

The Doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ among the Particular Baptists

In the fifth century, Cyril of Alexandria (412–44) spoke about the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God in his *On the Unity of Christ*. He wrote:

Indeed the mystery of Christ runs the risk of being disbelieved precisely because it is so incredibly wonderful. For God was in humanity. He who was above all creation was in our human condition; the invisible one was made visible in the flesh; he who is from the heavens and from the high was in the likeness of earthly things; the immaterial one could be touched; he who is free in his own nature came in the form of a slave; he who blesses all creation became accursed; he who is all righteousness was numbered among the transgressors; life itself came in the

⁹ Ryland, “Jesus Seen of Angels,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:213–14.

¹⁰ Ryland, “Separation from the World,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:98.

¹¹ Ryland, “Separation from the World,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:28.

appearance of death. All this followed because the body which tasted death belong to no other but to him who is the Son by nature.¹²

This “incredibly wonderful” doctrine within the church has always been considered a mystery and from early in the church has often been a source of controversy. While most of the church has always held to the full deity and full humanity of Christ, a precise understanding of these two natures of Christ was not formulated until the Chalcedonian Definition in AD 451. This definition or creed addressed the mystery of the nature of the Son of God and thus defined Jesus as being “of the same reality as God,” according to his deity and of the “same reality as we are ourselves,” according to his “humanness.”¹³ For the church, this understanding of the two natures of the incarnated Son of God became the orthodox view of the mystery of the nature of the Son of God. Stephen Wellum echoed this truth by stating: “Even though there have been various naysayers throughout church history, the Chalcedonian Confession remains the class Christological statement accepted by virtually all segments of Christianity; the church has always confessed this basic orthodoxy as its starting point and touchstone for understanding the identity of

¹² For a detailed description of Cyril of Alexandria, see C. Burk, “Cyril of Alexandria,” Philip Schaff, ed., *A Religious Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1894), 594; William Smith, *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D: With an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies*, eds. Henry Wace and William C Piercy (London: J. Murray, 1911), 502–520.

¹³ Cited in John C. Clark and Marcus Peter Johnson, *The Incarnation of God: The Mystery of the Gospel as the Foundation of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 48. The Chalcedonian Definition of 451 has become the standard definition of the nature of the incarnated Son of God and is still accepted by Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox branches of Christianity alike. In Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*, he notes that the Ethiopian Orthodox, Egyptian Coptic Church and the Syrian Jacobite Church reject the Chalcedonian Definition (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994], 556. In Philip Schaff’s *Creeeds of Christendom*, he provides an English version of the Chalcedon Definition: “We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and on Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been hand down to us” (cited in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 556).

Christ.”¹⁴ This orthodox position of Christ’s nature was the foundation for Ryland and the framers of both the First and Second London Baptist Confessions in the seventeenth-century, and the orthodox language of the Chalcedon Definition became the statement of faith for the Particular Baptists.

As discussed in chapter 2, the Particular Baptists set in place two definitive confessions of faith in order to outline their theological positions among the seventeenth century Dissenters, and to clearly define their orthodox beliefs concerning the Trinity and the incarnation of the Son of God.¹⁵ In the second of these two Baptist confessions, the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, the framers set out to specifically format the confession in order for the Particular Baptists to clearly express their theological doctrines and to separate themselves from the heterodoxy of the Baptist Thomas Collier, who had denied the Trinity and deity of Christ, as well as the incarnation of Christ.¹⁶ Author and pastor Samuel Renihan, in his book *Shadow to Substance*, described Collier’s erroneous doctrines of Universalism, Arminianism, and even a belief in postmortem salvation; that is, that salvation was still available after someone dies. Renihan also focused on other heresies of Collier, including his assertion “that God the Son was a creature” and not the Creator.¹⁷ In 1677, Nehemiah Coxe, a Particular Baptist

¹⁴ Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 40.

¹⁵ For more information on the First and Second London Baptist Confessions, see chapter 2 (pp. 12–28) of this dissertation. Also, see William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011); and James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Owensboro, KY: RBAP, 2004).

¹⁶ For more information of the Trinitarian conflict with Thomas Collier, see chapter 2 (pp. 48–55) of this dissertation. One of the specific points of heresy that the Particular Baptists charged against Collier was that “he asserts that Christ is the Son of God, only as considered in both Natures, which with other notions in Chap. 1. of his *Additional Word*, doth subvert the Faith concerning the Person of Christ, with respect to his eternal subsisting in the Divine Nature, in the incommunicable property of a Son, as is more abundantly manifest in the answer all ready returned thereunto” ([Author], “Confessional Orthodoxy and Evangelical Union,” Petty France (blog), July 5, 2016, <https://pettyfrance.wordpress.com/2016/07/05/confessional-orthodoxy-and-evangelical-union/>).

¹⁷ Samuel D. Renihan, *From Shadow to Substance: The Federal Theology of the English Particular Baptists (1642–1704)*, Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies, vol. 16 (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Regent’s Park College, 2018), 174–75.

pastor, along with other key leaders, wrote a rebuttal entitled *Vindiciæ veritatis, or, A Confutation of the Heresies and Gross Errours Asserted by Thomas Collier*. Coxe's purpose for this rebuttal of Collier was to repudiate his severe doctrinal defections, including his unorthodox teaching on the nature of the Son of God, specifically in his incarnation. In James M. Renihan's assessment of Coxe's *A Confutation of the Heresies*, he concluded that Coxe provided a "fascinating study contrasting unorthodoxy with truth. Demonstrating deep acumen and theological profundity, Coxe examined Collier's recently published writings and exposed them by the light of carefully articulated Reformed orthodoxy."¹⁸ Coxe's theologically orthodox teaching against Collier, and the needed response against the seventeenth century Socinians, would not be the sole reaction to the heresies involving the nature of the Son of God. In 1677, the English Particular Baptist would begin work on their second confession of faith, which would become the 1689 Second London Confession of Faith, and it would specifically address the nature of Christ in his incarnation.

In the 1689 Baptist Confession, the framers placed a great emphasis on the nature of the Son of God, which proclaimed the orthodox position that Christ was both fully God and fully man, united in his one person. The 1689 Confession explained this doctrine, by stating,

The Son of God, the second Person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Fathers glory, of one substance and equal with him: who made the World, who upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made: did when the fullness of time was come take unto him mans nature, with all the Essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her, and the power of the most High overshadowing her, and so was made of a Woman, of the Tribe of Judah, of the Seed of Abraham, and David according to the Scriptures: So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, were inseparably joined together in one Person: without conversion, composition, or confusion: which

¹⁸ James M. Renihan, "God Freely Justifieth . . . by Imputing Christ's Active . . . and Passive Obedience," *Master's Seminary Journal* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 62.

Person is very God, and very Man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and Man.¹⁹

It was here, in the 1689 Confession, that the Particular Baptists examined the nature of the Son of God in his incarnation as the person of the Mediator. As Chapter Two of this paper has argued, the language of the Confession was in opposition to the seventeenth century heresies of the Socinians concerning their assertion that Jesus Christ was a mere man, who was born of Mary and had no existence prior to his earthly birth. This paragraph of the Particular Baptists concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ mirrors both the Savoy Declaration²⁰ of the English Congregationalists and the Presbyterian's Westminster Confession of Faith.²¹ In his commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith's understanding of the nature of Christ, Robert Shaw stated, "Our Confession teaches, that Christ not only existed before his incarnation, but was from all eternity the Son of God, of one substance, and equal with the Father; and that, in the fullness of time, he assumed a complete human nature into union with the divine, so that he is both very God and very man, having two distinct natures, yet but one person."²² Shaw's comments could have also been addressed towards both the Savoy Declaration

¹⁹ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 247–48.

²⁰ Savoy Declaration concerning the Incarnation: "The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance: So that two whole perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one Person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which Person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man" (cited in Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* [New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1893], 376).

²¹ Westminster Confession of Faith concerning the Incarnation: "The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man" (cited in A. A. Hodge, *A Commentary on the Confession of Faith: With Questions for Theological Students and Bible Classes* [London: T. Nelson and Sons, Paternoster Row, 1870], 137).

²² Robert Shaw, *The Reformed Doctrine: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (n.p. Monergism Books, 2018), 129, eBook.

and the 1689 Baptist Confession, for all three confessions spoke of Christ's deity as the "Son of God" and that he was the "Second Person of the Trinity," who was "very and eternal God."²³ As for the humanity of Christ, all three taught that Jesus, the Son of God, took on "man's nature," with all the "essential properties and common infirmities," in the incarnation of Christ. However, to combat the confusion among the Particular Baptists concerning the human nature of Christ in his incarnation, caused by the heresy of Collier, the Baptists asserted that Christ:

did when the fullness of time was come take unto him man's nature, with all the Essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her, and the power of the most High overshadowing her, and so was made of a Woman, of the Tribe of Judah, of the Seed of Abraham, and David according to the Scriptures.²⁴

An important argument for the Baptists against the Socinians and Collier, focused on Christ's humanity, while continuing to secure his divinity. These two natures of the incarnated Son of God came together at a point in time of history and declared both the providence and sovereignty of the Son of God in his incarnation, as well as the true and real humanity of Christ, along with his divinity.

The 1689 London Baptist Confession declared that "in the fullness of time, the Son of God took unto himself the full nature of a man; it happened at the 'fullness of time.'"²⁵ The scriptural reference for this point-in-time event, was Galatians 4:4, ". . . when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son . . ."²⁶ In his examination of the phrase "fullness of time," James Montgomery Boice argued that the phrase "refers primarily to historical events, so its significance in regard to Christ must first be viewed

²³ See chapter 2 of this dissertation for more details on the Particular Baptists and the Trinity.

²⁴ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248.

²⁵ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248.

²⁶ Gal. 4:4 (KJV).

historically.”²⁷ In his massive work *The Doctrine of God*, John Frame noted that the statement the “fullness of time” was a reference to the fact that “God has carefully structured the whole history of the world to accomplish his own specific purposes.”²⁸ He argued that God was so in control of time that “we must conclude that God’s experience of time is very different from ours.” Frame said, “He looks at time as his tool in accomplishing his purposes . . . he is the Lord of time.”²⁹ Therefore, in God’s timing Christ took to himself the very nature of mankind; thus the incarnation of the Christ became “the focal point of history.”³⁰ All things prior to this particular time was preparing the human race for the incarnation of the Son of God.³¹

For the framers of the 1689 Confession, the idea of God’s providence and time was important in order to announce that it was at this specific time in history that “Christ took to himself” mankind’s nature. Again, looking at Galatians 4:4, Robert Reymond argued that this incarnational verse of Paul indicated the “preexistence” of the Son. The assumption made by the Particular Baptists, according to their confession of faith, was that Christ preexisted as the Son of God prior to taking on man’s nature. Coxe argued this same point with Collier by utilizing Hebrews 1:8, “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne,

²⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 554.

²⁸ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 556.

²⁹ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 556.

³⁰ Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 555.

³¹ Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 555. Boice cited Emil Brunner (1889–1966) concerning the preparation of the human race for the incarnation: “Plato and Alexander, Cicero and Julius Caesar must serve God, in order to prepare the way for Christ. It is significant that the Gospel of Luke begins with the incident of the census taken by order of Augustus, and the Gospel of Matthew begins with the story of the Magi from the East who prepare to leave their homes to follow the Star which leads to Palestine and the Court of Herod . . . Long ago, from the very earliest beginnings, God had prepared that which he then willed to give as the salvation of the world ‘in the fullness of the times,’ as something which on the one hand—according to the human nature—grows out of this history, as well as something which came into history, as something which could not be explained from itself.”

O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”³² Coxe made his point concerning the preexistence of Christ before his incarnation, by stating, “Herein we have not only the unction of the Son of God mentioned, but the reason of it: and this is plainly taken from his everlasting divinity, regality and righteousness.”³³ In other words, the unction of the Son of God, or the anointing of the Son, was argued for by the writer of Hebrews in chapter 1:8. He stated that the “throne” of the Son of God was “for ever and ever,” thus revealing the eternal existence of Jesus Christ and the proclamation that he was God. Coxe stated that the Word of God became flesh and that was accomplished in the “fullness of time. But from all of eternity, he was the I am, the Son of God, and as such came forth from God.”³⁴ Prior to the statement of the incarnation found in the 1689 Confession, it was already argued for the eternal existence of the Son of God. The Confession read, “In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word (or Son) and Holy Spirit . . . the Son is eternally begotten of the Father”³⁵ Reymond, commenting on Galatians 4:4, said, “It is clear that for Paul the Son enjoyed an existence with God the Father prior to his being sent, and that in this preexistent state he stood in relation to the Father as the Father’s unique Son.”³⁶ Therefore, when the 1689 Baptist Confession stated that the Son of God, “in the fullness of time,” was “manifested in the flesh,” it was arguing for the eternal

³² Heb. 1:8 (KJV).

³³ Nehemiah Coxe, *Vindiciae veritatis, or, A Confutation of the Heresies and Gross Errours Asserted by Thomas Collier in his Additional Word to his Body of Divinity* (London: Printed for Nath. Ponder, 1677), 23.

³⁴ Coxe, *A Confutation of the Heresies*, 24.

³⁵ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 237.

³⁶ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1998) 238. Reymond cites a quote from John Murray: “The uniqueness of the sonship belonging to Christ and the uniqueness of the fatherhood belonging to the Father in relation to the Son . . . In the language of Paul this corresponds to the title *monogenes* [‘only one of a kind’] as it appears in John. It is the eternal sonship that is in view and to this sonship there is not approximation in the adoptive sonship that belongs to redeemed men. The same applies to the fatherhood of the first person. In the sense in which he is the eternal Father in relation to the Son his is not the Father of his adopted children” (Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 238–39).

existence of Christ and his deity. Coxe, again commenting on Hebrews 1:8 and the preexistence of the Son of God, said, “Because he that is the Son of God is God that made, and upholds, and rules over the world of righteousness and loveth it, and hateth iniquity, therefore as the only fit person is he anointed by God the Father, his God and our God, to the office of Mediatorship.”³⁷ Coxe’s statement concerning Christ as the one who “made, and upholds, and rules” was very similar to the statement that only the Baptists used in their Confession: “who made the World, who upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made.”³⁸ Clearly the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists believed and understood the Son of God to be both the creator and sustainer of the world, thus attributing to him worship. Coxe said, “From the dignity of his Person as the Son of God, in divine adoration given to him, when as the Son of Man, he came first into the world: and from thence also preeminence, notwithstanding, his debasement in the flesh, continues with him above all his fellows.”³⁹ Coxe was stating that since Christ came in the fullness of time, thus revealing his preexistence before the incarnation, he was to be worshiped and he was preeminent over all creation.

Another point that the Particular Baptists were adamant about in their Confession was that the Son of God was fully God and fully man. Coxe made it a point to argue with Collier concerning the orthodox position of the two natures in the incarnated Son of God; that is, he was fully God and fully man. He said,

Both the divine and humane nature of Christ remain distinct in their essence, and all their essential properties, and necessarily must do so, the one being created, and the other increated; the divine nature cannot be changed into the humane, nor the humane into the divine: neither is it possible that they should be so confounded or mixed together, as to make a third nature distinct from both.⁴⁰

³⁷ Coxe, *A Confutation of the Heresies*, 23.

³⁸ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 247–48.

³⁹ Coxe, *A Confutation of the Heresies*, 23.

