THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT HALL, JR.:  
THE PREACHER AS THEOLOGICAL EXEMPLAR  
AND CULTURAL CELEBRITY

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Cody Heath McNutt  
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APPROVAL SHEET

THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT HALL, JR.:
THE PREACHER AS THEOLOGICAL EXEMPLAR
AND CULTURAL CELEBRITY

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Read and Approved by:

__________________________________________
Michael A. G. Haykin (Chair)

__________________________________________
Thomas J. Nettles

__________________________________________
Hershael W. York

Date______________________________
To my grandfather,

Rosie Foley,

Who went to be with Jesus during this project.

To my parents,

David and Stacy McNutt,

Always faithful in their love and support.

And especially to Sally,

My best friend, my love.

Without her this project would have never been completed.
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<td>ODNB</td>
<td>H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., <em>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</em></td>
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PREFACE

It would be impossible to name the countless individuals who have undergirded my doctoral studies since the fall of 2007. God has truly used the prayers, encouragement, financial support, and wisdom of many people as the means of grace that have caused my perseverance in this scholarly endeavor.

I must first thank Timothy Whelan of Georgia Southern University, whose recent work on Robert Hall first piqued my interest in this fascinating subject. Throughout my work on Hall, Whelan and I have exchanged numerous e-mails, where he has provided me with keen insight, important resources to consider, and the occasional remarkable anecdote or story from his own research related to Hall.

Austin Walker, pastor of Maidenbower Baptist Church in Crawley, England, and author of *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, shares an interest in Hall that served as the starting point for a wonderful, albeit long distance, friendship. His knowledge of Hall and his times provided me a wonderful sounding board for my own ideas and conjectures. He and his lovely wife, Mai, housed me for several nights before and after my research in Oxford, and being with them and seeing their love for Christ manifested in every facet of their lives has eternally blessed me.

Michael A. G. Haykin, my dissertation supervisor, has supported me and yet challenged me from the onset of this project. He is a kind friend, a godly example, and a Baptist scholar *par excellence*. Hershael York guided and encouraged me through my doctoral course work. Through his academic expertise and pastoral experience, he has shaped and molded me as a preacher and kindled within me a zeal for this sacred calling.
Tom Nettles has taught and advised me at pivotal moments since my work on Robert Hall began in my master’s studies. His personal encouragement in life and ministry has given me great strength, and his scholarship in Baptist history has influenced my thinking more than any other writer. Finally, from observing the lives and families of all three men, I have grown to love the Lord Jesus Christ more each day.

The people of New Heights Baptist Church, whom I am humbled to serve as pastor, have always given their support and prayers. They graciously provided me a three-month preaching sabbatical during which a large portion of this dissertation was researched and written. I am so very grateful to be able to minister to such a wonderful church family.

During my trip to the Angus Library at Regent’s Park College, Oxford, in March 2011, both Reverend Emma Walsh and Emily Burgoyne were of immense help. Months before, the rediscovery of notes of Hall’s sermons that had rarely, if ever, been utilized was entirely of their doing. While I worked in the Angus, they were very gracious and willing to assist me with anything I needed. I owe them a great debt. Further, Anthony Cross and John H. Y. Briggs both reviewed my prospectus and offered their wise counsel while I was in Oxford.

Finally, my parents have supported me since the day I was born, and their prayers and encouragement have only reached a zenith during these last couple of years. I could never repay them for their years of sacrifice and unconditional love. My wife, Sally, is indeed a blessing from God I do not deserve. She is an amazing wife and mother, a stunningly beautiful bride, a funny and kind best friend, and a model of godly humility. Even through long hours of ministering to patients as a nurse, and even longer
hours of caring for our two wonderful daughters, she has showed me nothing but love and support since the beginning of my doctoral studies just a few months after we were married. She even assisted me with cataloguing some of Hall’s sermons! I love her more than words could ever express.

And finally, to my great God, I am daily humbled by your grace and love towards my family and me. Every second spent on this project is ultimately for your glory alone. Paul’s words have truly become my life’s prayer, “as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:20-21).

Cody Heath McNutt

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2012
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In his biography of Robert Hall, Edwin Paxton Hall (1820–1885) recalled the effect Hall’s life and ministry had on preceding generations, even in works of literary fiction such as *The Caxtons.*¹ The fictional work *The Caxtons: A Family Picture*, written by Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803–1873), later Lord Lytton, tells the wonderful story of a wise and caring father who is attempting to commend “the biography of good and great men” to his brother and to his own teenage son. Both the uncle and son were facing difficult times, and the father believed that biographies were just the needed medicine. Roland, the uncle, was an older gentleman who had weathered the storms of life literally and figuratively, and the son, referred to as Pisistratus, was at a crossroads in his adolescent life. The father gave them each a copy of the best remedy he could prescribe: *The Life of Robert Hall.* After putting the biography off for a short time, the son and uncle both devoured its contents and discussed its spiritually edifying effects. The son was greatly impacted by Hall’s piety and his passionate devotion to God, whereas the uncle was struck more by Hall’s courage, displayed in a life lived in constant pain. The

son declared the consensus opinion well, “Never mind what your theological opinion is—Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, Paedobaptist, Independent, Quaker, Unitarian, Philosopher, Free-thinker,—send for Robert Hall!”

The pulpit brilliance and wit of the Baptist divine Robert Hall, Jr. (1764–1831) staggered many in his day, and the praise he elicited was abundant. He was one of the most celebrated figures among the Baptists of the Regency era, yet his fame extended far beyond Baptist circles. Commenting on Hall’s early ministry in Cambridge, William Cathcart writes, “In that city, famous for its Episcopalian university, Mr. Hall soon acquired the reputation of being the most finished scholar and eloquent preacher in the British Islands.” Michael Haykin asserts that Hall “was renowned as one of the most eloquent preachers of Great Britain.” Similarly, Thomas R. McKibbens states that, like the eighteenth-century preacher George Whitefield (1714–1770), it is almost impossible to describe the eloquence of Robert Hall. In fact, before the birth of Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), who cast an enormous shadow over Hall’s legacy as a preacher, publications during Hall’s day referred to him as the “prince of preachers.”

Certain of Hall’s enduring influence, one author wrote, “‘His works, which

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have been reprinted in America, will ever remain an enduring monument of his piety, his
genius, and his learning.” While this may have been the sentiment in the middle and
latter portions of the nineteenth century, Robert Hall’s legacy as a widely popular
preacher and theologian is now largely forgotten. Although Hall’s Works went through
several nineteenth-century editions and were very popular for a number of decades after
his death, they are now rarely cited or known. Indeed, as early as 1947, A. C. Underwood
observed, “Hall’s sermons now lie unopened on library shelves.” And today only
academics and scholars of Baptist history remember Hall. This state of affairs is well
illustrated by the fact that most of the people who walk by the massive statue of Hall that
stands in the middle of the De Monfort Square in Leicester, England—the site of Hall’s
longest pastorate—would have no idea who Hall was. Or consider the fact that in the
fall of 2010, a reunion was held of some members of the Robert Hall Society at
Cambridge from 1960 to 1965. The society existed for most of the twentieth century, yet
it is very likely that those who made up the society had little knowledge of the man for
which their organization was named.

Those who do recall Hall’s greatness primarily remember his heavy influence in a few areas in particular—the dissenting preacher who advocated freedom of the press


9In personal e-mail correspondence Austin Walker wrote, “There is a large statue in Leicester of him but sadly no plaque to say who he was etc. Hundreds of university students pass him by every day and I would guess that not one of them has any idea who he was. Mind you, I doubt if many of the citizens of Leicester do either. Many of them are Moslems as Leicester is one of the centres of Islam in the UK” (May 2, 2009).
and championed religious liberty, staunchly defended slaves and laborers, and rekindled the flames of the open communion controversy started by Henry Jessey (1603–1663) and John Bunyan (1628–1688) a century earlier. He is also remembered as a controversial, transitional figure in Baptist life. Although several works have dealt with certain aspects of Hall’s preaching, no attempt has ever been made to examine Hall’s hermeneutics or his philosophy and methodology of the preaching task. Early influences of heterodox sentiment have left many puzzled about Hall’s theology. While


14If this scholarship does exist, it has evaded my attention. I have also spoken with several scholars who have interacted with Hall (Michael Haykin, Timothy Whelan, John Briggs, David Bebbington), and this seems to be the consensus.
most believe Hall remained orthodox, few have undertaken the important task of analyzing or defending Hall’s theology, especially his Christology and soteriology.\textsuperscript{15} This is important because Hall was a highly significant transitional theological figure during his day, leading some to suggest Hall should be seen as one of the primary catalysts for change among the Particular Baptists in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{16}

**Background to the Present Study**

During studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I quickly found that my research always seemed to gravitate towards the historical. After completing master’s studies and entering the doctoral program in Christian Preaching, I knew that one of my minor areas of study was going to be Baptist History. Thinking towards the dissertation process, I hoped to find a preacher from Baptist history who had been neglected but deserved serious attention. After asking Tom Nettles and Michael Haykin for suggestions, and conversing with other students of Baptist history, the name Robert Hall, Jr. kept surfacing. It quickly became clear that this man and his ministry needed a fresh analysis.

The startling facet of my initial research was that a proper examination of


Hall’s published sermons had never been undertaken. Only a few of his more famous political or controversial sermons have been given proper treatment. Over a two-year span, I began to examine the four volumes of Hall’s published works, giving primary attention to a few, relatively unknown, sermons and writing three papers on different aspects of Hall’s life, ministry, and theology.

The first paper, “Condescension and Substitution: A Concise Examination of Robert Hall, Jr.’s Christology,” was for a seminar on English Baptist history under Tom Nettles. This paper focused on two sermons from the latter half of Hall’s ministry: Christ’s Pre-existence, Condescension, and Exaltation (1813) and On the Substitution of the Innocent for the Guilty (1822). The paper utilized these sermons to show how Hall clearly abandoned any heterodox sentiment and adhered to a robust, evangelical understanding of Christology and substitutionary atonement.

The second paper, “The Evangelistic Calvinist: Soteriology in the Preaching of Robert Hall, Jr., and Its Impact on Ministry and Missions,” was written for Chad Brand’s soteriology seminar. Arminianism was the theological system of many in Hall’s day, but it was perhaps expressed most clearly by the General Baptists, who denied that the distinguishing power in salvation was the grace of God. Rather, they argued “human will makes the difference.” Although the system was rarely viewed as heretical, its

\[\text{(footnote 17)}\]

\[\text{(footnote 18)}\]

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\[\text{17} \] Hall’s most famous sermons and writings deal with these themes. In 1791 he published Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom and then Apology for the Freedom of the Press in 1793. Published sermons such as “Modern Infidelity Considered” (1800), “Reflections on War” (1802), and “The Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis” (1803) brought controversy and notoriety. See Robert Hall, The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A. M., ed. Olinthus Gregory and Joseph Belcher, 4 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1849).

\[\text{18} \] Tom Nettles, The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity, vol. 1, Beginnings in Britain (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2005), 41.
adherents frequently lapsed into the much more dangerous Socinianism. The Socinians believed that “human intelligence and autonomy achieve salvation through obedience to Jesus and the divine commandments.” Furthermore, Hyper-Calvinism and the denial of the necessity of evangelism were crippling churches still holding to a Calvinistic soteriology. Hall’s father had critiqued Hyper-Calvinism in his *Help to Zion’s Travellers* (1781), and the senior Hall’s contemporary and friend Andrew Fuller had published *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1786). Therefore, this paper utilized Hall’s sermons to elucidate his soteriology as both Calvinistic and evangelistic. It analyzed four of Hall’s sermons that explicitly treated the soteriological subjects of human depravity, regeneration, conversion, and adoption. Finally, the paper reflected on how Hall’s theology of salvation impacted his personal ministry and led him to contribute great assistance to the newly launched missionary movement.

The final paper, “Subject Preaching Centered on Application: One Methodology in the Preaching of Robert Hall,” was submitted to Robert Vogel for a seminar on hermeneutics for preaching. Hall began his ministry as a self-proclaimed expositor. Throughout his ministry he was famous for eloquent sermons deeply rich in

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19 For a helpful summary of Socinianism see Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:106. He writes, “Socinianism is the name given to those who follow the teaching of the Polish theologian Faustus Socinus (1539–1604). Socinus, the nephew of Laelius Socinus, gave structure, both organizational and confessional, to the anti-trinitarian movement. He traveled widely but strategically, wrote and debated theological issues vigorously, and experienced persecution at the hands of the Catholic and Reformed alike. . . . The theological position is explained most concisely in the Racovian Catechism. The Bible is supernaturally given but only its ‘religious’ content is inspired. They argue that the doctrine of the Trinity is opposed to Scripture, that God’s omniscience extends only to things necessary and not to free human acts. Substitutionary atonement is denied and human intelligence and autonomy achieve salvation through obedience to Jesus and the divine commandments. Arminians proved to be susceptible for lapsing into Socinianism.”

biblical truth. Although exposition was his preference and his early practice, Hall eventually moved away from exposition when his audience no longer shared the sentiment for such a method of preaching. This paper examined several of Hall’s sermons from the Old Testament to argue that Hall’s primary sermon form became subject discourses that were driven by pietistic application but that often strayed from faithfulness to the original meaning of the biblical text. More than the previous two endeavors, this essay provided some insight into Hall’s philosophy and methodology of preaching.

Research Materials and Methodology

The primary aim of this dissertation is to look at Hall as a preacher. Therefore, it has been necessary to research and analyze rigorously any material related to Hall and his preaching ministry. First, Hall’s published works were examined, especially his sermons and material that relates to his theology and methodology of preaching. The four-volume American edition and six-volume British edition of Hall’s Works contain notes of over 100 different sermons, some from Hall’s own manuscripts, as well as copious notes from his hearers. Also contained within Hall’s collected Works are his memoirs, society charges, lectures, circular letters, political tracts, and personal correspondence. Next, research moved to secondary sources, although it quickly became apparent that very little academic attention had been given to Hall. Among several biographical works, there is little information that is not simply reconstituted from Hall’s memoir by Olinthus Gregory and various sketches by John Greene and John Foster
(1770–1843) found in Hall’s *Works*.\textsuperscript{21} Two academic works dealing exclusively with Hall appeared in 1957. The first and most extensive work was a master’s thesis written by Angus Hamilton MacLeod for his studies at the University of Durham.\textsuperscript{22} Apart from Hall’s collected *Works*, Macleod’s thesis is currently the most thorough treatment of Hall. It is largely biographical, although there are significant sections of theological and cultural analysis. It has never been published, however, and must be purchased at great expense and difficulty from the University of Durham library. The second was a master’s thesis by Newton Abbott Graves for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This thesis only provides a cursory analysis of Hall’s preaching.\textsuperscript{23} A few other dissertations and theses have included a segment on Hall’s thought and ministry in their overall arrangement.\textsuperscript{24} Then, there are a few diverse articles featuring Hall that have appeared throughout recent years. Timothy Whelan, a literature professor and prolific writer from Georgia Southern University, is well acquainted with this period and its figures and has completed the most significant research related to Hall in the last decade. Whelan has graciously corresponded with me throughout my research and his knowledge of published and unpublished material relating to Hall has proved to be immensely


\textsuperscript{24}John Robert Parnell, “Baptists and Britons: Particular Baptist Ministers in England and British Identity in the 1790’s” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, 2005), and J. T. Burdine, Jr., “English Baptist Ecclesiology from John Smyth to Robert Hall, 1600-1830” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1951).
helpful. Researching Joseph Cottle (1770–1853) over ten years ago in England, Whelan became fascinated with Hall and has collected material pertaining to Hall ever since. Hall has figured in several different articles penned by Whelan, one providing a recently discovered first-hand account into the mental breakdown of Robert Hall. Additionally, Whelan has authored several recent works that contain information relating to Robert Hall. First, he transcribed and edited a collection of letters from the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, several which were written by or pertain to Robert Hall. Second, he has authored a book about two of Hall’s political acquaintances, Benjamin and Eliza Gould Flower. Finally, he has edited an eight-volume set of works on nonconformist women, which has some material relating to Hall.

Through correspondence with Whelan and several other scholars and authors in England, I learned that there is a substantial amount of unpublished material on Hall. First, there are several letters at the Angus Library of Regent’s Park College, Oxford,


29 Throughout this research I have been privileged to correspond with John H. Y. Briggs, David Bebbington, Austin Walker, and Anthony Cross.
University, between Robert Hall, John Ryland (1753–1825), and Andrew Fuller (1754–1815). These letters date from the late 1780s and discuss tenets of Hall’s theology. Next, there are the Hall letters at Selley Oaks in Birmingham. These have been calendared and briefly summarized by Geoffrey Nuttall, but they are not well known.30 Finally, there have been several accounts of Hall’s ministry and preaching recently discovered in diverse journals, letters, and diaries at the Leicestershire Record Office. Although all of these letters and other material are vital for any study of Hall, the most necessary task for this project was determining if there were any extant unpublished sermon notes.

In correspondence with Emma Walsh and Emily Burgoyne, librarians at the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, they indicated their catalogue showed “eight volumes of sermons preached between 1811 and 1823.”31 After sending me the dates and titles of a few of the sermons, it was immediately evident that these were sermons not found in Hall’s published Works. Therefore, in late February and early March 2011, I traveled to Oxford, England, to research these sermons.

There are two sets of sermon notes taken down in shorthand and then transcribed by G. W. Riley during Hall’s Leicester pastorate. Among the notes is a letter dated June 5, 1886, written from Edward Underhill to Dr. Angus, which reads as follows:

Dear Dr. Angus,

These manuscripts of sermons preached by Robert Hall during his ministry in Leicester, came into my possession about the year 1848. They were given to me by the late Mr. R. Sherring of Bristol. His second wife was a Miss Riley of Leicester and these discourses were taken down in shorthand by her brother. In copying them out he was careful to leave blanks where his manuscript was imperfect, or


31Email correspondence between Austin Walker and Emily Burgoyne, April 5, 2010.
where he could not decipher what he had written.

Very few of these sermons have ever been printed. I published two or three in the Baptist Record, & I think two or three others have appeared in the Baptist Magazine.

I scarcely think they impress anyone as worthy of the reputation of Mr. Hall. Still they are interesting as specimens of his ministrations in the enduring course of his pastorate in Leicester.

If you think them worthy of preservation in the College, they are quite at your service.

I remain
Yours very truly
Edw. B. Underhill

Although details of the life of G. W. Riley are scarce, Olinthus Gregory does include a letter from a Mr. Ryley to Hall, and he calls Ryley “one of Hall’s most intelligent Leicester friends.”

Richard Sherring was a wealthy member of the Broadmead church who often gave large sums to various Baptist causes.

The first set of notes is a collection of seven volumes comprising 173 sermons from March 1811 to July 1822. The second set is a collection of ten shorter volumes containing forty-six sermons from July 1822 to April 1823. Although the handwriting is very poor for a few of the volumes, most of the notes are written in a very clear hand.

As I continued analyzing Macleod’s thesis, it was clear that he had known of and used these sermon notes, although he appears he only used a few of the sermons and even wrongly attributes them to John Ryley, rather than G. W. Riley.


Whelan, Baptist Autographs in the John Rylands University Library, 448.

indication these sermons have ever been seen until Austin Walker eventually catalogued them in 2010.

Finally, there are three other types of data that have been examined for the dissertation. The first are works that discuss the pastor and preacher as theologian. A second major type of data required for the dissertation were important works on the history of this period, as it was vital to have a general understanding of the history of England during the period of Hall’s ministry, as well as a larger grasp on the history and culture within evangelicalism between 1790–1830. Additionally, proper knowledge of Baptist history during this era was even more imperative. Biographies and historical material were consulted so that specific preachers discussed in the dissertation are properly placed in their appropriate personal, theological, and ministerial contexts. Several histories of preaching were examined to ascertain the most appropriate people to place alongside this study of Robert Hall. Major works on rhetoric or homiletic theory, especially those dealing with the years of Hall’s ministry, were also consulted.

As with any major research project, there are always boundaries or limitations that must be briefly considered. First, although this dissertation has a substantive historical and theological underpinning, it must be noted that it is written primarily with the field of preaching in view. Second, while it seemed necessary to provide an extensive biography for a largely forgotten figure, this dissertation is not intended to be an exhaustive biography of Hall’s life. The discovery of so much unpublished material begs

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for a new definitive biography of Hall to be written but that is beyond the scope of this project. Third, one of the expressed hopes of the dissertation is clearly and concisely to defend Hall’s theology at a few points, but the dissertation is not a comprehensive analysis of Hall’s theology. Again, the amount of material now available, especially in Hall’s unpublished sermons, provides fresh ground for future research.

**Thesis**

This dissertation argues that the peculiar intellectual gifts, oratorical skills, and theological posture of Robert Hall, Jr. combined with the Romanticist impulse of English culture to make this preacher a theological exemplar and a cultural celebrity. Some men can craft and preach sermons with theological depth and perspicuity, but they may never be given a hearing beyond their congregation or their denomination and certainly not among the wider culture. Other preachers can gain an incomparable popularity because of personal charisma or winsomeness, but do this without any real theological substance or influence. As a preacher, Hall was both an influential theologian and a national celebrity. In Hall these two factors converge in support of one another. Hall was influential because he was a celebrity, and yet his peculiar theological posturing helped make him a celebrity. Attaining both theological richness and cultural acceptance is a difficult and often dangerous task, but Hall accomplished this task rather naturally.

While the distinction here may seem minute, this dissertation distinguishes between the preacher who is an exemplar and the preacher who is exemplary. The term *exemplar* is being employed here in the very narrow sense of one who is a model, a living paradigm, and a standard. Every pastor is some type of theological exemplar. Hall’s case, however, is peculiar. His arrival in Cambridge serves as an introduction into this
aspect of his ministry. In the pulpit recently left void by the death of Robert Robinson (1735–1790) and the church that chose Hall thinking he would suit their liberal tendencies well, Hall began to proclaim and defend orthodoxy to the consternation of many in the congregation. The theology of Hall’s preaching and pastoral ministry drove away members who held to unorthodox positions and preserved others from sliding into similar error.

Hall’s theology has long been controversial and enigmatic, partly because the bulk of his clear statements regarding doctrine are contained in his personal correspondence or other writings. While Hall’s published works contain a few deeply theological sermons, the startling reality is that many of these extant sermons, especially those from his latter ministry, tend more towards moralistic or at best pietistic instruction and thus do not reflect a preacher who was deeply concerned with being a model theologian. Ironically, this absence of theological depth in preaching became another facet of Hall as an influential figure for later generations of Baptists.

Hall is briefly compared to prominent Baptists such as John Bunyan (1628–1688), Benjamin Keach (1640–1704), John Gill (1697–1771), and Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), to show both how he was similar and how he differed in his role as a theological exemplar. Analysis of many of Hall’s sermons demonstrates the way, at times, fundamental biblical doctrines are often clearly defended and at other times largely neglected.

The latter part of the dissertation shows how Robert Hall, as a preacher, became the first true cultural celebrity among the Baptists. There are various factors that contribute to an individual’s being so revered that they attain the status of a celebrity.
Although the term “celebrity” is commonplace in today’s vernacular, the word was just beginning to be used in Hall’s day, though, it needs noting, was scarcely ever used among religious figures and never among the Baptists. An intensive look at the characteristics of Hall’s preaching and the praise and the wonder it elicited serves to support the thesis that Hall did indeed attain true celebrity status. The dissertation suggests that the worldview of Romanticism provided the ambience in which celebrities could easily arise, and then it analyzes the overwhelming response to Hall’s ministry against this background. Finally, Hall’s most famous sermons are reintroduced and analyzed, showing the key means by which he became a national celebrity. Robert Hall’s eccentric personality also combined with his contagious conversational ability to make him a celebrity simply as a man. His intellectual prowess and incomparable ability as a rhetorician all intertwined to create a persona that attracted a large and diverse following. His love of liberty and individual religious freedom and experience caused a wide range of individuals to revere him, including prominent literary figures such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834). His radical political involvement was followed by many, yet he tempered this after 1800 and was chastised by radicals like Benjamin Flower (1755–1829) and others for doing so. His congregations were often filled with his Baptist members, paedobaptist attenders, and secular admirers. He became one of the leading pulpit voices for the new Baptist missionary movement, and he was often invited to preach for other religious organizations throughout England. Even Americans like John A. Broadus (1827–1895), the Southern Baptist homiletician and theologian, cited Hall in his own writings.  

Summary of Content

This dissertation consists of three main parts. Before delving into the main thesis of the dissertation, the life of Robert Hall, Jr. must be recalled. Thus, Chapter 2 will provide a fairly extensive biography. This is necessary because of the reality that although Hall has fallen out of memory to many, it is clear by all who have written of him that he was the greatest preacher of England in his day. An understanding of a man’s life and background is essential before attempting an in-depth analysis of his theology and philosophy as demonstrated in his writings, speeches, and experiences. This chapter discusses Hall’s childhood and conversion, his intellectual prowess as seen in his educational progression through several different institutions, and his pastoral ministry at Cambridge, Leicester, and Bristol.

The second part of the dissertation deals with Hall as a theological exemplar. Chapter 3 thus discusses how Hall modified the preaching methodology he inherited from his Baptist predecessors. While straightforward biblical exposition with a view to theological instruction was the goal of many Baptist preachers, Hall moved away from exposition and favored a more topical approach that stressed personal piety for the Christian life. Chapter 4 first traces Hall’s personal theological journey. Next, a number of Hall’s doctrinal sermons are analyzed to clarify and delineate some points of Hall’s theology regarding Christology, justification, regeneration, conversion, etc. With these sermons as examples of Hall’s ability to give a clear and rigorous defense of certain doctrines, this chapter then delves into the tension of Hall’s theological influence by showing how he also served as an exemplar by neglecting theology in the regular course of his preaching ministry.
The third part of the dissertation treats Hall as a cultural celebrity. Chapter 5 examines the extraordinary fame and popularity of Hall. The rise and impact of the Romantic Movement provide the context for this chapter, which treats other celebrities in England, both secular and religious, and the reasons for their rise to fame. Then the various accounts of Hall’s popularity and the dramatic effects of his preaching are collected. This chapter also contains a brief analysis of how Hall’s legacy was carried on in art and in sculpture. Chapter 6 gives a concise view of Hall’s political journey, from a staunch supporter of radical politics and revolution to a critic of the effect of the French Revolution, is also included here. Finally, this chapter analyzes Hall’s most famous sermons on the themes of infidelity, war, and the death of Princess Charlotte. This chapter shows how these sermons established Hall as a national celebrity.
CHAPTER 2

THE LIFE OF ROBERT HALL, JR.

No biography of Robert Hall has appeared in over fifty years, and the purpose of this study is not to provide a full account of the details of Hall’s life. It is necessary, however, in understanding the man, his thought, his ministry, and his influence, to examine the most important biographical details—some of which are popular and well known and others, which have only recently come to light.