⁴⁰ Coxe, *A Confutation of the Heresies*, 8. “It’s crucial to think of the incarnation as an act of addition, not subtraction, by the sovereign, effectual means of a virgin conception (Matt. 1:18–25; Luke

To make the point of the full humanity of Christ, the 1689 Confession stated that the incarnated Son of God, while still being fully divine, took on man's nature "with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin."⁴¹ Therefore, the Son of God took on human nature, but not sin. The Confession described how this was possible by stating that the Son of God was "conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Womb of the Virgin Mary."⁴² As for the preserving of the two natures of Jesus Christ, divine and human, this was an important statement by the Particular Baptists because it preserved the deity of Christ as he was "conceived by the Holy Spirit" of God. In Coxe's rebuttal of Collier, he made this point clearly by stating that Christ was the Father's "own son;" that is, "his proper son begotten of his own substance from everlasting, as to his divine nature."⁴³ According to the Particular Baptist Confession, there remained only one person, but now there were two natures: divine and human. In reference to Jesus' conception in Mary, the Confession stated that "the Holy Spirit coming down upon her, and the power of the most High overshadowing her, and so [he] was made of a Woman, of the Tribe of Judah, of the Seed of Abraham, and David according to the Scriptures."⁴⁴ In other words, Christ's nature of divinity assumed a second nature of humanity through Mary's lineage. Coxe argued that the Son of God was divinity from all eternity and that

1:26–38). The Son, from the Father and by the supernatural and sanctifying agency of the Spirit, without change or loss of his deity, added a second nature to himself consisting of a human body and soul (John 1:14, Phil. 2:6–8). As a result, the Son permanently added a human dimension to his personal, divine life, and became present to us in a new mode of existence as the incarnate Son. The Son's subsistence and action is now in both natures so that the Son is able to act in both natures and produce effects consistent and proper to each nature. Thus, as the incarnate Son, Jesus is able to render human obedience (Luke 2:52; 22:29–44; Heb. 5:8–10) for us as the last Adam (Heb. 2:5–18; Rom. 5:12–21), and to do a divine work by securing our eternal redemption (Eph. 1:7–10), and justifying us before God as covenant representative and substitute (Rom. 3:21–26; 4:25; 1 Pet. 3:18)" (Stephen J. Wellum, "The Incarnation and Two Natures of Christ: An Essay by Stephen Wellum," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed August 24, 2021, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-incarnation-and-two-natures-of-christ/>).

⁴¹ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248.

⁴² Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248.

⁴³ Coxe, *A Confutation of the Heresies*, 21.

⁴⁴ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248.

when he became flesh, the Son of God did not cease to exist as divinity.⁴⁵ Coxe encapsulated the Particular Baptists' position on the two natures of Christ by stating: "[The Son] was and remained the only begotten of the Father, his own Son, and yet was in all things made like to us, sin only excepted. He was true God: God by nature, and true man also, made of the seed of David, as concerning the flesh."⁴⁶ The orthodox position taken by the Particular Baptists, aligned them with both the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians, thus solidifying them as being orthodox in their beliefs. The 1689 Confession was clearly aligned with the Chalcedon Declaration in their understanding of the two natures of Christ, and stated: "two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, were inseparably joined together in one Person: without conversion, composition, or confusion: which Person is very God, and very Man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and Man."⁴⁷ As the framers laid the foundation of orthodoxy for the denomination, the Particular Baptists would hold to this confession through the challenges from the Socinians and Unitarians, and it would continue to be a major influence in the life of Ryland in his ministry as a pastor and educator.

Ryland and the Doctrine of the Incarnation

In September of 1820, the Baptist church in Cheltenham asked Ryland to preach a sermon at their "newly erected" place of worship.⁴⁸ In his introduction, Ryland began by expressing to the church that "the Chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."⁴⁹ Ryland thought that it was "highly proper" for the church to gather

⁴⁵ Coxe, *A Confutation of the Heresies*, 8.

⁴⁶ Coxe, *A Confutation of the Heresies*, 8.

⁴⁷ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248

⁴⁸ John Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse of the Law: A Sermon, Preached at Cheltenham, Sept. 13th, 1820, at the Opening of the New Meeting-House Belonging to the Baptist Church* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1820), 3.

⁴⁹ Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse*, 3.

in a particular location for the worship and adoration of God, and that this worship should be derived from the very revelation of God; that is, the Bible. Ryland reasoned, “It is greatly to be desired that we should receive directions from God himself, to inform us how he ought to be worshipped, how he would have us to glorify him, and how we may be brought to enjoy him; and it is a high privilege to have such a directive in his holy word.”⁵⁰ For Ryland, the Bible was the standard of faith and practice for the church and for the worship of God within the church, including the object and reasons for that worship. His main point of this sermon, which he entitled *Redemption from the Curse of the Law*, was to draw the attention of the people to the true redemptive message of Christ and to clearly define who Jesus Christ was in his incarnation. Ryland felt that true worship among God’s people must have a right understanding of Christ, his nature, his purpose, and his works. For Ryland, the doctrine of the incarnation was a worthy subject within the redemptive message of God and for the teaching of the proper aim of worship. As a demonstration of this conviction, Ryland began his sermon with the following question: “Who is He that could effect this great work of human redemption?”⁵¹ For Ryland, the object of worship was the one who had existed from eternity in the form of God and who had come in the flesh in the form of a servant. In his confession of faith, concerning the incarnation of the Son of God, Ryland described this one who was to be worshiped. He declared:

I am fully assured that in order to affect this Salvation, God the SON was manifested in the Flesh, being born of a Virgin in whom he had been conceived by the Power of the Holy Ghost. Thus he who was from Eternity in the form of God assumed in Time the form of a Servant. Uniting absolute Divinity and real Humanity in his Person, he alone was a fit Mediator between God and Man⁵²

⁵⁰ Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse*, 4.

⁵¹ Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse*, 22.

⁵² John Ryland, “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 (Bristol Baptist College, Acc. No. 14884), 11–12.

Ryland stated that he was “fully assured” of the supernatural work of God in the incarnation of the Son of God, thus uniting two natures, divine and human, in the one Person of Jesus Christ. This section will focus on Ryland’s theology of the incarnation of the Son of God as he expressed it in his Confession of Faith and throughout his sermons, letters, and polemical writings.

Absolute Deity/Real Humanity: “A Fit Mediator”

When John Rowe sent his rebuttal letter to Ryland concerning *The First Lye Refuted*, he argued in favor of the non-Trinitarian thought that Jesus, being a created being, existed as a mere man and not the Second Person of the Godhead. In his reply to Rowe, Ryland utilized the scripture reference that “all power” had been given to Jesus and that the Father had bestowed upon the Son “a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”⁵³ By utilizing Paul’s words to the church at Philippi, Ryland’s point was to challenge Rowe on why God the Father would bestow upon a mere man this much power and adoration. Ryland was adamant that if the Father did give Jesus, a mere man, a position that would cause “every” person to worship this mere man, it would be both “surprising and inconceivable.”⁵⁴ Ryland also engaged the Socinians with questions, like, how could a “mere man” atone for the sins of mankind? Or, why was Christ so often “denominated the savior” of his people?⁵⁵ In his sermon at Cheltenham, concerning the redemptive works of Christ, Ryland asked the church,

⁵³ Phil. 2:9–11 (KJV).

⁵⁴ John Ryland, *The Partiality and Unscriptural Direction of Socinian Zeal: Being a Reply to the Rev. Mr Rowe’s Letter, Occasioned by a Note Contained in a Sermon Entitled “The First Lye Refuted”* (Bristol, UK: Briggs and Cottle, 1801), 73.

⁵⁵ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:373.

“Where can the illustrious personage be found, who can officiate as a mediator between an offended God and offending man?”⁵⁶ The answer, according to Ryland, was no one, if Jesus be a mere man. It was important for Ryland to make these distinctions concerning the deity of Christ because if atonement was left in the will and decisions of a mere man, then the atoning works of God would have been unpredictable. In his sermon concerning the connection between the Trinity and divine election, Ryland asked, how can the Father give the souls of the elect to a mere man and then declare the security of these souls for salvation?⁵⁷ How can Peter declare, reasoned Ryland, that a mere man be “the shepherd and Bishop of souls?”⁵⁸ This same line of reasoning brought Ryland to conclude that a holy God would never put such a demand on a mere man to be a “religious Advocate” to accept unto himself such an “awful malediction justly incurred” by the sins of mankind.⁵⁹ In his argument with Rowe, Ryland asked,

If the Mediator be not God as well as man, how shall I assign some sufficient meaning, and yet not too much, to the following expressions? ‘He is able to save to the uttermost &c. being made higher than the heavens. He ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.’ God hath, ‘set him at his own right hand, in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who filleth all in all.’⁶⁰

Ryland was convinced that Christ, the Mediator between God and mankind, was the Son of God incarnate, and existed in the form of God from eternity. In his sermon concerning the Trinity, Ryland declared that Jesus Christ was Jehovah God, and that the Apostle Paul knew the worth of his own soul and was not grieved or anxious that the Father had left

⁵⁶ Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse*, 10.

⁵⁷ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:376.

⁵⁸ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:376.

⁵⁹ Ryland, *Redemption from the Curse*, 10.

⁶⁰ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 73.

his soul in the hands of a mere man.⁶¹ Ryland believed, as Paul exclaimed, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.”⁶² This high-view of Christ, expressed by Paul, was described by Ryland as being an “extravagant expression” and a confusing one if Christ was but a mere man. Ryland stated that if Jesus be a mere man, then he could do nothing as a mediator for humanity, any more than Enoch and Elijah could.⁶³

In Ryland’s Confession, he declared that Christ alone was the “fit Mediator” between God and man because he alone was both “absolute Divinity and real Humanity in his Person.”⁶⁴ Ryland convincingly made this point in his sermon “The Spiritual Participation of Christ,” which focused on John 6:53–57. Jesus, speaking to his disciples, said,

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.⁶⁵

These verses, according to Ryland, demanded a belief in the divinity and the humanity of Christ as the “fit Mediator” sent from the Father. Looking back through the context of Jesus’ words found in the Book of John, Ryland spoke of Jesus’ self-proclamation of being the true bread of heaven and the bread of life, and salvation was only in his blood and his body. Ryland argued “that he who thus spake of himself was a divine person, who

⁶¹ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:376.

⁶² Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:376. Ryland cited 2 Tim. 1:12 (KJV).

⁶³ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:376.

⁶⁴ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 12.

⁶⁵ John 6:53–57 (KJV).

became incarnated, for the express purpose of reconciling apostate, guilty, hell-deserving sinners unto God, by his obedience unto death; his blood being shed, and his soul made an offering for sin.”⁶⁶ In other words, according to Ryland, the very self-proclamation of Jesus Christ being the only way to salvation, as well as the one who has made provision for salvation, proved both his humanity and his “proper divinity.”⁶⁷

As Ryland examined the scriptures concerning the incarnation of the Son of God, he determined that the doctrine of the incarnation was always accompanied by the idea of mankind’s total depravity and the gracious redemptive acts of Christ on the cross. In his Confession, he stated that since the grievances against God were great and that all have sinned against God, then no one can be “sav’d without an atonement and satisfaction of infinite value.”⁶⁸ Ryland understood that in man’s depravity, the incarnation of Christ was demanded because salvation was a work of God alone. Leonard Champion said, “Ryland always maintained that man’s salvation is entirely the work of God.”⁶⁹ In other words, according to Ryland, if the Son of God did not come in the flesh, then salvation could not be achieved. Ryland’s Confession conveys his convictions clearly:

But I believe (and blessed be God that I ever existed to believe it) that the sovereign, unobliged and self-moved Goodness, and the unfathomable Wisdom of God have contrived a Method of Salvation that is not only consistent with the whole assemblage of the divine Perfections, but which displays their unparalleled Glory in a Manner infinitely superior to all the other Works of God. The Plan of this Salvation was laid in that eternal Counsel in which the sovereign Will of Deity

⁶⁶ Ryland, “The Spiritual Participation of Christ,” in *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), 1:306.

⁶⁷ Ryland, “The Spiritual Participation of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:306–07.

⁶⁸ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 11.

⁶⁹ L. G. Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences,” *Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1979): 19.

engaged the three Persons in God, and in which the honor of the Trinity and of every Perfection thereof was so amply provided for.⁷⁰

In other words, Ryland argued for the participation of the Trinity within the redemptive plan of God, and that this plan was “laid in that eternal Counsel” of the “Sovereign will” of God, that sovereign will of the Deity, involved the second Person being the “fit Mediator” and coming in the flesh. Ryland continued,

The Son of God was set up from everlasting as the public head of his People, who were personally and absolutely chosen in him and given to him in the everlasting Covenant, their eternal Felicity being secured by solemn Compact, not without the Oath of the immutable God.⁷¹

Ryland stated that he was “fully convinced” that for salvation to be fulfilled and effective, “God the Son was manifested in the flesh,”⁷² and he was set up to be manifest in the flesh from “everlasting.”

As for the Son of God being the “fit Mediator,” Ryland’s sermon “The Spiritual Participation of Christ,” gave a summary of the fitness of Christ as Mediator:

Hence then he came from heaven, not by change of place; but by his assumption of humanity; taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, and thus becoming Immanuel, evermore uniting two distinct natures in one person; whereby he was a fit Mediator between God and man; and as our great High Priest had somewhat to offer as a sacrifice to divine justice.⁷³

For Ryland, the “fit Mediator” was both incarnated absolutely in his deity and in his real flesh. This was what he meant in this statement: “But now the Son of God becoming incarnate, has most closely united created being and the Supreme being, and that in so intimate and astonishing a manner, that no creature could have once conceived such a

⁷⁰ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 11.

⁷¹ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 11.

⁷² Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 12.

⁷³ Ryland, “The Spiritual Participation of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:307.

union possible, had not God actually contrived, revealed, and effected it.”⁷⁴ Ryland absolutely believed that God’s presence in the flesh, was the only way for mankind to be reconciled to himself because it was his presence in the flesh that made him a “fit mediator” to die on a cross as a sacrifice for the “divine justice” of God.

Manifested in the Flesh

In the eleventh century, Anselm of Canterbury (d.1109) penned the classic statement on the incarnation in his book *Cur Deus Homo?* or Why God Man? The premise of Anselm’s book was to answer the question “Why did God become man?”⁷⁵ Anselm’s answer, according to Stephen Wellum, was that “God the Son became man to fulfill God’s plan to save sinners by making satisfaction for their sin.”⁷⁶ In Ryland’s Confession, he mirrored Anselm’s understanding of the incarnation by also stating that the Son of God was manifested in the flesh in order to fulfill his purpose of atonement and salvation of the elect. He said, “[In] order to affect . . . Salvation, God the Son was manifested in the flesh, being born of a Virgin in whom he had been conceived by the Power of the Holy Ghost.”⁷⁷ Ryland believed that the incarnation of Christ in the flesh was a key activity for the redemption of mankind. In his sermon “The Apparent Vanity of Man,” he taught, “If God had not been made man, yea, and made a curse for us, all men would have been made in vain, for any good they could have enjoyed.”⁷⁸ In other words, if God had not become man in the flesh to atone for sin, then all mankind would still be under the curse. The incarnation of the Son of God, according to Ryland, was the eternal

⁷⁴ John Ryland, *Christ Manifested, and Satan Frustrated: A Sermon Preached at the Meeting-House, in College Lane, Northampton, December 25, 1781* (Northampton, UK: Printed by Thomas Dicey and Co., 1782), 28.

⁷⁵ Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 297.

⁷⁶ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 217.

⁷⁷ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 12.

⁷⁸ Ryland, “The Apparent Vanity of Man,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:101.

plan of God for salvation. He declared in his Confession that the “Son of God was set up from everlasting as the public head of his People, who were personally and absolutely chosen in him and given to him in the everlasting Covenant.”⁷⁹ As the “true and living God,” argued Ryland, life was in the incarnated Son of God and, for the elect, “their eternal felicity.”⁸⁰ In his sermon “Christ the Life of Men,” Ryland reminded the church, “According to the covenant of redemption, it is conceded that he should, in consequence of his obedience unto death, give eternal life to all his elect.”⁸¹ Therefore, Ryland concluded, because of Christ’s work in redemption, the Bible can call the incarnated Son of God the “Prince of Life . . . The Tree of Life . . . The Bread of Life . . . and the Word of Life.”⁸² In other words, when the Apostle John declared that the “Word became flesh,” Ryland argued that this was the “surest pledge that all men were not made in vain;” therefore, if God did not come in the flesh, Ryland reasoned, then Aaron, his sons, priests, and Moses and prophets all died in vain.⁸³

In *Christ Manifested, and Satan Frustrated*, Ryland focused his sermon on First John 3:8, “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” According to Ryland, the Son of God being manifested in the flesh was for the express purpose of destroying sin, guilt, misery, and death, all works of the devil in the flesh of mankind. Ryland said, “The design of Satan in his work, or in his tempting man to sin, was first to despoil man of the divine image, and transform him into Satan’s own likeness, that he might become as unlike God as possible, and that God

⁷⁹ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 11.

⁸⁰ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

⁸¹ Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

⁸² Ryland, “Christ the Life of Men,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:291.

⁸³ Ryland, “The Apparent Vanity of Man,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:101.

might not be able to take pleasure in the conformity of the moral world to the qualities of his own holy nature.”⁸⁴ Satan’s work was accomplished through the sin of Adam and all humanity, in their flesh, and so “the honour of divine law, the support of God’s moral government, the consistency of his character, the immutability of his nature, his holiness, justice, and veracity, all required the sinner’s death.”⁸⁵ Ryland asked the question: “What then would the great Jehovah do in such a case?”⁸⁶ If God overlooked the sin of mankind, reasoned Ryland, then how could he be just for the punishment of Satan and angels? If God sentenced mankind to death, then Satan would triumph in his plan to “despoil mankind” of the image of God, thus dishonoring God’s deity and destroying his image within mankind.⁸⁷ Ryland argued at this point of the necessary presence of God, incarnated in the flesh, in mankind’s nature, in order to “destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”⁸⁸ Therefore, the incarnation of the Son of God in flesh “fully solved” the rescue of the elect by uniting “God’s highest glory with the truest, dearest interest of man.”⁸⁹ The presence of God manifested in the flesh destroyed the works of Satan by making the “perfections of Deity more gloriously” visible to creation⁹⁰ by uniting creation once again to its creator “by the closest ties.”⁹¹ Ryland argued that Christ being made in the flesh allowed him to take sin upon his flesh and become “liable to be treated as though he had been the chief of sinners.”⁹² Therefore, Ryland thought, the Son

⁸⁴ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 9.

⁸⁵ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 17.

⁸⁶ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 16.

⁸⁷ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 19.

⁸⁸ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 19.

⁸⁹ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 19.

⁹⁰ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 26.

⁹¹ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 27.

⁹² Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 29.

of God coming in the flesh demonstrated to all humanity the holiness of God and his hatred for sin.⁹³ In Ryland's Confession he made this point clear by stating that "His People's Sins were imputed to him, that his Righteousness might be imputed to them . . . And thus the righteous Governor of the Universe fully discover'd his infinite hatred of sin in not sparing his own Son but making his Soul an Offering for Sin."⁹⁴

For Ryland, the presence of the Son of God in the flesh, demonstrated his hatred of sin, but it also demonstrated the value that he placed upon mankind. In a sermon about angels, entitled "The True Idea of Christ Within," Ryland argued that the fallen angels did not receive atonement for their sin because the Son of God did not manifest himself as an angel; instead the Word of God became human flesh.⁹⁵ Therefore, for the fallen angels, the incarnated Son of God did not "bear their iniquity," thus demonstrating the Trinitarian love for those whom God created in his image.⁹⁶ His point seemed to be addressing the idea of the incarnation, that the Son of God "manifested" in mankind's flesh and not as an angel, revealed the eternal will of God for salvation for those in the flesh.

In observing God's atonement for mankind, Ryland asked the question: "How can [God] acquit the sinner, and not condemn himself, nor encourage future crimes?" His answer was "Only through a Mediator."⁹⁷ The only "fit Mediator" for the salvation of the

⁹³ Ryland, *Christ Manifested*, 34.

⁹⁴ Ryland, "A Confession of Faith," 12.

⁹⁵ Ryland, "The True Idea of Christ Within," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:197.

⁹⁶ Ryland, "The True Idea of Christ Within," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:197.

⁹⁷ Ryland, "The True Idea of Christ Within," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:197. Robert Shaw (1795–1863), the 19th century Scottish minister, defined a mediator as "one who interposes between two parties at variance, to procure a reconciliation. Before the fall, there was no need of a mediator between God and man; for, though there was an infinite distance in nature, yet, there was no variance between these parties. But upon the fall the case was altered; God was dishonoured, and highly offended; man was alienated from God, and subjected to his judicial displeasure; and as man was unable to satisfy the claims of the divine law which he had violated, if he was to be restored to the favour of his offended sovereign, the interposition of another person was requisite, to atone for his guilt, and lay the foundation of peace. This is the office and work assigned to Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and man; and the present

elect was found in atoning works of the Son of God in his flesh. Ryland argued that sin could only be forgiven through God providing to himself a lamb, and that lamb of God must be “manifest[ed] in the flesh; the only begotten of the Father.”⁹⁸ Without the presence of this “fit Mediator” in humanity’s flesh, there was no atonement for sin, there were no glorious manifestations of God, and according to Ryland, “there is no relief afforded or consolation to such sinners as we are.”⁹⁹

Born of a virgin but conceived by the Holy Spirit. In a Baptist association circular letter sent out from Ryland to the churches of the Western Association of Baptists in 1797, Ryland stated that believers in Christ “should be humble indeed, who admit that eternal misery would have been your certain doom, had it not been for the free and self-moved grace of the Father, the full and costly redemption of the Son, and the special and effectual influence of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁰ Ryland, a committed Calvinist, understood that the “effectual influence” of the Holy Spirit was necessary for new life in Christ.¹⁰¹ He also was convinced of the deity of the Holy Spirit and declared that the “divine Person” of the Holy Spirit was “a single subsistency in the Godhead, endued with understanding, will, and power of the distinct operation; yet one in essence, nature, and will, with the Father and the Son.”¹⁰² Ryland often preached on the Holy Spirit, and he

section relates to his divine appointment to this office, and the donation of a people to him as his seed” (Shaw, *The Reformed Faith: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 127).

⁹⁸ Ryland, “The True Idea of Christ Within,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:197.

⁹⁹ Ryland, “Allegory of Hagar and Sarah,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:337.

¹⁰⁰ John Ryland, “The Circular Letter from the Elders, Ministers, and Messengers, of the Several Baptist Churches of the Western Association, Assembled at BATH, June 7 and 8, 1797,” *Circular Letters, Western Baptist Association (1769–1814)* (Bristol Baptist College Archives: 19857), 3.

¹⁰¹ For Ryland’s understanding of the Holy Spirit’s work in salvation, see Ryland, “The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:342–49). On the Holy Spirit’s work in salvation, Ryland said, “The Holy Spirit operates in man for God; leading the soul into the knowledge of the truth; drawing it to Christ; and restoring the lost image of God, by renewing the sanctifying grace; working conviction in the mind, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment” (Ryland, “The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:342).

¹⁰² Ryland, “The Love of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:41.

was convinced that not only does the Holy Spirit draw sinners into the life of Christ, it was the Holy Spirit who conceived Jesus Christ in the virgin Mary for the incarnation. In his Confession, Ryland stated: “I am fully assured that in order to affect this Salvation, God the Son was manifested in the flesh, being born of a Virgin in whom he had been conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰³ Like the Particular Baptist framers of the 1689 Confession, Ryland also adhered to the Trinitarian work of God in the incarnation of the Christ, especially the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s incarnation.¹⁰⁴

In 1823, Ryland wrote a letter to the Indian Unitarian Rammohun Roy in response to Roy’s debates with John Marshman (1768–1837), the Baptist missionary to India, concerning the Trinity and the doctrine of the atonement of Christ. Ankur Barua, in an article concerning Roy’s theology, stated, “While from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy, Roy was a Unitarian and not a Trinitarian, he did not hold that Jesus was merely a man – rather, Roy believed that God had exalted Jesus above all the creatures and all the prophets, and Jesus was the intercessor between God and humanity.”¹⁰⁵ Ryland argued against Roy’s idea that the Trinity meant that God existed as three gods, by promoting the unity in the Godhead, God was Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that the Son of God, in his incarnation, was fully God and fully man,¹⁰⁶ which Roy declared that he rejected “on the basis of his exegetical readings of the New Testament.”¹⁰⁷ Ryland responded to Roy declaring that it was the “Holy Spirit” who “formed our Lord’s

¹⁰³ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 11–12.

¹⁰⁴ John Ryland, Jr., *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 Seymonds, Pastor of the Congregational Church which Assembles at the Old Meeting in Bedford. Preached November 27, 1788* (London: J. Buckland, 1788), 12.

¹⁰⁵ Ankur Barua, “‘I am the Living Bread:’ Ram Mohan Roy’s Critique of the Doctrine of the Atonement,” *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 30, Article 8 (2017): 2.

¹⁰⁶ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

¹⁰⁷ Barua, “I am the Living Bread,” 5.

humanity in the womb of a virgin,” not through sexual intercourse, but through supernatural conception.¹⁰⁸ The reason Ryland denounced sexual intercourse as the primary means of the conception of Christ, was that it “would imply the previous incarnation of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, the formation of Christ was a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary, thus preserving the deity and humanity of the incarnated Son of God. He said, “The formation of our Lord’s humanity was ‘a new thing in the earth,’ effected in a peculiar and miraculous manner.”¹¹⁰ Ryland then asserted that this supernatural formation in the incarnation allowed Jesus to call himself “the Son of Man.”¹¹¹ For Ryland, this was on account of Jesus “really [assuming] our nature, by uniting to himself a human body and soul, though he had no human father, nor was descended from Adam by ordinary generation, and thus was totally uncontaminated with sin, which has infected all our race.”¹¹² Ryland was declaring that since the Son of God was formed in the virgin’s womb, he, now in the flesh, was not contaminated by sin, and so was the perfect sacrifice for the sin of the elect.

The form of a servant. As Ryland began his sermon “Christ an Example of Self-denial,” he quoted from John Smith of Cambridge (1554–1612), who stated that “Mankind are all fallen from God, into a gulph of sinful selfishness.”¹¹³ Ryland agreed with Smith’s assessment with mankind, calling his statement “true” and stated that all the descendants of Adam pursue their own interests and disregard the “divine glory” or the

¹⁰⁸ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

¹⁰⁹ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

¹¹⁰ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

¹¹¹ Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

¹¹² Ryland, “A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:383.

¹¹³ Cited in Ryland, “Christ an Example of Self-Denial,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:36.

general good of mankind.¹¹⁴ As for the incarnated Son of God, Ryland stated, “But there is one glorious person, who dwelt among men, and was found in fashion a man, though not descended from Adam like others . . . ‘He pleased not himself.’”¹¹⁵ Ryland’s point of this sermon was to champion the incarnated Son of God as the “absolute exception” to this “general infection” of mankind’s selfishness.¹¹⁶ In Ryland’s Confession concerning the incarnation, he established his theological understanding of the incarnation that from all eternity, the Son of God existed in his deity, but in the incarnation, he existed in the “form of God” from eternity and the “form of a servant.”¹¹⁷ Ryland denounced those who stated that Christ “emptied” himself of deity or the divine attributes of God when he assumed flesh. “In the dignity of his person,” declared Ryland, “He is the only-begotten of the Father, attested to be his beloved Son, possessed of every perfection of deity.”¹¹⁸ In other words, even in the form of a servant, Christ still possessed his deity. Ryland continued his argument by stating, “All things the Father has are his . . . All the attributes of deity were magnified by him.”¹¹⁹ Although the Son of God humbled himself, becoming a man in the flesh, he remained God from eternity in the form of a servant. As for his divine perfections, Ryland stated that the Son of God “veiled his natural perfections” in the form of a servant, but that his “moral excellencies shone forth.”¹²⁰ Ryland made this same argument with Rowe, in describing the incarnated Son of God

¹¹⁴ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Self-Denial,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:36.

¹¹⁵ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Self-Denial,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:36. The Scripture reference is Rom 15:3 (KJV).

¹¹⁶ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Self-Denial,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:36.

¹¹⁷ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 12.

¹¹⁸ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 75.

¹¹⁹ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 75.

¹²⁰ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 75.

who had come to purchase the “church with his own blood,” who being in the flesh “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”¹²¹

While the 1644 and 1689 Baptist Confessions did not use this language of “form of a servant” in describing the incarnated Son of God, Nehemiah Coxe did use this phrase in his rebuttal of Collier. Coxe stated that the Son of God “vailed his deity, humbled himself, and [took] upon him the form of a servant.”¹²² Ryland also utilized the phrase “form of a servant” when describing the incarnated Son of God in the flesh. For Ryland, the idea that the Son of God was incarnated in the form of a servant reflected Christ’s obedience as a servant who humbled himself on the cross. The phrase “form of a servant” appeared six times in Ryland’s *Pastoral Memorials*, and in all six occurrences, it reflected the Son of God and the atoning works he performed on the cross. In “Christ the Example of Self-Denial,” Ryland argued that the incarnation of the Son of God in the flesh revealed to us that Christ

took no pleasure in worldly grandeur; in temporal power in the honor that cometh from men, in the respect of the great, in the applause of the multitude, in the idle quiet of retirement, in the investigation of science, in the contemplation of the works of men or even in bare speculations on divine truth, apart from its connexion with the great object he had in view in taking upon himself the form of a servant.¹²³

For Ryland, the servanthood of Christ in the incarnation reflected on the character and will of God in the atoning works of the Son of God in the flesh. He declared in his sermon on Christ as our example: “Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience. He took on him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, by which he honored the divine law.”¹²⁴ Therefore, according to

¹²¹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 71.

¹²² Coxe, *The Confutation of the Heresies*, 24.

¹²³ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Self-Denial,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:38.

¹²⁴ Ryland, “The Example of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:263.

Ryland, the servanthood of Christ was a reflection of his obedience to the will of the Father and the salvific plans of God from all eternity.

The brightness of the Father’s glory. As already discussed, Ryland was convinced that the Son of God was the Second Person of the eternal Trinity with the Father and the Spirit. Ryland was completely confident that there was one God in nature who was in the “Unity of the Godhead,” but yet this one God existed with “equal Divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁵ Along with the Trinity, Ryland was also convinced that in the incarnation, that is, “The Word become flesh,” the Son of God never emptied himself of his deity in order to be, in the flesh, the “brightness of the Father’s glory.”¹²⁶ In describing the deity of Christ in his incarnation, the 1689 London Baptist Confession stated, “The Son of God, the second Person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father’s glory, of one substance and equal with him”¹²⁷ In 1678, the Presbyterian writer Edward Polhill (1622–1694?) wrote a book entitled *A View of Some Divine Truths*, in which he described the incarnate Christ as the “Brightness of the Father’s glory.” Polhill, in a study on Hebrews 1:3, said, “Above all, this was eminently seen in our great prophet Jesus Christ: he did not only reveal the gospel, but he himself is the substance and marrow of it. He is the very mirror of divine truths and perfections. His style is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory.”¹²⁸ In other words, the incarnated Son of God, displayed what could not be seen; that is, God. Polhill stated,

¹²⁵ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 6.

¹²⁶ Ryland, “The Indwelling of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:150.

¹²⁷ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 247.

¹²⁸ Edward Polhill, *Speculum Theologiae in Christo: Or, a View of Some Divine Truths, Which Are Either Practically Exemplified in Jesus Christ, Set Forth in the Gospel; or May Be Reasonably Dduced from Thence* (London: Printed by A.M. and R.R. for Tho. Cockerill, 1678), 12.

Jesus Christ, as he is the eternal Son of God, is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. But because our weakness could not bear so excellent a glory without being swallowed up by it, he veiled himself in our flesh, that he, who was light of light in the eternal generation, might become the light of the world in an admirable incarnation; and such he was, under a double notion.¹²⁹

Thirty years prior to Polhill's *Divine Truths*, the 1644 London Baptist Confession utilized the same language concerning Christ being "brightness" of the Father's glory," but they ended the phrase by stating: ". . . the ingraven form of his being."¹³⁰ In his treatise on the Trinity, the Particular Baptist John Gill also wrote about this phrase engraven form or express image as it related to the incarnated Christ and his relationship with the Father. He said, "That Christ is like unto the Father is certain, for he is 'the Brightness of the Invisible God, the Brightness of his glory and, the express image of his person:' But then this likeness is the not the cause or foundation of his Sonship. The reason that he is the Son of God, is not because he is like him, but the reason why he is like him, is because he is his Son, of the same essence and nature with him."¹³¹ Gill was arguing that the expression that Christ was the "Brightness of his Father's glory" was a reference to equality and sameness of nature, and distinction of persons within the Trinity.¹³² For Gill, and the Particular Baptists, the biblical phrase that the Son of God in his incarnation, existed as the "Brightness of the Father's Glory," revealed the true nature of Christ being divinity, and was the "express image" of the character of the Father.

In a sermon on Habakkuk 3:4, Ryland spoke of this expression, "The Brightness of God's Glory."¹³³ Although Ryland conceded that the prophet could be

¹²⁹ Polhill, *A View of Some Divine Truths*, 12.

¹³⁰ Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 146.

¹³¹ John Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated, being the Substance of Several Discourses of that Important Subject; Reduc'd into the form of a Treatise* (London: Printed, and sold by Aaron Ward, 1731), 146.

¹³² Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 118.