Hall’s Childhood and Early Education

Robert Hall, Jr. was born May 2, 1764, at Arnesby in Leicestershire, where his father had pastored the Particular Baptist congregation since 1753.¹ One of Hall’s earliest biographers, John Webster Morris (1763–1836), writes that Hall’s ancestors were “respectable yeomen in the neighborhood of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.”² Angus Hamilton Macleod’s research, drawing upon primary source material, adds the specific Northumberland village from which the Halls came as Black Heddon in the parish of Stannington.³


His father, Robert Hall, Sr. (1728–1791) had long agonized in deep despair at the thought of being damned by a wrathful God, yet experienced conversion at twenty-two after a deep study of the Scriptures. He married Jane Catchaside (1729–1776) and began “to display his talents as a preacher” at Juniper Dye-House, Northumberland, owned by William Angus and licensed as a meeting house in 1749. In 1752, Robert Hall, Sr.’s brother Christopher preached for two Sundays at the struggling Baptist work on the Welford Road in Arnesby, Leicestershire. Christopher encouraged the congregation to extend the pastoral call to Robert. The church agreed and Robert Hall, Sr. came to Arnesby in June 1753 with his wife and first child. Despite significant early hardships, Robert Hall, Sr. served the Arnesby church as pastor for thirty-seven years. Gregory describes him as an uneducated man who was, nevertheless, an “eloquent and successful preacher of the gospel, and one of the first among the modern Baptists in our villages who aimed to bring them down from the heights of ultra-Calvinism to those views of religious truth which are sound, devotional, and practical.”

He became a highly respected pastor within the Northamptonshire Association of Particular Baptist churches, which he helped found, and even wrote several of their circular letters, such as his 1776 defense of the Trinity. The elder Hall is best remembered for his sermon to the Northamptonshire Association at College Lane Chapel in 1779. The sermon, originally taken from Isaiah 57:14, was later published as Help to Zion’s Travellers in 1781. This work provided both an able defense of the doctrines of grace and a stinging rebuttal of

\[\text{Gregory, “Memoir,” 3.}\]

Hyper-Calvinism. The force of this work would be felt by the eminent Baptists Andrew Fuller and William Carey (1761–1834). Alongside personal mentoring, Robert Hall, Sr., had introduced both men to the works of Jonathan Edwards, which when combined with *Help to Zion’s Travellers*, firmly grounded their belief that zealous gospel proclamation was necessary despite God’s sovereign work in salvation. Macleod succinctly states that Carey, Fuller, and Hall, Jr., “all owed an incalculable debt to the lowly minister at Arnesby.”

Jane Hall is described by Olinthus Gregory, in the only line written of her, as a “woman of sterling sense and distinguished piety,” yet her life would affect her son most significantly in a much different fashion. In March of 1773, a neighbor appeared at the Hall house covered in blood, having been attacked by a thief in the middle of the night. Mrs. Hall was depressed for some time before this, and this frightful experience drove her into even deeper anguish. From the time of this incident, she had great difficulty sleeping and would lie awake trembling during the night. She no longer took delight in the affairs of her family and the keeping of the Hall home, and she attempted suicide on several occasions. In November, friends such as the eminent minister John Newton sent money to the Hall family so that Mrs. Hall could be treated in London. The Hall family had kept vigilant watch over her for almost three years, but ultimately to no avail. She died at nine o’clock in the morning on December 21, 1776, and Robert Hall, Jr. was forced to “lean all the more on his saintly father who was becoming a well known figure in the Baptist

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7Gregory, “Memoir,” 3.
Robert Hall, Jr. was the youngest of fourteen children, only six of whom outlived their parents. Among these were four girls and two boys, Robert and John. Robert was a sickly child, almost dying at one point, and not being able to walk or talk until he was two years of age. The family employed a woman named Nancy to care for young Robert in these early years. Since Nancy also worked as a farm laborer, she carried Robert behind the plow or kept him near the livestock, especially the sheep, for she believed that the cultivated earth and farm atmosphere would greatly assist in the infant’s recovery. Nancy also became Robert’s first educator. His first lessons were learning the letters and words of gravestone inscriptions in a nearby cemetery where Nancy would take him. Once able to read, he always carried books around with him. He even carried a pocket dictionary in case he stumbled on a difficult word. The cemetery became his study and he would often “steal into the grave-yard . . . lie down upon the grass, spread his books around him, and there remain until the deepening shades of evening compelled him to retire into the house.”

As soon as he began to talk, he became a very rapid but insightful talker, a quality that extended throughout his life and made accurate transmission of his later sermons nearly impossible. Hall’s mind advanced quickly under the tutelage of a Dame

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8MacLeod, “Life and Teaching,” 22.


Scotton and a Mrs. Lyley. From 1770 to 1775, Hall attended a school at Wigston in Leicestershire, under the leadership of a Mr. Simmons. Although he often walked to and from school, his severe back pain often forced his brother John and several friends to carry him. At Wigston, Hall’s capabilities moved beyond those of the other students and even the instructors. Between school hours, he would read books from his father’s library. His favorite author was Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), and by the age of nine he had spent hours reading and meditating on Edwards’s works, *Religious Affections* and *Freedom of the Will*.11 By the age of nine, he had also completed Joseph Butler’s (1692 – 1752) *Analogy*. His appetite for knowledge was so great that he proposed that his father bequeath the cows, sheep, and pigs to his brother John, while he would receive “all the books.”12

By the age of ten, Hall had begun writing religious essays and hymns and preaching his first sermons. His preaching to his other siblings, playmates, and even some of the servants, was often in imitation of his father, yet there were also several occasions where he addressed a modest assembly in the vestry of Beeby Wallis (1735–1792), a deacon at the Baptist church of Kettering. In fact, Hall often stayed with Wallis for short stints since the Baptist deacon had become concerned for his physical well-being and yet was also impressed by the young man’s mental faculties. Furthermore, upon a visit to preach at Kettering, the elder Hall had expressed to Wallis a burden for the spiritual direction of his son, calling him a “strange sort of boy” and stating he “did not


These early preaching exercises were damaging for the youthful Hall’s character, for they evidently induced tremendous pride. Hall later remembered how this “company of grave men, full half of whom wore wigs” had raised him to an inappropriate position.14

### Teen Years and Higher Education

#### Northampton

Mr. Simmons of Wigston, having to “sit up all night to prepare lessons” for Robert, informed his father that his education must continue elsewhere.15 At eleven he was placed in the Northampton school of the eccentric but godly John Collett Ryland (1723–1792), where he spent the next year and a half. Ryland had become the pastor of the College Street Baptist Chapel in 1759 and transferred his Warwick boarding school to Northampton. He was both admired and feared by his students. One of his first evenings at the school would greatly affect young Hall. At a dinner party, Ryland discussed the war that had begun between England and the American colonies, and he defended the Americans and their right to liberty. He then vividly described how the Americans should share a bloody oath to not cease their fighting until liberty was attained. Years later, Hall recounted the experience to his friend John Greene, saying,

> Only conceive, Sir, my situation; a poor little boy that had never been out of his mother’s chimney corner before, Sir, sitting by these two old gentlemen, and hearing this conversation about blood, Sir. I trembled at the idea of being left with such a bloody minded minister. Why Sir, I began to think he would no more mind

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bleeding me, after my father was gone, than he would of killing a fly. I quite expected to be bled, Sir.  

Morris wrote, however, of the astounding impact the conversation had on young Hall, “The impassioned harangue filled the mind of his young pupil with admiration and dread; at the same time it inspired him with the love of liberty, a passion which he afterwards cherished to the end of life, never failing to consider it essential to the very existence of public virtue.”

At Northampton, he excelled in Latin and Greek, but also studied mathematics and grammar. A sermon at Northampton by Thomas Robins of Daventry may have had as equally a significant impact as the entire tutelage under Ryland. This sermon had captivated Hall’s attention, for the preacher’s sermon was both impressive and delightful, employed a lively imagination, and was delivered in a clear and elegant style. These precise characteristics were frequently attributed to Hall’s own preaching years later. He would also be required to read Gibbon’s *Rhetoric*, which further kindled the passion to have “an elegant as well as a perspicuous style.”

As his education continued, he developed the necessary skills of composition, studied divinity alongside his father during breaks from school, and yet admitted he

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16 John Greene, *Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. Late of Bristol, and Sketches of His Sermons Preached at Cambridge Prior to 1806* (London: Frederick Wesley, and A. H. Davis, 1834), 94. Ryland was employing a double entendre, for the ancient practice of “bleeding” or bloodletting was when a vein in the arm was cut and the blood collected into a small bowl, with the hopes that the body would be relieved of toxins and the body’s four humors (blood, phlegm, black bile, yellow bile) would be balanced.


18 The Dissenting Academy at Daventry had seen Philip Doddridge as its first principal and Joseph Priestly as its most famous student.

indulged in moments of juvenile pleasure and mischief, often playing jokes on others. Once when a servant brought a pig as a present to his father, Hall replaced the pig with a dog and watched with delight as the servant found the suckling transformed. Later at Bristol, he fell down a chimney trying to scare one of the few Welsh students, although he later claimed he had simply been trying to understand the business of the chimney sweeps.\(^\text{20}\)

He had wrestled with religious conviction since his youth, often engaging in private prayer even as a toddler. Although he later doubted the genuine nature of such an early conversion, records indicate the Arnesby church baptized him in 1778. The account in the church book at Arnesby reads thus:

> On Lord’s-day, August 23\(^{\text{rd}}\), 1778, Robert Hall, youngest son of our pastor, Robert Hall, gave a very distinct account of his being the subject of spiritual grace. He was only fourteen years of age last May, and has appeared to be serious from his earliest childhood. He was baptized on Lord’s-day, September 6\(^{\text{th}}\), and the same day was added to the Church.\(^\text{21}\)

**Bristol**

In October of 1778, Hall enrolled in the Bristol Baptist Academy, operational since 1770 and the only Baptist institution concerned with preparing young men for ministerial work among their denomination. He was the ninth student admitted to the trust of the late John Ward (1679–1758), professor of rhetoric at Gresham College, London. Before his death, Ward had left a large sum of money in Bank of England Stock

\(^{20}\)Morris, *Biographical Recollections*, 41.

\(^{21}\)Morris, *Biographical Recollections*, 36. Morris earlier recorded how Nancy, Hall’s childhood nurse and educator, was convinced that Hall “knew the Lord before he was seven years of age,” Morris, *Biographical Recollections*, 27. Hall later believed he was not genuinely converted until after his second mental breakdown.
for the purpose of educating the teenage sons of protestant Dissenters. Baptists were preferred, and the young students had to have shown proficiency in Latin and Greek. Upon their finishing a grammar school, the students desiring to be ministers or tutors were to be sent to a Scottish university. This is how Robert Hall, Jr. became a student at Bristol and later at King’s College in Aberdeen, Scotland. At the Bristol Baptist Academy, Hugh Evans (1712–1781) was Hall’s first principal, but was soon followed by his son Caleb Evans (1737–1791). The elder Evans was both the pastor of the Baptist church in Broadmead and president of the academy.

Bristol provided Hall with some of his first real preaching opportunities. These early attempts were not only failures; they were humiliating experiences for the young man. By the end of the introduction of his first real sermon on 1 Timothy 4:10, Hall had captured the Broadmead audience, which included his tutors and fellow students. He faltered shortly thereafter, buried his head in his hands, and cried, “Oh, I have lost all my ideas!” The church extended a second opportunity the following week, unhappily culminating in the same devastating result. This time he was heard exclaiming, “If this does not humble me, the devil must have me!”

He must have been humbled, for his next preaching assignment in July 1779 during an ordination service at Clipstone in Northamptonshire came in the place of the well-appreciated preacher Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795) and was a tremendous success. The fifteen-year old Hall preached from 1 John 1:5, among an audience of ministers he had known since childhood, and Olinthus Gregory wrote that Hall “treated this mysterious and awful subject with such metaphysical acumen, and drew from it such

an impressive application, as excited the deepest interest." The early failures, although disappointing, had only solidified his tutors’ opinions that he was supremely capable if he could regain some confidence.

In the summer of 1780, his father became convinced of his son’s piety and ability as a preacher and the Arnesby church set him apart for the gospel ministry on August 13, 1780. He remained at Bristol for another year, and the remainder of his studies were so successful he was sent to King’s College, Aberdeen.

**Aberdeen**

Near the end of September 1781, Hall departed for enrollment in King’s College in Aberdeen. Although the Toleration Act of 1689 had brought some measure of liberty for Dissenters, the English universities remained closed to all outside the Church of England, and so the students of the Ward trust were sent to the Scottish universities.

John Pownall and Joseph Stennett accompanied Hall to Scotland, stopping at Leeds Chapel along the way, where Hall preached a sermon remembered by Pownall fifty years later. Pownall recalls, “Now, Mr. Hall’s leadings on this passage, although one half of a century has elapsed, as I have occasionally revolved them in my mind, have always appeared to me grand and beautiful, simple, yet majestic and sublime.”

At Aberdeen, Hall furthered his Greek studies under John Leslie (1727–1790). In a letter to his former tutor John Ryland, Hall described how Leslie was “though a man

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of no apparent brightness of parts, is, notwithstanding, well fitted for his office.” Hall’s abilities allowed him to read Homer, Socrates, and Xenophon, but most importantly the Greek New Testament. During his time at King’s College, he also studied philosophy and mathematics under Roderick Macleod, humanity with W. Ogilvie, moral philosophy with James Dunbar, and divinity with Dr. Alexander Gerard. Hall graduated with a master’s degree in arts on March 30, 1785. In September 1817, the faculty gave Hall an honorary doctorate in divinity, yet he never accepted the title.

In addition to academics, Aberdeen provided Hall with one of his most cherished friendships. During Hall’s fourth year, he met Sir James Mackintosh (1765–1832), a first-year student. Only Gregory’s vivid description rightly captures the essence of the friendship between the two:

Sir James said he became attached to Mr. Hall, ‘because he could not help it.’ . . . Their tastes at the commencement of their intercourse were widely different; and upon most of the important topics of inquiry there was no congeniality of sentiment; yet notwithstanding this, the substratum of their minds seemed of the same cast, and upon this Sir James thought the edifice of their mutual regard first rested. . . . They read together; they sat together at lecture, if possible; they walked together. In their joint studies they read much of Xenophon and Herodotus, and more of Plato; and so well was all this known, exciting admiration in some, in others envy, that it was not unusual as they went along for their class fellows to point at them and say, ‘There go Plato and Herodotus.’ But the arena in which they met most frequently was that of morals and metaphysics; furnishing topics of incessant disputation. After having sharpened their weapons by reading, they often repaired to the spacious sands upon the seashore, and still more frequently to the picturesque scenery on the banks of the Don, above the Old Town, to discuss with eagerness the various subjects to which

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27 Hall thought James Mackintosh’s intellect was unsurpassed in his times, and he lamented his friend chose to neglect the field of metaphysics for a career in law and politics. Mackintosh died before he could pen his own memoir of his time with Hall. Gregory wrote, “The lamented death of Sir James Mackintosh has left a blank which none can adequately fill, with regards to Mr. Hall’s character, habits, and the development of his intellectual powers at this period.” Gregory, “Memoir,” 10.
their attention had been directed. There was scarcely an important position in Berkeley’s Minute Philosopher, in Butler’s Analogy, or in Edwards on the Will, over which they had not thus debated with the utmost intensity. Night after night, nay, month after month, for two sessions, they met only to study or to dispute; yet no unkindly feeling ensued. The process seemed rather like blows in that of welding iron to knit them closer together.\textsuperscript{28}

Hall’s years in Aberdeen, and especially his friendship with Mackintosh, elevated his intellect to an even greater level. He had excelled in every subject and acquired great knowledge in literary and biblical studies.\textsuperscript{29} Olinthus Gregory noted the Hebrew language was the only theological subject of which Hall knew nothing. Of Hall’s completion of studies at Aberdeen, Morris wrote,

Towards the close of his fourth year he pronounced a Greek oration, which was heard with great applause, and followed with the honourary degree of A. M. The spot on which he stood to deliver this memoriter address, is still carefully pointed out to amateurs who visit the college, and his fame still survives in the memory of some distinguished members of the university.\textsuperscript{30}

**Hall’s Early Pastoral Ministries**

**Broadmead Church, Bristol**

While at Aberdeen in 1783, the church at Broadmead summoned Hall to be the assistant pastor to Caleb Evans, Hall’s former instructor at the Bristol Academy. Hall reluctantly agreed to serve alongside Evans and to reside at Bristol during the six-month interval between his studies at Aberdeen from 1784 to 1785. His fellow students at Aberdeen had witnessed his brilliant mind, and his few preaching appointments displayed flashes of remarkable oratory. During his final sessions at Aberdeen, Hall devoted

\textsuperscript{28}Gregory, “Memoir,” 11–12.

\textsuperscript{29}Gregory, “Memoir,” 12.

\textsuperscript{30}Morris, *Biographical Recollections*, 47.
himself to the study of Greek, philosophy, and to every field related to theology.\textsuperscript{31} Furthermore, he was impacted by the lectures and expository discourses of Dr. Campbell of Marischal College, the sister institution to King’s College in the university at Aberdeen. With this theological underpinning, the twenty-one year old Hall left for Bristol to assist Evans with the Broadmead church.

Broadmead, as well as other churches around Bristol, provided a more regular preaching ministry for Hall and soon his reputation was elevated. Increasing popularity also brought elevated concern, for both his private and public discourse, and to both himself and his friends. There may have been jealousy at the popularity of the young preacher, but the concerns seem to have been more than mere jealousy.

First, Hall’s intellect and wit gave rise to a growing sarcasm, which he often used in conversation and debate. His struggle with sarcasm and a tendency to make rash remarks fueled the suspicions of Hall’s critical listeners.\textsuperscript{32} This caused many of his friends to distance themselves from him for they never “knew on whom he would turn next.”\textsuperscript{33} To his credit, he recognized the pain his words could inflict and began a course of self-examination to bridle his tongue, even penning The Character of Cleander as a portrait of his own confession and desire for accountability.\textsuperscript{34} Despite his improvement, his sarcasm was never completely vanquished. On one occasion in Hall’s later ministry,

\textsuperscript{31}Gregory, “Memoir,” 12.


\textsuperscript{33}Macleod, “Life and Teaching,” 62.

\textsuperscript{34}This essay can be found in Works, 2:343–45.
a leading member of one of his congregations chastised him for not preaching often
enough on predestination. Hall forcefully responded, “Sir, I perceive that nature
predestined you to be an ass, and what is more, I see that you are determined to make
your calling and election sure.”

Next, in August 1785, only three months after leaving Aberdeen, Hall accepted
the invitation to succeed his former Bristol Academy tutor James Newton in the field of
classics. Gregory wrote that this was “manifestly unfavourable to the correct
development of his character as a preacher,” an opinion perhaps owed to the amount of
time required for tutoring, although Gregory does not provide the reason for this
assessment. As classics tutor, he made a profound impression on his students, such as
Joseph Kinghorn (1766–1832), James Hinton (1761–1823), William Steadman (1764–
1837), and Samuel Pearce (1766–1799).

The major cause for concern, however, was Hall’s theology. While both an
insightful conversationalist and even more remarkable orator, Hall could simultaneously
instill both awe and wariness. Gregory penned, “Yet it ought not to be concealed (for I
simply announce his own deliberate conviction, frequently expressed in after-life) that at
this time he was very inadequately qualified for the duties of a minister of the gospel.”
He often “expatiated, with much originality and beauty, upon the Divine attributes,” and

Department, 1947), 170.


yet in his preaching he “dealt too much in generalities.”

Hall had been accused of “not preaching the gospel” after he delivered two sermons from the book of Proverbs that dealt with “observations and government of the temper.” There were greater concerns, however, and the heaviest burdens for Hall’s colleagues and auditors was his love of speculative conversation, his materialism, his denial of the personality of the Holy Spirit, and his open admiration for the Unitarian Joseph Priestley (1733–1804). The journals of Andrew Fuller and John C. Ryland show how they were greatly affected by Hall’s preaching, but both men also had questioned Hall’s orthodoxy, and both prayed for God to “keep that young man.”

On a trip to Birmingham, Hall had apparently made remarks that God would not judge Priestley, and this caused great concern, especially for his former tutor John Collett Ryland. Ryland feared Hall was on the verge of a dangerous course and wrote Hall a forceful letter admonishing him to study the Scriptures and oppose those who would deny the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the resurrection. In reply, Hall said Ryland had misunderstood if he thought Hall “far gone in Socinianism.” He stated further, “I do not recollect a time when I was less inclined to Socinianism than at present.”

While Hall could affirm his orthodoxy in his rejection of Socinianism, there

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40 Warren, The Hall Family, 55.
were two other doctrinal issues from which he would not turn, at least not until later in his life and ministry. First, Hall had come to believe that the Holy Spirit was a divine energy or agency instead of the third person of the Godhead. Further, although he conceded that immersion was the proper mode of baptism and that infant baptism was a perversion of truth, he did not consider himself authorized to re-baptize any person who had been sprinkled as an adult. While these issues must have troubled his Baptist contemporaries at large, they certainly created an irreparable breach with the Broadmead church.

Hall’s final days at Bristol were extremely difficult, plagued in part by doctrinal division with the congregation and part by theological, if not also personal, disagreements with Evans. Although the precise details of the rift with Evans remain unclear, the aforementioned doctrinal controversy almost certainly deepened the schism, which in turn created partisanship among the church. Gregory wrote, “I have read various and written papers, and some pamphlets, which relate to this painful affair; and cannot but conclude that, like many others, it originated in such trifling misconceptions as, in more felicitous circumstances, neither part would have suffered to disturb his thoughts for an hour.” Attempts were made to reconcile the two, often involving close friends and once even the mayor of Bristol, John Harris, but ultimately to no avail.

Another bitter situation arose in Hall’s life around the same time. As J. W.

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44Joseph Hughes indicated that Evans was aware of his own age and was jealous of the younger Hall’s popularity. See Warren, The Hall Family, 53. Caleb Evans would die the following year on August 9, 1791. For another brief and more recent account of these two men, see C. Sidney Hall and Harry Mowvley, Tradition and Challenge: The Story of Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol from 1685 to 1991 (Bristol: Broadmead Baptist Church, 1991), 33–37.

Morris wrote, Hall had “fallen prey to all the miseries of unrequited love.” This was around the year 1786 or 1787, and Morris reported that the young woman was a Miss Steele, whom he described simply as a relative of the Baptist hymn writer Anne Steele (1717–1778). Timothy Whelan has discovered the woman was actually Anne Steele’s niece, also named Anne Steele. Anne Steele Tomkins (1769–1859) and Hall were briefly engaged before Miss Steele broke the engagement and several years later in December 1791 married Joseph Tomkins of Abingdon, a suitor of greater influence and accomplishment. She further injured Hall when she allowed onlookers and reporters to make a spectacle of Hall’s failed romantic pursuit by printing several anecdotes of their relationship. Hall even believed that someone from the Broadmead church had conspired to ruin the engagement. With all the other controversy swirling, Hall’s chief suspect was his own pastor, Caleb Evans, although it is unclear Evans had anything to do with the matter.

Of Hall’s first Bristol ministry, Mcleod summarizes well, “His preaching had matured; he had been forced to clarify his faith; he had lost much of his youthful pride and had learned in some measure to bridle his sarcastic tongue. If it is true that at Bristol Hall made his mistakes, it is also true that he learned his lessons and was never again to have such an unhappy experience with a church.” Robert Hall needed fresh opportunities in life and ministry, and Cambridge called.

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46Morris, Biographical Recollections, 82.


St. Andrew’s Street, Cambridge

If Hall’s Bristol ministry had stoked the embers of public curiosity and popularity, then Cambridge made the flames blaze. One of Hall’s significant influences, Robert Robinson (1735–1790), had died suddenly after preaching in Joseph Priestley’s Birmingham pulpit, leaving open his own pastorate at St. Andrew’s Street, Cambridge. Robinson, described by Graham Hughes as an “erratic genius” and a “leader of militant Dissent,” had come to Cambridge in 1761 and revived a languishing flock so that by 1764, the old meeting house was demolished and a new, larger one erected.49 By 1780, however, Robinson had wandered from the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement. Of Robinson’s heterodox sympathies Olinthus Gregory wrote, “From the profession of orthodox opinions, he had passed by a rather rapid transition, not to Socinianism, but far beyond, to the very borders of infidelity. . .”50 During Robinson’s tenure, the church had become divided between the sympathetic Socinians and antipathetic orthodox, the congregation being described as “liberal and unshackled.”51 The difficulty in securing Robinson’s successor was obvious, yet the church initially found Robert Hall to be a perfect candidate. Gregory summarizes well:

There was at that time no man of eminence among the Baptists, besides Mr. Hall, who could for a moment have been thought of by the church at Cambridge as a fit successor to Mr. Robinson; nor was there any Baptist church and congregation with which he could become connected with the same prospect of being useful and happy, according to the views he then entertained.52


Hall went for a month in September 1790, finding a depleted and divided congregation. After the first month, he agreed to stay for six more months, and formally accepted the pastorate in July 1791. Just a few months earlier, in March 1791, Robert Hall buried his father, the seasoned Arnesby shepherd. Almost immediately he began to wrestle with the serious nature of truth and piety and remembered how his father had “exhorted him to abandon the vague and dangerous speculations to which he was prone.”

He devoted himself to exposing error and defending truth, modifying “some of his views in an orthodox direction,” especially his materialism, which he claimed he buried with his father.

His first sermon after accepting the pastorate was a defense of the doctrine of the atonement from Hebrews 9:13. The sermon was clearly biblically orthodox and evangelical in its substance, and so offended several in the congregation, that they left the church and procured the Socinian William Frend (1757–1841) as their religious instructor. Hall’s regular preaching ministry slowly rebuilt the struggling congregation and placed his pulpit as a dominant fixture in the Cambridge community—a stronghold of the Church of England. As the number of Cambridge students attending St. Andrews Street increased, the university administrators considering imposing a rule forbidding attendance at Hall’s services. The influential head of Trinity College stopped the


55Gregory, “Memoir,” 22. William Frend was a tutor at Jesus College but was later forced to leave after his 1793 publication of Peace and Union Recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans.
measure by declaring that if it were not for his position, he too would be sitting under Hall’s preaching.  

At Cambridge, Hall conducted two services on Sundays, one in the morning and one in the evening. The afternoon sermons were very popular and in them Hall would address a single text or a national event or local incident. One of his more well known weekly sermons at Cambridge came in of these afternoon services. Two men had been charged with forgery after trying to pay with a forged note at a local shop. When the shopkeeper realized, the man took back the note and promptly swallowed it. The men were arrested and later executed. The story was swirling around town. Hall visited the men in prison, and later addressed St. Andrews Street from Job 20:12-16, “Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue . . . yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. He hath swallowed down riches and he shall vomit them up again.”

Hall’s popularity grew at Cambridge as he carried out his weekly preaching and pastoral duties at St. Andrews and endeared himself to his church members and many other Cambridge residents. Hall regularly visited his church members, attempting to see each family as often as he could, and often taking along his own tea so as not to burden the poorer members. He was also a faithful “village preacher,” conducting services in the regions on the outskirts Cambridge. His popularity soared primarily, however, because of his engagement in the political rhetoric of his day.

The French Revolution was creating division and upheaval in England where
the people were increasingly bombarded with political, social, and religious rhetoric. In
September 1791, Hall preached and then published his first major work titled Christianity
Consistent with a Love of Freedom.57 He was only twenty-seven years old, yet he
forcefully attacked fellow Dissenting ministers John Martin (1741–1820) and John
Clayton (1778–1826) of Weighhouse, both who had urged Dissenters to withdraw from
political activity. He further argued for full toleration of religious opinion and the
protection of every religious party in every form of worship. In 1793, Hall followed this
first publication with his Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty.
Some dissenters who had become involved in political rhetoric were being accused of
sedition. One of Hall’s friends, W. Peet Musgrave, a wealthy Cambridge tailor and
woolen draper, had even been violently attacked. Hall took over a month to complete
this work, yet when finished, it stood as a clear explanation of the principles for which
the supporters of liberty stood.