¹³³ Ryland, "The Brightness of God's Glory, and the Hidings of God's Power," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:198–203.

referring to a “visible brightness in the pillar of fire in the wilderness,” or the appearance of Yahweh at the giving of the law at Mount Sanai, or even the “cloud of glory” seen filling the Temple and resting on the mercy seat of God, he interpreted this phrase as God’s own “essential glory:” God is light.¹³⁴ Ryland taught that the “light of God” was his “declarative glory, or the outward exhibition of his inward excellence, his brightness is as the light.”¹³⁵ Ryland believed that every “manifestation” of the “bright and beautiful” glory of God, was an exhibition of the “true character” of God, “and these exhibitions have been just, uniform, and glorious.”¹³⁶ When Ryland examined the incarnation of Christ and the phrase that he was “the brightness of the Father’s glory,” he was declaring that Christ, in the flesh, was “near and dear to the Father; his associate; the joint partaker of Deity.”¹³⁷ For Ryland, Christ was the very “manifestation” of the “bright and beautiful” glory of God.¹³⁸ In his sermon “Christ the only Source of Eternal Happiness,” Ryland described Christ as “dignified, being the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and full of truth. He is Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh. The brightness of his Father’s glory”¹³⁹ Ryland understood that the revealing of God’s glory through Christ was a display of “God’s whole character” and that it was a reflection to “all the friends of God” that God “cannot err” and that his “whole plan is clear before him arranged by infinite wisdom and purity; and he hath power absolutely infinite to

¹³⁴ Ryland, “The Brightness of God’s Glory, and the Hidings of God’s Power,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:198.

¹³⁵ Ryland, “The Brightness of God’s Glory, and the Hidings of God’s Power,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:198.

¹³⁶ Ryland, “The Brightness of God’s Glory, and the Hidings of God’s Power,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:198–99.

¹³⁷ Ryland, “The Reasonableness of Christ’s Mediation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:177.

¹³⁸ Ryland, “The Brightness of God’s Glory, and the Hidings of God’s Power,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:198.

¹³⁹ Ryland, “Christ the Only Source of Eternal Happiness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:314.

execute it.”¹⁴⁰ Being revealed as the “Brightness of the Father’s glory” greatly defined who Christ was in the flesh and displayed to the world what they cannot see: the presence of God.

Ryland’s Doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God Applied

In his letter to the ministers and messengers of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, Ryland asserted that Godly zeal was the “fervor of true benevolence” towards a “beloved object,” therefore, “exciting the subject” to vigorous activities for the good of the “beloved object.”¹⁴¹ Ryland argued that there was a “dutiful connection” between faith and practice, that he called the practice of “true religion.”¹⁴² For Ryland, true religion was “internal, and consists primarily in holy affections, and devout exercises of the heart.”¹⁴³ He asked the church whether faith in Christ and his possession of the believer make one “live differently” than one normally lives.¹⁴⁴ Faith in Christ, argued Ryland, produced a “true religion” that generated “holy affections” of the heart towards Christ. This devotion to Christ or “true religion,” according to Ryland, begins in the internal, but works out in the external. He said, “But if [holy affections towards Christ] be genuine, they will, in proportion to their strength, show themselves externally, and influence the whole conduct.”¹⁴⁵ Ryland’s affections towards Christ developed in him a spirituality of the external practice of faith, not necessarily out of burden or task, but from

¹⁴⁰ Ryland, “The Brightness of God’s Glory and the Hidings of God’s Power,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:201.

¹⁴¹ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:392.

¹⁴² Ryland, “Characteristics of Divine Revelation,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:168.

¹⁴³ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:291.

¹⁴⁴ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:26.

¹⁴⁵ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:291.

the “sincerity and strength” of his love towards Christ.¹⁴⁶ This devotion to his affections for Christ and his spiritual activities that demonstrated this love are clearly expressed in his sermon “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” where he declared, “Love to a creature will sweeten labor.”¹⁴⁷ The external expression of affection towards Christ was a prevalent theme throughout Ryland’s sermons and letters. In his concluding remarks in “The Spirits and the Just,” he discussed about the character of a godly man living out a life that was “just” even before “their admission into that state of perfection.”¹⁴⁸ This living out the “just” life that was initiated by great affections towards Christ was a product of God’s love for mankind that was demonstrated through Scripture, including the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God. Ryland stated, “Never had God such another servant as his own incarnated Son.”¹⁴⁹ For Ryland, this ultimate act of “self-denial and self-abasement” of the Son of God was the definitive example and motivation for the practice of true religion in the believer’s life.¹⁵⁰ He believed that “doctrine and practice” were an important part of the believer’s spirituality and championed this practice as an endearing quality within the spiritual life of a believer.¹⁵¹

In Ryland’s “On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism,” he argued that the gift of the incarnate Son of God was the most wonderful display of God’s sovereignty that has ever been demonstrated.¹⁵² Through his sermon, Ryland engaged with Richard Watson’s phrase “the impiety of Calvinism” and asked the question of the deceased Watson: “Is

¹⁴⁶ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:293.

¹⁴⁷ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:293.

¹⁴⁸ Ryland, “The Spirits of the Just,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:257.

¹⁴⁹ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:294.

¹⁵⁰ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:294.

¹⁵¹ Ryland, “The Unworthy Communicant,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:62.

¹⁵² Ryland, “On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:358.

there any thing impious or incredible in the doctrine of the incarnation?”¹⁵³ Ryland was amazed by the idea that God would “permanently unite himself to a created nature” or “that God should make himself visible to his creatures” in order to become the sacrifice for the sin of the elect.¹⁵⁴ He asked Watson if it was impious to suppose that the incarnated Son of God would provide an atoning sacrifice or would forgive sinners through his mercy. Ryland said, “If the guilt of man was so great, as to need to be expiated by the sacrifice of God’s incarnate Son, surely the gift of Christ must be the most wonderful instance of divine sovereignty that ever was, or can be conceived.”¹⁵⁵ For Ryland, the incarnation of Christ and his atoning works for the elect was “an idea which would promote piety, and especially humility” in his life, and would be “the most powerful motive [for] . . . gratitude and obedience, the natural consequences of this doctrine.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, for Ryland, the doctrine of the incarnation and the atonement by Christ represented the greatest motive for spiritual formation. He expressed this same thought in a sermon focused on Romans 14:8. Ryland, utilizing the words from Paul to the church at Rome, expressed the foundation of his spirituality: “Whether therefore we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”¹⁵⁷ Ryland then asked, “Are you more his than others . . . and does the thought of being the Lord’s influence you?”¹⁵⁸ In other words, Ryland believed that since Christ gave you “existence, and bestowed on you numberless mercies, surely he deserves some return,” or “practical evidence,” manifested in the life of the believer, thus demonstrating a “cordial gratitude” for God.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Ryland, “On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:355.

¹⁵⁴ Ryland, “On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:355.

¹⁵⁵ Ryland, “On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:358.

¹⁵⁶ Ryland, “On the Alleged Impiety of Calvinism,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:358.

¹⁵⁷ Rom 14:8 (KJV).

¹⁵⁸ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:26.

¹⁵⁹ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:26–7.

In his sermon concerning the devotion to Christ, Ryland quoted the psalmist: “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”¹⁶⁰ As Ryland reflected on the great doctrines of Scripture that encouraged him in the practice of “true religion” and the manifestation of the practical evidence of this new life through the incarnated Son of God, he gave a series of reactions that demonstrate the influence that Christ had on his life. He said,

We do habitually aim at glorifying God, and do endeavor to make every other object subordinate to this grand and beloved design We regard all he says as law; and wish fully to know his will in every thing, that we may do it. We cheerfully resign ourselves to his disposal, and would have no will of our own, contrary to the will of God. What God loves, we love; what he condemns, we would forsake and mortify. We long to be absolutely free from all that he dislikes, to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We would prefer the honor of God to our own honor, and the interest of Christ to every other interest.¹⁶¹

The influence of the incarnation of Christ, and Christ’s presence in deity in the life of the believer, according to Ryland, produced a grand effect on the believer, thus answering the question of how one can obtain this “essence of the bliss” of longing to be with Christ and the hope of a continual pursuit of the presence of Christ.¹⁶² In a description of Ryland’s own spirituality, he stated, “I set the Lord ever before me, as though I could see him that is invisible.”¹⁶³ In his sermon “The Beauty of the Divine Image,” Ryland described this invisible Christ as the catalyst for “holy activity” and the submission of “ourselves out to do good, honoring God with our substance, acting as stewards for him, imitating his beneficence, abounding in every good work.”¹⁶⁴ As a spiritual practice for Ryland, he asserted he often meditated on his “obligations to the Redeemer, remembering what he did and suffered for me. The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son

¹⁶⁰ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:27.

¹⁶¹ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:28.

¹⁶² Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:28.

¹⁶³ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:28.

¹⁶⁴ Ryland, “The Beauty of the Divine Image,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:104.

of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”¹⁶⁵ For Ryland, there was no salvation apart from belief in the deity of Christ and the doctrine of incarnation of the Son of God. Ryland argued that these doctrines demonstrated the true divinity of Christ and, therefore demanded from the life of the follower of Christ a dedication to living out life as if this divine, invisible Christ were standing before them. The influence of the doctrine of the presence of Christ, past, present and future, affected Ryland spiritually and this influence was clearly demonstrated through his life. This section will examine several areas of Ryland’s spirituality and discover the influence of Christ’s incarnation and presence in the ministry of Ryland.

Spiritual Formation: “The Mind of Christ”

The doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God played an extremely prominent role in the spiritual formation of Ryland because he was thoroughly convinced that God was most consistently and fully known through the person of Jesus Christ. In his sermon, “Christ the Only Source of Eternal Happiness,” Ryland described Christ as “Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh. The brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.”¹⁶⁶ In his rebuttal letter to Rowe concerning the misplaced zeal of the Socinians, Ryland noted that God the Father required his church to “continually look unto Jesus” as the hope of the church and giver of “benefits.”¹⁶⁷ Ryland’s argument was that the presence of the Son of God in flesh was the hope of the church and the foundation of true religion. For Ryland, the “glorious idea” of true religion was found in God’s calling for his followers to be “imitators of God” and to

¹⁶⁵ Ryland, “On Devotedness to Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:28.

¹⁶⁶ Ryland, “Christ the Only Source of Eternal Happiness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:314.

¹⁶⁷ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 52.

develop through discipleship the “mind of Christ.”¹⁶⁸ In Ryland’s *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer’s Consolation*, he spoke of the believer’s hope as being connected with the gift and revelation of the Son of God in his incarnation.¹⁶⁹ For Ryland, this revelation of the Son of God was a cause for worship of the Father for the “Scriptural evidence” of Christ’s presence within the believer and the dwelling of the Son of God in their “hearts by faith.”¹⁷⁰ This reflection of Christ’s presence by Ryland was an important part of his spirituality, especially as he dealt with spiritual formation among believers. In “The Mind of Christ,” Ryland examined the connection between “evangelical truth and vital holiness” within the lives of followers of Christ.¹⁷¹ As for “evangelical truth,” Ryland expanded on this thought by describing evangelical truth as “the richest discoveries of the gospel” that were designed for “practical purposes,” that is, “the sublimest virtues of morality enforced by evangelical motives.”¹⁷² He argued that the “beauty and strength” of evangelical truth and vital holiness were lost if there was no connection between truth and holiness. In other words, the truth of Scripture applied in the mind of the believer should motivate true holiness in the life of the believer. In his sermon “The Beauty of the Divine Image,” Ryland spoke of God’s power to conform a sinner into his own image and to put inside this person the great desire for himself and for others to “enjoy God, and to glorify him,” with a goal to “act for him.”¹⁷³ For this reason, Ryland was committed to preaching Christ-centered sermons. In his sermon “The Preaching of the Cross,” Ryland began by reminding his audience that Jesus Christ “was the main subject of [Paul’s] ministry,” and although many rejected his Christ-centered

¹⁶⁸ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:183.

¹⁶⁹ Ryland, *Christ, The Great Source*, 17.

¹⁷⁰ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 17.

¹⁷¹ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:183.

¹⁷² Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:183–84.

¹⁷³ Ryland, “The Beauty of the Divine Image,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:103.

teaching, others found it to be “salutary and efficacious.”¹⁷⁴ For Ryland, a Christ-centered spirituality was developed by the transformation of his mind through Scripture, and this developed in him a desire to imitate Christ and to develop the character of Christ.

The spirituality of the imitation of Christ. In his sermon “The Mind of Christ,” Ryland utilized Paul’s words to the church at Philippi: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”¹⁷⁵ He began this sermon by declaring, “Surely it is a glorious idea of true religion, that it calls us to be imitators of God: and it is a blessed advantage that evangelical religion presents to us the example of God incarnate, who was found in fashion as a man, and exemplified the most difficult duties, in such circumstances as most powerfully to recommend them.”¹⁷⁶ In Ryland’s mind, the incarnation of the Son of God was of infinite importance for the spiritual formation of the believer, as it “contains all that is valuable on earth, and stands connected with all that is glorious in heaven.”¹⁷⁷ Ryland understood that by the self-emptying birth of the Son of God, humanity now had before them the spiritual model of God in the flesh and the means of living out the new life. While Ryland understood that it would be impossible to imitate Christ in all of his attributes, miracles, or especially in his works of atonement, he did nevertheless champion Christ as the prime example of obedience to the Father. Evan Howard, in his book *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, said, “The Spirituality that flows from Christ’s example is a spirituality of imitation.”¹⁷⁸ In his

¹⁷⁴ Ryland, “The Preaching of the Cross,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:47.

¹⁷⁵ Phil 2:5 (KJV).

¹⁷⁶ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:183.

¹⁷⁷ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:190.

¹⁷⁸ Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 182.

sermon “The First and Second Adam,” Ryland argued for the spirituality of imitation, and said that “spiritual men are like Jesus Christ.”¹⁷⁹

For Ryland, godliness included “the knowledge . . . and [the] imitation of God.”¹⁸⁰ He understood the knowledge of God to include God’s attributes and moral character, as well as the “knowledge of God in Christ.”¹⁸¹ In other words, one could not know God without knowing Christ. Ryland also spoke of the imitation of Christ as being a particular activity of godliness. He said, “Not in [Christ’s] natural, but in his moral perfections. Righteousness, holiness, truth, beneficence, Oh, what a honor, to be called to imitate God! What an additional advantage have we, from the example of Christ!”¹⁸² Ryland explained this advantage of the presence of Christ in the spiritual formation of the church by noting that God cannot humble himself, yet he has commanded his followers to be humble. Ryland noted that Paul “proposed Christ Jesus as an example of humility, or lowliness of mind,” yet, according to Ryland, “humility cannot properly be predicated of the divine nature.”¹⁸³ Ryland’s argument was that God, by nature and “according to truth,” can condescend, but he cannot be humble, because he cannot in his divine nature think “nothing less than the highest opinion of himself.”¹⁸⁴ It was in the incarnation of the Son of God, “having assumed human nature,” that true humility could be displayed and exercised by Christ for the formation of true religion within a believer.¹⁸⁵ Ryland stated that Christ’s humility was “unspeakably enhanced by the dignity of [Christ’s] person”

¹⁷⁹ Ryland, “The First and Second Adam,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:71.

¹⁸⁰ Ryland, “Godliness and Contentment,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:215.

¹⁸¹ Ryland, “Godliness and Contentment,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:216.

¹⁸² Ryland, “Godliness and Contentment,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:216.

¹⁸³ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:184.

¹⁸⁴ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:184.

¹⁸⁵ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:184.

and that “never was any heart so lowly as that of our Lord Jesus.”¹⁸⁶ It was the presence of the Son of God in the flesh on this earth that demonstrated to the believer the mindset of a follower of Christ, and if Christ did not come in the flesh, according to Ryland, then true humility was “spoiled.”¹⁸⁷

The character of Christ. For Ryland, the application of evangelical truth into the life of the believer was a calling or “glorious idea” of true religion, and this pursuit of evangelical truth defined the life of Ryland. He was convinced that there was “great beauty in true holiness” and that this beauty stemmed from believers being conformed to the character of Christ.¹⁸⁸ Ryland proclaimed that there was “nothing on earth” or in heaven that was “so lovely,” and this beauty of Christ’s character “makes saints and angels lovely, and the more of it we possess the more lovely we are.”¹⁸⁹ For this cause, Ryland believed that true piety towards God and the possession of the beauty of Christ’s character were founded upon having the “mind of Christ” through the study of evangelical truth. In his association letter “Godly Zeal,” Ryland told the ministers and messengers that “all evangelical truth is of a holy tendency, and is either misunderstood, or you do not enter into the spirit of it, if it does not regulate your tempers and influence your lives.”¹⁹⁰ Ryland believed that spiritual growth through evangelical truth was the foundation of living out the mind of Christ in this world, and to him this mind of Christ was founded upon the evangelical truths of Scripture. He said, “Nothing can so happily promote beneficence, integrity, and equity towards men, and piety towards God, as

¹⁸⁶ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:184.

¹⁸⁷ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:184.

¹⁸⁸ Ryland, “The Beauty of the Divine Image,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:103.

¹⁸⁹ Ryland, “The Beauty of the Divine Image,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:103.

¹⁹⁰ Ryland, “On Godly Zeal Descried and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:403.

evangelical truth.”¹⁹¹ In his sermon “Indecision in Religion,” Ryland also warned the church not to neglect evangelical truths or to neglect the practice of these truths because they would be in danger of having a “dead faith.”¹⁹² Ryland was adamant about the connection between the doctrines of the incarnation and the deity of Christ, and their influence on the mind of the believer. In his recollection of Colossians 3, Ryland exhorted the church to have their minds renewed and affixed on Christ.¹⁹³ Therefore, for Ryland, Christ was our valuable example of living out life according to the “mind of Christ,” for Christ’s mind was “dead to the world, and altogether heavenly.”¹⁹⁴

Righteous Living: “Triumphing in Christ”

In his sermon “Triumphing in Christ,” Ryland utilized Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth instructing them that it was God who “causeth us to triumph in Christ.”¹⁹⁵ For Ryland, the understanding of “triumphing in Christ” was to be brought into a new relationship with God through the mediatorial work of the Son of God incarnated. In Christ’s incarnation, Ryland argued that he was able to successfully accomplish all the necessary acts of the mediatorial office, thus revealing the “ground of [our] triumph” in Christ; that is, “we [now] serve the Son of God, are related to him, interested in him, and act by commission from him.”¹⁹⁶ Ryland argued that this triumphant life in Christ was exemplified in the life of the Apostle Paul. He said, “The temper and conduct of the apostle Paul in particular, exemplifies the nature of

¹⁹¹ Ryland, “On Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:403.

¹⁹² Ryland, “Indecision in Religion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:49.

¹⁹³ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:186.

¹⁹⁴ Ryland, “The Mind of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:186.

¹⁹⁵ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:74.

¹⁹⁶ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:75.

Christianity, and presents an example worthy the imitation of every believer.”¹⁹⁷

Ryland’s use of the phrase “temper and conduct” was a reference to the new disposition of Paul brought about in him by Christ and the way this new disposition lived out in Paul’s life. In his sermon “The Form of Godliness,” Ryland spoke of becoming a new creature in Christ and that “godliness,” “an internal, operative principle,” had been implanted into his “heart by God himself.”¹⁹⁸ He recognized that this change by God was internal or “invisible,” and thus there was “no outward form” of a new creation.¹⁹⁹ This new disposition was created in the believer by “a most powerful and extensive influence of the temper and conduct.”²⁰⁰ Ryland said, “If a man as much realizes the truth of those invisible objects, whose existence is ascertained by divine revelation, as he realizes the objects of sense, surely they will powerfully move every power of his soul; and if the whole soul be moved, it will regulate the outward conduct.”²⁰¹ For Paul, according to Ryland, this new disposition, or “holy ambition” implanted in him, was motivated by his calling by the “Head of the church” and it was displayed in his willingness to labor abundantly and endure a life of suffering for this Head.²⁰² For Paul, this motivation for righteous living and dedication to laboring for Christ was directly connected to the “dignity” of the Person of Christ.²⁰³ In “The Relation of Christ to the Believer,” Ryland stated that because of the dignity or deity of Christ, believers were “influenced” by Christ “as the branch receives sap from the vine.”²⁰⁴ He said,

¹⁹⁷ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:74.

¹⁹⁸ Ryland, “The Form of Godliness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:221.

¹⁹⁹ Ryland, “The Form of Godliness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:221.

²⁰⁰ Ryland, “The Form of Godliness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:221.

²⁰¹ Ryland, “The Form of Godliness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:221.

²⁰² Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:74–75.

²⁰³ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:75.

²⁰⁴ Ryland, “The Relation of Christ to Believers,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:54.

Though freed from the curse of the law, and entitled to life by his obedience, yet believers are not therefore without law unto God, nor given up to impurity of life. But he who has saved them from wrath, saves them also from the love and power of sin, having procured the gift of the Holy Spirit, and rendered it consistent with his dignity to inhabit our hearts once so depraved. The most powerful motives to holiness are drawn from his dying love. He is the most attractive pattern of holiness. He has rendered obedience easy, by his promises of assistance. Yea, he has made it in a manner unavoidable by his constraining love.²⁰⁵

For Ryland, “the most powerful motives to holiness” or holy living stemmed from the salvation of Christ and his “gift of the Holy Spirit” inhabiting the “once depraved mind.”²⁰⁶ Therefore, it was Christ’s activities in the incarnation and in his life that made him the “attractive pattern of holiness” for righteous living.²⁰⁷ Ryland reminded his hearers of Christ’s deity, being the “only-begotten of the Father” and the possessor of “every perfection of deity,” and in his incarnation, “every moral excellence belongs to [Christ] in full perfection.”²⁰⁸

Benevolence and Service: “The Nature and Importance of Good Works”

In the biography of Ryland, written by his son Jonathan Edwards Ryland and published in volume one of his *Pastoral Memorials*, it was said that Ryland’s benevolent character was evident by his life.²⁰⁹ For Edwards Ryland, the description of his father’s benevolent piety was obvious, as he displayed this piety in both denominational

²⁰⁵ Ryland, “The Relation of Christ to Believers,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:54.

²⁰⁶ Ryland, “The Relation of Christ to Believers,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:54. For a detailed understanding of Ryland’s beliefs concerning the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, 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. Also see several sermons by Ryland: Ryland, “The Design of Spiritual Gifts,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:67–70; Ryland, “The Gift of the Holy Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:268–71; Ryland, “The Holy Spirit the Author of Conviction,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:342–49; Ryland, “The Indwelling of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:15–19; Ryland, “The Love of the Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:39–46; Ryland, “On Grieving the Holy Spirit,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:156–60.

²⁰⁷ Ryland, “The Relation of Christ to Believers,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:54.

²⁰⁸ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:75.

²⁰⁹ Ryland, “Memoir of Dr. Ryland,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:43.

ministries and activities, as well as in his devotion to benevolence and service in his own home.²¹⁰ In Ryland’s funeral service, Robert Hall, Jr. described Ryland through the visible spiritual characteristics he displayed in his life. Hall spoke of Ryland in terms of having “the most tender sympathy with the infirmities and distresses of our fellow-creatures; and his whole life was a perfect transcript”²¹¹ of benevolence and service towards his fellow believers and humanity in general. As Hall described the benevolent character of Christ in his funeral sermon for Ryland, he made sure to also compare the benevolent piety of Ryland with that of Jesus Christ. Hall’s intent was to portray the perfect example of a life lived in God and then to compare the life of Ryland, favorably, to this perfect example. Hall said:

It is a homage due to departed worth, whenever it rises to such a height as to render its possessor an object of general attention, to endeavor to rescue it from oblivion; that when it is removed from the observation of men, it may still live in their memory, and transmit through the shades of the sepulcher some reflection, however faint, of its living luster.²¹²

Hall, like Edwards Ryland, thought the life lived by Ryland was worthy of respect and emulation because it mimicked the life of Jesus Christ and reflected the salvation given to Ryland through Christ.

In his debates with the Antinomian William Huntington (1745–1813), Ryland, who accused Huntington of practical Antinomianism, declared that it was “a false gospel which . . . promoted a mere witness of the Spirit, without the works of the Spirit.”²¹³ In

²¹⁰ Ryland, “Memoir of Dr. Ryland,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:43.

²¹¹ Robert Hall, Jr. *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D.D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5th, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1825), 3.

²¹² Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 22.

²¹³ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 22. “Practical antinomianism holds that since salvation is entirely of grace and cannot be lost once it has been received, then why bother about keeping the commandments? So you have the cycle of sin, forgiveness; sin, forgiveness, and so on. This is the classic heresy Paul was dealing with in Romans 6, from those who urged continuance in sin so that grace may abound. In our own day, this is not unrelated to the false teaching that it is possible to separate the acceptance of Jesus as Saviour from the acceptance of Him as Lord. (Richard Brooks, “Antinomianism—The Present Confusion,” Banner of Truth (blog), February 23, 2005, <https://banneroftruth.org/>)

the eighteenth century, Particular Baptists were engaged in a variety of philanthropic enterprises that were specifically connected to the incarnation and atoning works of Christ. Michael Haykin, in an article concerning Particular Baptists and the necessity of good works, said, “Good works, though rejected as necessary for justification, were nevertheless highly prized as evidence of authentic Christianity.”²¹⁴ Haykin championed Hannah More (1745–1833), an Evangelical author on ethics and morals, who asserted that “action is the life of virtue, and the world is the theatre of action.”²¹⁵ More’s comments were echoed by Ryland throughout his sermons and he often spoke of the response to salvation being this “spring of action” to do good works.²¹⁶ This “spring of action” for good works by Ryland and More was indicative of the eighteenth-century Evangelical character. According to the British church historian David Bebbington (b. 1949), in his research of the origins of the revivals of the 1730s, there were four characteristics or qualities that demonstrated the birth of eighteenth century Evangelicalism. These four qualities, aptly called Bebbington’s Quadrilateral, were described in Bebbington’s book *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. Bebbington described the Evangelical movement, which he argued coincided with the “doctrines or ministers of the revival movement”²¹⁷ of the 1730s, under four characteristics: conversionism, biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism.²¹⁸

us/resources/articles/2005/antinomianism-the-present-confusion-part-1/#:~:text=%E2%80%98Practical%E2%80%99%20antinomianism%20holds%20that%20since%20salvation%20is%20entirely,of%20sin%2C%20forgiveness%3B%20sin%2C%20forgiveness%2C%20and%20so%20on).

²¹⁴ Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘He Went about Doing Good:’ Eighteenth-Century particular Baptists on the Necessity of Good Works,” *American Theology Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (2010): 55–65.

²¹⁵ Cited in Haykin, “He Went about Doing Good,” 56.

²¹⁶ Ryland, “On Steadfastness in Religion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:299.

²¹⁷ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House 1989), 1.

²¹⁸ For a detailed description of Bebbington’s four characteristics of Evangelicalism, see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2–19. Bebbington described *conversionism* as a supernatural and instantaneous change; it was an answer to a great crisis of agony and guilt, with an immense feeling of relief. In other words, there is a sharp difference between those who had received relief

Ryland, who was part of the eighteenth century revivalist movement, demonstrated each of these characteristics, especially that of activism. Bebbington described “activism” as a response to “conversions” and “an exceeding great desire for the conversion of others.”²¹⁹ For Ryland, activism was a demonstration of a love of God, based upon God’s love for him.²²⁰

The nature of good works. As Ryland discussed the nature of good works in the believer’s life, he noted that the incarnation of the Son of God revealed the evil of sin and the drastic transformation of one who was “dead unto sin,” now reconciled to Christ to no longer live in sin.²²¹ He argued that this one who was transformed was to live their life “as in [Christ’s] sight, as though you could see him that is invisible.”²²² For Ryland, the inward presence of Christ through a renewed heart was demonstrated by the outward activity of good works. He said, “While you rejoice to be justified by faith in him, you well know that your works must justify your faith before men, and show that it is genuine and vital,” among God’s elect.²²³ While Ryland was not arguing for justification by works, he was convinced that if one professed Christ and was a new creature in Christ, this one should demonstrate this “new life” through benevolent acts of service; that is,

and those who had not. Jonathan Edwards described this as “infusing life into the dead soul” (Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 7). *Biblicism* is the belief that all spiritual truth is found in Scripture. This, according to Bebbington, brought a greater devotion to the Bible as the source of truth. *Crucicentrism*, or the atoning works of Christ on the cross, was at the very center of the evangelical movement. Bebbington stated that the ‘standard view of evangelicals’ was that Christ died as a substitute for the sinner on the cross; thus, according to Bebbington, the predominate thought of early evangelicals was substitutionary atonement. The fourth part of the quadrilateral offered by Bebbington is that of *activism*. Bebbington argued that because of assurance of salvation through conversion, the new Evangelical was actively engaged in ministry and missions. Bebbington quoted Jonathan Edwards expressing that once a person is converted, they express a deep desire to see others converted to Christ.

²¹⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 10.

²²⁰ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:238.

²²¹ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:237.

²²² Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:237.

²²³ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:237–38.

“you are alive for God.”²²⁴ In order to be clear concerning works and justification, Ryland argued that true Christianity was reflected by a life devoted to good works, but these good works themselves were not works to gain righteousness, for they were insufficient grounds before a holy God. In his sermon “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” Ryland asserted that there was an “immediate connexion . . . between the doctrine of salvation by grace . . . and our indispensable obligations to the practice of good works,” but this salvation by grace, according to Ryland, was “exclusive of human merit.”²²⁵ Ryland made this same statement in his Confession of Faith: “Our works are not only imperfect, but also are by no means designed to be in whole or in part the ground of our justification before God.”²²⁶ Ryland stated that justification, which was received by faith alone, was “solely upon the account of the imputed righteousness of Christ.”²²⁷ In other words, Ryland argued, Christ saved by his grace, but this salvation produced godly activity or service through good works for Christ. For Ryland, the nature of benevolent activity and service was connected to the mediatorial works of the incarnated Son of God and prescribed according to the will of God that was revealed in Scriptures and the motive or purpose of the good work.²²⁸ Therefore, the act of feeding the poor, according to Ryland, was in direct response to the “reverential affectionate regard to God.”²²⁹ This reverential affection for God did not merit justification, as Ryland argued in his sermon on the “The Nature and importance of Good Works,” for good works were not performed in order to “merit eternal life.” Ryland stated that to describe

²²⁴ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:238.

²²⁵ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:232.

²²⁶ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 15.

²²⁷ Ryland, “A Confession of Faith,” 15.

²²⁸ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:232.

²²⁹ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:232.

good works as being meritorious activities was derived from an “arrogant pretense.”²³⁰ He clarified “arrogant pretense” by stating that “for a sinner to confide in his own merit, is the great act of presumption of which a creature can be guilty; and he that thus prides himself in his own righteousness, and scornfully rejects the mediation of Christ, is as offensive in the sight of God as the vilest profligate on earth.”²³¹ This rejection of Christ’s mediation was exactly what Ryland accused the Socinians of doing when they rejected Christ’s mediatorial work on the cross for the atonement of sin.²³² For Ryland, this rejection of Christ’s mediation would declare that the “good works” of the Socinians “have very little weight in them” since they were derived from the wrong motive. This was the nature of good works according to Ryland; they were the response to the incarnation of the Son of God and his atoning works on the cross. They do not merit salvation, but they were performed as if this incarnated Christ was before the believer as a demonstration of justification, not to merit justification.

The demonstration of good works. In Ryland’s sermon, “Christ the Life of Men,” he declared that “partakers of spiritual life . . . joined unto the Lord as to be one spirit with him . . .” should have a “disposition for holy activity and gracious affections.”²³³ These “gracious affections” for God were displayed to the world through “holy activity” or good works. Ryland called this display of good works being the “light” of the Lord. He said,

Have we, in consequence of the influence of the quickening Spirit, been made light in the Lord, though we were sometime ago in darkness? Have we been brought out of that darkness into marvelous light? Oh! Walk as the children of the light and of the day: have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Let your light so

²³⁰ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:235.

²³¹ Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:235.

²³² Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 75

²³³ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:293.

shine before men, that they, beholding your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.²³⁴

In other words, when one was made “light in the Lord,” through the power of the Holy Spirit, one should demonstrate this transformation from darkness to light by displaying the very light of Christ through good works. Ryland thought that Christ, the “light of the world” who made him a light through his atonement, deserved to be imitated through holy activity. He said, “Consider the excellence of the divine nature, and moral character, and say, Is not God worthy of ardent zeal?”²³⁵ Ryland said that “zeal is fervent, active benevolence” derived from the whole law of God and lived out in the believer’s life.²³⁶ This zeal, according to Ryland, was directly related to the incarnation of the Son of God in flesh. He argued for the imitation of Christ based upon “the importance of his kingdom among men. How wonderful, that he will condescend to dwell among them!”²³⁷ Ryland believed that the practice of holiness had a deep connection with the incarnated presence of Christ and the works he had done in his flesh. Ryland said, “All he did for God, was also done for us, for our highest benefit; and at the same time was intended to be an example. Can we bear lukewarmness, when we reflect on his amazing love? Must it not give the lie to our profession, if we serve him with indifference?”²³⁸ Ryland’s argument that the incarnation of the Son of God as a direct influence for the demonstration of good works rested in representing Christ, the source of his salvation, and in confessing that he was the possession of Christ, “for good works.”²³⁹

²³⁴ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:293.