As the French Revolution raged on, it created a boiling cauldron of infidelity
and immorality rather than ensuring peaceful liberty and the moral and religious society
for which men like Hall had hoped. In November 1799, Hall preached from Ephesians
2:12 on the phrase “without God in the world,” a sermon titled Modern Infidelity
Considered with Respect to Its Influence on Society. Hall violently attacked growing
atheistic sentiments and its bitter fruits. With its publication throughout England, Hall

excellent treatment of this period in its religious context, see Robert Hole, Pulpits, Politics and Public
Order in England 1760–1832 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and also John Robert
Parnell, “Baptists and Britons: Particular Baptist Ministers in England and British Identity in the 1790’s”
(Ph.D. diss, University of North Texas, 2005).
captured the attention of the nation.

Two other sermons would further solidify Hall’s legacy at Cambridge. The first, *Reflections on War*, was preached on June 1, 1802, a day appointed to give thanks for the general peace established by the Treaty of Amiens. *Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis* was preached in Bristol on October 19, 1803, and Hall urged the nation to repentance in the midst of its war with France. By the time 1804 had dawned, Hall had risen to public prominence. Austin Walker writes, “He was recognized as an eloquent and passionate gospel preacher who commanded a wide hearing even though he was a Baptist Dissenter. The fact that he accomplished this in Cambridge, a stronghold of the Established Church of England, is testimony to his powerful intellect and his outstanding gift of oratory.”

Hall’s ministry at Cambridge should not simply be remembered as the season in which he gained a national reputation. Although Hall became very influential and established relationships with some of the most distinguished people in Cambridge, he also had a vibrant ministry of preaching in the surrounding villages to people of a much different class. Hall even had a striking interaction and confrontation of his fellow Cambridge minister, Charles Simeon, who had attacked the Baptists in one of his sermons. Hall wrote a forceful letter to Simeon which was published in the *Cambridge Intelligencer* on August 7, 1795.

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58 Austin Walker, “Robert Hall Jr. (1764–1831) and the decline of historic Calvinism among the Particular Baptists of the nineteenth century” (paper presented for The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, October 27, 2010).

59 I am grateful to the librarians and archivists of the Angus Library for allowing me to view a reprint of this letter, by T. Kemp of Huddersfield, from 1818, held in the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University.
Apart from the recollections of others, however, much of Hall’s Cambridge ministry remains a mystery. He destroyed all of his sermon notes and kept little record of church proceedings. B. R. White observes,

Unfortunately Robert Hall had none of the historical and antiquarian interests of his predecessor and in consequence, apart from four entries concerned with membership matters 1791/92 there were to be no other matters recorded in the church-book until his letter of resignation after a pastorate lasting nearly fifteen years.\(^{60}\)

### The Mental Breakdown of Robert Hall

Hall faithfully served at Cambridge until ill-health forced his resignation in 1806. As mentioned previously, Hall had been a feeble child and he was rarely ever free from pain. His body, primarily his back, ached throughout his life. It was not, however, his bodily ailments that led to the termination of his Cambridge ministry, but rather a difficult mental and emotional instability. This emotional distress was noticed by friends, such as when Hall made remarks about his hatred of the Cambridge scenery. When a friend praised the trees and the views in Cambridge Hall made his feelings known:

Yes, sir, I recollect – Willows, I believe, sir – Nature hanging out signals of distress sir! Before I came to Cambridge I had read in the prize poems – of ‘the banks of the Cam’ and of the ‘sweetly flowing stream’ and so on, but when I arrived here I was sadly disappointed. When I first saw the river as I passed over King’s College Bridge I could not help exclaiming, ‘Why the stream is standing still to see people drown themselves!’ and that, I am sorry to say, is a permanent feeling with me. . . . Shocking place for the spirits, sir; I wish you may not find it so. It must be the very focus of suicides.\(^{61}\)

In addition being depressed by his surroundings, the pressures of life and ministry were at

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a boiling point. Beginning around October 31, 1804 to February 19, 1805, and then again from November 26, 1805 to February 1806, Hall’s mind “twice lost its balance.”

Suffering from almost incessant back pain since childhood, Hall had been advised in 1803 to leave his dwelling in Cambridge and move five miles away to Shelford. Dr. William Kerr (1738–1824) of Northampton had been consulted and thought the ability to ride horses would help ease Hall’s back pain. His relocation was meant to provide relief, but its accompanying isolation proved unbearable. He missed communing with Cambridge intellectuals, although he often spent time conversing with James Nutter, a member at St. Andrew’s Street, and Thomas Thomason (1774–1829), a young curate for Charles Simeon (1759–1836) at Trinity Church. These friendships, while valuable, could not maintain his health. Gregory recorded:

Gratifying, however, as this intercourse was, both to Mr. Hall and his valued neighbours, it still left him too much alone, and too much exposed to all the morbid influences of a disordered body, and of a mind overstrained. Often he has been known to sit close at his reading, or yet more intensely engaged in abstract thought, for more than twelve hours in the day; so that, when one or both of his kind friends have called upon him in such a state of nervous excitement as led them to unite their efforts in persuading him to take some mild narcotic, and retire to rest. The painful result may be anticipated. This noble mind lost its equilibrium; and he who had so long been the theme of universal admiration now became the subject of as extensive a sympathy.

Although Hall’s early biographers all recorded the events, specific details of Hall’s

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breakdown from eyewitness accounts have only recently been uncovered.\(^6^3\)

After a pleasant evening dining with Cambridge solicitor Edward Randall (1765–1840) and others on Tuesday, October 31, 1804, Hall returned home and went to bed for the evening. An eyewitness reported that Hall arose at two in the morning “in considerable agitation of mind, went up to his maids room, called her up, accused her of having devils in the room, of bewitching him.” Hannah, the maid, found Hall walking around the house with a candle in his hand, and she quickly argued for her innocence. Hall then went to the kitchen to smoke his pipe and read his Bible. Between three and four in the morning, Hall ventured outside and knelt in the dirt to pray. His actions so alarmed Hannah that she woke a man named George, whose job it was to care for Hall’s horse. Hall was convinced his house was haunted, and asked his nearby neighbors the Ansells for lodging. They let him into their home where he slept until one o’clock that afternoon.

Two church members of St. Andrews Street, Charles Finch (1726–1830) and William Lyon (1753–1816), traveled to Shelford to be with Hall. The eyewitness recorded that Hall’s conversation was “the most part rational & interesting, but occasionally incoherent & wild Said he had had a conflict with devils & nothing but a miracle had saved him but he had prevailed & should prevail.” Later that night, Hall was

\(^{63}\)Timothy Whelan, “I Am the Greatest of the Prophets’: A New Look at Robert Hall’s Mental Breakdown, November 1804,” The Baptist Quarterly 42 (2007), 114–26. The document titled “A curious account of a Mr. Hall who dined with Mr. Randall on Tuesday 31\(^{st}\) Oct., 1804, and who became temporarily insane,” was discovered by Whelan among the papers of Joseph Angus in the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University. Whelan believes even if Hall’s friend and early biographers Gregory, Greene, and Morris had known of these details, they “would have been keen to preserve his reputation” and would not have included the accounts (115). Whelan seems to believe the account was recorded by one of the witnesses mentioned in the document, or by one of Hall’s close friends James Nutter or John Greene.
Throughout the next day, Hall spent time with his friends Thomas Thomason, John Audley, William Hollick (1752–1817), Samuel Luccock, and Newton Bosworth (1778–1848). During the course of evening conversation with Bosworth, Hall “gave frequent indications of the perturbed state of his mind.” At bedtime, the mental agitation heightened and Hall was heard declaring, “he was the Greatest Prophet that the world ever saw.” He would see no other person except for William Hollick, who quickly arrived, and witnessed Hall state, “I am the son of God,” and further declaring his supernatural birth with only half a head that was always too small for his brains. He attempted to attack Hollick when Hall’s fanciful claims had been rebuffed. Later that evening, prominent Cambridge physician Frederic Thackeray (1774–1852) tried to calm Hall by medicating him with laudanum and restraining him with a strait waistcoat. Hall would spend much of the next week confined to his bed with chains. Eventually, Hall was placed under the care of Thomas Arnold (1742–1816), a Leicester physician and operator of an asylum for the insane. Hall was under Arnold’s care at Bond Street, but was also under the care of a Dr. Hill who conducted an asylum at Belgrave Gate.\(^\text{64}\)

Hall described the experience in the asylum to his friend John Greene. Hall indicated the staff confined him and placed him in the company of “a number of pauper lunatics, practising all manner of ludicrous antics.” He added, “Sir, this sight was enough to make me ten times worse; they were as mad as March hares. I was at times quite

insensible. I don’t believe Dr. Arnold was aware how I was treated by a lazy keeper.”

Hall then described how this “keeper” would leave him confined for hours, and he begged Greene to prevent him from ever being sent there again.

After this first breakdown, Hall indicated that it had actually been helpful in many ways. His friend John Greene recalled his saying, “My mind was so excited and my imagination so lively and active, that more ideas passed through my mind during those seven weeks than in any seven years of my life. Whatever I had obtained from reading or reflection was present to me; I had all my ideas at my fingers’ ends and could bring them to bear upon any subject.”

Hall’s trouble was far from over, and Macleod succinctly states, “But if his first breakdown from one point of view was a heavenly revelation, his second was an affliction which nearly broke him utterly.”

Upon his release from Arnold’s asylum, Hall stayed for a week with his senior deacon William Hollick, and then moved to Fowlmire, nine miles away from Cambridge. Having been away for five months, Hall resumed his duties at Cambridge, but they would again be quickly interrupted that November because of a similar, but worse breakdown. The signs were very apparent to his friends. Hall would forget to prepare his sermons or forget the Sunday services entirely, and he was often found wandering throughout the streets. A year after his first attack, the climax of the second finally came. In an afternoon service, Hall began to act erratically and speak incoherently. After the crowds left and the church members remained behind for communion, Hall remarked, “Stop, my

friends, I have something very important to communicate to you. I have to inform you that the Millenium is come.” After making these remarks, he led the church in a wild prayer. The meeting was ended and Hall returned to his place of lodging with Mr. T. Nutter. In the afternoon, however, Hall made a wild and furious horse ride away from Foulmire to within twelve miles of London, before his friends finally caught up to him and brought him home.

On November 26, 1805, he was placed in the care of a doctor and then transferred to the care of Joseph Mason Cox (1763–1818), a Bristol physician, who operated an asylum at Fishponds. Cox’s treatment was more gradual and reasonable, and Hall recovered within a few months. Cox advised Hall with three very practical suggestions. First, he suggested Hall continue smoking his pipe, believing it would calm his nerves. Second, he urged Hall to leave Cambridge, move to the country, and rest for an entire year. Finally, Cox counseled Hall to consider getting married.

During this period of recovery, Hall’s brother John died unexpectedly dealing another vicious blow to an already wounded man. Although St. Andrews Street would have welcomed Hall’s return, Hall submitted to the doctor’s advice and resigned his Cambridge pastorate on March 4, 1806. Macleod writes, “Hall himself stepped out into the unknown future, broken in health and humbled in spirit.”

Despite the difficulty such experiences caused for Hall, they also brought great

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68 Timothy Whelan has uncovered evidence that Mary Steele Tomkins, the daughter of Anne Steele Tomkins, paid a visit to Fishponds but was advised by doctors to avoid contact with Hall. Almost twenty years had elapsed and although little is known as to how Hall may have still felt, his doctors feared there might be “unpleasant emotions” were he to see Mary. See Timothy Whelan, ed., Nonconformist Women Writers, (London: Pickering & Chato, 2011), 3:447–48, n. 335.

religious renewal, or perhaps even conversion itself. Of Hall’s thoughts during this time Gregory wrote,

His own decided persuasion was that however vivid his convictions of religious truth, and of the necessity of a consistent course of evangelical obedience had formerly been, and however correct his doctrinal sentiments during the last four or five years, yet that he did not undergo a thorough transformation of character, a complete renewal of his heart and affections, until the first of these seizures.

His friends noticed a significant change in Hall’s devotional habits and in his heightened awareness of his sin and his need for repentance. During this time, Hall penned, “An Act of Solemn Dedication of Myself to God,” and each year on his birthday he would renew and strengthen this covenant.70

**Hall’s Latter Pastoral Ministries**

While Hall continued to recover, the Baptist missionaries to India—Carey, Marshman, and Ward—had consulted his friends Andrew Fuller and John Ryland regarding issues of biblical interpretation and translation. Fuller and Ryland believed enlisting Hall’s help would be beneficial for the work and for Hall’s recovery. Hall labored diligently for two years, struggling as he searched for the exact meaning of the words in the New Testament text. Although he originally intended to publish some of his conclusions, he soon destroyed his manuscript after learning that a work called *The Apostolical Epistles* by the Scottish scholar James McKnight contained similar arguments. It was also at this time that Hall destroyed all of the notes from his Cambridge sermons.

As Hall regained his mental and physical health in 1806, he would often stay

70A copy of one of Hall’s dedication letters was found among his papers after his death and was included in Gregory, “Memoir,” 53.
with his sister, Mrs. Cotton, at Leicester and worship with her at the Harvey Lane Baptist Church. He also spent weeks with other relatives at Arnesby where he could often be found praying over his father’s grave. Morris writes, “Much of his time was spent in the duties of retirement, in the cultivation of holy affections, and seeking communion with God.”

In 1807, Hall moved to Enderby, a village about five miles from Leicester, where he lived with another relative. Morris recalls how Hall’s visits to the only church in the village, a parish church, only fueled his passion for dissent. Morris wrote that Hall would quip that if he had not been a dissenter before he would be now and throughout all eternity.

Hall’s friends continued to urge him to follow his doctor’s advice to marry, and most urged him to marry someone of similar intellect and culture, while others advised he “marry money.” For those wishing the former Hall would respond, “I do not want a wife to read Greek, sir, I can read Greek myself.” Another time a rumor circulated that he had begun a relationship with a woman of monetary advantage, but Hall again quickly replied, “Marry Miss So-and-So, Sir! I should as soon think of marrying the devil’s daughter, and going home to live with the old folks!” With this as the background, Hall shocked everyone in the summer of 1807, when he entered a romance with a most unlikely young woman.

Hall had agreed to preach for Thomas Edmonds at Clipstone, and while staying

71Morris, Biographical Recollections, 119.
72Morris, Biographical Recollections, 195.
73Hughes, Robert Hall, 6.
with him became attracted to one of his servant girls. Hall proposed marriage on a later visit, having never spoken to this woman before. He was forty-three years old and possessed an incomparable mind, while she was a servant girl and completely uneducated. Various accounts exaggerate Hall’s proposal, although apparently Hall simply remarked, “Betty, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?” to which she replied, “I hope so, Sir, I do.” Hall then asked, “Betty, do you love me?”

The woman’s name was Elizabeth Smith, and the proposal obviously surprised Hall’s friends whose matchmaking attempts had failed miserably. The two were united in marriage on March 25, 1808, at the Kettering Baptist Church. Hall loved his wife dearly and often remarked about what she meant to him. He considered her a “perfect Martha” and when visitors would come to dine with the Halls, he would say, “At such times she is as much engaged as Napoleon would be in the arrangement of his army previous to fighting a mighty battle.”

Frederick Trestrail, who visited the Hall home years later while a student at Bristol, recalled:

Of Mrs. Hall it is impossible to speak too highly. Those who were only acquainted with her slightly, as well as those who knew her intimately, equally felt the attraction of her person and manner. She must have been very beautiful when young, and possessed in a remarkable degree that air of refinement which is found among those who have been accustomed to highly intelligent and cultivated society. Mr. Hall invariably paid her the greatest deference and relied on the soundness of her judgment.

Three daughters and two sons would be added to the Hall family, although one son would die in infancy.

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75Trestrail, *Reminiscences of College Life*, 149.
Harvey Lane, Leicester

The year 1807 had not only brought about Hall’s recovery and engagement, but had also provided the opportunity to resume regular preaching at the Harvey Lane Baptist Church in Leicester. Throughout the latter months of 1806, Hall was preaching almost every Sunday in the villages around Leicester. He preached for a time at Narborough, spent several weeks at Clipston, and occasionally preached at Harvey Lane. Hall desired to settle at Clipston, but the church never extended the pastoral call to him. He did receive an invitation from his home church at Arnesby, but felt the stronger call to Harvey Lane. He accepted their call and officially began his pastorate on October 7, 1807. Macleod insightfully summarizes, “Neither Hall nor the church realized that their partnership was to last almost twenty years and was to bring both church and minister into the front rank of English nonconformity.”

Leicester was a very different town than Cambridge having no source of power such as coal or iron and thus becoming dependent upon textile manufacturing rather than industry. The people in Leicester were just as different. Unlike Cambridge, the town was composed of working class people with much less education. Hall would tell John Greene, “My congregation, sir, is composed principally of plain people who are engaged in manufactories, and who have not enjoyed the advantages of education.” Although Hall missed his friends and the intellectual rigors of Cambridge, he quickly gained acceptance among his flock at Harvey Lane. There was already a familiarity with the flock at


77 Sheila Mitchell, *Not Disobedient: A history of United Baptist Church, Leicester including Harvey Lane 1760–1845, Belvoir Street 1845–1940, and Charles Street 1831–1940* (Leicester: United Baptist Church, 1984), 40.
Harvey Lane, not only because of his occasional preaching there, but also because his uncle Christopher had served a brief stint as pastor there beginning around 1760 and continuing until 1762 when he helped Harvey Lane separate from Sutton-in-the-Elm.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Not Disobedient}, 41. For another brief comment about this “church planting” endeavor as it relates to Robert Hall, Sr., and as a new feature among the Particular Baptists of the Midlands, see Alan Betteridge, \textit{Deep Roots Living Branches} (Leicester: Matador, 2010), 77.}

William Carey led the church from 1789 to 1793, but by the time Hall arrived over a decade later in 1807, the church was struggling and their membership had declined to only seventy-six people.\footnote{Gregory, “Memoir,” 81.} The congregation grew steadily under Hall’s leadership, eventually having over two hundred people in membership. Sheila Mitchell has noted that, just as at Cambridge, Hall kept little record of church meetings and activities at Harvey Lane. Of the “sketchy” church book entries she writes, “Either church meetings were not held so regularly or the matters discussed were not considered important enough to write up in detail. A full record of baptisms, deaths, exclusions and restorations is kept, however, and it is possible to obtain from this a fairly clear picture of the church’s progress during this period in its history.”\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Not Disobedient}, 43.}

Although the ministry at Leicester was going well, Hall was struggling personally. His incessant back pain was becoming even more severe. Dr. Kerr of Northampton prescribed Hall the powerful painkillers opium or laudanum, drugs upon which Hall would continuously and heavily rely until his death in 1831. The deepest struggle, however, was Hall’s personal doubts about his standing before God. He requested prayer from close friends such as John Ryland. Once on a journey, Hall
stopped at an inn near Sibbertoft village. After preaching to some gathered villagers, Hall told the innkeeper, a Master York, “I am in great doubts as to my state. I sometimes fear I have never been converted and it distressed me exceedingly.”81 On his forty-fifth birthday, May 2, 1809, Hall forever settled his doubts as he penned An Act of Solemn Dedication of Myself to God, in which he made a new commitment of his life to the cause of Christ. While only the Lord knew the reality of the condition of his soul, Hall would later date this time in 1809 as his true conversion, meaning he felt the previous two decades of pastoral ministry had been conducted as an unconverted man.82

Eight years into his ministry at Leicester, Hall entered into a lengthy controversy over open communion with his former pupil, Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich. In 1815 Hall published On Terms of Communion, where he argued Baptists should not deny communion to those who believed in infant baptism.83 His church never adopted his position, but his powerful influence led to a new culture among the Baptists.84

Just as at Cambridge, however, Hall’s ministry extended beyond the confines of the Harvey Lane congregation. First, he became very involved with three of the

81 Frederick Trestrail, Reminiscences of College Life, 145–46.


Baptist colleges in England. Years had passed since his departure from Bristol, but Bristol Baptist College and the Bristol Education Society were always dear to him. In 1814, he became a life member of the Bristol Education Society. He was also one of the original members of the Northern Education Society, which started the Horton Academy. Hall preached its inaugural meeting at Rochdale in 1804 and encouraged the Academy to seek Joseph Kinghorn as their president, but Kinghorn declined and the Academy hired another of Hall’s former students, William Steadman. Finally, Hall was involved in the forming the new Baptist Academy in Stepney. He penned a prospectus that gave a brief account of the vision of the college’s founders, he assisted in raising funds for the institution, he preached at the annual meeting in 1811, and he even personally donated books for the college.

He also became involved in promoting educational reform at the popular level, in establishing and developing effective Sunday Schools, in supporting the work of the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society, and in laboring to assist the Baptist Missionary Society. During his Leicester pastorate alone, Hall helped to raise nearly 3,000 pounds for the society. In his earlier ministry, Hall had influenced missionaries such as William Ward, John Chamberlain, and John Rowe. Now at Leicester, he had a significant impact on William Gamby, William Yates, and Eustace Carey. In 1814, Hall preached the sermon for Eustace Carey, William Carey’s nephew, upon his being designated as a missionary to India.

Hall’s public reputation and fame grew at Leicester in large measure due to his famous funeral sermon upon the sudden death in childbirth of Princess Charlotte in 1817. Many preachers dedicated a sermon to this national event, but few brought the notoriety
that Hall did. In the decade leading up to 1827, Hall’s sermon had already run to nine editions.\textsuperscript{85} By this time in 1818, Hall had been at Harvey Lane over a decade and had certainly become adored by those in Leicester. His work in 1819 would knit him even closer to the people.

In 1819, Hall defended the framework knitters in the Leicester hosiery industry, the only large-scale industry in Leicester until the middle of the nineteenth century. Most people in Leicester were involved in the industry in some trade, as “framework-knitters, wool-combers, dyers, framesmiths, combmakers, winders, sizers, seamers, spinners, bobbiners, and needlemakers.”\textsuperscript{86} Hall’s \textit{An Appeal to the Public on the subject of the Framework Knitters’ Fund} was written anonymously on their behalf, appealing to the public for help in establishing a friendly relief society.

By the mid 1820’s Hall was facing a serious issue of church discipline with a member at Harvey Lane. The church had come to the decision to expel the member, apparently over an ongoing and clear dishonesty. Friends and family of the church member felt Hall had been too severe, both personally and in his leadership of the church. It was during this uneasy time in 1825 that Hall received a formal invitation to succeed John Ryland at the Broadmead Baptist Church. Ryland’s death provided an opportunity for Hall to return to Bristol, the site of his first pastorate and the place that clearly had forgiven and forgotten any earlier grievances. After much personal debate and

\textsuperscript{85}John Wolfe, “British Sermons on National Events,” in \textit{A New History of the Nineteenth Century Sermon}, ed. Robert Ellison (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 185. Wolfe only lists the nine editions that had been printed by 1818. A copy of a sixteenth edition from 1827, printed in London, Bristol, and Leicester is held in the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University.

\textsuperscript{86}A. T. Paterson, \textit{Radical Leicester} (Leicester: University College, 1954), 42.
vacillation and amid a strong attempt from the Leicester community to retain him, Hall accepted Broadmead’s pastoral call in December 1825.

**Broadmead Church, Bristol**

So much had changed for Hall and his family in the years since Hall had left Bristol. Hall was now sixty-two, happily married, and the father of four children, Eliza who was seventeen, Jane who was sixteen, Robert who was twelve, and Mary who was eight. Upon his return to Bristol in 1826, Hall found the financial and educational status of his members much better than at Leicester, and although there had been a serious rift years earlier, Hall was welcomed back by many. The church was immediately crowded to hear the famed preacher. Hall wrote a friend stating,

I continue to be very happy with my people, from whom I daily receive every demonstration of affection and respect. Our attendance is as good as I could wish; and we have added to the Baptist church, during the last year, twenty-seven, and six are standing candidates for baptism. For these tokens of the divine presence I desire to be thankful.  

Hall’s second tenure at Bristol was attended with increasingly poor health, however, “All things, indeed, except his infirm state of health, seemed to conspire in promoting his own happiness as well as the prosperity of the church with which he had again connected himself.”

Hall was also thrilled to have constant interaction with the other tutors and the students of the Bristol Baptist Academy. Some of the most delightful times were the “conferences” at Broadmead chapel, held on Tuesday evenings, where Hall would follow the addresses of some students or the president with his own remarks.

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87 Gregory, “Memoir,” 64.

88 Gregory, “Memoir,” 64.
Always caring for his friends and former congregants, Hall visited Cambridge in 1827 and 1829, each time attempting to visit every member of the church. He also occasionally visited Leicester and London. Despite ill health and an incessant ministry, Hall’s passion for learning never ceased. He continued to be a voracious reader, devouring ancients such as Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, and Cicero, and although he only read a few poets loved the works of Milton. Most importantly, however, Gregory notes that, next to the Scriptures, Hall preferred works of “clear, strong, and conclusive reasoning” and then adds, “Thus he, for full sixty years, read Jonathan Edwards’s writings with undiminished pleasure.” In addition, he continued his love for languages, taking up the study of Italian in his final years.

An extract of Hall’s home life from Gregory’s Memoir gives a taste of Hall’s ministry to his family during his time at Bristol:

He generally rose and took his breakfast about nine o’clock. Breakfast was immediately succeeded by family worship. At this exercise he went regularly through the Scriptures, reading a portion of the Old Testament in the morning and of the New Testament in the evening. On Sunday morning he almost invariably read the ninety-second Psalm, being short, and appropriate to the day. He also read in his family the translation of the four gospels by Campbell... He seldom made any remarks on the portion of Scripture, except when strangers were present, who, he knew, would be disappointed at their entire omission... In the prayer that succeeded, he was not in the habit of forming his petitions on the passage of Scripture just read, though the prayer was usually of considerable length... He adverted specifically to all the persons belonging to his family, present and absent: never forgot the people of his care; and dwelt on the distinct cases of members of the church that were under any kind of trial or affliction.

Aside from private records and publicized reports of Hall’s ministry, little else is known of Hall’s ministry during these final years at Broadmead because, as at every


church before, Hall wrote almost nothing in the church records. He did assist in the establishment of a new meeting at Thrissell Street that later became the Kensington Baptist Church.

Despite the spiritual joy of a renewed ministry at Bristol, Hall’s physical health was in serious decline. His friends reported he could no longer walk the mile from his home at Ashley place to the church. In the evenings during the week Hall would visit church members, yet his pain was so debilitating he usually traveled by carriage. He later expressed his hope that small groups of people could gather together so that he could visit more people at once. By 1828, he had developed serious heart problems that escalated until 1830, when Hall was finally persuaded to take a leave of absence from his pastoral duties for a few weeks. Even while trying to recover, Hall found it impossible not to preach, speaking both at Coleford and Cheltenham. Hall returned to Bristol in October 1830, and continued his labors into the new year. His health continued to decline for the next several months.

The Death and Funeral of Robert Hall

On Thursday, February 10, 1831, severe chest pains forced Hall to rest rather than prepare for the Lord’s Supper service later that evening. A letter from Hall’s friend, Mr. Addington, was included in Gregory’s memoir and includes an account of the following Sunday morning, February 13, 1831. Addington observed,

I found him in a condition of extreme suffering and distress. The pain in his back had been uncommonly severe during the whole night, and compelled him to multiply, at very short intervals, the doses of his adonyne, until he had taken no less than 125 grains of solid opium, equal to more than 3,000 drops, or nearly four

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91 Hall and Mowvley, Tradition and Challenge, 54.
ounces, of laudanum!! . . . The opium having failed to assuage his pain, he was compelled to remain in the horizontal posture; but while in this situation, a violent attack in his chest took place, which in its turn rendered an upright position of the body no less indispensable. . . . Powerful stimulants, such as brandy, opium, ether, and ammonia, were the only resources; and, in about an hour from my arrival, we had the satisfaction of finding him greatly relieved and expressing his lively gratitude to God.  

The agony was intense and incessant, but Hall’s faith was steadfast. Addington adds,  

“His language abounded with expressions at once of the deepest humility and of thankfulness to God for his ‘unspeakable mercies,’ – together with affectionate acknowledgements of the care and assiduities of his family and the friends around him.”  

His mood remained peaceful despite rapidly increasing attacks of pain.  

He understood he would never preach or minister again and remarked, “But I am in God’s hands, and I rejoice that I am. I am God’s creature, at his disposal, for life or death; and that is a great mercy.” Gregory collected several of Hall’s most poignant remarks during his last days. Once he said, “I fear pain more than death. If I could die easily, I think I would rather go than stay; for I have seen enough of the world, and I have an humble hope.” Later he remarked, “Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins? I have not complained, have I, sir?—and I won’t complain.”  

Close friends accompanied Hall during his final days. One close friend, Mr. Chandler, observed how Robert Hall frequently reminded himself and others of the incomparable nature of his sufferings to those of Christ. Chandler wrote,  

He then alluded to the character of the sufferings of crucifixion, remarking how intense and insufferable they must have been, and asked many minute questions on what I might suppose was the process by which crucifixion brought about death. He

92 Gregory, “Memoir,” 72

particularly inquired respecting the effect of pain – the nervous irritation – the thirst – the oppression of breathing – the disturbance of the circulation – and the hurried action of the heart, till the conversation gradually brought him to a consideration of his own distress; when he again reverted to the lightness of his sufferings when contrasted with those of Christ. 94

On the morning of February 21, Hall told his wife he believed that day would be critical. Mr. Chandler had just recently departed, but was called back very quickly to attend to the dying preacher. Only his record can adequately describe the scene of Hall’s death. He remembered,

In a very short time, and before I had reached home, I was summoned to behold the last agonizing scene of this great and extraordinary man. His difficulty of breathing had suddenly increased to a dreadful and final paroxysm. . . . On entering his room, I found him sitting on the sofa, surrounded by his lamenting family; with one foot in the hot water, and the other spasmodically grasping the edge of the bath; his frame waving in violent, almost convulsive heavings, sufficiently indicative of the process of dissolution. . . . He said to me, ‘I am dying: death is come at last: all will now be useless.’ . . . The rapidly increasing gasping soon overpowered his ability to swallow, or to speak . . . and when his family, one after another, gave way in despair, he followed them with sympathizing looks, as they were obliged to be conveyed from the room. This was his last voluntary movement; for immediately a general convulsion seized him, and he quickly expired. 95

Hall was finally free of what his friends often referred to as his “internal apparatus of torture” and had finally entered into eternal rest. Hall had mentioned his hope for eternity to William Wilberforce. Wilberforce had told Hall that his idea of heaven was “Love,” to which Hall responded, “Mine, is rest.” 96

After Hall’s death, his friend J. M. Chandler did an autopsy of Hall’s body, wrote an extensive report of his findings, and published it at the request of those close


95 Gregory, “Memoir,” 74. For another brief account of Hall’s death, see “Death of the Rev. R. Hall, M. A. Bristol,” The Baptist Magazine (March 1831): 120.

acquaintances of Hall who so long wondered what exactly plagued their beloved friend and pastor. Chandler detailed Hall’s heart disease, and also discussed a bone projection from Hall’s eleventh dorsal vertebra that must have contributed to Hall’s incessant back pain. The chronic pain since childhood was most likely the result, however, of Chandler’s most striking discovery – ten calculi, today known as kidney stones.

Chandler wrote of his astonishment that the stones never caused any type of kidney disease and then described his findings, including an artistic rendering of each of the calculi:

The Calculi, which were ten in number, were found in the natural cavities of the right kidney. These consisted of one large stone, which filled and dilated the central cavity, and nine small stones, which were firmly encased in the smaller cavities adjoining. . . . The smaller calculi . . . are all of a brown or bronze colour, smooth, polished, and very hard. With the exception of one, they are all armed with sharp spikes.

The funeral of Robert Hall must have been quite a sight to behold. First, for several days, Hall’s friends were allowed to view his body. John Dix recalls the striking scene,

I went, and never was I more impressed with the grandeur of the man than when he lay in his coffin. On the wall, just over the body, hung Branwhite’s print of him in the pulpit. There was the pictured preacher, and beneath it the clay tabernacle of whom Southey said: ‘He had the eloquence of a Cicero, the learning of a Parr, and the piety of a Whitefield.’

Frederick Trestrail, then a student at Bristol, remembered the crowds and the mood well. He wrote, “The students, and about three hundred ministers and gentlemen,

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followed the mourners; most of the shops were closed, and the blinds of the windows of the houses which were passed were drawn, and the streets thronged with sorrowing spectators. There was an entire absence of pomp and show."\(^{100}\)

A report of the funeral was published in *The Pulpit* on March 10, 1831. The report first described the initial procession to Broadmead Chapel:

The funeral was conducted on foot; about eleven o’clock the corpse was placed on a bier, at the residence of the deceased in Ashley-Place, and borne on shoulders to the Baptist Seminary, in Stoke’s Croft, where a large number of respectable persons, principally members of his congregation, but including also ministers and people of almost every religious persuasion in the city, joined the procession. After the mutes, we perceived, the medical friends of the deceased, Dr. Prichard, Mr. Addington, and Mr. Chandler; who were followed by the officiating ministers, Rev. Messrs. Anderson, Hughes, and Crisp. The pallbearers were, Rev. Messrs. Foster, Winter, Lucy, Roberts, Woolridge, and Roper. As mourners, Mr. — Hall, (son of the deceased,) Rev. Dr. Cox, of Hackney, and T. Ransford, Esq.: Deacons, Messrs. Philips, Ash, Holden, Livett, Sherring, and Reed. Then followed the students of the academy, and the congregation and friends, four abreast. On arriving at the chapel, the corpse was placed in front of the pulpit from which the deceased had so recently imparted to his flock the great truths of Christianity.\(^{101}\)

T. S. Crisp then delivered the funeral oration, extolling Hall and commending his hearers to God on such a solemn occasion. The funeral report continued:

On the conclusion of the Rev. Mr. Crisp’s address, the body was removed into the adjoining burial-ground, followed by the chief mourners, and silently committed to the grave; the limited space preventing more than a few persons witnessing the interment. A hymn was afterwards sung, and, the Rev. Mr. Thorp having prayed, the congregation dispersed. Throughout the service the utmost solemnity prevailed; and there were few present who refrained from tears. The chapel was deeply hung with black, and was crowded to excess, the females occupying the galleries, to which they had been exclusively admitted while the funeral procession was advancing.\(^{102}\)

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\(^{100}\)Trestrail, *Reminiscences of College Life*, 181.


Although Hall’s body was initially laid in the burial ground next to Broadmead Chapel, it was later exhumed and moved to the Arnos Vale Cemetery where it was placed in a fine tomb adorned by his silhouette portrait.\footnote{For a picture of Hall’s tomb at the Arnos Vale Cemetery see Appendix 2, Figure A1.}
CHAPTER 3

PREACHING METHODOLOGY AMONG THE BAPTISTS: WHAT HALL INHERITED AND HOW HE CHANGED

A Baptist Spirituality of the Word

Robert Hall, Jr., had a strong spirituality of the Word, a characteristic passed down from his Baptist forebears. There were two interconnected components to this aspect of Baptist spirituality: a high view of the Scriptures themselves and consequently a high view of preaching. To develop an understanding of Hall’s philosophy and methodology of the preaching task, and thus to find his place in Baptist history, it is first necessary to understand the principles he inherited from the preceding generations of English Baptists.

To grasp fully how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English Baptists understood the role of preaching, it is first necessary to establish a general understanding of how they viewed Scripture. *The First London Confession* of 1644 contained two articles that briefly summarized the Baptist position. The seventh article read thus: “The Rule of this Knowledge, Faith, and Obedience, concerning the worship and service of God, and all other Christian duties, is not man’s inventions, opinions, devices, laws, constitutions, or traditions unwritten whatsoever, but onely the word of God contained in the Canonicall Scriptures.”¹ The next article concisely articulated the content of biblical

revelation, “In this written Word God hath plainly revealed whatsoever he hath thought needful for us to know, believe, and acknowledge, touching the Nature and Office of Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen to the praise of God.” This confession revealed the Baptists’ view that Scripture was of divine origin and could clearly instruct humanity in various facets of life but primarily in the essentials of the gospel as found in the person and work of Christ.

Although the mid-seventeenth century brought many challenges to English Baptists, three were especially significant in leading to the publication of a new confession. The first factor was political. Charles II, the Clarendon Code, and a Parliament eager to suppress dissent brought increased persecution for Baptists, and provided an opportunity for Baptists to show their unity with other nonconformists such as Presbyterians and Independents. In the production of their new confession, the Baptists thus relied heavily on the Westminster Confession of Faith, which had been issued in 1646. The last two factors were theological. First, there was the threat of Hyper-Calvinism, which was beginning to make serious inroads into Baptist life. This theological controversy would gain prominence through the ministries of John Brine (1703–1765) and John Gill and would have a destructive impact on certain sectors of the Baptist denomination. The final factor, perhaps less remembered, was the influence and threat of Quakerism to exalt the “light within” above the Scriptures. Therefore, when

\[2\] Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 158.

The Second London Confession of Faith, or The 1689 Confession, was issued in 1677 and then again in 1688, Baptist leaders sought to establish both unity with other Dissenters and yet provide their own measure of doctrinal clarity.

Although the former confession of 1644 was utilized, several “innovations” were employed. One of these was the enlargement and movement of the section on Scripture to the front of the document, following the organizing principle of the Westminster Confession.\(^4\) Whereas previous confessions led off with the doctrine of God, putting the doctrines of Scripture and revelation at the forefront of their confession would become the precedent for succeeding confessional documents.

In this confession of 1689, several important facets of the Baptist view of Scripture, and thus necessarily the Baptist view of preaching, emerged. First, the Baptists argued for the exclusivity of Scripture: “The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, Faith, and Obedience.”\(^5\) The books of the Old and New Testaments are named and differentiated from the books of the Apocrypha because the latter are not “of Divine inspiration” and therefore “no part of the Canon.”\(^6\) Next, the necessity of biblical revelation is established and distinguished from “the light of Nature” and the “works of Creation and Providence.”\(^7\) Only Scripture could give “that knowledge of God and His will, which is necessary unto salvation.”\(^8\) The

\(^4\)Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 237.

\(^5\)Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 248 (emphasis added).

\(^6\)Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 249.

\(^7\)Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 248.

\(^8\)Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 248.
“diverse manners” of God’s revelation in biblical times “being now ceased,” the Baptists viewed “the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary.”9 Third, they delineated the authority of the Scriptures, a reality embedded ultimately in divine authorship, establishing the Bible as the “Word of God.”10 A fourth characteristic of Scripture was its perspicuity. Although the Baptists understood that only the “inward work of the Holy Spirit” could convince the believer of the “infallible truth” and “divine authority” of the Scriptures, and while they asserted that not all things in Scripture were “alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all,” they insisted for such biblical clarity that any “due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.”11

As Baptists clearly espoused their high view of the Scriptures, the role of preaching and the pastoral ministry necessarily came to occupy a central component of Baptist life. Preaching was essential in bringing the Word to bear in the lives of the unconverted, but also in the continual edification and instruction of the church. In this regard, The London Confession of 1644 noted, “That faith is ordinarily begot by the preaching of the Gospel, or word of Christ.”12 Moreover, ministers were to “continue in their calling . . . to feed the flock of Christ committed to them.”13 The 1689 Confession’s twenty-sixth chapter “Of the Church” makes clear that “The work of Pastors being constantly to attend the Service of Christ, in his churches, in the Ministry of the Word

9Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 248–9.
10Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 250.
11Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 251.
12Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 162.
13Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, 166.
and prayer, with watching for their Souls.”\textsuperscript{14} The chapter more specifically adds that it was “incumbent on the Bishops or Pastors of the Churches to be instant in Preaching the Word, by way of office.”\textsuperscript{15} Being “instant” meant that ministers should not simply be available for gospel proclamation should a preaching opportunity arise, rather it bore a sense of urgency that ministers must possess in recognition of the persistent need for biblical preaching.

\textbf{English Baptists and Preaching in the Seventeenth Century}

The seventeenth century brought massive change to the social, political, and religious landscape of England. Five different monarchs reigned during the hundred-year span, with Cromwell and the Commonwealth breaking up the monarchy’s dominion from 1649–1660. The influence of preaching during such a turbulent century should not be understated. Historian and homiletics scholar Edwin Charles Dargan called the century “the classic period of the British pulpit” and has written that this pulpit was a “living factor of the age,” not simply because of the greatness of the preachers but because of the increasing influence of preaching.\textsuperscript{16} Dargan further clarifies the general impact of the pulpit in England during this time:

\begin{center}
It gave and received potent influence in the stirring events and movements of the
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\textsuperscript{14} Lumpkin, \textit{Baptist Confessions of Faith}, 287.

\textsuperscript{15} Lumpkin, \textit{Baptist Confessions of Faith}, 288.

\textsuperscript{16} Edwin Charles Dargan, \textit{A History of Preaching}, vol. 2 (Birmingham, Alabama: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2003), 137. Analyzing preaching from a literary perspective, W. Fraser Mitchell agrees that these divines played a prominent role in the “national affairs of the day” and yet argues that “amid the hundreds of printed sermons which they have left us comparatively few are of any literary importance.” See W. Fraser Mitchell, \textit{English Pulpit Oratory from Andrews to Tillotson: A Study of Its Literary Aspects} (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 255.
time; and it can not be understood or rightly valued apart from its intimate connection with the social, literary, and religious facts and forces which helped to make the seventeenth century in England, as in France, an illustrious epoch in the history of preaching.\(^{17}\)

The primary “potent” source was far and away the Puritan pulpit. Puritan preaching was dominant throughout the seventeenth century and would most directly influence the Baptists. J. I. Packer has argued that although the Puritan sermon finds its roots in Zwingli’s Zurich expositions begun in 1519, that “Cambridge was its proper birthplace” and that the seventeenth century was its “heyday.”\(^ {18}\) The seventeenth century Puritan pulpit in Britain came in every ecclesiastical form: Independents such as Thomas Goodwin (1600–1679), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), John Owen (1616–1683) and John Howe (1630–1705), Presbyterians such as Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) and Edmund Calamy (1600–1666), and Baptists such as John Bunyan and Benjamin Keach.

R. Bruce Bickel writes, “Because the Puritans held that the pure Word of God was the criterion to which doctrine, worship, and church government must conform, the proclamation of the Scriptures occupied the central position in their worship.”\(^ {19}\) Bickel continues, “Consequently, they made the exposition and discussion of the Scriptures the outstanding feature in their worship. Their reverence for the Bible as the only standard for worship produced the Puritan appreciation of the sermon as the culminating point of

\(^{17}\)Dargan, A History of Preaching, 137.


\(^{19}\)R. Bruce Bickel, Light and Heat: The Puritan View of the Pulpit (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1999), 12.
Seventeenth century Baptists shared the Puritan spirituality of the Word, especially in regard to preaching, viewing the pulpit as the central place for God’s people to hear His Word proclaimed.

Even greater than a high view of Scripture and a general reverence for preaching, however, was the Baptists’ adoption and adaptation of the central tenets of Puritan preaching. William Perkins (1558–1602), the Cambridge Puritan divine, first crystallized these principles in published form when he released *The Art of Prophesying* in Latin in 1592. Although no two Puritan preachers were identical, most shared Perkins’s philosophy and methodology of the preaching task. Analyzing the works of Perkins and continuing through the most prominent Puritan preachers, J. I. Packer has described Puritan preaching as expository in method, doctrinal in content, orderly in arrangement, popular in its style, Christ-centered in its orientation, experimental in its interests, piercing in its applications, and powerful in its manner. Packer further summarizes, “What made Puritan preaching into the reality that it was, however, was less its style than its substance. Puritans preached the Bible systematically and thoroughly. . . Puritan rhetoric was servant to Puritan biblicism.”

Although the English Baptist pulpit did not have as great a social influence as some of the other strains of Puritanism, Baptist preachers shared these characteristics of Puritan preaching and began to garner a hearing from the wider world of Christendom. This concern for biblical exposition, theological instruction, and a simplistic and orderly

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design are well modeled by the great Baptists John Bunyan and Benjamin Keach.

**John Bunyan and Benjamin Keach**

Though still relatively few in number and severely oppressed and marginalized, the Baptists had two dominant and increasingly influential voices in John Bunyan and Benjamin Keach. Bunyan, pastor of Bedford Baptist church, was a powerful preacher, although he is primarily remembered for his allegory of the Christian life, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Bunyan’s sermons were replete with Scripture and he carefully crafted sermons that would instruct his hearers in the doctrinal truths of the Bible. This approach has led literary critics to scoff at Bunyan’s sermons for being “heavy and dull” and for being the epitome of “gloomy dogma and censoriousness.” Even Baptist homiletician and historian Edwin Dargan agrees that Bunyan’s preaching lacked the spiritual insight and picturesque imagination of his writings. He critiques, “The sermons are those of the Puritan pattern of the day, prolix, tedious, minutely divided, with labored effects and conceits, and the style is often too homely and dry.” This was certainly intentional, however, as Bunyan aimed to preach sermons that were arranged in an orderly fashion and that utilized simple, understandable language. However, although many recognized Bunyan’s lack of rhetorical and literary acumen in his preaching, they still praised Bunyan for a preaching legacy of “vividness and reality of its spiritual power.”

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The most famous Baptist preacher of the seventeenth century and the man leaving the most significant preaching legacy was Benjamin Keach, pastor of Horse-lie-down church near Southwark for thirty-six years. Of Keach’s writing and preaching, Dargan writes, “These show a fine insight into Scripture, a clear and convincing argumentation, a devout and earnest spirit, and a style usually simple and clear and not without graces of expression and occasional eloquence.” Expressing his own views on the Scriptures and preaching in a sermon, Keach remarked,

But God hath ordained or appointed the sacred Scriptures as read, especially as preached by faithful ministers, as the ordinary and most effectual way of means for the conversion of sinners, or to bring them to believe and repent, therefore the Scriptures as so read and preached hath a real and Divine power and efficacy in it above all or any way or means whatsoever, to effect that great end. Will God leave his own ordinance, and own an ordinance of man’s own devising, or cause that to succeed to answer the great end proposed by himself in his own institution?

Benjamin Keach was not simply “loyal” to the Bible. He considered it the indispensable foundation for all true preaching, and preaching as the preeminent tool of God to mold the hearts of men.

The Scriptures were not simply to be preached for conversion, but also for theological instruction and spiritual growth. As heirs of the Reformation, most Baptist preachers understood and stressed the importance of preaching doctrine. Of this duty being incumbent upon ministers, Keach had declared, “They (ministers) are entrusted with the Word, the faithful Word and doctrine of God is committed to them; they must

26 Dargan, A History of Preaching, 185.

27 Benjamin Keach, “The rich man and Lazarus,” in Expositions of the Parables (1856; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1991), 410. Austin Walker, personal friend and Keach scholar, brought this and the following quotations to my attention. For more on Keach, see Austin Walker, The Excellent Benjamin Keach (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2004).
see they preach nothing for doctrine, but what is the direct and undeniable truth and mind of God; they must not corrupt the Word, not intermix it with the traditions of men.  

Simple doctrinal lessons and lectures were insufficient. The pastor must open the Scriptures and expose every facet of doctrinal truth. Again Keach remarked,

He that would make sweet music, must not harp too much on one string, or have only one distinct note. So a preacher that would make right gospel-music, must not always preach on one particular gospel truth, but he must touch melodiously upon every string; not preach justification always, as if there were nothing else to instruct the people in, but must insist on sanctification also; the first as our title to heaven, and the other as our meetness for heaven; nor must a minister, who would make true gospel music, preach only on the promises, but also on the precepts; not of what Christ hath done for us, but also what he wrought in us, and must also be done by us.

Keach understood that a rigorous and clear defense of theological truth was vital for the growth of biblical Christianity among the Baptists. In their writing and preaching, both Keach and Bunyan demonstrated a loyalty to the Scriptures and a desire for forceful, yet simple and clear, reasoning. These qualities would be cherished and improved by Baptist preachers into and throughout the eighteenth century.

**English Baptists and Preaching in the Eighteenth Century**

As the eighteenth century dawned, the Baptists were still feeling the horrendous effects of outward persecution and inward theological struggle. It would not be until the final third of the century that there was a gradual recovery of health among the Baptists and the Baptist pulpit became influential in its social impact. In his excellent

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28Benjamin Keach, “Ministers compared to watchmen,” in *Preaching from the types and metaphors of the Bible* (1855; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972), 834.

29Keach, “Children in the market place,” in *Expositions of the Parables*, 280.
dissertation on the English Particular Baptists, Olin C. Robison writes,

Gradually, the denomination achieved some semblance of unity, and their desire to impress the public grew proportionately. Names such as Stennett, Gifford, Ryland, Hall, Booth, Fuller and Robinson came to symbolize the very best in Nonconformity. The standard of preaching set by these men was largely responsible for the improving public opinion of Dissent in general and Baptists in particular. Several of the finest pulpiteers of the age were Particular Baptists.30

Due to their high view of Scripture and preaching, Robison notes, “The central act in every service of public worship was the proclamation of the Word.”31 Everything in Baptist life and worship revolved around the sermon. According to Robison, the Baptists, as dissenters, clearly attempted to distance themselves from the sacerdotalism of the established Church of England, and thus preaching took on more of a prophetic role than a priestly one. The Baptist belief in the universal priesthood led the diaconate and the church body to a more vibrant role in everyday ministry, yet the Baptists maintained their firm conviction that the ordained ministers were primarily responsible for bringing God’s message to his gathered people.32 Only preachers “could preach the prophetic judgment and redemption of the Almighty.”33 The influential Baptist preachers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were numerous: John Gill, Daniel Turner (1710–1798), Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795), Robert Robinson, John Collett Ryland (1723–1792), Benjamin Francis (1734–1799), Robert Hall, Sr., John Ryland Jr. (1753–


1825), Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliff (1752–1814), William Carey, and Robert Hall, Jr.

As English Baptist preaching developed throughout the eighteenth century and into that of the nineteenth, several key philosophical and methodological principles regarding preaching began to be shared and practiced by these popular and influential preachers, a legacy Robert Hall would inherit but modify to make his own.

**Scripture as the Sole Foundation**

Having already established the high view of Scripture held by Baptists in the seventeenth century, it is clear to see how the Bible remained foundational for preaching throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Scriptures served as a reservoir from which the preacher derived his ideas and a fountain from which the sermon would thus spring forth. Olin Robison writes, “That the source of what the preacher had to say was Holy Writ was an unquestioned principle. When the minister stood before his people, they rightfully assumed that he had searched the scriptures diligently and had been endowed by God with a message for the saints.”34 Whether for Lord’s Day worship, an afternoon of village preaching, or a mid-week service of meditation and prayer, Baptist preachers constantly turned to the Scriptures.

For most Baptist preachers, public proclamation of the Scriptures was reliant upon previous private devotion and intense study. Andrew Fuller declared, “There is a great difference between reading the Scriptures as a student, in order to find something to say to the people, and reading them as a Christian, with a view to get good from them to one’s own soul. . . . That which we communicate will freeze upon our lips, unless we

have first applied it to ourselves.” While reading the Scriptures for personal piety was essential, Fuller also believed a preacher should then wrestle deeply with the text and only then move to consult the thoughts of other preachers or commentators to conclude the sermon preparation process. While Fuller and others looked to the works of other Christians for aid, the Scriptures trumped every secondary source.

Furthermore, Baptist ordinations were solemn times in which young ministers testified of their utter reliance upon the Scriptures. Again Robison noted, “This vow was not taken lightly, but it was the basis for the entire Particular Baptist concept of the ministry.” On October 7, 1783, Fuller delivered his own confession of faith at his installation to be the pastor at Kettering. Of the Scriptures he declared,

I believe we needed a revelation of the mind of God to inform us more fully of his and our own character, of his designs towards us, and will concerning us. And such a revelation I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be, without excepting any one of its books, and a perfect rule of faith and practice. When I acknowledge it as a perfect rule of faith and practice, I mean to disclaim all other rules as binding on my conscience.

Simplicity in Design and Delivery

For the Baptists, the preacher’s sermon was to be rooted in Scripture and the entire preaching event, but especially the sermon itself, was to be designed with simplicity. Again there was a desire to distinguish themselves from the tradition and formality of the Church of England. As Robison clarifies, “Writers in The Evangelical

35 Andrew Fuller, “Thoughts on Preaching,” in The Works of Andrew Fuller, ed. Andrew Gunton Fuller (Edinburgh: The Banner of Trust, 2007), 753.


Magazine and The Baptist Magazine constantly reminded him that the pulpit should be used in simplicity, without the frills and adornments which characterised the Establishment.” Many dissenting preachers distanced themselves from all Anglican vocabulary and even declined wearing clerical vestments in the pulpit.

One increasingly popular symbol of originality and simplicity was extemporaneous delivery in preaching. Baptists were not alone in their admiration for this “technique,” as many other Dissenting ministers had adopted the practice. Robison has noted that extemporaneous delivery “which they never attributed to lack of preparation, was the hallmark of simplicity in worship.” Extemporaneous delivery was not simply preaching without notes. It also accompanied the idea that Baptist preachers should be able to be so well acquainted with the Scriptures they could preach at a moment’s notice. To illustrate, Robison recounts an oft-repeated anecdote of the famed preacher Benjamin Beddome. Beddome was once scheduled to preach at Fairford in Gloucestershire and had planned to preach without notes. He completely forgot his sermon and asked the local pastor Reverend Davis, “Brother Davis, what must I preach from?” Mr. Davis replied, “Ask me no foolish questions.” Immediately, Beddome turned to Titus 3:9 and preached on avoiding foolish questions, a discourse considered by his hearers to be extremely useful.

While the entire service of worship was to be simplistic in its design, this was of central importance with regard to the sermon. Simplicity was first sought in the

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construction and then in the language of the sermon. Plainness, clarity, or even unity were synonyms of simplicity often used to describe the goal of a sermon’s construction. Previous generations of preachers had delivered sermons of extreme lengthy and convoluted designs. Fuller’s sermons were lengthy, often an hour in length, but that was only half the length of the sermons of many of his predecessors. Thus, Fuller warned, “Shun, therefore a multitude of divisions and subdivisions. He who aims to say every thing in a single discourse, in effect says nothing.” Fuller recognized numerous methods could be used, but advised a simple unity in the sermon’s design. He offered a three-step approach: explanation, establishment, and improvement. By establishment, Fuller meant to provide evidence of the truth or doctrine presented, and by improvement, he meant for the preacher to pursue its application for the hearer.