²³⁵ Ryland, “On Steadfast in Religion,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:296.

²³⁶ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:421.

²³⁷ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Zeal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:296.

²³⁸ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Zeal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:296.

²³⁹ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Zeal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:296.

Assurance and Faith: “The Presence of Christ”

As Ryland was expositing the Apostle John’s words concerning Jesus’ removing himself bodily from the presence of his disciples, Ryland noted the promise of Jesus: “I will not leave you comfortless. I will come unto you.”²⁴⁰ For Ryland, the presence of Christ, both in his incarnation for the atonement and in his spiritual relationship for comfort with his earthly disciples after the ascension, was an important part of his compassion ministries as a pastor. In 1796, Ryland was asked to give the “Charge” at the pastoral ordination of William Belsher of the Baptist church at Silver Street in Northampton. He reminded Belsher that there would be times when God’s people would enter into adversity, and that it was the pastor’s responsibility to this people to be their caregiver.²⁴¹ Ryland opened his sermon with Moses’ words found in the Book of Numbers: “Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers?”²⁴² Ryland compared the work of a pastor with the calling and care that God entrusted to Moses over the people of God in the wilderness. This pastoral work, according to Ryland, must be infused with the promise from Christ that he was continually present in the life of the believer.

In John Newton’s 1787 letter to Ryland upon the death of Ryland’s wife, he wrote such encouraging words of the presence of Christ during suffering that would serve as a great example to a young Ryland of the importance of the language or words used by

²⁴⁰ Cited in 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 . . . Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Samuel Pearce,* 2nd ed. (London: Clipstone, 1800), 15.

²⁴¹ John Ryland, *The Duty Ministers to be Nursing Fathers to the Church to Regard Ministers as the Gift of Christ: A Charge Delivered by the Rev. John Ryland, D. D. of Bristol; and a Sermon by The Rev. S. Pearce, M. A. of Birmingham, in the Dissenters Meeting-house, Angel Street, Worcester; at the Ordination of the Rev. W. Belsher, to the Pastorate of the Baptist Church, meeting in Silver Street, in the same city; Together with an Introductory Address, by the Rev. G. Osborn, and also Mrs. Belsher’s Declaration of Religious Sentiments* (London, 1796), 17.

²⁴² Num 11:12 (KJV).

the pastor in times of grief. It was evident from the many letters that were written from Newton to Ryland, in their thirty-nine years of friendship, that Ryland learned much from him in terms of pastoral care. In Ryland's sermon at the death of his friend and fellow pastor, Samuel Pearce (1766–1799), he told Pearce's church, "So deeply am I sensible of the loss sustained by this church in general, not to say by the nearest relative of my dear departed brother, that on a partial view of their circumstances, I could not be surprised were some now present, ready to exclaim, 'Is there any sorrow like unto our sorrow, wherewith the Lord has this day afflicted us?'"²⁴³ Ryland, knowing the suffering of both the church and Pearce's family, interjected into his sermon the biblical doctrine of Christ as husband of the church, giving care in times of suffering. Ryland declared,

Surely they who drank with him [Pearce] the deepest out of his cup of affliction, could find no savor of the curse, no, not at the bottom; nor would they drink the bitter, without tasting also of the sweet, which was not sparingly dropt into it, but copiously infused. And after such proofs and illustrations of the divine fidelity, I cannot but believe, that she [Pearce's widow] who needs them most of all shall find farther stores of consolation laid upon for her relief: since God her Maker is her husband, who giveth the songs in the night.²⁴⁴

Ryland described how Pearce, while serving as pastor of this church, often recommended Christ's presence as "ground encouragement" on which the church could depend.²⁴⁵ As Christ promised to not leave the disciples in their time of suffering, so Ryland reminded the church that this "same respect to his whole church in every age" was available for them to "safely rely on his gracious promise, as his very apostles."²⁴⁶ Ryland's language in this sermon was infused with the understanding of the presence of Christ, and this understanding was the source of a great hope and consolation to the church that would sustain them in their times of grief.

²⁴³ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 15.

²⁴⁴ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 16.

²⁴⁵ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 17.

²⁴⁶ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 17.

The language of presence. In Ryland’s 1781 Confession of Faith, he declared that he was “convinced of the existence of God”²⁴⁷ and knew that this assured faith in God’s existence was an important piece of “great spirituality.”²⁴⁸ He said, “We must live as seeing the invisible God . . . impressed with a deep sense of the work of spiritual things.”²⁴⁹ This blessed assurance of the existence of God fueled Ryland’s theology regarding a future presence of God, as well as an experience and expectation of the current presence of God. In his funeral sermon for Pearce, Ryland spoke of three ways in which Christ fulfilled or will fulfill his promise to “come unto” his disciples again. Ryland stated that Christ, after his resurrection, appeared to his disciples on several occasions, thus assuring his disciples of his promise, “Because I live ye shall live also.”²⁵⁰ Ryland also reminded the church of their “continued enjoyment of [Christ’s] spiritual presence, and divine influence.”²⁵¹ Ryland asserted,

We fully ascertain this privilege to be included in the text, by comparing this promise, I will come unto you, with those declarations, recorded by Matthew, which admit of no solution without the acknowledgement of Christ’s proper divinity: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. And lo I am with you always to the end of the world.”²⁵²

For Ryland, the divinity of Christ, along with his continued presence, was the source of the believer’s joy, even in the midst of suffering. One final way Christ fulfilled his promise of eternal presence, according to Ryland, was that “at the end of the world,”

²⁴⁷ Jonathan M. Yeager, ed., “A Baptist’s Beliefs: John Ryland, Jr.,” *Early Evangelicalism: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 294.

²⁴⁸ John Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:77.

²⁴⁹ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:77.

²⁵⁰ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 21–22.

²⁵¹ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 22.

²⁵² Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 22.

Christ will “come again, and receive them to himself; that where he is, there they may be also.”²⁵³

Ryland’s confidence in the eternal presence of God was an encouragement in his own life and was made apparent in his confession. He said, “We must have a strong confidence in the all-sufficiency of Christ to support and defend us, and to carry on his own interest, being persuaded that he will be exalted in his own strength, will overcome all his foes, fulfill all his counsel, gather in all his people, and make them eternally happy.”²⁵⁴ This confession in the eternal presence of God developed a language in Ryland that made its way into his pastoral care ministry, which was evident in his consoling use of the phrase “presence of God” in his funeral discourses. A notable example of this was found in Ryland’s comforting words to the church at Birmingham where Pearce pastored. Ryland said to the Church, “Yes, beloved, we are authorized to make a general application of this word of consolation; and must affirm, that the promised presence of the blessed Redeemer is the best source of comfort to all his people, in every time of trouble.”²⁵⁵ Ryland was so convinced in the comfort that this doctrine of “presence” brings to the church that he challenged the church at Birmingham to reflect on Pearce’s earthly ministry, but also to realize that Pearce’s “affections were evidently and eminently in heaven.”²⁵⁶ Ryland also reminded them that when Pearce knew that he was going to die, “he could not promise to come again” to the church, but he believed that the “presence of his great Master, as to his divine nature,” would be the sufficient comfort to sustain the church “by his departure.”²⁵⁷ Ryland continued, “The spiritual presence of

²⁵³ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 23.

²⁵⁴ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:77.

²⁵⁵ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 17.

²⁵⁶ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 25.

²⁵⁷ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 25–26.

Christ could make up for the want of his bodily presence, to those who knew what it was to enjoy the latter; it must then assuredly be sufficient to supply the absence of any under-shepherd.”²⁵⁸ For Ryland, the presence of Christ and the hope of his return were the greatest comfort of the grieving church and were more than sufficient in their lives to bring complete effectual healing in their time of grief.

Ryland called upon Pearce’s church, in their mourning for the loss of their pastor, to “reflect that if Christ should come unto you, according to this gracious promise, he will communicate unto you, more largely, the supply of his Spirit. And shall not this fit you for every duty, support you under every pressure, and ensure you the victory over every spiritual enemy?”²⁵⁹ For Ryland, the language of the “presence of Christ” as both a present help in times of grief and as a future hope of the promised eternal presence with Christ, was a consistent teaching point for the church, especially those who were suffering.

Presence of Christ: “The Source of Earthly Consolation.” As noted, when Pearce was getting close to death, he entreated Ryland to preach his funeral using John 14:18: “I will not leave you comfortless. I will come unto you.”²⁶⁰ For both Pearce and Ryland, “the promised presence of the blessed Redeemer is the best source of comfort to all his people, in every time of trouble.”²⁶¹ Pearce wanted to leave his church with an anticipation of the comforting presence of God, no matter the extent of the grief that was felt upon this earth. Ryland accomplished Pearce’s wishes by presenting the assurance of the fulfillment of the promise of Christ that He would not leave His disciples “comfortless,” a reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God, and that Christ

²⁵⁸ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 26.

²⁵⁹ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 35.

²⁶⁰ John 14:18 (KJV).

²⁶¹ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 17.

would return again for His church.²⁶² Ryland told the church, “Let then the expectation that this promise will be accomplished, moderate your sorrows.”²⁶³ In other words, Ryland encouraged the church to “moderate” or restrain their sorrows by contemplating the promises of God for consolation. He continued, “It is the presence of Christ which constitutes the perfected felicity of our dear departed friend: but Christ is really present with his church upon earth also.”²⁶⁴ As the church was to moderate its sorrows, it would find its “felicity” or happiness in the presence of God on this earth.

Ryland’s message to the grieving congregation at Bedford was also centered around the presence of Christ and the comfort that was found in Christ. Ryland began his sermon for the Joshua Symonds’ (1739–1788) church with an encouragement to remember that Christ was the “great source of the believer’s consolation.”²⁶⁵ In order to bring this church comfort, Ryland chose Colossians 1:27–28 as his base text: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”²⁶⁶ Ryland said, “The text is the language of inspiration, and points out infallibly to us all, the only ground of every Christian’s hope, and the noblest theme on which every preacher should insist.”²⁶⁷ The message of “Christ in you,” according to Ryland, revealed to the church that “none of the fallen race of Man can entertain a rational hope of glory,” he said, “but what must be founded on Christ alone, that Anointed Saviour who died without the gates of Jerusalem, who lives and reigns in glory now, and lives and reigns within the breast of every sincere believer.”²⁶⁸ Therefore, there was great comfort to the church, which was grieving the loss of their pastor, in the

²⁶² Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 20.

²⁶³ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 40.

²⁶⁴ Ryland, *The Promised Presence of Christ*, 40.

²⁶⁵ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 1.

²⁶⁶ Col 1:27 (KJV).

²⁶⁷ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 4.

²⁶⁸ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 4.

understanding that there was only one hope, Jesus Christ, and his Spirit “lives and reigns” in the life of true believers in Christ.

As a pastor, Ryland understood that in order to deal with grief, the church must comprehend that their hope was not in this world, and that they were not left in this world alone. Therefore, he spoke to them about the presence of God and the truth that the Spirit of Christ indwells every “sincere believer,” thus revealing to the church, “the account given us of what Christ is to the church.”²⁶⁹ Ryland stated, “By [Christ’s] obedience unto death, he rendered the bestowment of future glory, upon lost, guilty sinners, perfectly consistent with the divine character, and the honour of God’s moral government. They who were exposed to everlasting contempt, on account of the dishonour they had cast upon their maker, may now hope for everlasting glory.”²⁷⁰ In other words, Ryland argued, the presence of incarnated Son of God, the “maker” of all things, brought about a restoring of the relationship between God and sinners, thus ensuring a future “new hope,” which was everlasting. It was this future hope that Ryland reminded the church of at Bedford in order to bring assurance and consolation during their time of grief.

Presence of Christ: “The Source of Eternal Bliss.” When Benjamin Francis (1734–1799), pastor of Shortwood, died, Ryland preached his funeral message utilizing 1 Thessalonians 4:17–18: “So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”²⁷¹ Ryland’s pastoral care for this church was based on Paul’s phrase: “shall we ever be with the Lord.” Ryland held that the life-giving presence of the Lord, which he described as “within the breast of every sincere believer,” had its root in the “stronger attractions of heaven,” for “to be with Christ was still far better, than all the

²⁶⁹ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 8.

²⁷⁰ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 13.

²⁷¹ 1 Thess 4:17–18 (KJV).

bliss, which even a Christian could enjoy below.”²⁷² Therefore, for Ryland, a belief in the eternal communion between God and the believer was the greatest source for the believer’s happiness on earth. He said, “The presence of the Lord is evidently represented as the very essence of their bliss.”²⁷³ This eternal “celestial bliss,”²⁷⁴ that was “the state of the Saints in glory,”²⁷⁵ was held in the promised eternity of the presence of Christ. It was here that Ryland introduced a connection between the happiness of the living Church with the anticipation of the presence of Christ throughout eternity. In other words, Ryland believed one cannot truly have joy or happiness in the present life without a convincing faith in the eternal life with Christ.²⁷⁶ In Francis’ funeral discourse, Ryland delivered to the church an anticipation of the eternal bliss found in an everlasting communion with the eternal Christ.

First, Ryland encouraged the church that “they who are for ever with the Lord, enjoy an uninterrupted sense of his divine excellencies and glorious perfections.”²⁷⁷ Ryland assured the church that their departed pastor could now “see [Jesus] as he is,”²⁷⁸ that is, in all his perfections because he “now possessed a just and full acquaintance with the divine character.”²⁷⁹ This was only accomplished, according to Ryland, when one saw God “face to face.”²⁸⁰ The anticipation of this “face to face” encounter with God was a

²⁷² John Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss: A Funeral Discourse Delivered December 22, 1799 . . . The Death of the Rev. Benjamin Francis, A. M.* (Bristol, England: Ann Bryan Corn-Street, 1799), 4.

²⁷³ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 7.

²⁷⁴ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 9.

²⁷⁵ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 9.

²⁷⁶ Ryland, “Christ the Only Source of Eternal Happiness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:310.

²⁷⁷ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 10.

²⁷⁸ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 10.

²⁷⁹ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 10.

²⁸⁰ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 11.

source of the believer's "eternal bliss" or happiness in Christ. It was never truly realized until one was "for ever with the Lord."²⁸¹ Yet it was here that Ryland reminded the church that their "extacy of joy" was in the presence of Christ and "that they shall derive everlasting blessedness from the uninterrupted contemplation of his perfections."²⁸²

A second encouragement was that those believers who have already passed, entered into a "perfect union with [Christ]."²⁸³ In Ryland's sermon, "The Joy of the Lord the Believer's Strength," he stated, "Your own happiness consists in connexion and communion with God, in union with Christ and conformity to him; and so does the happiness of others."²⁸⁴ That was to say, the eternal bliss by which Ryland was encouraging these grieving churches was only found in a union whereby "the believer is now so 'joined unto the Lord,' as to be 'one spirit' with him, and to 'have the mind of Christ.'"²⁸⁵ For Ryland, union with Christ was an important aspect of receiving all of the benefits of God, including "His intrinsic glory being displayed to [the believers] enlightened understanding."²⁸⁶ Ryland said that Christ "must dwell in your hearts; abide in your affections, as truly as the bridegroom dwells in the heart of the bride."²⁸⁷ Yet, for those who were "for ever with the Lord," this union was demonstrated through a "continual and uncloying community with [God]."²⁸⁸ Ryland's point was that there were no "impediments" to true fellowship with God through eternal union with Christ.

²⁸¹ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 11.

²⁸² Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 19.

²⁸³ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 10

²⁸⁴ Ryland, "Enlarged Desires Satisfied," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:95.

²⁸⁵ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 11.

²⁸⁶ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 11.

²⁸⁷ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 11.

²⁸⁸ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 12.

A third point of encouragement from Ryland directed the church to anticipate being perfectly conformed to the image of God. Ryland stated, “But as a believing sight of Jesus has, even in this life, a transforming efficacy, so the full enjoyment of his presence, in the world above, shall instantly complete the blessed transformation.”²⁸⁹ For Ryland, this completion of earthly sanctification was a point of joy for the believer. To be present with the Lord, face to face, brought a fullness of possession by the Holy Spirit of the believer’s soul.²⁹⁰ Ryland called this the “state of perfection” although he did not ascribe to “absolute perfection,” for he understood this “state of perfection” to be progressive. He said, “For every fresh discovery of God will assuredly have a corresponding impression on the heart,” yet without any earthly obstacles, biases, errors or sins to distort these “fresh” discoveries of God.²⁹¹

The premise that to be present “for ever with the Lord” brings “eternal bliss” was a major theme in Ryland’s funeral discourses. He encouraged within the hearts of the church a great anticipation for this “face to face” encounter with God. He maintained that the brethren who had already entered “into the joy of the Lord,” that is, who were in the presence of the Lord, “participate with him of that ineffable bliss which he derives from the enjoyment of his Father’s love. They rejoice in his exaltation, and in a manner, enjoy it with him, as though they sat down with him on his throne.”²⁹² In his article concerning the presence of God, modern author and theologian Gordon Fee reminded his audience that the central theme of the prophetic hope to the people of God was “the promised return of God’s presence.”²⁹³ Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, Fee

²⁸⁹ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 13.

²⁹⁰ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 13.

²⁹¹ Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 14.

²⁹² Ryland, *The Presence of Christ the Source of Eternal Bliss*, 13.

²⁹³ Gordon D. Fee, “The Spirit as the Renewed Presence of God,” *CRUX* 44, no. 24 (Summer, 2008): 7.

spoke of God’s people “simultaneously filled with wonder and awe at being in God’s very presence.”²⁹⁴ This was the same message Ryland delivered to those churches who had lost their pastors. It was only through the presence of God that the church truly found its consolation and comfort in this life, and it was only by this same presence of God that the church would find its joy and eternal bliss. In Ryland’s sermon, “The Death of the Aged Believer,” he remarked: “From the whole, we should learn, not to sorrow for those who have died in the Lord, as those who are without hope.” Rather, Ryland said, “They are safe and happy. The fruit is gathered for life eternal.”²⁹⁵

In a letter dated September 1, 1788, almost three months before Symonds’ funeral, Symonds penned his wishes to John Ryland as to the subject of the funeral discourse to be preached. Although Symonds suggested a myriad of Scriptures, Ryland chose to encourage his church with “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” This letter from Symonds reached Ryland about eighteen months after he received the encouraging letter from Newton at the death of Ryland’s wife. At that time, Newton reminded Ryland that God “will condescend to visit” him and that this presence of God brings with it “effectual healing.”²⁹⁶ This same theme concerning the presence of God became a main focus for Ryland, and he utilized this encouraging thought on multiple occasions to bring comfort to a church who had just lost their pastor.

Godly Zeal: “The Influence of the Love of Christ”

In Ryland’s *Christ, the great source of the believer's consolation; and the grand subject of the Gospel*, he spoke of church discipline and reminded the church that there were many who have a great zeal for God, but lack true knowledge of God. He said

²⁹⁴ Fee, “The Spirit as the Renewed Presence of God,” 7.

²⁹⁵ Ryland, “The Death of the Aged Believer,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:65.

²⁹⁶ Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 189.

that “they have erred from the law of the love of Christ, and have made a rent from the true church, which is but one.”²⁹⁷ In his letter to John Rowe, Ryland made this same argument against the Socinians and accused them of being zealous against the deity of Christ and his atonement for sin.²⁹⁸ Ryland described Socinian zeal as being irregular,²⁹⁹ for their zeal was strong against Trinitarians and those who believed in the incarnation of the Son of God, including the deity of Christ, but it was accommodating to “dissipation and profaneness.”³⁰⁰ On the other hand, Ryland’s zeal stemmed from his love for Christ and he encouraged the pastors involved in such disputes with these Socinians by stating, “You are the most eminent in profession, set a pattern to all the rest of the church. Let your faith, love, and zeal be very eminent: if any of you cast a dimmer light, you will do much hurt in the church.”³⁰¹ Ryland taught that “godly zeal” was a “fervent, vehement motion of the mind, inflamed with love” affixed on God.³⁰²

Ryland stated in his sermon “The Influence of the Love of Christ” that many thought Paul to be “beside himself . . . but dare not give into their verdict.”³⁰³ Paul wished his “judges, accusers, and enemies” to be like him, excluding his own shortcomings. His point, according to Ryland, was that he wanted his hearers to know the love of Christ and feel its effects in their lives.³⁰⁴ Ryland asked, “Can, then, all join in this assertion? If not, what more powerful motive influences you?”³⁰⁵ The influence of

²⁹⁷ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 48.

²⁹⁸ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 44.

²⁹⁹ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 6.

³⁰⁰ Ryland, *The Partiality . . . of Socinian Zeal*, 44.

³⁰¹ Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source*, 49.

³⁰² Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:391.

³⁰³ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:88.

³⁰⁴ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:88.

³⁰⁵ Ryland, “The Influence of the Love of Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:88.

Christ was the foundation for Ryland’s spirituality for godly zeal, specifically the person of Christ and his deity. Ryland argued:

We beseech you, holy brethren, partakers, of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our Profession, Christ Jesus. Let the excellency of his cause, the ardor which he himself hath shewn in it, the personal obligations you are under to him, and blessings derived from him to all his people, excite your zeal to the uttermost—Reflect on the original dignity which he eternally possessed, and consider the depth of humiliation to which he condescended for your sakes.³⁰⁶

Godly zeal, according to Ryland, was in direct response to the “excellency” of the cause of Christ and Christ’s own zeal demonstrated to the church through his actions. Ryland reminded the Baptist ministers and messengers that Christ “took upon him the form of a servant [and] he made it his meat and drink to do” the will of the Father.³⁰⁷

For Ryland, godly zeal was a response to this “kingdom of God among men,” who took on the “arduous task” of suffering for the cause of the Father, and he never allowed any opposition to deter him from his task, “even the reconciliation of transgressors to God.”³⁰⁸ This work of reconciliation was accomplished, argued Ryland, by Christ condescending and applying his salvation to the heart of his elect. It was through this condescending of the Son of God in flesh that birthed in Ryland’s heart a zeal for the things of God. He stated, “And can you be languid and lukewarm in the service of such a friend? Let his love, his dying love, constrain you to imitate his example, and exert yourselves in his interest.”³⁰⁹ Ryland implored his hearers to consider the love of Christ towards the church through his incarnation and to allow Christ’s zeal for the cause of Father to fuel the church’s zeal for “further advancement of his cause.”³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:409.

³⁰⁷ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:409.

³⁰⁸ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:409.

³⁰⁹ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410.

³¹⁰ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:409–10.

It was not that God needed the assistance of the church to fulfill the mission of Christ, but, according to Ryland, “he honors you by employing you in his service.”³¹¹

Godly zeal through opposition. Ryland often experienced opposition in his ministry, especially from the Socinians and others who rejected the deity of Christ. Robert Hall, in his funeral sermon for Ryland, portrayed his character as having a “certain timidity of spirit,”³¹² yet it never caused him to shrink from speaking out against doctrinal errors nor to neglect his leadership qualities that would have affected many in that generation. In his letter to the Baptist Association, Ryland stated, “Let the greatness of the opposition that is made to the reign of God on earth stir you up to the more ardent zeal.” In other words, the opposition to the deity of Christ and his incarnation on this earth should empower the believer with “ardent zeal” to continue the cause of Christ.³¹³ Ryland believed that opposition to Christ merely demonstrated that the “hosts of hell” were actively “engaged on the side of sin,” and it reminded Ryland of his former position as an “active” enemy of “the blessed Saviour.”³¹⁴ Ryland challenged the ministers and messengers of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association by stating, “Let reflection upon your former servitude rouse you to assert that glorious liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. Be at least as active for the best of masters, as you were once for the worst of tyrants.”³¹⁵ Godly zeal, therefore, should be the fruit of opposition because it reminded the believer of Christ’s work of “pardon and recovery,” and it should “stimulate” the believer to “activity in glorifying [God].”³¹⁶ He also stated that this opposition allowed

³¹¹ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410.

³¹² Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 35.

³¹³ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410.

³¹⁴ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410.

³¹⁵ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410.

³¹⁶ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410.

for the believer to engage in combat against “principalities and powers,” who “once lorded it over you. But Omnipotence is on your side. Through your God you may do valiantly, for he shall tread down your enemies for you.”³¹⁷ For Ryland, godly zeal was increased in his spiritual life through supernatural opposition and allowed him to experience spiritual warfare “in the name of Jesus.”³¹⁸

Godly zeal for the state of mankind. As Ryland was finishing his thoughts concerning godly zeal and opposition, he stated, “Carry on the war in the name of Jesus into the empire of your adversary. Through the Spirit you shall mortify the deeds of the body, and obtain farther conquests over your in-bred foes. And you are warranted to labor and hope to be the instruments of rescuing others from the prince of darkness, that are now led captives by him at his will.”³¹⁹ For Ryland, when one considered the “divine nature” of the Son of God incarnate and his moral character in the flesh, compared to the “miserable state of mankind,” there was a godly zeal for evangelism and missions.³²⁰ In his letter to the ministers and messengers concerning godly zeal, he encouraged his readers to give “serious attention” to the writings of John Carey on “the state of the heathen world,” and published sermons by Andrew Fuller and John Sutcliff (1752–1814), in *Jealousy for the Lord of Hosts, and the Pernicious Influence of Delay*.³²¹ Ryland asserted that these works, “if you have any feelings in your souls,” would “excite your compassionate concern for your brethren of the human race, who sit in darkness and the

³¹⁷ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410.

³¹⁸ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:410–11.

³¹⁹ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:411.

³²⁰ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:411.

³²¹ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:411. John Sutcliff and Andrew Fuller, *Jealousy for the Lord of Hosts: And, the Pernicious Influence of Delay in Religious Concerns. Two Discourses Delivered at a Meeting of Ministers at Clipstone, in Northamptonshire, April 27, 1791* (United Kingdom: Vernor, 1791).

shadow of death.”³²² Having an ardent zeal for the salvation of mankind was part of Ryland’s spirituality. He was committed to missions and a zeal for the salvation of Mahometans, Papists, Eastern Christians, Nominal Protestants, which he considered to all be “poor miserable heathens.”³²³

Godly zeal for worship and the ordinances. In his sermon “Christ an Example of Zeal,” Ryland utilized John 2:17, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,” to demonstrate the heart of Christ for worship, including the practices of worship through the ordinances. Ryland reminded his hearers of the ardent zeal of Christ for the house of worship and Christ driving “the buyers and sellers out of the temple,” declaring this was his “Father’s house” and not a “house of merchandise.” Ryland asserted that this was an “astonishing instance, not only of zeal, but of the divine power over the minds of this covetous and resentful throng.” In other words, Christ’s actions demonstrated his zeal for the Father, his authority over the Jews, and his zeal for the worship of God. True godly zeal, according to Ryland, promoted the divine honor of God and “strenuously” opposed “all that would dishonor God.”³²⁴

Hospitality and Friendship: “The Criminality of Selfishness”

In Ryland’s sermon “The Criminality of Selfishness,” he asserted that “the greater part of mankind was wholly under the influence of the most sordid selfishness.”³²⁵ He based this assertion on Paul’s message to the church at Philippi: “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”³²⁶ Ryland argued that, in general,

³²² Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:411.

³²³ Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:411.

³²⁴ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Zeal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:294.

³²⁵ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:188.

³²⁶ Phil 2:21 (KJV).

unregenerate people regard “only their own inferior part, and are inattentive to their noblest concerns; living wholly without God in the world; not acknowledging their dependance on his providence; still less realizing their need of his grace; and least of all aiming at his glory.”³²⁷ For Ryland, this was the natural reaction to the knowledge of God or the gospel message of Christ. He described this natural selfishness as being “a mean, vile, and sinful” condition.³²⁸ Ryland argued that anyone who elevated the advancement of one country at the expense of another or to regard the human race above other “intelligent beings,” including “the Supreme Being,” would “still be but a sordid selfish wretch!”³²⁹ As for those who claim Christianity, Ryland recognized that many in society, when terrified, will pray to God or call upon his name for help “and think there is a vast deal of merit in their so doing.”³³⁰ Ryland also acknowledged that for those who “fall in with the gospel,” that is, hear the gospel and “give it but a partial reception,” will falsely submit to Christ and make a forced repentance, but their motives for this false religion was merely derived from self-interest.³³¹ He continued describing the selfish person of false religion:

All their zeal and love is founded on a persuasion of their own safety and exaltation. They are for all privilege, and no duty. They have no notion of entering such into the nature and desire of the law and gospel, and seeing the divine glory. They know as much of God’s general character, of the things which David prayed to behold, and which angels desire to look into, as they expect or desire to know.³³²

Ryland was convinced that “unrenewed men,” even if they claim Christ or have their conscience awakened, “mind only self” and the “external interests” of the flesh.³³³

³²⁷ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:188.

³²⁸ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³²⁹ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³³⁰ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³³¹ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:188.

³³² Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³³³ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

As Ryland described the natural person's self-consumed mind, he recognized that if this same attitude was "so common in the Apostle's days," then it would be no less common in his own day. The reason for Ryland's recognition of the prevalence of this sin was that without the presence of Christ in one's life, the natural tendency would always lean towards the sin of "sordid self-interest."³³⁴ Therefore, Ryland argued, the only way to properly implant a "superior affection in the human heart" with a supernatural "holy love" for others was through the renewing grace of Christ that "unites the heart to the Supreme Being."³³⁵ Ryland taught that to be united to the Supreme Being through Christ, was to also be united to "beings in general."³³⁶ In other words, when someone was united to the Supreme Being, it "expands the bosom, enlarges the heart, causes the soul to delight in the diffusion of good, and exult the communication of happiness from the fulness of God."³³⁷ Ryland understood that the spirituality of friendship and hospitality towards all began with a "renewed soul," who now was convinced that "God himself is [to be] loved above all" and that he was to be glorified in all relationships.³³⁸ This "renewed soul" now "regards also the happiness of others, as of equal importance with his own; and though he cannot equally exert himself for every individual around him, yet he feels a new kind of regard for the welfare of all mankind."³³⁹ Ryland believed that a "renewed soul" viewed the welfare of others as equally important as his own and sought the happiness of those around him with equal effort as his own happiness.

³³⁴ Ryland, "The Criminality of Selfishness," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³³⁵ Ryland, "The Criminality of Selfishness," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³³⁶ Ryland, "The Criminality of Selfishness," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³³⁷ Ryland, "The Criminality of Selfishness," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:188.

³³⁸ Ryland, "The Criminality of Selfishness," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189.

³³⁹ Ryland, "The Criminality of Selfishness," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:189–90.

For Ryland, this newly found spirit of hospitality and friendship was directly related to the Son of God, “who alone has rendered the salvation of sinners.”³⁴⁰ Ryland gave three reasons for this newly acquired adjustment of interest. The first dealt with the vastness of God. In reading Colossians 1, that all things exist by God and for God, and that God was “before all things, and by him all things consist,”³⁴¹ Ryland noted the vastness of God compared to his own minuteness. He said, “As a particle of water is small, compared with a generous stream, and much more with the mighty ocean, or the dust of the balance with the solar system; so the humble man feels small before the great family of his fellow-creatures, and less than nothing compared with the infinite God.”³⁴² In other words, renewed souls humbled themselves before God and mankind and treated others accordingly as better than themselves.

Ryland also spoke of the “gratitude to Christ” for his salvation. He said, “Gratitude to Christ requires that we should seek his interest above our own.”³⁴³ For Ryland, the work of Christ in salvation demanded a proper respect and gratitude. He reasoned, “For how did he deny himself for us! He became poor for our sakes, emptied himself, made himself of no reputation, and became obedient to death. What ingratitude is it to neglect his cause!”³⁴⁴ To show hospitality and deference to others was to understand the depth of the incarnated Son of God, who “became poor for our sakes,” and died on a cross for sin.

Ryland’s third reason for not seeking self-interest was the “wisdom” that was given to the renewed soul through Christ. A renewed soul, according to Ryland, “requires

³⁴⁰ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:190.

³⁴¹ Col 1:17 (KJV).

³⁴² Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:190.

³⁴³ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:190.

³⁴⁴ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:190.

that we should see the things of Christ, for self-seeking is arrant folly; he that finds his life shall lose it.”³⁴⁵ Simply, Ryland was convinced that the believer’s “highest interest” was found in seeking the interest of the Redeemer and that personal happiness “would be greatly advanced were we but more public spirited.”³⁴⁶

In Ryland’s closing arguments of his sermon concerning selfishness, he recounted the words of Christ that no one can be a disciple of Jesus Christ “without self-denial.”³⁴⁷ For Ryland, to focus on self was in opposition to the example of Christ’s incarnation because it does not reflect his becoming “poor for our sakes” or emptying himself and becoming of “no reputation.”³⁴⁸ Ryland noted that “selfishness is the very root and essence of sin, and generous disinterested love is the very root and essence of holiness.”³⁴⁹ In other words, disinterested love demonstrated the love of Christ, for it was given to the church by his grace and not based upon their merits.