Simplicity in regard to language did not equate to “vulgarity of common speech” but rather the utilization of words and thoughts that were clear in their meaning. Although an educated and eloquent preacher, Robert Robinson stated preachers should use “vivacity” and “ingenuity” in their sermons. He noted, however, that the sermon’s message would be lost if preachers failed to aim for simplicity, because most people “never had any charms in schools” and were “not accustomed to honeyed accents.” Andrew Fuller agreed and contended:

In general, I do not think a minister of Jesus Christ should aim at fine composition for the pulpit. We ought to use sound speech, and good sense; but if we aspire after great elegance of expression, or become very exact in the formation of our periods, though we may amuse and please the ears of a few, we shall not profit the many,

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41 Fuller, “Thoughts on Preaching,” 756.

and consequently shall not answer the great end of our ministry.

**Exposition as the Preferred Method**

Like many other Baptist preachers, John Gill cherished and modeled the systematic exposition of the Scriptures. Although he would not always preach through an entire book, exposition was his preferred method, preaching through large portions of the Bible and leaving behind his voluminous *Exposition of the Scriptures*. Andrew Fuller also had a remarkable ministry of expository preaching. He wrote, “I have found it not a little useful, both to myself, and to the people, to appropriate one part of every Lord’s day to the exposition of a chapter, or part of a chapter, in the sacred writings.” Fuller wanted his hearers to be “led to see the scope and connexion of the Sacred writers” so they would have a deep and rich understanding of the whole counsel of God. For Fuller, exposition meant establishing the true meaning of a text by viewing it in the light of its context. To avoid contextual analysis in exposition often led to great errors in the pulpit and the pew. Fuller remarked, “For want of this, a great number of Scripture passages are misunderstood and misapplied.”

It was not simply a neglect of contextual analysis that frustrated Fuller. He also saw great danger in simply “comparing parallel passages” or “tracing the use of the same word in other places.” The likely result of such preaching was to leave a

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43 Fuller, “Thoughts on Preaching,” 752.

44 Fuller, “Thoughts on Preaching,” 752.

45 Fuller, “Thoughts on Preaching,” 752.

46 Fuller, “Thoughts on Preaching,” 752.
congregation “wearied and lost.”

**Theological Instruction**

Hughes Old has noted that during the eighteenth century “more and more theologians began to think out their theology in sermons.”\(^\text{47}\) He continues, “In fact, a number of the major religious thinkers of the century left their theology to us as series of sermons. It was not for presentation in the classroom that theologians thought out their ideas, but for the service of worship.”\(^\text{48}\) Old illustrates this with the example of John Wesley (1703–1791) and demonstrates how movements such as pietism and moderatism saw the nature and purpose of the sermon shape the theology. On the contrary, Baptist preachers attempted to let Scripture dictate their theology, and then let theology flow throughout the sermon. The sermon was to be a vehicle for theological instruction, a channel through which biblical doctrine flowed. Nowhere was this more evident than in the preaching of John Gill, whose preaching was heavily doctrinal.\(^\text{49}\)

John Gill was constantly engaged in theological debates and thus viewed doctrinal preaching as instrumental for the retention of orthodoxy. Although Gill and others were accused of doctrinal preaching aimed only at the elect, the middle and latter parts of nineteenth century saw some significant changes in how Baptists viewed

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\(^\text{48}\) Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 11.

\(^\text{49}\) Of Gill’s preaching, Robison states, “Sermons were preached to the Church, i.e., to the elect, and were therefore not concerned with those outside the fold,” in “The Particular Baptists in England,” 231. For another perspective on Gill’s preaching, see George M. Ella, *John Gill and the Cause of God and Truth*, (Durham, England: Go Publications, 1995), 184–204. See also Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1791): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
preaching and theological instruction. This is enforced by Olin Robison who has stated: “Between 1760 and 1820 the subject matter of preaching underwent a notable change.”

While preaching remained a vehicle for theological instruction, there was now a renewed emphasis on evangelization and Andrew Fuller was its primary catalyst.

From problems with heterodoxy to lethargy in the pulpit, Andrew Fuller “sought to model a new approach to preaching for English Particular Baptists.”

Believing salvation through Christ’s cross to be the unifying theme of the Bible, Fuller aimed to make soteriological themes ubiquitous in his preaching. Even if a text did not explicitly deal with the cross, Fuller saw it as paramount to find its relationship to the cross, and with this understanding Fuller knew that preaching had an errand, to proclaim the gospel to sinners and call them to a decision. Fuller was certainly not the only Baptist preacher whose philosophy and methodology of preaching began to change, but no man quite embodied it like Fuller.

Simultaneously, a second and equally influential shift was taking place. Olin Robison notes, “It is apparent, however, that by the last decades of the eighteenth century both minister and people had grown weary of minute doctrinal abstractions.” One example given by Robison is William Price of Leeds, a Calvinist, who nonetheless, “never profaned the hours sacred to public worship by an abstract attention to speculative


52 Brewster, Andrew Fuller, 113.
opinions.” Speaking of Price, Robison adds, “He berated his contemporaries for preaching too much metaphysical doctrine and abstract moral teaching, seldom understood by the common man.”

Theological orthodoxy retained its importance, but there was a new emphasis on preaching that was “relevant to the basic issue of daily life.” While it was yet far from a dominant practice among Baptist preachers, some individuals began focusing less on evangelical sentiment, neglecting theology almost entirely, and favoring what they deemed “experimental,” a term they used synonymously with applicational. For some, theology was giving way to piety in preaching, and rather than supporting exposition with the “experimental,” application was assuming centrality. This naturally drove preachers away from exegetical study and towards a more “topical development.” Some had followed Gill as a model of doctrinal preaching, and others Fuller as a standard for Calvinistic evangelical preaching. If the newer shifts in Baptist preaching would take hold, they too needed an exemplar, and Robert Hall, Jr. would prove to be just that.

**Hall’s Philosophy and Methodology of the Preaching Task**

*The Works of Robert Hall* includes many conversation remarks, ordination sermons, memoirs, and letters, and each must be scoured to construct the framework of Hall’s philosophy regarding the preaching task. The characteristics that comprise Hall’s framework are those inherited from the previous generations of Baptist preachers. Hall

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would change a crucial part of this methodology, and it would be no small or insignificant modification. Furthermore, this is almost certainly an incomplete analysis and will require further research and scholarship.

First, Hall believed Scripture to be the true foundation of the preacher’s every endeavor. Second, biblical exposition was Hall’s preferred method early on, even though the majority of his extant sermons reflect his later topical approach. Third, Hall always sought simplicity in the design of his sermons, and this eventually led him to adopt a subject sermon approach to preaching. Fourth, Hall understood personal application was the goal of every sermon.

**Scripture as the Sole Foundation**

Robert Hall’s sermons are replete with Scripture. Biblical quotations abound as background knowledge, supplemental argumentation, and personal application. One can ascertain Hall’s commitment to Scripture apart from a close analysis of his sermons. For example, two strikingly similar ordination charges provide wonderful insight into Hall’s thoughts about the foundational nature of Scripture for the preacher’s interpretation and proclamation.⁵⁶ For Hall, the preaching office is centered upon the Word. The preacher can have no authority or power apart from what comes with the Word. The preacher is to be a watchman, a shepherd, and a steward for his flock. The Scriptures must be used to warn, to feed, and to entrust.

Although the call to preach is a divine and holy calling, Hall encouraged all

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⁵⁶Robert Hall, “On the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister,” in *Works*, 1:127–55. In 1811, Hall gave this address to the Reverend James Robertson at his ordination over the Independent Church at Stretton in Warwickshire. It was published a year later in 1812. Also see “The Substance of a Charge,” in *Works*, 2:474–83. This sermon was for Hall’s nephew, John Keen Hall, at his ordination at Kettering on November 8, 1814.
preachers to acknowledge the fact that “the materials of our work are ready furnished to
our hand.” Hall instructs preachers to “adhere to the dictates of Scripture,” although this
does not mean, “that you should confine yourself to the words, but to the sentiments.”
Some may give pause at such a statement, thinking it contradictory, even dangerous.
Hall was not suggesting the words of the biblical text are unimportant, but he was simply
stressing imagination in explanation. Creativity in proclamation did not mean corruption
in purity. The crux of Hall’s admonition to preachers regarding the Word may be seen in
the following: “Preach the word purely and fully; mix nothing with it that does not
belong to it, or may not evidently be inferred from its language.”

Hall elucidates his concern for the Scriptures to be handled faithfully even
further. He observes, “You will recollect that your work is not to dispense the principles
inculcated by any human authority.” Hall eloquently and cogently declares,

Our office is that of stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom; our duty, faithfully to
dispense the stores which superior wisdom and opulence have provided. It is not
necessary for us to stretch our invention in the discovery of topics and arguments
fitted to move the mind and impel it in a right direction, which, if we may judge
from past experience, would be a most unpromising undertaking. A doctrine, full,
pure, perfect, to which nothing can be added without debasing its spirit, nothing
taken away without impairing its proportions, is committed to our trust, to be
retained and preserved just we have received it, and delivered to our hearers in all its
primitive simplicity. . . . No peculiar refinement of thought, no subtlety of
reasoning, much less the pompous exaggerations of secular eloquence are wanted
for that purpose. . . . Draw your instructions immediately from the Bible; the more
immediately they are derived from the source and the less they are tinctured with
human distinctions and refinements, the more salutary, and the more efficacious.

57 Hall, “The Substance of a Charge,” 476.

58 Hall, “The Substance of a Charge,” 476.

Let them be taken fresh from the spring.\textsuperscript{60}

Hall not only felt Scripture should be the primary foundation for all preaching, but following the Reformed tradition of biblical interpretation known as the analogy of Scripture, Hall filled his sermons with numerous biblical passages that buttressed his main argumentation. Relating the main biblical passage to the rest of Scripture was more important than relying upon the thoughts of others. Still further he comments, “There is then little scope for the exercise of invention or the flights of imagination in the discharge of this duty. . . . You are not required to make new discoveries; you need only to inquire and ascertain what is revealed in the word of God. . . . The best method of doing this, in connexion with reading and meditation, is to pray for spiritual illumination.”\textsuperscript{61} The best way for the preacher’s flock to know the Scriptures, according to Hall, was for their shepherd to practice exposition.

\textbf{Exposition as the Preferred Method}

Hall’s high regard for Scripture and his desire to see it impact his flock led him to revere the method he termed “exposition.” Hall esteemed the tradition of exposition of the Church of Scotland and its effect upon the believers there. In a conversation with his friend John Greene, Hall remarked, “It is the uniform practice of clergymen in the Church of Scotland to expound every Sabbath morning. On these occasions, the people have their Bibles before them; and by this plan, are accustomed to hear and to read the

\textsuperscript{60}Hall, “On the Discouragements,” 144–45.

\textsuperscript{61}Hall, “The Substance of a Charge,” 476.
Scriptures in their connexion, which is a very great advantage, sir." Hall perceived the Scotch to be of “superior biblical knowledge” than the English because the former were “in the habit of reading and hearing the Scriptures in their connexion.” Hall also considered this type of preaching to be the practice in most of the dissenting churches as well.

Hall’s comments about the “connexions” that exposition brings to the hearer suggest his understanding was that exposition was the systematic preaching of the Scriptures, book by book. This is made plainer by observing how exposition was his dominant approach to preaching while at Cambridge, early in his ministry. His friend John Greene remembers,

“When at Cambridge, Mr. Hall generally expounded the Scriptures on a Sabbath morning, and preached from a single text in the afternoon; the exposition generally suggested a subject for the sermon. I found him expounding the Gospel of John, afterward the Acts of the Apostles, then he went to the Epistle to the Philippians, and the two Epistles of Peter; the three Epistles of John closed his labours at Cambridge, previously to his indisposition. . . . I inquired his reason for omitting the Epistle to the Romans; he replied, “I do not understand it, sir. The Apostle Peter says, there are many things hard to be understood: I shall reserve the exposition of that Epistle for the last work of my life.”

Greene also indicates, however, that Hall would frequently break up his expositions by treating a Psalm or an “interesting subject of Scripture biography.” Hall’s exposition of Philippians, however, appears to be the only remaining evidence of this ministry.

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63 Greene, “Reminiscences,” 63.

64 Greene, “Reminiscences,” 17.

Although preferred, exposition for Hall became increasingly difficult. At Leicester, Hall began to experience difficulty finding subjects upon which to preach because his people were not favorable to exposition. He told Greene, “My people at Leicester do not like expositions. I have frequently tried them, and it does not do to expound when the people are not interested.”

Hall tied the interest in exposition at Cambridge to the intellectual nature of his audience. His congregation at Leicester, however, “is composed principally of plain people, who are engaged in manufactories, and who have not enjoyed the advantages of education.”

Hall was overwhelmed with the tedious responsibility of selecting a new subject each week. This type of preaching, examining a new subject from a different text each week, Hall describes, interestingly, as the “sermon,” to be distinguished from his favored “exposition.” Instead of the text being the determining factor for the sermon’s design, Hall would select a subject and then find a text from which he could support his thoughts. He began to do this more frequently despite believing that “practice of preaching from single texts was of modern invention; that in most of our dissenting churches, the Scriptures were formerly expounded” and that “more solid instruction may be derived” from expositions than sermons.

Hall would never roam dangerously into an ear itching methodology, for Scripture remained the fountainhead of his substance. His methodology began to shift, however, towards that which would most interest his hearers. From exposition to the

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Cambridge intellectuals to sermonic preaching to the crowds at Leicester and Bristol, Hall’s oratorical expressiveness awed hundreds with every discourse. Regardless of the heights to which the metaphysical oratory and apologetic argumentation of his sermons soared, Hall always sought after simplicity as he crafted his sermons.

**Simplicity as the Structural Aim**

Hall strove for simplicity throughout his ministry, and especially wanted to be distinguished from the Church of England. John Greene notes how Hall refused to wear a gown in the pulpit and objected to the term “chapel” because of its Anglican connotations. Despite having learned and prestigious individuals among his hearers, Hall kept simplicity central in every aspect of the sermon design. Although many of his famous sermons were marked by great eloquence, the structure of Hall’s weekly sermons was generally very simple: the reading of the text, a brief contextual explanation, clearly delineated points of observation and reflection, and a conclusion of application.

Hall’s sermons would often finish with a flourish of rhetorical skill, but he always began quietly and “with sentences of the utmost plainness both of thought and language.” 69 John Foster conjectured, “It was not, I believe, in observance of any precept of the rhetoricians, or with any conscious intention, that he did so; it was simply the manner in which his mind naturally set in for the consideration of an important subject.” Much of the congregation had difficulty hearing these introductory portions, for Hall’s voice began “deficient in tone and force.” Foster further recalls the commencement of Hall’s sermons:

A short comment on the facts in Scripture history found in connexion with the text, or which had been the occasion of the words; or on circumstances in the condition of the primitive church; or on some ancient or modern error relating to the subject proposed; would give, within the space of five or ten minutes, the condensed and perspicuous result of much reading and study.  

Having heard of Hall’s pulpit brilliance, strangers would often be disappointed with his plain introductions, wondering if they were hearing the wrong preacher. Hall would then consistently state his subject so that “the attentive hearer was certain to apprehend what the subject was.”

Proceeding with the body of the sermon, the simplicity never vanished. Foster recalls,

Mr. Hall’s plans of sermons were always remarkable for their simplicity. The view which he took of his subject was so easy and natural, that persons felt surprised that they had not considered it in the same light before. There was seldom anything very extraordinary in his introductions; but when he kindled with his subject, he introduced the most brilliant passages with so great a rapidity, that it was impossible ever to take them down: they were, in fact, quite overpowering.

Simplicity in design and a straightforward delivery were always Hall’s goal. In his exposition, “The plan which he adopted when the subject admitted of it, instead of paraphrasing every verse, was to take a number of verses in their course, and form them into a pleasing and instructive order.” Even as his methodology shifted, he kept simplicity in mind. Again, Foster remarks,

He surpassed perhaps all preachers of recent times in the capital excellence of

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70Foster, “Observations,” 100.
71Foster, “Observations,” 100.
72Foster, “Observations,” 100.
having a definite purpose, a distinct assignable subject, in each sermon. Sometimes, indeed, as when intruders had robbed him of all his time for study, or when his spirits had been consumed by a prolonged excess of pain, he was reduced to take the license of discoursing with less definite scope, on the common subjects of religion. But he was never pleased with any scheme of a sermon in which he could not, at the outset, say exactly what it was he meant to do. He told his friends that he always felt ‘he could not nothing with’ a text or subject till it resolved and shaped itself into a topic of which he could see the form and outline. . . . He never attempted, never thought of those schemes of arrangement in which parts are ingeniously placed in antithesis, or in such other disposition as to reflect cross-lights on one another. . . . It is not denied that such ingenious and somewhat quaint devices of arrangement have had their advantage. . . . But such a mode was entirely foreign to the constitution and action of his mind. . . . He had [his subject] it in one full single view before him, the parts lying in natural contiguity as a whole. . . . There were no half-formed ideas, no misty semblances of a meaning, no momentary lapses of intellect into an utterance at hazard, no sentences without a distinct object, and serving merely for the continuity of speaking; every sentiment had at once a palpable shape, and an appropriateness to the immediate purpose.  

Hall’s desire was to explain simply the Scriptures to his hearers. Hall felt he could easily accomplish this simplicity with straightforward exposition. Preaching through books of the Bible did not have to be monotonous and stiff; in fact Hall was quite critical of such preaching. Hall preferred to keep his sermons fresh, creative, and imaginative, yet simple. As his ministry progressed, however, exposition was no longer preferred. Therefore, to keep simplicity in his design, it appears that Hall began to turn every discourse into a subject sermon. The subject sermon would take a design or a structure typically independent of the text, but would at least try to keep the subject that a “text most naturally presents and which most thoroughly exhausts its meaning.” Subject


77Broadus, On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, 135. Broadus cites Robert Hall as an excellent example of this type of preaching.
sermons would typically lean towards explanation, proof, application, or a combination of these designs. As Hall became more captivated with the necessity of application in preaching, application began to so dominate his subject sermons that the chosen biblical text would simply be nothing more than an introductory springboard, often minimally explained.

Like Robert Robinson, his predecessor for almost three decades at St. Andrews Street, Hall believed in extemporaneous delivery in preaching. He insisted that thorough preparation must precede any attempt at extemporaneous delivery.

Application as the Ultimate Goal

Although Hall confirmed the absolute significance of the Scriptures as the only source of God’s truth, he simultaneously suggested that the application of the Scriptures may be as vital for the preacher’s study and delivery. It is in application that the Scripture becomes efficacious for its hearers. Hall reminds,

There has long been laid down a rule which is often repeated, is most excellent, and worthy of constant recollection: it is, that we must ‘preach the doctrines practically, and preach practice doctrinally.’ Preach the doctrines so as to show their influence upon practice, and recommend religious and virtuous conduct by evangelical motives. . . . It is impossible to say which of these two, doctrinal or practical preaching, is most necessary; or which extreme is most dangerous – to preach doctrine without practice, or practice without doctrine. Read, then, the Scriptures of the New Testament, and in order to observe how these are blended together by our Lord and his inspired apostles. You will observe there that the enforcement of duties by evangelical motives is the very end of the gospel; and all preaching is good and estimable only as it secures the same end by the same motives.78

Although this quotation seems to evoke an inner struggle in Hall, it is clear from his preaching that he tended more towards the practical and away from the

doctrinal. Theology was not completely neglected by Hall, for he preached several sermons that vigorously defended and explained pivotal points of doctrine. However, as Hall’s ministry progressed, his preaching was no longer straightforward exposition with theological instruction as its aim. Instead, theology gave way to what Hall would term the “experimental” side of Christianity, and thus his preaching became topically focused with application and personal piety as the supreme goal.

This can be further seen in Hall’s admonition: “To preach against sin in general, without descending into particulars, may lead many to complain of the evil of their hearts, while at the same time they are awfully inattentive to the evil of their conduct.”

Perhaps even more emphatic is this statement from Hall:

A notion prevails among some, that to preach the gospel includes nothing more than a recital or recapitulation of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. If these are firmly believed and zealously embraced, they are ready to believe the work is done, and that all the virtues of the Christian character will follow by necessary consequence. . . . The conscience is not likely to be touched by general declamations on the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness, without delineation of character. . . . He must know little of human nature who perceives not the callousness of the human heart, and the perfect indifference with which it can contemplate the most alarming truths when they are presented in a general abstract form. . . . The reproof which awakened David from his guilty slumber, and made him weep and tremble, turned, not on the general evil of sin, but on the peculiar circumstances of aggravation attending that which he had committed.

The application of doctrine to life must not be a passing hint or an “obvious inference from orthodox doctrine.” Instead, the preacher must always concern himself with illustrating “Christian morality” with “an energy, a copiousness, a fulness of detail

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Hall always felt the need to strengthen and enlarge his application. A friend once suggested the importance of more attention being paid to the application of the subject, to which Hall replied, “You are quite correct, sir, the celebrated Mr. Fox was an example of this kind. He generally attempted to put his ideas in different points of view, in order to impress them more fully upon the mind. I intend, in future, to enlarge my applications.”

Although he stressed the fundamental importance of application, he also recognized its practical difficulty. He relates this difficulty as one of the “discouragements” of the Christian minister. The preacher’s audience is never diseased with the same maladies, and therefore they require a variety of treatment, for “the same prescription” will not suit all cases. He further explains,

A different set of truths, a different mode of address is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit from what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart. . . . A loose and indiscriminate manner of applying the promises and threatenings of the gospel is ill-judged and pernicious. . . . Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to calls himself.

Hall was known for his keen discernment into the character of man and often made some uncomfortable in his presence. This would only be heightened by his “searching” application.

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82 Greene, “Reminiscences,” 84.

Hall certainly did not invent this style of preaching and he would definitely not be the only Baptist preacher to model it, but he was by far the most popular, and thus perhaps the most influential.

**An Analysis of Hall’s Methodology as Seen in His Old Testament Preaching**

Examining Hall’s Old Testament preaching is one way, and perhaps the clearest, to examine how Hall frequently departed from the rich theologically instructive preaching of his Baptist forebears into a new methodology of subject sermons built around pietistic and personal applications. Several reasons may be given for analyzing only the Old Testament sermons of Robert Hall. One is an issue of time and space. Clearly the whole of Hall’s preaching corpus cannot be examined here. Nevertheless, unlike many contemporary preachers, one third of Hall’s sermons are taken from Old Testament texts. Second, in *Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, A. M.*, John Foster frequently remembers his personal favorites of Hall’s sermons as stemming from the Old Testament. Finally, these sermons will demonstrate how Hall selected Old Testament texts to fit his subjects while often letting application drive his design. Therefore, eight sermons from the various genres of the Old Testament will be offered as evidence that Hall’s subject sermon approach centered on applications often overshadowed his exegetical explanations and his theological instruction.

**Robert Hall’s Preaching in the Pentateuch**

*“Abraham and Lot.”* Hall’s sermon “Abraham and Lot”84 clearly and

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84Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” in *Works*, 4:367–73. This sermon was preached at Cambridge on February 7, 1802.
quickly demonstrates his tenet that one reason for Scripture’s narratives is to “exhibit to us different degrees of religious attainment.” Hall’s text is Genesis 13:7–13, which tells of the strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot and the men’s subsequent conversation and separation. Hall immediately delineates one aspect of the historical and cultural background of the text when he explains, “Thus we learn the riches of Lot and of Abraham. Their occupation was chiefly in attending their flocks, that they might choose such districts of pasture as were suitable to them. The cultivation of the soil in those days was not common.” The narrative’s place in the larger context of Genesis, the storyline of Israel’s history, or the grand meta-narrative of redemption history is ignored.

Instead, Hall develops a subject sermon on integrity by contrasting the two characters of the narrative, and offering moral application from both. “The conduct of Abraham affords us several important instructions,” proclaims Hall. Hall observes four positive aspects of Abraham’s conduct in this narrative, and applies them to his hearers. First, he states that “Abraham had a great disposition to cultivate peace with his countryman, Lot.” Although he was Lot’s uncle, Abraham treats him as a brother. This attitude should be adopted by Christians in their own families, and especially with other believers who “have drank into one Spirit.” He asserts, “In members of families, and in domestic and social life, every thing like strife, contention, or discord, should be extinguished by this sentiment, and the recollection of ‘we are brethren.’ . . . How

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85 Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 373.
87 Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 368.
88 Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 368.
important is it that peace should be preserved, especially in families."\textsuperscript{89}

Second, Abraham provides a striking example of humility and condescension. Although favored by God, this “father of the faithful” considered himself last and offered Lot the pick of the land.\textsuperscript{90} For Hall, humility and preference for the interests of others should characterize the life of the believer. The final two lessons to be gleaned were that Abraham exhibited an “amiable moderation with respect to worldly things” and a “very diligent observance of all the modes of civility, urbanity, and decorum.”\textsuperscript{91}

Conversely, Hall’s understanding of Lot’s role in this text is a depiction of attitudes and behaviors to avoid. Interestingly, Hall admits that the “inspired historian has not given us an express censure” in regard to Lot, but Hall understands this as the natural conclusion to be drawn by the reader.\textsuperscript{92} Lot understands the land he has chosen is near the wicked citizens of Sodom, but he chose “more from the fertility of the soil, than from any regard for the preservation of his virtue and character.”\textsuperscript{93} Lot’s decision ultimately affected his children, who were corrupted by the Sodomites. Therefore, Hall concludes his sermon with an appeal to parents who “do not always consider the probable influence and effect of certain connexions and situations on the habits of their children.”\textsuperscript{94}

There is nothing inherently wrong, or unorthodox, in Hall’s applications. It is

\textsuperscript{89}Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 368.
\textsuperscript{90}Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 369.
\textsuperscript{91}Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 370.
\textsuperscript{92}Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 371.
\textsuperscript{93}Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 371.
\textsuperscript{94}Hall, “Abraham and Lot,” 371.
certainly debatable, however, whether the purpose of this text is for Abraham’s character
to teach methods for developing family peace and personal manners, and that of Lot to
give warnings to parents for raising their children.

“Strength in Trials.” Another narrative gives an extremely elementary
understanding of Hall’s thought regarding typology. This sermon is from Deuteronomy
33:25 and is entitled “Strength in Trials.” It was an address given to console the widow
and flock of a deceased minister. In regard to his remark on typology, if the occasion
of his address were not peculiar enough, the biblical passage is even more puzzling, for
the text is Moses’ final blessing to the tribe of Asher. For Hall, however, Moses’ words
assuring strength to this tribe also belong to believers, for he states, “The Jewish church
was a type of the Christian Church.” Hall then quotes Paul’s words from 1 Corinthians
10, where he indicates, “Now these things were our examples, and they are written for
our admonition.” Therefore, Hall briefly expands his view of typology as follows:

The various deliverances the Divine Being wrought for his people, the services in
which they engaged, and the sacrifices they offered, were for our learning. The
promises, also, which they received, and comforts given them, were designed for us,
if we fear God, “that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have
hope.” Let us, therefore, endeavour to unfold the meaning of these words written by
Moses, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be,”
and impart from them some consolation.

This text seems to fall into the category of “promises” or “comforts” to the
Jews that function as a type for the church.

95 Hall, “Strength in Trials,” in Works, 4:363. This sermon was preached at Broadmead in
Bristol on January 16, 1831.


From this brief verse, Hall makes three general observations. First, he states, “the true Israel of God are called to tread in rough paths and endure heavy trials.” Second, Hall argues that in “the prospect of these things they are apt to be dismayed,” and then he indicates, “That although their trials are great, they may expect all-sufficient strength.”

From his first observation, Hall encourages his hearers to recognize that “In every age God’s children have been peculiarly tried.” Moses, David, and Christ all endured hardship. Thus, believers must expect various trials, whether “pain of body, depression of mind, family bereavements, losses in business, temptations, poverty, and persecution.” Enduring suffering and uncertainty caused the Israelites, Elijah, Paul, and Jesus to be “dismayed” or “discouraged.” Hall offers, “Then, my dear brethren, recollect, that no new trial has happened to you.” The final encouragement, however, is that God’s support “shall be equal to the trials and exigencies of every day.”

Of all the comforting promises in Scripture, one wonders why Hall would choose this text for this occasion. While the sermon is a wonderful example of Hall’s insightful and eloquent pastoral application, it must also been seen as illustrative of Hall’s tendency to favor instruction in personal piety, often from seemingly obscure texts and

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98 Hall, “Strength in Trials,” 364. Hall’s first observation is based on an understanding of the text as reading, “Thy shoes shall be iron and bronze” (italics mine). Most modern versions translate this text to refer to iron bars, or bolts on gates. Hall’s eloquent application repeatedly refers to the believer having strength to stand in trials because of their “shoes.” While strength is still a crucial element in understanding the passage, Hall’s application seems to have derived from a poor rendering of Moses’ terms.


100 Hall, “Strength in Trials,” 364.

often at the expense of contextual faithfulness.

**Robert Hall’s Preaching of Narratives in the Historical Writings**

*“Early Piety Exemplified in Abijah.”* Hall frequently urged religious piety for all, but he selects the subject of piety for a young generation in his sermon “Early Piety Exemplified in Abijah.” The text appearing in Hall’s works reads, “All Israel shall mourn for him; . . . because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel” (1 Kings 14:13). Hall briefly describes the context where the wife of wicked Jeroboam, who has done nothing but lead Israel into sin, seeks a favorable word from God’s prophet regarding her ill son Abijah. Instead, the prophet suggests the child shall soon die, but that he will be mourned because of his piety. Hall then requests the “serious attention” of his audience as he makes seven remarks “about the passage.” He initially makes remarks directly from the words of the text, but then he wanders into making application from very general principles.

First, Hall suggests “religion is an internal principle.” Second, it is the “best of principles,” and still further it “has the Lord God for its author and its object.” Fourth, he urges that no small degree of religion will “escape the eye of God.” Fifth, Hall proclaims, “Early piety, always pleasing to the Lord, is pre-eminently pleasing when it

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102Hall, “Early Piety Exemplified in Abijah,” in *Works*, 4:377–80. This sermon was preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Lord’s Day evening, October 15, 1826, on the occasion of the death of a pious youth, the son of the Rev. John Foster.

103Hall, “Early Piety Exemplified in Abijah,” 378.

104Hall, “Early Piety Exemplified in Abijah,” 379.
appears amid an irreligious family.” Sixth, early piety “affords no security against an untimely grave,” and finally, “early piety . . . has a record in heaven and earth.”

This sermon may be more aptly characterized as a lecture on the nature of godly religion. Although the words of the text formulated his remarks, Hall never returned to the biblical text, its context, or its purpose in Israel’s or redemption history. Hall makes the text’s purpose an appeal to the young for religious piety. Strewn throughout the delineation of his remarks are repeated appeals and applications, especially to the young. He urges, “Only be in earnest; determine that you will be saved, that you will not let God go, except He bless you; and nothing in heaven or earth can prevent your salvation.” He concludes,

And let the young now be faithful to their convictions! now make the choice which alone they can approve! now resist whatever they cannot but condemn! Let none defer the work of God to a more convenient season. . . . It is but few that deliberately reject religion; their sin and ruin lie in procrastination: they look forward to a day of repentance that never arrives! Now is the accepted day! This is our only inheritance of time; all beyond this is God’s, enveloped in the secret of his purpose! Let us all, therefore now set ourselves with new devotedness for heaven; that, when the Lord shall come with his fan in his hand, we may not be cast out as the chaff and refuse for destruction, but be gathered with the precious wheat into his eternal garner!

“David’s Charge to Solomon.” Another address directed towards young

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105 Hall, “Early Piety Exemplified in Abijah,” 379.
107 Hall, “Early Piety Exemplified in Abijah,” 379.
people is Hall’s sermon “David’s Charge to Solomon.” It is similar to the sermon on Abijah, for Hall employs David’s words to his son to launch into a religious discourse on the knowledge of God and to make salient application, but application that is clearly separated from the exposition of the text. In 1 Chronicles 28:9, David charges Solomon to “know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.” The only context given is that this was “an exhortation of King David, a little before his death, addressed to his son Solomon.” According to Hall, “this exhortation is as applicable to every individual as it was to Solomon, and is recorded for our instruction.”

Hall instantly directs his hearers to attain the knowledge of God. “It is a belief in the perfections of God, including all his natural and moral perfections – his goodness, his mercy, his truth, his justice, his immutability, and his faithfulness; in short an acquaintance with Him as the moral governor of the world.” The young person is encouraged to understand that “God rules, and that every other being is but an instrument in his hands.” The knowledge of God, however, must be practical, for it must bring about love and obedience. That is why David’s admonition to know God is followed by the directive to serve him.

Hall indicates that serving God stands against three things: a profane contempt

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109 Hall, “David’s Charge to Solomon,” in Works, 4:381–85. This sermon was preached to young persons at Cambridge on January 2, 1802. From the date it appears this may have been a charge for the new year.

110 Hall, “David’s Charge to Solomon,” 381.

111 Hall, “David’s Charge to Solomon,” 381.

112 Hall, “David’s Charge to Solomon,” 381.
of God, a temporal morality, and a religion that entirely leaves out the affections. In opposition to a spirit of profanity towards God, the believer is “commanded to fear his name, to reverence his worship, to keep the holy solemnity of the Sabbath, which he has appointed, and thus to distinguish ourselves from the world.”

Godly morality is not to serve God half-heartedly simply trying to avoid the effects of a sinful life, or to “be applauded for our benevolence,” but to follow God holistically because “this steady and devoted service of God, which Christianity requires, is very distinct from that which the men of the world think necessary and inexpressibly superior.”

Hall then provides three vanities that the knowledge of God will correct. First, the knowledge of God will correct the vanity of “every other kind of knowledge.” Hall makes the application clear. “Knowledge it must be considered, is not to be sought simply for its own sake; for, till we possess piety, or a sense of God, we find no ultimate end in its acquisition, and no satisfaction to our inquiries,” remarks Hall, continuing to urge his hearers to acquire godly knowledge for the furnishing of peace and rest. The knowledge of God will also correct the vanity of our passions. Since innumerable evils occur by “pursuing the object of our passions,” Hall advises his hearers to the opposite. Finally, the knowledge of God corrects the vanity “that attaches to every state and condition in life.”

Whether men are happy, anxious, dejected, or weary, only the knowledge of God and piety “will produce satisfaction with our condition, and prevent

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113 Hall, “David’s Charge to Solomon,” 382.
the indulgence of our passions.”

Hall concludes by appealing to his young hearers to spend their year seeking God and religion. He proclaims,

Through want of watchfulness resolutions are ineffectual. . . . Go to that God who has promised to give wisdom, and beg that he will teach you the knowledge of God himself, who is the source of happiness to all beings, and supports the saints under affliction in the hour of death. Entreat that he would give you of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, of which whoever tastes will live, and appear spotless before the throne.

Robert Hall’s Preaching from the Psalms

“Prayer for the Prosperity of the Church Encouraged.” Hall’s sermon “Prayer for the Prosperity of the Church Encouraged,” taken from Psalm 122:6, proposes that David’s words to pray for peace in Jerusalem are to be applied to the church with the promise of its prosperity. Due to the fact that Jerusalem was the site of the Temple and the “ordinances of God,” Hall believes this language must certainly be applied in general principle to the “Church of God.” Hall says, “We may consider that, in the text, a blessing is promised to every one that loves the Church of God, every one that desires to promote the interest of religion.” After introducing the text, however, Hall never explains its original context or intent. He moves directly into his subject, a discourse on the nature of the church’s prosperity, and the attending application for his


118 Hall, “Prayer for the Prosperity of the Church Encouraged,” in Works, 4:220. This sermon was delivered at Broadmead in Bristol on Thursday evening, June 10, 1830, preparatory to the Lord’s Supper.

hearers.

The prosperity of the church “consists, not in one thing, but many,” and these all become direct applications of Hall’s subject. First, the church can only prosper if its members are pious. The “love of God, the faith of Jesus Christ, the fruits of the Spirit abound” in a prosperous church, and Hall exhorts his hearers to let their lives be marked with such characteristics. Second, the church is to promote conversion. Thus, Hall urges the church to pray eagerly for God to add people to the church. Then, a “third feature of prosperity is the prevalence of brotherly love; the spirit of union among the members; the disposition to bear one another’s burdens, relieve one another’s wants and sorrows,” remarks Hall. 120 The church should always be seeking a perpetual increase in love. The fourth mark of a prosperous church is “conscientiousness and diligent attendance on all the ordinances of religion, public and domestic.”121 Hall warns his hearers to avoid neglecting their spiritual duties in the church and advises that such neglect can become contagious. Finally, Hall says the church should exercise church discipline if it is to prosper.

The people of the church are to pray for its prosperity, that God’s hand would work for its success. Hall concludes by exhorting believers to consider joining with a prosperous church. He declares, “It is a serious injury to be united to a dead, a merely formal church; a great advantage, to hold communion with one that is spiritually alive.”122 He drives his application deeper into the hearts of his hearers: “Would you

120 Hall, “Prayer for the Prosperity of the Church Encouraged,” 221.

121 Hall, “Prayer for the Prosperity of the Church Encouraged,” 221.

122 Hall, “Prayer for the Prosperity of the Church Encouraged,” 222.
enjoy this spiritual prosperity? Seek the good of the Church.”

“The Glory of Christ’s Kingdom.” One might think a second sermon from the Psalms titled “The Glory of Christ’s Kingdom” would be more appropriate if taken from a New Testament passage. Hall preached this sermon from Psalm 145:11 which reads, “They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.” Hall says, “Whether the Psalm before us is designed, in particular, to celebrate this dispensation of the Son of God, I shall not inquire; but as the kingdom of Christ is so conspicuous an object in both Testaments, and is the only one among men by whose government their happiness can be secured, it cannot be improper, from the words before us, to direct your attention, on the present occasion, to some particulars relating to the glory of the Kingdom.” Therefore, the sermon becomes an address centered on the nature and glory of Christ’s kingdom.

The foundation of this kingdom is the incarnation and atonement of Christ. The kingdom is ruled by righteousness, grace, and divine law. A major focal point of this sermon, however, is Hall’s notion that “the glory of the kingdom of Christ appears in the character of his subjects.” These characteristics become applications. Hall says that the subjects of Christ’s kingdom are to be enlightened, renewed, and prepared for a

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123 Hall, “Prayer for the Prosperity of the Church Encouraged,” 222.

124 Hall, “The Glory of Christ’s Kingdom,” Works, 3:353. This sermon was preached at Kettering in 1813.


“perfect blessedness.” Also, there are privileges to being in Christ’s kingdom. Hall directs his hearers to seek these as well. First, there is peace, which “begins in reconciliation with God” but extends to unite mankind together and centers on producing peace among all families and nations. In addition to peace, there is to be dignity and the pursuit of immortality, which can only be found in this kingdom. While the kingdoms of the world are “changing and falling to ruin,” Hall assures that Christ’s kingdom will never die. He concludes with a forceful application.

To be within this kingdom—how important! Why are there, then, any of you that are not earnestly seeking it? If you have not felt a concern about it before, what are your present thoughts? . . . There is no one wise that does not yield to the Saviour: all are fools who are not either rejoicing in the evidence that they are in this kingdom, or earnestly desiring of it.

**Robert Hall’s Preaching from the Prophets**

The last two sermons are taken from texts written by the prophet Jeremiah. The first is “On Chastisement Resulting in Penitence.” The text is God’s recitation of Ephraim’s groaning, which was acknowledgement that God had chastised His people and a prayer that God would use that work to turn them back to him. Hall does briefly discuss the text in its context. He introduces, “This chapter contains great and gracious promises made to the people of Israel upon the prospect of their true repentance. They are assured, that notwithstanding the severe rebukes of Providence, the Lord had mercy

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in reserve when their afflictions had answered the purpose for which they were appointed, in humbling and reforming them.”131 The sermon quickly changes into addressing how God’s people can be attentive to the correction of God in their lives.

Hall’s discourse commences noting that God’s corrections, although calculated to produce change, are often ineffectual. Hall encourages his auditors to not be like the biblical figures that are unchanged by their discipline. He says, “It is not uncommon to see men hardened under rebukes, and to grow more bold and presumptuous in the commission of sin, after having experienced severer trials than before. This melancholy fact is no recent observation; it is frequently described and lamented in the word of God.”132

For Hall, the Israelites under Moses epitomized this hardness. Those under Hall’s preaching were called to be attentive and reflective or else “no real improvement can be expected.”133 Hall’s text had been a plea for God to turn the people to repentance. He returns to the text briefly to advise his people to avoid considering that they could turn in their own strength. Instead, they must understand the necessity of God’s intervention and entreat God to turn their hearts.

Jeremiah’s words from Lamentations 3:24, “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore I will hope in him,” are the basis for Hall’s sermon “God the Portion of

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133 Hall, “On Chastisement Resulting in Patience,” 144.
the Soul.” Only a paragraph is devoted to discussing the character of the “weeping” prophet and the substance of his Lamentations. Instead of discussing the text any further, Hall proposes the goal of the sermon: “In considering these words, I shall direct your attention, first, to their general import, and then to those properties of the Divine nature and character which make God the portion of His people.” Thus, the sermon essentially becomes an eloquent metaphysical and philosophical treatise on the nature of a “portion,” and why God should be that “portion.”

Unlike other sermons, Hall saves his application for the conclusion of the sermon. While much of the sermon is difficult to understand, Hall’s concluding remarks are clear and meant for application to two groups. The first group is made of those who do have God as their portion. Hall offers, “You will bless the means, though perhaps of a painful kind, the minister or instrument, that first led you to God. Cleave, then, to our divine portion! Let it never be suspected, by any symptoms of decline from this, that you have detected an error in your choice; that you have repented of a repentance never to be repented of!”

The other group has “not made this choice.” Hall begs people to cry out for God to draw them to Christ, to help them break alliances with sin, and to choose God for their portion. He concludes, “If you think you can be safe without an interest in the Divine perfections; if you believe you can be truly and permanently happy without a

134 Hall, “God the Portion of the Soul,” in Works, 4:186. This sermon was preached at Broadmead in Bristol on June 29, 1828, on the Lord’s Day evening.

135 Hall, “God the Portion of the Soul,” 186.

136 Hall, “God the Portion of the Soul,” 191.
participation of the Divine fullness [sic], abandon yourself to a life of vanity and sense!

But if, on the contrary, you are assured by all experience, as well as by the word of God, that you can be secure only in His protection, and satisfied only with his favour, which is better than life, give yourself up to Him as His property; choose Him as your portion, here and for evermore!"  

CHAPTER 4

DOCTRINE AND THE PREACHING OF ROBERT HALL:
THE PREACHER AS THEOLOGICAL EXEMPLAR

Little thought or analysis has been given to the theology of Robert Hall, Jr. that appears in his preaching. Hall’s early biographers, Olinthus Gregory, John Greene, and J. W. Morris, traced the more popular anecdotes of Hall’s theological pilgrimage, especially during his time at Aberdeen and in his first two pastorates at Bristol and Cambridge. As Hall’s legacy faded in the first half of the twentieth century, only scholars of Baptist history kept Hall’s memory alive. In the second half of the twentieth century, with Hall’s legacy having almost completely disappeared, only a few individuals have undertaken the arduous task of combing through Hall’s Works, scouring his letters and conversational remarks for further knowledge of Hall’s theology and its influence.¹ Many of Hall’s most definitive theological statements are found in these pieces of private correspondence, so naturally that is where much of the examination and discussion of Hall’s theology has centered. Hall did not neglect theology entirely in his preaching, but it certainly was not his primary aim, and thus a thorough study of his preaching as it

¹It appears only three works have seriously wrestled with aspects of Hall’s theology in the last fifty years. See Angus Hamilton Macleod, “The Life and Teaching of Robert Hall, 1764–1831” (M.Litt. thesis, University of Durham, 1957); Austin Walker, “Robert Hall Jr. (1764–1831) and the Decline of Historic Calvinism among the Particular Baptists of the Nineteenth Century” (paper presented for The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, October 27, 2010); and Michael Walker, Baptists at the Table: The Theology of the Lord’s Supper amongst English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century (Didcot, England: Baptist Historical Society, 1992), 45–65.
relates to his theology has rarely been attempted.

This is the fact that makes Hall’s theology and influence so much more intriguing. While it has been noted that many preachers developed their theology in the pulpit and viewed preaching as a vehicle for theological instruction, Hall increasingly shied away from rigorous biblical exposition and doctrinal instruction and favored a preaching style that centered on personal application. Therefore, on the one hand, questions abound about the specifics of Hall’s theology and its influence in Baptist life and in the larger swath of evangelicalism with which he was associated. On the other hand, it might be argued that Hall’s love of liberty and piety and his refusal to “work out” his theology in the pulpit is precisely what made him a theological exemplar in Baptist life in the nineteenth century.

First, it will be necessary to trace out Hall’s theological journey. Although Hall’s life and theology were once popularly known among Baptists because of his biographies and his published works, this is no longer the case as many have forgotten Hall’s legacy. Next, a brief summary and analysis will be provided for some of Hall’s most important doctrinal sermons, some which have never been published. Finally, it will be important to provide some clarity regarding Hall’s place as a theological exemplar.

**Hall’s Theological Journey**

Prior to Hall’s birth in 1764, both the General and Particular Baptists were in decline, numerically and theologically. Arianism and Socinianism plagued the General Baptists, and far too many of the Particular Baptists were being decimated by the effects of hyper-Calvinism. While Hall was still a teenager, however, his father had published
Help to Zion’s Travellers in 1781, and just four years later Andrew Fuller penned The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation. Both works served as a great impetus for the Particular Baptist recovery of doctrinal health. Angus Hamilton Mcleod writes, “It was in this period of reaction from hyper-Calvinism that the theology of young Robert Hall first took shape.”

Reaching Aberdeen in 1781, Hall began to recoil from some of the traditional doctrines of Calvinism he had heard and studied at Northampton and Bristol. He questioned Jonathan Edwards’ (1703–1758) argument about the freedom of the will and frequently debated his good friend James Mackintosh (1765–1812) “with utmost intensity” over such matters. Perhaps of even greater significance was the fact that the preaching and theology of the Scottish ministers, which he dubbed the “frosty-spirited Calvinists,” greatly disturbed Hall. Macleod summarizes Hall’s continued theological journey well: “This process of reaction, begun at Aberdeen, was continued in his pastorate at Bristol.”

Returning to Bristol in 1785, Hall’s popularity increased among many as both a tutor and a preacher, and yet his theological pilgrimage was continuing to raise doubts. It has already been briefly demonstrated that Hall never veered into the dangerous mire of the Socinianism promoted chiefly by men of influence such as Joseph Priestley, and yet Macleod has argued, though with little supporting evidence, that Priestley had an

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enormous influence on Hall.⁵ It was also at this time that Hall was influenced by Robert Robinson of St. Andrews Street, Cambridge – the church Hall would soon pastor.

Hall’s doctrinal speculations around several key theological issues caused division to emerge between him and Caleb Evans and the rest of the Broadmead church. By December 1790, separation was unavoidable. Broadmead requested that Hall explain his “reasons of separation” and he obliged. Hall had already accepted a six-month probationary period at St. Andrews. He understood that his explanations would probably do little to heal the division. In the concluding portion of the letter he wrote to the Broadmead congregation, he stated,

This avowal I have made, partly as a testimony of the respect I bear you, and partly to vindicate my character from any suspicion of ambiguity or reserve; but not all with the remotest wish to win popularity or to court your suffrages; for at present it is as little in my power to accept any invitation to continue, as it may be in your inclination to give it.⁶

This letter gives the clearest picture of Hall’s still-budding theology. It seems the letter was divided into sections based on Hall’s identity as an orthodox Christian, as a Calvinist, and as a Baptist. The first section briefly dealt with Hall’s views on Christology, justification, and regeneration. He wrote,

In the first place, I am a firm believer in the proper divinity of Jesus Christ; in the merits of Christ as the sole ground of acceptance in the sight of God, without admitting works to have any share in the great business of justification; and in the necessity of Divine influence to regenerate and sanctify the mind of every man, in order to his becoming a real Christian. Thus far in the affirmative.⁷

The second section was slightly more full, and here Hall delineated his views


regarding the Calvinistic “system” and the issues of original sin, election, reprobation, and materialism. Hall continued,

In the second place, I am not a Calvinist, in the strict and proper sense of that term. I do not maintain the federal headship of Adam, as it is called, or the imputation of his sin to his posterity; and this doctrine I have always considered, and do still consider, as the foundation of that system. I believe we have received from our first parents, together with various outward ills, a corrupt and irregular bias of mind; but, at the same time, it is my firm opinion that we are liable to condemnation only for our own actions, and that guilt is a personal and individual thing. I believe in the doctrine of the Divine decrees, and of course in the predestination of all events, of which the number of the finally saved is one. But this appears to me a different thing from the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation, as it has ever been explained by Calvinists, which does not meet my approbation. Without going into a large field of metaphysical discussion, this is all I think it is requisite to say respecting my orthodoxy; but there are two other points which have occasioned a good deal of conversation, and from some quarters a good deal of censure; upon which I shall therefore beg leave to explain myself in a few words.

I am, and have been for a long time, a materialist, though I have never drawn your attention to this subject in my preaching, because I have always considered it myself, and wished you to consider it, as a mere metaphysical speculation. My opinion, however, upon this head is, that the nature of man is simple and uniform; that the thinking powers and faculties are the result of a certain organization of matter; and that after death he ceases to be conscious until the resurrection.8

While Hall does not comprehensively deny the doctrine of election, he is certainly attempting a redefinition, or moderation, of the traditional Calvinistic view held by Particular Baptists such as Hall’s father and Andrew Fuller. The same is true for Hall’s views regarding original sin where he argues only for personal guilt and against the imputation of Adam’s guilt to his posterity. The most important statement in relation to Hall’s theology and his preaching, however, is in his discussion of materialism. Along with other doctrines Hall considered to be “metaphysical speculation,” Hall admits that he never made his materialism a subject of his preaching. One can assume that Hall was having to clarify his position in writing because he had failed to do so in his preaching.

8Gregory, “Memoir,” 19.
The final section of the letter dealt with Hall’s identity as a Baptist, specifically relating to baptism itself and Hall’s associations with other Christians. Hall declared,

> It has been held out to the world by some that I am not a Baptist. I am, both in respect to the subject and to the mode of this institution, a Baptist. To apply this ordinance to infants appears to me a perversion of the intention of the sacred institution; and the primitive, the regular, and proper mode of administration I take to be immersion. Still it appears to me that sprinkling, though an innovation, does not deprive baptism of its essential validity, so as to put the person that has been sprinkled in adult age upon a footing with the unbaptized. The whole of my sentiments amounts to this – I would not myself baptize in any other manner than by immersion, because I look upon immersion as the ancient mode, that it best represents the meaning of the original term employed, and the substantial import of this institution; and because I should think it right to guard against the spirit of innovation, which in positive rites is always dangerous and progressive: but I should not think myself authorized to rebaptize any one who has been sprinkled in adult age.  

While some of Hall’s theological views would change, his views on baptism and the church would not. It would be these views about baptism that would eventually fuel the fire of the communion controversy with Joseph Kinghorn.

Hall’s doubt about certain tenets of Calvinism remained at Cambridge. One Cambridge friend had observed, “I had but a slight acquaintance with Robert Hall from 1790 to 1793: from thence to the end of 1796 I knew him intimately. At that period his creed was imperfect, wanting the personality of the Holy Spirit, and waverin between the terrors of Calvin and the plausibilities of Baxter.” Two major theological modifications, however, happened at Cambridge. First, as has been noted, the death of Hall’s father dealt a crushing blow to his materialism. As Macleod noted, “When the tragedy of the death of a loved one came home to him personally, he found his

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materialism brought him no comfort.”\textsuperscript{11} Next, Hall had finally become a genuine Trinitarian, believing in the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

While some at Cambridge had thought, and perhaps hoped, for Hall to follow in the lax theology of his predecessor, they were sorely disappointed. Hall’s views were clearly evangelical as he preached on the fallen nature of man, articulated a defense of the atoning work of Christ, discussed the necessity of faith and repentance for salvation, and pleaded with sinners to flee to Christ.

There is little evidence that Hall’s theology was modified significantly beyond his Cambridge ministry. However, his views on several theological matters, especially the extent of the atonement, were delineated in conversations from Hall’s Leicester ministry that were later written down by Olinthus Gregory. In an appendix to his biography of Hall, Gregory includes what he terms “Miscellaneous Gleanings from Mr. Hall’s Conversational Remarks.” The majority of these remarks were transmitted to Gregory by Rev. Robert Balmer, of Berwick-upon-Tweed, in conversations he held with Hall between 1819 and 1823. The following is Balmer’s account of the conversation:

On informing him that I had been perplexed with doubts as to the extent of the death of Christ, and expressing a wish to know his opinion, he replied, “There, sir, my sentiments give me the advantage of you; for on that point I entertain no doubts whatever: I believe firmly in ‘general redemption;’ I often preach it, and I consider the fact that ‘Christ died for all men’ as the only basis that can support the universal offer of the gospel.”\textsuperscript{12}

Balmer was even more perplexed by how Hall could hold to election and yet deny particular redemption, to which Hall replied:

\textsuperscript{11}Macleod, “Life and Teaching,” 129.

\textsuperscript{12}Gregory, “Memoir,” 76.
I believe firmly in election, but I do not think it involves particular redemption; I consider the sacrifice of Christ as a remedy, not only adapted, but intended for all, and as placing all in a salvable state; as removing all barriers to their salvation, except such as arise from their own perversity and depravity. But God, foresaw or knew that none would accept the remedy, merely of themselves, and therefore, by what may be regarded as a separate arrangement, he resolved to glorify his mercy, by effectually applying salvation to a certain number of our race, through the agency of his Holy Spirit. I apprehend, then, that the limiting clause implied in election refers not to the purchase but to the application of redemption.\(^\text{13}\)

In later conversations Hall continued to try to clarify his views to Balmer.

Balmer recalled Hall’s remarks:

In the course of our conversation respecting the extent of Christ’s death, Mr. Hall expatiated at considerable length on the number and variety of the Scripture expressions, in which it seems to be either explicitly asserted or necessarily implied, that it was intended, not for the elect exclusively, but for mankind generally, such as “the world,” “all,” “all men,” “every man,” &c. He made some striking remarks on the danger of twisting such expressions from their natural and obvious import, and on the absurdity of the interpretations put on them by some of the advocates of particular redemption. He mentioned, especially, the absurdity of explaining “the world,” John iii. 16, to signify the elect world, as the text would then teach that some of the elect may not believe. He noticed further, that the doctrine of general redemption was not only asserted expressly in many texts, but presupposed them in others . . . and that it was incorporated with other parts of the Christian system, particularly with the universal offers and invitation of the gospel.\(^\text{14}\)

**Theology in the Preaching of Robert Hall**

Although there are several hundred of Hall’s sermons extant, the majority deal with topics regarding piety and the Christian life and there is but a limited minority that deal with fundamental doctrinal issues. The following sermons, some of which were published and some which have never been seen, provide a clear picture of the best of Hall’s theological preaching.