Conclusion

In Ryland’s seventieth year of life, his health and strength began to fail, and he confined his ministry “labours more exclusively to the church at Broadmead, the College, and those religious and benevolent objects in the West of England whose claims pressed upon him.”³⁵⁰ In the biography by Culross, it became apparent that even in Ryland’s last stages of life, he was concerned with the welfare of others. His benevolent spirit and commitment to the gospel that was demonstrated in his life, continued to be his moniker as his life began to fade. For Ryland, “true religion is internal” and produced “affections”

³⁴⁵ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:191.

³⁴⁶ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:191.

³⁴⁷ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:191.

³⁴⁸ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:190.

³⁴⁹ Ryland, “The Criminality of Selfishness,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:191.

³⁵⁰ Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 88.

for God and for humanity that flow from the “devout exercises of the heart.”³⁵¹ All throughout his writings, Ryland demonstrated his genuine faith in Christ through his encouragement for the church to participate in the eternal activities that were derived from their love and adoration for Christ, including the divine works of Christ. Ryland demonstrated how the doctrine of the incarnation and the presence of Christ were applied to various areas of his ministry and in his own Christian life, including his spiritual formation, righteous living, acts of service, assurance of salvation, and his godly zeal. His application of the presence of the Son of God in the flesh was clearly demonstrated in his life and created in him an ardent zeal to live his life “abundantly to God.”³⁵² In the final reflections of his sermon “Christ and Example of Zeal,” he expressed the results of the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God and the humility he demonstrated in the flesh. Ryland stated, “Oh! May we look to the author and finisher of faith, for an increase of faith, love, and zeal!”³⁵³

³⁵¹ Ryland, “Obedience the Test of Love to God,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:291.

³⁵² Ryland, “Godly Zeal Described and Recommended,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:411.

³⁵³ Ryland, “Christ the Example of Zeal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:296.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As stated in chapter 1, this dissertation's focus has been to systematically explore the works of John Ryland to develop an insight to his theological beliefs concerning the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation, and to discover the direct bearing that these Evangelical truths had upon the spiritual formation of Ryland as a pastor and denominational leader among the Particular Baptists. In assessing Ryland's theology, this dissertation also observed Ryland's engagement in the Trinitarian controversies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and discovered that Ryland played an integral part in preserving orthodoxy among the Particular Baptist, especially as he related to his students at the academy, the churches where he pastored, and to other ministers in the Baptist associations to which he belonged. These controversies revealed in Ryland a dedication to orthodoxy and a willingness to engage the heresies of his time and to contribute his intellectual abilities to the preservation and promotion of key doctrinal issues involving the nature of God. The primary question that this dissertation sought to answer involved Ryland's understanding of the deity of Christ as presented in the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the effects of Christ's deity on Ryland's spiritual formation. For Ryland, as verified in this dissertation, it was Christ's present and future presence as the divine Son of God and his work in Ryland's life that motivated his activities and shaped his spirituality.¹

¹ John Ryland, "Christ an Example of Self-Denial," in *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), 2:28.

In chapter 2 of this dissertation, it was discovered that the false doctrines concerning the nature of God have plagued the church for millennia, but they also have served the church in the creation of foundational Christian documents that honor the biblical teaching concerning the nature of God as being a Trinity, as well as Christ's divine nature as the Son of God. Furthermore, chapter 2 established that the creation of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith was specifically born out of the denouncing of the Trinity and deity of Christ by a key Particular Baptist pastor. This key document affected the life of Ryland by defining the orthodox beliefs for the Particular Baptist, but also shaping the thoughts of the Particular Baptist theologian John Gill. It would be Gill and his systematic theology concerning the Trinity who would, perhaps, have the greatest influence on Ryland and other eighteenth century Baptists concerning the nature of God.

To understand Ryland's theology and spiritual formation, chapter 3 systematically studied Ryland's sermons, letters, and other writings to discover his understanding of the nature of God as Trinity. Ryland was convinced that God exists as a Trinity and that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one God who exists in three Persons. This confession of Ryland on the Trinity placed Ryland in the pale of orthodoxy concerning the nature of God as presented in the ancient documents derived from the councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), as well as in agreement with both the First and Second London Baptist Confessions of Faith. This commitment by Ryland was verified in his letter to the Unitarian Rammohun Roy, in which Ryland stated that the belief in the Trinity and the deity of Christ were vital affirmations of faith concerning true Christianity.² This undeniable commitment to the centrality of the Trinity in Ryland's theology was witnessed in countless sermons, and letters, as well as in his 1781 Confession of Faith.

² Ryland, "A Letter to Ram-Mohun-Roy," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:84–85.

After tracing Ryland's theological understanding of the nature of God as a Trinity, chapter 3 argued for the deity of Christ and how Ryland's affirmation of this doctrine affected his spirituality. Ryland was concerned about the Socinian practice of debasing the person of Christ and often preached of the "superior nature" of Christ, and that Christ was the "grand object" of the believer's faith and practice.³ Ryland believed that the deity of Christ influenced the life of a believer by promoting within the person "beneficence, integrity, and equity towards men, and piety towards God."⁴ This dissertation focused on two areas of Ryland's spiritual life that were directly affected by the deity of Christ. First, Ryland argued that since Jesus Christ was God, he must be worshiped as God. He made this point clear in his engagement with the Socinians and claimed that they had a different "object of worship" than he did. Ryland's writings concerning Christ as the source of his salvation as his divine God abundantly evinced his object of worship and how that object affected areas of his ministry, including how he viewed and administered the ordinances of the church. By maintaining the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ, Ryland was "authorized" by God to not neglect the ordinance of Baptism or to deviate in any respect from the original institution of baptism by immersion in the name of the "Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," and he even required all candidates for baptism to affirm the Trinity. For Ryland, baptism was a display of worship as one having "communion with [Christ],"⁵ and this helped him to always be reminded of the atonement of Christ and Christ's presence in the life of the believer. As for the Lord's Supper, Chapter 3 demonstrated that Ryland viewed the

³ 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: Sold by Buckland, Pater-noster-Row; and J. Pl. Lepard, 1787), 6.

⁴ Ryland, "Godly Zeal Described and Recommended," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 403.

⁵ John Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from their Christian Brethren . . . with a Letter on the Subject of Communion, by the late W. Clarke*, 2nd ed. (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1827), 28.

Lord's Supper as an act of the veneration of Christ, as opposed to the debasing attitude of the Socinians. Unlike the Socinians, Ryland understood the Lord's Supper as an ordinance for the church to acknowledge in worship that Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

Chapter 3 also demonstrated a very important aspect of the spirituality of Ryland, hymn writing. Ryland's hymns were filled with the words of adoration for Christ and acknowledgement that he is God. For Ryland, since the incarnated Son of God was the source of atonement and salvation, he described Christ as the "grand object of faith and worship" and expressed this in poetry and hymns. To examine the effects of the Trinity on Ryland, chapter 3 analyzed some of Ryland's hymns that specifically called the church into worship by poetically reflecting on God as a Trinity, as well as on the divinity of Christ. For example, in his "Let us Sing the King Messiah," Ryland utilized the term "king" to describe the value of Christ, and in this hymn, he called upon others to join him in singing praises to Jesus as king.

A second example of Ryland's spirituality that was affected by the Trinity is his preaching ministry. Chapter 3 revealed the trinitarian language found in Ryland's sermons and demonstrated his commitment to preaching the economy of the Trinity in the redemptive acts of God. This evinced how Ryland was affected by the Trinity, but also the deity of Christ. As chapter 3 argued, Ryland viewed Christ as the satisfying agent of divine justice and redemption, and therefore Ryland's primary theme concerning the preaching of the gospel was that Christ was his "agent of obtaining" redemption in the economy of the Trinity. His evangelistic sermons were filled with evidence of the effects of the Trinity on Ryland, which also transformed him in presenting Christ as God, the One who provided the atonement for the sinner.

In chapter 4, this paper focused on Ryland's understanding of the incarnation and its effects on his spiritual transformation. An examination of Ryland's letters and sermons concerning the incarnation, including his Confession, verified Ryland's adherence to the Chalcedonian Definition of the two natures of Christ, therefore, aligning

Ryland with the orthodox position that understands the incarnated Son of God to be “absolute deity and real humanity.” Ryland argued with the Socinian John Rowe about Rowe’s claims that Jesus was but a “mere man.” Ryland felt that if Christ was only man, then there was no real atonement for sin. Ryland stated, “If the Mediator be not God as well as man, how shall I assign some sufficient meaning to . . . ‘He is able to save to the uttermost.’”⁶ Ryland was convinced that God’s presence was physical on the earth in the incarnation and therefore that God “fully solved’ the redemption of his elect. The idea of the presence of God was a major motivating factor in Ryland’s spirituality to the point that it set Christ at the center of his spiritual formation. Chapter 4 argued for a Christ-centered spirituality that specifically adjoined the doctrine of the incarnation and the presence of God with Ryland’s spiritual formation. As stated, Ryland was convinced that there is a dutiful connection between faith and practice, which he called true religion. In other words, Ryland’s spirituality was in direct response to his theology, including the incarnation of the Son of God. For example, chapter 4 argued that it was the “mind of Christ” that Ryland felt was an important part of connecting truth and practice in a believer’s life; therefore, Ryland called upon his hearers to “continually look unto Jesus” and to imitate Christ in the activities of life. Ryland argued that the spirituality of the imitation of Christ was an important part of the believer’s spiritual formation because the incarnation truly demonstrated a servant attitude and an example of righteous living in Christ. Ryland made this point clear when he declared that “the most powerful motives to holiness are drawn from [Christ’s] dying love.”⁷

Additionally, chapter 4 continued the demonstration of the effects of the doctrine of the incarnation in the spirituality of Ryland. He noted that the incarnation

⁶ Ryland, “On the Connexion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with other Scriptural Truths,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:376.

⁷ Ryland, “The Relation of Christ to Believers,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:54.

encouraged in the believer a life of “righteous living,” for in the incarnation, Christ successfully accomplished all the necessary works for the atonement of sinners thus revealing the “ground of [our] triumph” in Christ.⁸ For Ryland, salvation was the most powerful motive for holy living, and to be freed from the curse of the law through the triumph of Christ, argued Ryland, encouraged a life of obedience in a believer. An example given in chapter 4 was Ryland’s dedication to performing “good works.” Being spiritually transformed, argued Ryland, created such an affection for God that a person was transformed with a new “disposition for holy activity.”⁹

As demonstrated in this dissertation, Ryland’s spirituality was an expression of his theological beliefs, especially from the doctrine of the incarnation and the promised presence of Christ to his disciples. This promise of God’s presence, especially in times of trial and suffering, was personally introduced to Ryland through the words of John Newton on the death of Ryland’s first wife and became a foundational part of his spirituality. Newton declared to Ryland that Christ would “condescend” to Ryland, thus bringing comfort to the grieving Ryland with the idea of the nearness and personal presence of Christ in his life. Ryland validated the understanding of Christ’s presence by incorporating it into his preaching, especially in his pastoral care ministry. Ryland argued for a spirituality that was derived from the thought of “seeing the invisible God,” for he believed that the life-giving presence of God was “within the breast of every sincere believer,” and so the presence of Christ reminded the believer of the eternal happiness that could only be found in Christ.

At Ryland’s funeral, Hall reminded the church of the blessing that was given to them as a result of the “labours you have so long enjoyed” through the ministry and

⁸ Ryland, “Triumphing in Christ,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:74.

⁹ Ryland, “Christ the Great Object of Faith,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:253.

pastorate of Ryland.¹⁰ Hall said, “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.”¹¹ Ryland’s life and ministry demonstrated his zeal for truth and practice in his spiritual life, and his dedication to this truth was an evinced characteristic of Ryland that many in his circle of life witnessed and loved. Hall stated, “[Ryland’s] 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.”¹² It could be said of Ryland that he “set the Lord ever before [him], as though [he] could see him that is invisible.”¹³

Suggestions for Further Research

This dissertation has revealed that there is much work to be done concerning the spirituality of John Ryland. In this study of his spiritual formation that was built upon his understanding of the Trinity and the incarnation, it is apparent that there is still a trove of treasure awaiting in the study of Ryland’s writings for other possible studies. As this work has examined Ryland’s spiritual formation in relation to the Trinity and incarnation, a future study might include Ryland’s personal spiritual disciplines as they relate to his theology of the servanthood of Christ or the spirituality of “obligation and duty” as compared to Ryland’s understanding of the obedience of the Son of God according to the emptying of himself in Philippians 2. Researchers could also discover Ryland’s Calvinism in a systematic study of his understanding of the doctrine of atonement and continue to develop a deeper understanding of his soteriology. Finally, there is also a

¹⁰ Robert Hall, Jr. *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D.D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5th, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1825), 42.

¹¹ Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 42.

¹² Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 25.

¹³ Ryland, “Christ an Example of Self-Denial,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:28

need for an in depth look at the use of Association Letters among the eighteenth-century Particular Baptist associations and a modern treatment of these letters for Baptist Associations today.

Coda

In one of Ryland's hymns, he expressed the triumph in Christ's atoning works on the cross and the benefit of this work to the church, his friends.

Thy cross, O Christ, was Satan's bane;
Thy weakness crush'd his power;
And all the hopes of hell were slain
In that decisive hour.

"Tis finished!" with his latest breath
Thy dying victor cried:
That cry amaz'd the realms of death—
"Tis finished!" hell replied.

Fall'n is they throne, O prince of night,
Abortive all they plan:
The God of everlasting might
Hath rasnom'd dying man.

His captive, death cannot detain;
He rises, he ascends:
In life and glory shall he reign—
With him shall reign his friends.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ryland, "VIII," in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:430.

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Daniel, Curt D. "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill." PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983.

Godet, Steven Tshombe. "The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill (1697–1771): Context, Sources, and Controversy." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015.

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ABSTRACT

“SEEING THE INVISIBLE GOD”: JOHN RYLAND, JR.’S SPIRITUALITY OF TRIUMPHAL LIVING IN CHRIST

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In a sermon delivered by John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) entitled “On Devotedness to Christ,” he explained the source of his spirituality: “I set the Lord ever before me, as though I could see him that is invisible. I often think of my obligations to the Redeemer, remembering what he did and suffered for me. The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” For Ryland and his eighteenth-century Particular Baptist co-laborers of the gospel, the presence of Christ and his deity, as related to the biblical understanding of the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ, were a great source of their Baptist piety and a declaration of their commitment to the orthodox doctrines of the Church. This dissertation explores the many works of Ryland to understand his Christological spirituality as it related to the deity of Christ presented in the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ, and asks the question to what effect the deity of Christ, in relation to the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ, had upon Ryland’s personal piety, as a pastor and as an association leader among the Particular Baptists. Ryland’s Christological spirituality is examined amid the constant influence and “grand delusion” of Socinianism and other antitrinitarian doctrines among English Dissent in the eighteenth century. The thesis of this dissertation, therefore, is to prove that Ryland’s adoption of orthodox Trinitarian and incarnational theology, leading to his understanding of the deity of Christ, penetrated every area of his spiritual formation, and of those under his influence, through letters, sermons, friendships, and

theological writings.

The introductory chapter of this dissertation provides a short biography of Ryland to understand his origins and the legacy that he left among the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter 2 describes the antitrinitarian controversies that arose among English Dissent, especially as it related to the influence of Socinianism, and the statement of faiths that were birthed to express the orthodox beliefs among Congregationalists, Presbyterians and the Particular Baptists. Chapter 2 also introduces the Christological beliefs of John Gill (1697–1771) and John Collett Ryland (1723–1792) to explore the major theological influences of Ryland concerning the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation of Christ. In Chapter 3, this dissertation explores Ryland’s own theological beliefs concerning the Trinity and how these beliefs affected his spirituality regarding his pastoral leadership and his personal practices of hymn writing. Chapter 4 examines Ryland’s theological beliefs concerning the incarnation of Christ and his presence, as well as how these beliefs affected the pastoral ministry of Ryland. In Chapter 5, this dissertation provides a summary of how Ryland’s spirituality was affected by both the deity of Christ and his presence, and how he remained orthodox in his understanding of the Trinity. This chapter concludes by arguing for the need for further research and examination of Ryland’s personal spiritual disciplines and a continuing look at the legacy that has been left to the church through the life and ministry of Ryland.

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