\(^{13}\)Gregory, “Memoir,” 77.

\(^{14}\)Gregory, “Memoir,” 77.
“More to be desired are they than gold”

Hall delivered this discourse on the beauty and glory of the Scriptures from Psalm 19:10 in Leicester on March 16, 1823. He begins by noting how the psalmist is comparing the beauty of nature and the beauty of the Word of God. In only the second sentence of the sermon, Hall’s preaching power shines, “The works of nature the psalmist celebrates as affording a striking evidence of the power and wisdom of God, but the word of God he magnifies above all these.”

He continues, “The basis of natural religion which leads to the practice of outward duties, is found in the works of nature as they are animated in all their motions by divine providence; but the basis of all that satisfactory knowledge of God, which if we are true Christians enlightens our heart, is found in the word of God.”

Hall’s illustrative skill and mastery of language is captured in the following remarks:

The light which the sun diffuses in his circuit, when he takes his course through the earth is not a saving light; the light which the stars and the glory of the firmaments display, is not a transforming glory, nor is any person led by the contemplation of them to any other object than themselves; so that the light which is derived from them must be of a deceptive nature if they lead off from their great Author, and the Divine Being is concealed from view by the splendor of his own performances.

Hall does not elaborate on the idea that the “light derived” from general revelation is of a “deceptive nature,” however, Hall’s other writings and sermons make it

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15 Robert Hall, “More to be desired are they than gold,” in Two hundred and nineteen Unpublished Sermons preached at Leicester 1812–1823, taken down in shorthand and transcribed by G. W. Riley, Set B, Vol. 7, March 16, 1823, Catalogue Nos. 35.g.16–23, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University.

16 Hall, “More to be desired are they than gold,” 1.

17 Hall, “More to be desired are they than gold,” 1.
clear Hall believed special revelation to be necessary for the proper understanding of God and for the salvation of one’s soul. The rest of this sermon is a beautiful agreement with the Psalmist and a further clarification that Hall understands the only true source special revelation to be the Scriptures, which far exceed the value and pleasure of honey or gold. Hall then discusses the “two properties attending” the words of the psalmist and provides words of counsel and an admonition of reflection for his hearers. He first notes how the psalm has a “tendency to enrich the mind” and then discusses its “tendency to give delight.”

Apparently Hall had recently preached another sermon dealing with the nature of the Scriptures. Rather than recounting the evidence or reasons behind the Scriptures’ power and majesty Hall simply summarizes the previous discourse, stating, “In a discourse delivered a few evenings since we attempted to point out the authority of the word of God as preeminent over all others, and exclusive of all other rules; as a standard, and the only standard of thing to be believed, and things to be done; as the only judge of doctrine, and the only criterion of conduct.” The rest of the sermon deals with how men may avail themselves of the “unerring guide” of the Bible. He encourages his hearers to read through the entire Bible, acquainting themselves with every part of it, recognizing that it is inspired in its entirety and that the whole of it is “exceedingly useful.” Hall then gives numerous points of application for reading the Old and New Testaments, even

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18 Hall, “More to be desired are they gold,” 1.
19 Hall, “More to be desired are they gold,” 2.
20 Hall, “More to be desired are they gold,” 2.
21 Hall, “More to be desired are they gold,” 2.
providing helps for the believer’s daily devotion.

Hall further invites his hearers to give attention to the full “sense” of the Scriptures and not simply to the “literal” words. While this may at first sound suspicious, Hall is not advocating an abandonment of Scripture’s original meaning but warning against its abuse when individuals become fixated on one passage without connecting it to the whole counsel of God. Hall warns: “If you deduce from the Scriptures inferences which are not to be sustained upon mature reflection, you are not guided by the Scriptures; but in fact it is a new revelation, or at least an intended new revelation, and the evils it brings upon the church are innumerable.”

Hall then reflects on the importance of the Scriptures stating they are “instrumental in forming in us the divine life and fitting us for performing the duties of the Christian character, and sustaining the trials which attend the Christian conflict, and preparing the mind for an eternal world.” After a few more remarks, Hall concludes,

Let every one then recollect that to read the scriptures to any purpose the Spirit of God must accompany the perusal of it; that we must feel the workings of that Spirit which raised Christ from the dead. Our desire ought to be that that Spirit may have a transforming energy on our minds and may dwell in our understandings, which will make the engrafted word able to save our souls.

“On the Being and Name of Jehovah”

This sermon was delivered by Hall at Leicester in October 1814. The text chosen was Exodus 3:14, “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM, and he said,

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22 Hall, “More to be desired are they than gold,” 6.

23 Hall, “More to be desired are they than gold,” 7.

24 Hall, “More to be desired are they than gold,” 8.
Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

Hall’s explanation of the name Jehovah immediately reveals his biblical understanding of the character and nature of God. Speaking of the word Jehovah, Hall began, “It comes from a word which denotes to be, to exist; and the proper import of it appears to be permanent, unchanging existence.”

Hall then moved to tie this introduction of the divine name in Exodus to the closing of the Scriptures and John’s revelation of the Lord as the one “who is, and who was, and who is to come,” and concludes, “It denotes eternal, original, unchanging being.”

As Hall continued the sermon, he divided his discourse into four sections as he sought to argue for the eternal existence, the self-existence, the intelligence, and the monotheistic nature of God’s character. Looking at not only Exodus and the Revelation, but also the very realities of creation itself, Hall argued, “Something always must have existed, or nothing could have had an existence. To suppose the matter of this world, for example to have arisen out of nothing, without any cause whatever, is evidently to suppose what is absurd and impossible.”

Illustrating God’s intelligence and his sole ability to provide reason and understanding to his creatures, Hall remarked,

Reason and understanding could no more have been caused by what had none, than matter could have arisen out of nothing. Take a lump of clay, or of any part of inanimate matter, and ask yourselves whether it is not in the highest degree absurd to suppose that the power of remembering, or reasoning, of judging, should arise

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from that as a cause.\textsuperscript{28}

Attacking atheists who plead for “an eternal succession of finite beings,” Hall argued that such a position was “inconsistent with reason and with itself.”\textsuperscript{29} Similarly, Hall railed against those who would argue for a plurality of eternally existent beings. He stated: “But no shadow of reason can be assigned for believing in a plurality of such beings, because the supposition of one accounts for all that we see, as well, and even much better, than the supposition of more.”\textsuperscript{30} Hall then utilized the “laws of nature”, such as light and gravity, to support the Scripture’s presentation of the “one underived, self-existent, eternal, and intelligent Cause.”\textsuperscript{31} Of these characteristics of God’s nature, Hall concluded, “No other being possesses any degree of them. And from these may be inferred his absolute, infinite perfection, rectitude . . . This is the great, glorious, and fearful name, “The Lord our God.”\textsuperscript{32}

“Christ’s Pre-existence, Condescension, and Exaltation”

Hall’s sermon “Christ’s Pre-existence, Condescension, and Exaltation,” was preached on June 27, 1813, at the chapel in Dean Street, Southwark, a borough of

\textsuperscript{28}Hall, “On the Being and Name of Jehovah,” 14.

\textsuperscript{29}Hall, “On the Being and Name of Jehovah,” 14.

\textsuperscript{30}Hall, “On the Being and Name of Jehovah,” 14.

\textsuperscript{31}Hall, “On the Being and Name of Jehovah,” 15.

\textsuperscript{32}Hall, “On the Being and Name of Jehovah,” 16.
London. The text chosen for exposition was Philippians 2:5–9. Writing eighty years after Hall preached this sermon, H. C. G. Moule includes a portion of the discourse in his commentary on Philippians. He admits that a younger Hall had been “much influenced by the Socinian theology,” and yet commenting on this sermon concludes, “His later testimony to a true Christology is the more remarkable.”

Noting the context, Hall commences by showing that Paul is exhorting believers to demonstrate a spirit of humility and condescension to one another. Paul’s goal is for faithful individuals to emulate the spirit of Jesus Christ, whom Hall terms our “striking example.” Hall elucidates the features of condescension in general before moving into his interpretation of the biblical passage. For Hall, condescension is a virtue, which “always implies that it is an inferior towards whom it is exerted,” involves a “descent from some dignity or previous elevation,” and is “perfectly voluntary.”

First, the passage can be interpreted by those who “deny the divinity of Christ


34 It should be noted that Hall seems to have held the same Christology when he gave lectures on Philippians at Cambridge in 1801 and 1802. Some brief notes of Hall’s lectures on Philippians are found in Works, 4:573–629. The sermon examined here develops Hall’s thought much more fully.


37 Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 341.
and the incarnation.”

Although Hall does not specify these individuals, he almost certainly has the Socinians in view. With remarkable genius, Hall succinctly summarizes, dissects, and demolishes their understanding of each phrase Paul uses in Philippians 2. Hall says their view of Christ “being in the form of God” is simply his “being possessed of extraordinary miraculous powers.”

For Paul to declare that Christ “thought it not robbery to be equal with God” only meant that he was “not eager to maintain . . . any likeness to God.” Christ’s making himself of no reputation is seen as the act of reducing himself to poverty. Further, these interpreters must observe that for Christ to take upon himself the “form of a servant,” is better translated as he subjected himself “to the abject state of a slave.” Finally, Christ’s taking the form of a man involved his “not distinguishing himself by outward distinctions, but placing himself on a level with the meanest part of mankind.”

Hall understands Paul’s intent is to offer Christ as the supreme example of condescension to the Philippians and so he continues the sermon by proving how the heterodox interpretations of this passage are inaccurate. If Christ’s only distinction above man was that he possessed miraculous powers, making him “in the form of God,” this would not commend him to his followers as worthy of emulation in condescension, for he never set aside his ability to perform miracles throughout his ministry. The reality,


38Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 343. Immediately preceding the concise notes of this same sermon found in Works, 3:24–28, is Hall’s “Outline of the Argument of Twelve Lectures on the Socinian Controversy,” 3:19–24; and immediately following the sermon is another of Hall’s sermons, “On the Spirit and Tendency of Socianism,” 3:28–35. Gregory clearly intentionally arranged the material this way in an effort to defend Hall’s Christology.

39Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 344.

40Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 344.
according to Hall, was just the opposite. His miraculous power continued “with increasing splendour and advantage.”41 Christ certainly did not “empty himself” of this facet of his nature.

Hypothetically conceding their interpretation that Christ, a miracle-working man, “was not eager to maintain his equality and likeness to God,” Hall vehemently denies this as an example of condescension. Hall remarks: “Still I affirm that this is not an instance of condescension, because there is upon creatures a forcible obligation not to contend for equality with God: and although it would be extremely criminal not to comply with it, yet there can be no high degree of virtue in abstaining from so atrocious a degree of guilt.”42

Individuals who denied Christ’s pre-existence must recognize Christ’s becoming a servant as more properly becoming a “slave.” For this to be true, Hall says Christ could only be a slave to God or man. Christ was never captive to man, however, and so this was not his “relation to society.” Additionally, Hall demonstrates that using such degrading language to describe Christ’s service to God would not have been Paul’s desire.43 Furthermore, those who rebuff Christ’s divinity and eternality view Paul’s foundational argument as presenting Jesus Christ as a “wonderful example of a person rising from the most obscure beginning, commencing in lowly circumstances, and

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41Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 344.

42Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 344.

43Here Hall argues that his “adversaries” would never call angels or the apostle Paul the “slaves of God.” Although some translations use terms like “bondservants” or “slaves,” Hall’s main attack was on the degrading nature of the language in his day.
After briefly critiquing each poor interpretation of his opponents, Hall shifts to outlining his own understanding. Hall supposes that the apostle’s intention is to present Christ as the pre-existent Son of God who possessed the divine nature and united himself to mortal flesh. Therefore, this is a great example of condescension because Christ, as a divine Son, assumed a “nature that did not belong to him, an inferior nature.” Hall’s own textual interpretation is rather brief, but his exposition of the doctrine continues with supreme skill. Hall remarks, “The doctrine of Christ’s humiliation and incarnation is expressed in the most forcible manner, and worthy of our most attentive admiration and adoration.” Hall urges the believer to understand the degrees, the depths of Christ’s condescension. Christ was not satisfied with being found in fashion as a man, nor was he satisfied taking the form of a servant, though both of these were great examples of condescension. Hall continues, “[H]e descended deeper and deeper, and was not contented till he had reached the very bottom of humiliation, till he ‘became obedient unto death.’” Hall persists:

Nay, even that was not sufficient; there was one death more ignominious, more painful, more replete with agony and shame, than any other; and for the purpose, the glorious purpose, of his coming into our world, he selected that death, he determined to die that death, that very death; and made that his peculiar province in which he should appear, to the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and the conquest of the powers of darkness . . . It was from this cross, which was the lowest step to which he could possibly descend, that he arose to his crown; it was from thence that ‘he ascended up on high,’ that he was elevated to the right-hand of God; that there might be exhibited in his person the most wonderful contrast of the original dignity which he laid aside, then of the scene of shame and suffering which he endured, and afterward of the majesty and glory with which he invested the nature in which he

44Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 346.

45Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 346.
suffered.\textsuperscript{46}

Hall knew some people would insist on knowing why Paul used phrases like “form,” and “likeness,” and “appearance.” For Hall this was simple. Paul was simply contrasting “our Lord’s states at different times.” Hall clarifies, “His being in the form of God did not prove that he was not God, but rather that he was God, and entitled to supreme honour. So, his assuming the form of a servant, and being the likeness of man, does not prove that he was not man, but, on the contrary, includes it.”\textsuperscript{47}

In keeping with his understanding of condescension, Hall illustrates that Jesus’ actions were voluntary in nature. According to Paul, Christ “became obedient” and Hall praises this aspect of condescension, declaring, “But he assumed voluntarily a nature which made him capable of suffering . . . in order that he might make it becoming the character of God, as a Moral Governor, to grant pardon to a whole race of apostate guilty, but believing and penitent, creatures.”\textsuperscript{48} Hall may have created a stir with his beliefs about open communion, but his thoughts regarding fellowship with Unitarians was unequivocal. Hall forthrightly declares, “the leader of the Unitarians in the present day declares, that no words can ever be clear enough to prove to him that Christ is God. . . . With such men we can have no communion.”\textsuperscript{49}

Hall does not his perceive his sermon or Paul’s text as a simple lesson in ontology, nor does he exhort his hearers to take abstract speculations of divine

\textsuperscript{46}Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 347.

\textsuperscript{47}Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 348.

\textsuperscript{48}Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 349.

\textsuperscript{49}Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 349.
metaphysics. Paul’s Christ-exalting text demands action. Hall understands the mystery of redemption as pressing believers to imitate Christ by foregoing their own desires and becoming partakers first in Christ’s sufferings, then in his glory. He directly applies the rich Christology of this text to the lives of his hearers, calling for their response. For Hall, one step of obedience to this text is evangelism and missions. Christ looked upon lost sinners with a tender compassion and condescended himself to redeem them. For believers to have Christ’s “mind,” is to be engaged in a compassionate consideration of the people “dead in trespasses and sins” among whom they lived, as well as the “nations innumerable sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.” He then adds,

    Carry your eyes to the remotest borders of the earth; and be not satisfied until the whole earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, till all men have seen the salvation of God. Let no distance of place no difference of circumstances, prevent your exerting yourselves to spread the knowledge of Him ‘who made himself of no reputation.’

Furthermore, Hall summons unbelievers to respond by coming to Jesus Christ by faith. It is the obligation of the unconverted to “cast yourselves upon the dying love of the Saviour; receive Him by faith.” Finally, Hall concludes by pleading with the believers of his audience to reject the tendency to hold an erroneous Christology, and to hold fast to the doctrine set forth by the apostles, and to “impress still more and more upon your minds the lessons which Christ crucified teaches.”

Hall’s concluding summary is remarkably forceful and lucid. He declares,

    Take away the incarnation of our Lord, and his sacrifice upon the cross, and these sublime and glorious truths lose all their meaning: this great example dwindles into nothing, if we lose sight of Christ’s dignity, glory, and humility. It is this which renders his sacrifice of infinite value. It is this which renders his cross so inexpressibly awful and so interesting. It is this which makes it so infinitely

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50 Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 352.
precious to his people. The cross of Jesus Christ is the appropriate, the appointed rendezvous of heaven and earth; the meeting place between God and the sinner: thus the principles of the cross become the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. Deprive Jesus Christ of his dignity, deprive his person of divinity and pre-existence as the Son of God, and all these momentous truths dwindle into inexpressible futilities.  

“On Spiritual Death”

Hall believed in the universal and total depravity of mankind, and therefore the complete inability of the sinner to save himself. Hall’s sermon taken from Ephesians 2:1, begins with clarity and force:

The power of God was most illustriously displayed in raising Christ from the dead; but there is another operation of Divine power which bears a great resemblance to this, of which every individual believer is the subject. . . . He hath not merely raised Christ from the dead, but he had wrought a similar deliverance for the Ephesians by imparting spiritual life to those who had been dead in trespasses and sins.

Hall understood some would debate who exactly the apostle had in view when speaking of individuals being dead in trespasses and sins. Hall attempts to show from the text how Paul’s language is to be applied “to every person who has not been renewed by the grace of God.” Hall then illustrates this truth.

First, Hall demonstrates how Paul, in the third and fourth verses of the second

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51 Hall, “Christ’s Pre-existence,” 352.

52 Hall, “On Spiritual Death,” in Works, 3:70. The text appears in Hall’s Works as: “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The notes from this sermon are incomplete, and there is no information given as to its location or date of delivery. For two other published sermons related to the doctrine of sin see, “On the extreme Corruption of Mankind before the General Deluge,” in Works, 3:51–7, and “On Spiritual Leprosy,” in Works, 3:93–101.

53 Hall mentions three possible groups, “Whether the representation applies to heathens only, or to those in a Christian country who for their enormous sins may be justly compared to heathens; or whether they are to be applied to unconverted sinners universally.” Hall, “On Spiritual Death,” 71.

Hall also shows how Christ came to be bread for a world that was destitute of spiritual life. Furthermore, he examines how Christians are described in the Scriptures as “persons who have ‘passed from death unto life.’”

For Hall, the world is divided into a “region of life and region of death” by an invisible boundary. The region of life certainly refers to those who have been given spiritual life, and the region of death to those who remain in their trespasses and sins. Hall states: “It is implied that none come into the former, that is, that of life, but by passing into it from the latter. They were not natives to this blessed region, but migrated or traveled to it from an opposite one.” Hall then clearly states that all humanity remain dead in their trespasses and sins unless they are transferred from that region of death into the region of life once they have been renewed by the “grace of God.”

Hall continues by observing how man once enjoyed unadulterated union with God, yet he states succinctly: “Sin dissolved that union.” The ultimate effect of sin is death, a death that came first upon Adam who initially possessed life and union with God. There are no degrees of death, according to Hall, and thus all of humanity is universally corrupt. While vegetation, animals, and humans all exist in various degrees of life, there are no degrees of death. He declares:

But there are no degrees in death. All things of which it can be truly said that they

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are dead are equally dead. There are no degrees in privation; thus it is with all who are dead in trespasses and sins. They are all equally dead. They may possess very estimable and amiable qualities, such as naturally engage the love of their fellow creatures; but being equally destitute of a principle of spiritual life, they are all in one and the same state of death; they are governed by the same carnal principle; they are in the flesh, and therefore cannot please God. They are alike subjects of the prince of darkness; they serve the same master, and belong to the same kingdom. Every unsanctified person is totally ‘alienated from the life of God,’ – is totally devoid of love to Him, and a perception of his true glory and excellence.59

Hall concludes that unless the Spirit of God is pleased to operate, no sinner can be persuaded to seek the Lord.60

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam”

This unpublished sermon was preached at Leicester on January 6, 1821.61 Insight into Hall’s views on both sin and salvation can be gleaned in this sermon from Romans 5:14, in which Hall examines how Paul sees Adam as a type of Christ. Hall begins: “The great scheme of redemption occupies so large a part of the purpose of the Gospel that we find traces of it everywhere.”62 For Hall, these traces begin “with the history of the Fall.”63 Adam in his “transaction which brought ruin on his race” was a figure of Christ who was to come. Hall gives three ways in which Adam typified Jesus Christ. First, Hall shows how both Hall and Adam were full partakers of human nature.


60 Hall, “On Spiritual Death,” 73.


63 Hall, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam,” 1.
Hall seeks to demonstrate the importance of this fact by showing how these two men produced effects that “decided the destiny of the whole human race.” As Hall states: “That all mankind should be plunged into the deepest misery by one man; and raised to a much greater state of happiness than that which they formerly lost, by one man is a most wonderful fact.”

After establishing the reality of Adam and Christ’s shared humanity, Hall continues by maintaining that Adam further typified Jesus because of his great influence on humanity through his moral character. Hall says,

> It is certain that the moral conduct of Adam brought the anger of God upon himself. From the moment of his sinning he lost the favour of God. That this did not stop in his own person is plain from the matter of fact. Death, natural Death, has been leveled on the whole human race and hence it is evident that all have sinned.

Hall then remarks:

> It is plain that the corruption of nature has been transmitted from Adam. He lost the image of God—he became spiritually dead—he became alienated from God – he lost his integrity and therefore all confidence in God; and it is plain that this has been transmitted to his children. Hence, he acted not for himself since actual guilt is the necessary consequence of that state of mind which he brought into the world by his apostacy. But in this instance he was a figure of him that was to come; as he brought death upon all men by this disobedience, so eternal life is permitted to all that believe by virtue of Christ’s obedience—As death passed upon all men, so thro’ Jesus Christ, Justification passes upon all who are united to him by faith in his name and are virtually his posterity.

Hall had long denied the federal headship of Adam and argued that mankind was only held accountable for their actual sin. At the very least, Hall believed that Adam’s sin causes all men to be born dead in sin, and thus each will eventually live

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64 Hall, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam,” 2.
65 Hall, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam,” 2.
sinfully and necessarily incur “actual guilt.” Hall’s comments in this sermon call into question whether he may have modified his views. Equating the death brought about by Adam’s sin to the life imputed to mankind through their union with Christ by faith certainly sounds as if Hall has reversed course. Hall then adds, “Adam, we perceive, not only forfeited eternal life but brought in a state of mind which issues in actual sin, the penalty of which is eternal death—Thus it is plain that he brought the whole human race into the greatest danger.”67 But due to the purification brought about by the work of Christ, the “effects of Adam’s transgressions are completely effaced.”68

Even though the typology suggests similarities between Adam and Christ, Hall also notes a difference, or as he terms it a “dissimilitude.” He says, “By one action alone he brought ruin on all his race, but it was not only one act of obedience by which Jesus Christ effected our salvation, no, it was by a whole course of obedience.” The ruin brought upon humanity resulted in “innumerable sins of the whole human race” and in “all manner of sins.” Hall reveals the beauty of salvation, however, by setting forth the way in which “all our acts of iniquity against God are obliterated by the peacespeaking blood of Jesus Christ.”69 As Hall continues in this sermon, his eloquence shines:

The one fell by aiming too high, the other saved us by humbling himself—Adam ruined us by listening to a deceitful spirit, while Jesus Christ saved us by being under the holy Spirit of God—Adam ruined us in consequence of distrust of God, while Jesus Christ was supported thro’ all his cares by his trust in God.70

68 Hall, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam,” 3.
Hall also sees Adam as the “original pattern for men” in that we share in his moral character and walked in his course of transgression. Here again, Hall is noting a point of contrast between Christ and Adam. He observes:

But as the Divine Being set up Adam as the original pattern for men, so Jesus, the heavenly Adam was set as another model – the glory of God to which we are to be conformed is set forth in the face of Jesus Christ – The Glory which Jesus Christ himself received is imparted to his disciples – the blessed Saviour has nothing to give equal to himself he therefore gives us his spirit – and will never be satisfied till he bring us to the perfect image of himself.71

In his closing exhortation Hall appeals to his listeners to consider their likeness to the spiritual Adam. Hall concludes,

We have all sinned and the wages of sin is death – To be united to the first Adam is to share in his apostacy – How necessary is it that we should look to Jesus Christ by a lively faith – believe in his blood – be partakers of his spirit – If any man believe on Jesus Christ there is no condemnation to him. Let us all make it our chief care to be united to Jesus Christ by a lively faith – To have his word live in us is to have him live in us. If we abide in him he abides in us – if we adhere to him by faith he adheres to us – Place your great happiness in being made like him – Doubt not that he will save you to the utmost – Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and this was the only purpose for which he visited this world.72

“On the Substitution of the Innocent for the Guilty”

David Bebbington has argued that probably the greatest of Hall’s sermons was his “defence of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Its argument was still being repeated, with due acknowledgement of Hall, in a statement of Evangelical principles by the Anglican W. R. Fremantle in 1875.”73 Although probably preached several times,


73David Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730’s to the 1980’s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 16.
Taking Isaiah 53:8 as his text, Robert Hall begins by praising the evangelical prophet for the apostolic feel of his writing. “In no part of the New Testament,” Hall exclaims, “is the doctrine of the atonement more unequivocally asserted, and the vicarious nature of our Lord’s passion more forcibly inculcated, than in the context of the words selected as the basis of the present discourse.” Hall criticizes Jews who interpret the sufferings described by Isaiah as being directed towards the nation of Israel. Isaiah distinguishes, according to Hall, between the one who will be stricken and the “people for whose benefit he suffered.”

Substitutionary atonement is “unquestionably the doctrine of the inspired writers.” Christ was not just an example or a martyr, but a substitute. Hall’s observations demonstrate the brilliant way he could use language:

The doctrine in question is so often asserted in the clearest terms, and tacitly assumed as a fundamental principle in so many more; it is intermingled so closely with all the statements of truths and inculcations of duty throughout the Holy Scriptures, that to endeavour to exclude it from revelation is as hopeless an attempt as to separate colour from the rainbow or extension from matter.

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74 Olinthus Gregory had requested Robert Hall to write down several sermons for publication, of which this was one. The manuscript written by Hall was not found until after his death. The manuscript was incomplete but Gregory was confident he had correctly completed the manuscript after consulting with several of Hall’s friends who heard the sermon preached.

75 Robert Hall, “On the Substitution of the Innocent for the Guilty,” in Works, 1:261–82. Gregory’s translation of the text included above the sermon reads, “For the transgression of my people was he stricken” (Is. 53:8). Hall notes in the sermon that some have preferred the translation “he was smitten unto death,” (264).


Therefore, Hall’s efforts are not to prove the doctrine but to “illustrate the fitness of the scheme of substitution, and the indications which it affords of profound and unsearchable wisdom.” Gratitude for the “unspeakable goodness” of the Father must be elicited as one contemplates the doctrine of substitution. No such heroism or virtue exists among mere men, for no one would ever sacrifice himself for a guilty person out of sheer benevolence. When Hall reflects on God’s providence, and how one of the human race could submit himself to such an excruciating death, he is confident that “Nothing like this has ever existed.” Hall then breaks the sermon down into ten observations regarding this great doctrine. Hall’s ten characteristics of substitution clearly reveal the depth of his metaphysical reasoning regarding this doctrine.

First, an act like Christ’s substitutionary atonement “must be sanctioned by the Supreme authority.” Hall notes how Christ only did what his Father commissioned him to do, and that he never “contracted to private engagement without the consent and approbation of his heavenly Father.” As Hall puts it,

These inspired statements place it beyond all doubt that Christianity originated with the Supreme Governor of the universe, that its gracious provisions are the accomplishment of his counsel, and that its principles, however much they surpass the discoveries of reason, are in perfect harmony with the genuine dictates of natural religion. The substitution of the Redeemer in the room of sinners was the contrivance of the same wisdom.

Second, Hall notes that the substitution is “perfectly voluntary on the part of

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the sufferer.” The act originates within the innocent person himself, for to force one into such a proceeding would be the “highest injustice.” Relating this observation to the previous, Hall remarks, “He came, not only by authority, but such was his infinite love, that he came voluntarily.” Christ was led as a lamb to the slaughter to gain “that glorious reward, the eternal happiness of an innumerable multitude of intelligent creatures who must have perished if he had not been stricken to death for them.” Third, the substitute must be “perfectly free from the offence which renders punishment necessary.” There must not be a hint of guilt in the substitute or else there would be a “debt due on his own account.” Hall believes that it is Christ’s miraculous conception that has freed him from the taint of original sin. As such Christ is sinless, the spotless lamb who is sacrificed for his people.

Next, Hall illustrates how “the innocent person substituted for the guilty should stand in some relation to him.” An illustration of this can be seen in the law, where a redeemer must be related to the party of a lost estate if redemption is to occur. This foreshadowed, said Hall, the “congruity of the substitution of Christ.” Referencing several Scriptures, Hall elucidates how Christ was the seed of Abraham who came to redeem sinful men, of whom he shared their nature. Hall’s words speak for themselves:

But Jesus Christ, by his incarnation, being of one flesh and of one spirit with us, was

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fitted to sustain the character of Redeemer. He thus became indeed our kinsman, one in the same circumstances, under the same law, liable to the same temptations, subject to the same passions, encompassed about with our infirmities, but sinless; and thus suited every way to become a substitute for our guilty race.88

Hall then discusses why substitution cannot be allowed if the innocent party is ever capable of regretting his sacrifice. Hall observes that, among humans, there can often be a surge of sacrificial affections. These emotions may warm for a moment, but upon rational reflection they are usually “chilled and frozen.” Hall’s view of Christ’s atonement is that there must have been such a “settled purpose on the part of the substitute as precludes the possibility of a vacillation or change.”89 Hall continues,

But this condition is found in the highest perfection on the part of the blessed Redeemer. His oblation of himself was not the execution of a sudden purpose, the fruit of a momentary movement of pity; it was the result of deliberate counsel, the accomplishment of an ancient purpose, formed in the remotest recesses of a past eternity.90

Sixth, Hall teaches “he who offers himself as the substitute should justify the law by which he suffers.”91 The sufferer should express approval of justice of the original sentence. Speaking of Christ’s view of the law, Hall observes, “It was a great part of the business of his life to assert and vindicate by his doctrine that law which he magnified and made illustrious by his passion.” Jesus Christ came to teach, illustrate, defend, and fulfill the law. In fact, Hall continues, “Never had the law such an expounder as in the person of Him who came into the world to exhaust its penalties and endure its

Then, Hall is of the opinion that “the interests sacrificed by the suffering party should not be of less cost and value than those which are secured by such a procedure.”

Hall provides an illustration to clarify his meaning: “The life of a peasant is a most inadequate substitute for that of a personage of the highest order.”

The blood of bulls and goats can serve as a remembrance of one’s guilt but it is insufficient to take away sin. A dilemma thus exists, for, among the descendants of Adam, where is there one “of such pre-eminent dignity and worth, that his oblation of himself should be deemed a fit and proper equivalent to the whole race of man?” This was the mystery of the ages, the question of “insurmountable difficulties” until the coming of the Lord Christ. But now, Hall argues, the Lord Jesus,

By his participation of flesh and blood he becomes susceptible of suffering, and possesses within himself the materials of a sacrifice. By its personal union with the eternal word, the sufferings sustained in a nature thus assumed acquired an infinite value, so as to be justly deemed more than equivalent to the penalty originally denounced.

The eighth mark of true substitution is that it creates a mysterious situation, whereby the guilty party rejoices at the oppression suffered by the innocent. The cross is the only instance where deliverance is not embittered by the destruction of the “compassionate Redeemer.” Pressing further, Hall says, “While we rejoice in the cross

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of Christ as the source of pardon, our satisfaction is heightened by beholding it succeeded by the crown.”

Ninth, Hall indicates that for substitution in the biblical sense to be understood and esteemed, it must be affirmed that “it should be introduced very sparingly.” For Hall, Christ’s substitution is so glorious because it is only introduced on one occasion, purchasing redemption for all who would believe. As Hall puts it,

It requires some great crisis to justify its introduction, some extraordinary combination of difficulties obstructing the natural course of justice; it requires, that while the letter of the law is dispensed with, its spirit be fully adhered to; so that instead of tending to weaken the motives to obedience, it shall present a salutary monition, a moral and edifying spectacle.

Finally, Hall urges believers to consider that meditation upon the fact of Christ’s substitution must always be combined with a humbling encounter with its design. The cross was not God’s plan of redemption to call forth tears of “sensibility” as mankind contemplates the cruel death endured by Christ Jesus. The design of substitution was to change eternally the destinies of lost souls by the satisfaction of God’s infinite wrath for sin. From the post-Fall promise of Genesis 3:15 to Abel’s acceptable sacrifice, from the sacrificial system under Mosaic law to the prophetic pronouncements of One who would suffer for God’s people, Hall declares that Christ’s blood shed on Calvary has always been God’s eternal, sovereign, gracious design. He adds,

The doctrine of remission of sins through the blood of that victim which was once offered for the sins of the world, forms the grand peculiarity of the gospel, and was the principal theme of the apostolic ministry, and is still pre-eminently the power of God to salvation. It is inculcated throughout the New Testament in every possible form, it meets us at every turn, and is, in short, the sun and centre of the whole

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Hall again ends with application, exhorting his hearers to realize that substitution is the only hope of a lost world. The believer cannot possibly have “felt or understood” the doctrine of substitution if he or she feels any encouragement to sin from it. Hall powerfully concludes this marvelous sermon:

The habitual contemplation of the cross of Christ will be found the most effectual expedient for weakening the power of corruption, resisting the seductions of the world, and rising progressively into the image of God and the Redeemer. It will at the same time lay the deepest foundation for humility. He who ascribes his salvation to this source will be exempted from every temptation to exalt himself; and while he rejoices in the ample provision made for the pardon of his sins and the relief of his miseries, he will join with the utmost ardour in the song of the redeemed – To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.  

“On the Cause, Agent, and Purpose of Regeneration”

This sermon, delivered as the Wednesday evening lecture on March 7, 1811, and taken from the book of James shows how James “endeavours to fortify the minds” of persecuted professors of Christianity by showing them their reward is assured but warning them temptation only succeeds because of the “unbridled corruption of the human heart.” Hall then briefly summarizes how James shows that every good and gracious gift has a “celestial” origin, and that the graces of God cannot be communicated from “one human being to another.” Hall later suggests, “In the context, the apostle has

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been strongly insisting on it, that the beginning of all moral evil is to be ascribed to man; the beginning of all good to the Supreme Being; and it is in supporting this assertion he introduces the words of the text, ‘Of his own will he begat us.’

Here Hall takes James 1:18 as his text and begins the body of the sermon, commencing with the cause of regeneration.

Concisely stating the cause of regeneration, Hall asserts it to be the will of God “operating by a free and spontaneous agency.” God was under no obligation to interpose in the lives of sinners, rather the work of regeneration was due solely to his sovereign will. Hall further argues that God does not effect regeneration because of any necessity in his own nature or any “claim of merit in the subject of his gracious agency.”

Fallen human beings are so corrupt there can be no worthiness or “attractive excellence” in them by which God is obliged to regenerate their hearts. Hall proclaims,

No signs of virtuous and laudable conduct had ensued to procure the communication of divine grace, agreeable to what another apostle observes in his epistle to Titus: ‘not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.’

As for the agent of regeneration, Hall asserts, as James 1:18 says, it is “the word of truth.” Anything contrary to the revelation of God found in the Scriptures is “imposture” and “whatever is compared to it insignificant.”

gospel, the sole source of “infallible truth” and the instrument of God’s regenerating work. Without the gospel, and thus without regeneration, there is no change in the person and there can never be any “features of a renewed and sanctified mind.” Hall then supports his argument from 1 Peter 1:23, according to which man is born again by the word of God “which liveth and abideth forever.”

The final section of Hall’s sermon treats the purpose of regeneration. It is that we might be “a kind of first-fruit of the creatures.” Hall exclaims. Hall examines the Old Testament history of first-fruits, and then observes that the renovation of the heart means that believers are to be “dedicated to God as holy persons, separated from every unclean use.” Hall outlines three principles that flow out of God’s regenerating work. The first is that believers need to devote themselves wholeheartedly to God. Hall eloquently explains what this entails:

They present all their faculties and powers to him; their understanding, to be guided and enlightened by his truth; their will, to be swayed by his authority and to be obedient to his dictates; their hearts and affections, to be filled with his presence and replenished with his love; the members of their body, to be instruments of his glory sacred to his use; their time, to be employed in the way which he directs, and in pursuit of the objects he prescribes, and no longer according to the dictates of inclination and caprice.

Second, Hall illustrates that regeneration has in its purpose the bestowing of

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109Hall, “On the Cause, Agent, and Purpose of Regeneration,” 67. For a deeper understanding of how Hall understands regeneration, especially as it relates to the work of the Spirit, see his circular letter, “On the Work of the Holy Spirit,” in Works 1:233–45. This letter was written in 1809 on behalf of the ministers and messengers of the Baptist churches of the Northamptonshire Association, and it deals with other theological topics such as assurance and sanctification.


honor and dignity upon Christians. The regenerated soul now has a high and heavenly calling. The world’s momentary pleasures and offerings are set against the new regenerated life of the believer. Hall clarifies what it means for believers to be as God’s first fruits. When the first fruits were presented to God in the temple, it was an acknowledgement of his “absolute right over all things.” Just as the priests offered the first fruits to God, so the Lord Jesus now offers those who are His to the Father. Hall then believes that regenerate souls have the obligation to daily renew themselves to God as His first fruits because He is their rightful master. Finally, Hall observes that the idea of a “first-fruits” entails a “pledge of what is to follow,” which will be the perfect “sanctification” of all regenerated creatures. Hall concluded the sermon by illustrating the future universal harvest in which Christ will reign over the earth. The lives now lived by Christians as God’s first fruits are a sign of the harvest that is to come.112

“On Conversion, As Illustrated by that of St. Paul”

Of the two sermons in Hall’s Works that directly deal with the subject of conversion, this sermon gives the clearest insight into Hall’s conversionism. The sermon is taken from Galatians 1:15–16.113 Hall begins by encouraging believers to reflect constantly upon the glory of their conversions. Although a believer’s life may differ dramatically from the experiences of the Apostle Paul, Hall exhorts every hearer to grasp the truth that Paul’s conversion experience was “exactly the same as everyone must

112 Hall, “On the Cause, Agent, and Purpose of Regeneration,” 70.

113 Robert Hall, “On Conversion,” in Works, 3:74. In Hall’s Works, the text from Galatians reads, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”
experience before he can enter into the kingdom of God.” Hall saw Paul’s experience, however, as the most “striking and instructive example of the efficacy of divine grace in conversion.” This experience of Paul, and the text which records it in Galatians, lays out the causes, means, and effects of conversion.

Hall begins by treating the causes of conversion. One cause of conversion is the eternal decrees of God. Hall does not use the term election here, but it is undoubtedly in view. Hall states succinctly, “We cannot suppose the purposes of God to be of recent date, or to have taken rise from any limited point of time. What he designs he designs from eternity. Whatever he accomplishes is agreeable to his eternal purposes and word.” Understanding this to be the cause of Paul’s conversion, that he had been set apart from his mother’s womb, Hall generalizes and reasons this must be the cause of conversion for every true believer.

It was not only the eternal counsel of God, however, but also the divine and gracious call of God that converted Paul. Hall differentiates between a general and an effectual call, thus:

There is a general call in the gospel, addressed to all men indiscriminately. Gracious invitations are given, without exception, far as the sound of the gospel extends; but this of itself is not effectual. There is in every instance of real conversion another and inward call by which the Spirit applies the general truth of the gospel to the heart. By this interior call, Christ apprehends, lays hold on the soul, stops it in its impenitent progress, and causes it to ‘hear his voice.’

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Although every believer experiences this same call, Hall shows how believers may receive the call in various forms. Some undergo conversion because “the solemnities of death and judgment are forcibly presented to the attention.” Hall continues, “Others, like the eunuch and Lydia, are wrought upon in a more gentle manner – drawn with the ‘cords of love, and the ties of man.’” It should also be noted that, whereas the sermon previously examined speaks of the Word of God as the instrument of regeneration, Hall briefly yet clearly argues here that the Spirit of God is the author of the saving change in a sinner’s life.

Hall then proceeds to examine the means of conversion. “The principal method which the Spirit adopts in subduing the heart of a sinner is a spiritual discovery of Christ,” declares Hall. Although the “terrors of the law” may show the heinousness of sin and the “extreme danger to which the sinner is exposed,” the saving change is only effected when Christ is beheld. Hall says the Spirit of God first reveals Christ in his greatness and dignity, and then his transcendent beauty and glory. Finally, Hall remarks, “The Spirit reveals the suitableness, fullness, and sufficiency of the Saviour to supply all our wants and relieve all our miseries.” Hall’s notion of “ beholding” should not be thought of as some mystical experience. Instead, the sinner can only “behold” Christ when the Spirit reveals Christ. Hall asserts that it is the Spirit’s revelation of the Son to the sinner that makes the soul emboldened to “venture upon him, and, extinguishing all

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120 Hall, “On Conversion,” 76.
other hope and confidence, to rely upon him alone.” Hall concludes, “This is that revelation of Christ which, whosoever gives, is entitled to the privilege of becoming the child of God.” This clearly implies that Hall understands conversion as occurring only in those who trust in Christ alone for salvation.

Finally, Hall discusses the effects of conversion by examining the way Paul’s entire life was changed and how he immediately set out in obedience to the will of Christ and the new calling for his life. Paul’s example, Hall is obviously convinced, reveals conversion to be immediate and holistic. Such effects, like those that attended Paul’s conversion, are “constant and persevering” throughout life. Hall thus understood believers to be thoroughly converted, a conversion that would endure to glorification.

“Christ’s Mission for the Adoption of Sons in the Fullness of Time”

Hall preached this sermon at Melbourne, near Royston, in September 1827. Hall begins by providing the context to which Paul is writing to the Galatians. He reminds his hearers of the dangers that had been brought about by the “arts of the Judaizing teachers” who added circumcision as a necessary feature of salvation and who attempted to supersede the sacrifice of Christ by “denying the sufficiency of his mediation and death for the salvation of sinful men.” Then Hall reminds that Paul is directing the attention of the Galatians to


The great and fundamental doctrine of Christ’s incarnation and atonement, to its completeness and efficacy, not only in saving us from guilt and condemnation, but in reinstating us in the Divine favour, and bestowing on us inexpressible privileges: admission into his family and the reception of adoption which is the spirit of His Son, whereby Christians feels the dispositions and perform the duties of obedient children to their heavenly Father.  

Hall divides the sermon into a consideration of the mission of Jesus and the manner in which He manifested Himself, the redemptive design of his mission, and the fitness of God’s wisdom to accomplish these purposes “in the fullness of time.” It is the second point of this sermon that is most important for a proper understanding of Hall’s theology and for an example of how he defended significant doctrines in his preaching.

First, Hall defends the deity of Christ and argues that it must be affirmed to have a proper understanding of the atonement. Hall states, “Those who dispute the divinity of Christ act consistently in explaining away his sacrifice and atonement; the two doctrines are inseparably connected, and must stand or fall together.” He then adds,

Jesus Christ was made under the law, who was not originally under it, for the purpose of producing that righteousness, and creating that fund of merit in the eyes of an infinitely wise and holy Being, which should be imputed for the benefit of penitent believers, by dying on a cross a death which he never merited; and thus working out a justification from which the spiritual wants of all mankind should be supplied, if they receive his testimony and believed his name.

Hall believed the vicarious nature of Christ’s atonement to be a doctrine that “runs through all the statements of the New Testament.” Hall’s language is forceful and clear:

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The immediate effect of Christ’s death is the imputation of his righteousness to the believer, and this righteousness produces an instant acquittal from punishment; but such was the exuberance of his merits, such the dignity of his person, and the high complacency of the Father in his work, that it was worthy of him to bestow on them who were members of His Son greater blessings than those which their first parents had forfeited. It was not merely to relieve from misery that Christ died; it was not only justification that was the fruit of his sufferings; but adoption into the family of heaven, the privileges of sons and daughters for all his believing people. Hall’s affinity for Richard Baxter has long caused his views of the atonement and justification by faith to be questioned. This sermon, however, proves how Hall’s belief and preaching of these doctrines align with historic Calvinism and the broader spectrum of evangelicalism. Hall did not attempt to hold to justification by faith while denying the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Here, Hall clearly defends the doctrine of imputation and suggests that only by it, received through faith, can a sinner be adopted into the family of God.

Thus, those who are in Christ may now approach the Father in a “domestic character,” crying out “Abba, Father.” Where once there was guilt and shame, the believer now has a sense of confidence and trust for he now walks with God as one of his children. The adopted child becomes an “imitator of his perfections” and a “share of the fulness of the glory of his heavenly Father.” On the other hand, all who do not approach Christ in faith remain cursed under the law. Again, the vivid language Hall employs is striking:

Those who do not receive Christ by faith remain under the law, and are exposed to all its penalties; they live under its curse; at home, abroad, in solitude, in company,

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Those who approach Christ in faith, however, are adopted into his family, and the benefits therein are glorious. Hall concludes,

Then you will begin to live indeed, to know the Divine life, when you come and taste of the salvation of God, when you cast yourselves on the mercy of the Saviour. . . . Then the mercy of God will be revealed unto you, and you will one day join in singing ‘a new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb,’ which none can sing but they who are redeemed from the earth.  

“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God”

This sermon was most likely preached at some point in 1811, and although no biblical text is given in G. W. Riley’s notes, the sermon certainly appears to be taken from Romans 5:1. Hall commences by noting how Paul is relying upon the “inspired author of the Pentateuch” in making this inference about justification. Abraham had believed God, Hall notes, and God had “reckoned unto him for righteousness.” Hall then says, “The method in which he is represented as having procured acceptance must be considered as an example and specimen of the method in which sinners are to expect justification under the gospel.” After providing some additional context, Hall states:


133 Robert Hall, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God,” in Two hundred and nineteen unpublished sermons preached at Leicester 1812–1823, taken down in shorthand and transcribed by G. W. Riley, Set. A, Vol. 1 [not labeled], 90–104, March 3, 1811–March 19, 1815, Angus Library Catalogue Nos. 35.g.16–23, Regent’s Park College, Oxford. At the top of the page G. W. Riley has written, “A sermon on justification by faith taken from Mr. Hall’s own manuscript.” Although no date is listed, its location in the volume makes it likely it was preached sometime between September 22, 1811 and November 3, 1811. It should further be noted that the handwriting in this volume is very difficult to decipher.
To an attentive reader of the Scriptures it will appear there are two points of doctrine relating to it distinctly and repeatedly affirmed. The first is that the proper and meritorious ground of the acceptance of sinners is laid in the interposition of the merits or in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who that he might offer himself a sacrifice became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. We read in the context he was delivered for our offences. He offered himself without spot to God that he might purify our conscience from dead works that we might serve the living and true God.  

The second point of doctrine Hall raises is “that men are justified by faith.” The benefits ascribed to Christ, being at perfect peace with God, are not ascribed to the sinner until they receive Christ by faith. Hall then succinctly recaps the first point asserting that “the only meritorious ground of reconciliation lies in the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Hall lays the question before his hearers,  

The question is by what means does a sinner become actually pardoned and justified. Of the meritorious ground of salvation there is supposed at present to be no doubt: our inquiry is simply by what act does a guilty creature pass into a justified state. Is it by faith in Christ or is it by the actions of a virtuous and Christian life. Is a man justified the instant he believes in Christ and cordially embraces the Gospel or does he become so in consequence of the actual performance of religious and social duties.

Those who would argue for a justification by works, even works flowing from genuine faith, must be opposed. Hall understood that some would wrongly see this as an unnecessary theological debate, but Hall warned that those who argue for justification by works are those who “utterly reject the gospel.” Instead, Hall argues, “We contend that true faith in Christ justifies a sinner completely. That the moment he believes the

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134 Hall, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God,” 91–92.

135 Hall, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God,” 92.

136 Hall, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God,” 94.

137 Hall, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God,” 94.
Gospel from the heart he is pardoned and accepted previous to his performance of good works of any kind.” Further, Hall remarks that repentance and faith are vital conditions of a justified state.

Hall concludes the sermon by buttressing his defense of justification by faith alone. To accomplish this task, Hall methodically lists numerous other biblical texts, primarily from John’s gospel, that speak of the necessity of believing on Christ and his name in order to have everlasting life.

“**But now we are delivered from the law**”

This unpublished sermon taken from Romans 7:26 was preached at Leicester in 1821 and shows Hall’s view of the law, the consequences of its transgression, and the duties of the believer in their union with Christ. Hall begins by maintaining that the “language of the law was given to our first parents.” He states,

We having forfeited this favour, having violated this condition are become liable to the penalty of the law—This is the miserable state of all mankind by law and practice—They are under a law which they cannot keep—They are shut up therefore in a prison from which they could not have escaped but thro’ the Divine Being. It is on on account of this miserable state to which men are reduced by sin that the necessity of the Gospel exists.

The language of imputation is then employed: “The Divine Being now thro’ Jesus Christ gives not to him that worketh but to him that worketh not for the works of

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138 Hall, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God,” 95.

139 Robert Hall, “But now we are delivered from the law,” in *Two hundred and nineteen unpublished sermons preached at Leicester 1812–1823*, taken down in shorthand and transcribed by G. W. Riley, Set A, Vol. 3, January 6 – March 25, 1821, 53–59, Catalogue Nos. 35.g.16–23, Angus Library Regent’s Park College, Oxford University. The sermon was most likely delivered in late January 1831. Although Riley gives no specific date, the sermon notes fall between other sermons listed as delivered on January 28 and January 31.

140 Hall, “But now we are delivered from the law,” 53.
Jesus Christ are imputed to man.”¹⁴¹ Because Jesus Christ became the substitute for sinners, all those who place their faith in him have his deeds transferred to them.

Responding especially to the threat of antinomianism, Hall then states that salvation means “not that we may be released from serving God but that we may serve him in a superior manner.”¹⁴² There is a new life and new heart for the believer. Of this new life, Hall exclaims that it is a privilege to be born of God’s Spirit and that believers will grow in their conformity to Christ, bearing fruit as evidence of their new nature. For Hall, any good works that proceed from this new life of faith are attributed “all to Christ.” Hall says,

They that serve Christ in newness of Spirit never suppose that they can merit anything at the hand of God by their best works—Whatever their attainments may be they entirely renounce them as a means of acceptance with God—They see such defects in their best services that they know if they are weighed in the balance they can be nothing.¹⁴³

Hall then reflects on how the law brings about the knowledge of sin and therefore conviction and condemnation to the soul. The sinner who has not fled to Christ is still under a merited curse and thus will always be harassed with the fear of God. When the believer rightly understands the glory of Christ’s work, they will serve him in full gratitude. One of Hall’s concluding admonitions follows:

The duties which a Christian performs are performed with a constant recollection of what Jesus Christ has done for him—They feel ashamed that they can present no more to such a benefactor, but they give themselves—Every part of the duties of a Christian are performed after the pattern of the Saviour. They strive to clothe themselves with the humility and love of the blessed Saviour—To be with him and

¹⁴¹Hall, “But now we are delivered from the law,” 54.

¹⁴²Hall, “But now we are delivered from the law,” 54.

¹⁴³Robert Hall, “But now we are delivered from the law,” 55–6.
like him is their highest idea of heaven—The influence of the union of believers with Christ is expressed by the metaphor of their being married to another.¹⁴⁴

### Hall as a Theological Exemplar

Finally, a brief consideration needs to be given to two circular letters that Hall wrote for the Northamptonshire Association. The first, *On the Work of the Holy Spirit*, was written in 1809, and the second, *On Hearing the Word*, in 1813.¹⁴⁵ At the head of each of these annual circular letters of the Northamptonshire Association was a précis of theological tenets, which reads,

Maintaining inviolably, the important doctrines of three equal persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; efficacious grace in regeneration; the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the future judgment; the eternal happiness of the righteous, and everlasting misery of such as die impenitent; with the congregational order of the churches.¹⁴⁶

For the sake of associational unity, such “an abstract of principles” was deemed sufficient as a summary of the doctrines found in *The Second London Confession*, which was the formal statement of faith of the Association. Considering Hall’s outright denial of particular redemption and his often hazy views on doctrines such as original sin and election, it might at first be perplexing to wonder how Hall could have participated so openly and in good conscience with his Particular Baptist contemporaries. When one understands Hall’s negative views regarding confessions of faith, his support of personal liberty, and his extreme emphasis on piety and the personal Christian life,

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¹⁴⁴ Hall, “But now we are delivered from the law,” 57.


¹⁴⁶ This précis of belief is drawn from the circular letter of 1814. The opening section reads, “Assembled at Leicester, on the 31st of May, and the 1st and 2nd of June, 1814.”
understanding Hall’s associations becomes a little clearer. Comprehending Hall’s theology and his influence is a different matter.

Some Particular Baptists joined the New Connexion of General Baptists in reconstituting the Baptist Union in 1832, and they incorporated a new statement of faith defined by a pledge of “sentiments usually denominated evangelical,” a great contrast to the previous covenant that was full of doctrinal particulars.147 Robert Oliver has questioned the assessment of E. A. Payne, among others, who asserts that it was the theology of Andrew Fuller that led to a “change in attitude” among the Particular Baptists. Citing only Hall’s rejection of particular redemption, his friendship with General Baptists, and the eventual influence of other open communionists in the vein of Hall, Oliver succinctly states, “It might be better to claim that the catalyst for change was the younger Robert Hall.”148

Working from Oliver’s suggestion, Austin Walker has argued that Hall played a leading role, although perhaps unconsciously, in the decline of historic Calvinism among the Particular Baptists of the early nineteenth century. Walker states, “Hall’s theology was not identical to that of his Particular Baptist forefathers, including Andrew Fuller, and he made a significant contribution towards what Frank Rinaldi has called an “erosion of distinctives” between General and Particular Baptists.”149 While Walker’s


149Austin Walker, unpublished paper, “Robert Hall Jr. (1764–1831) and the decline of historic Calvinism among the Particular Baptists of the nineteenth century,” presented for The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.
overall thesis is here affirmed and while it is outside the purview of this work to provide a full examination of all the nuances of Hall’s theology, the reasons Walker provides for Hall’s theological influence, including his analysis of Hall’s theology can be clarified by looking at Hall’s sermons and his ministry.

First, Hall’s sermons demonstrate that he had a high view of Scripture, believing the Bible to be necessary and authoritative not only in regard to conversion but also for the believer’s ongoing life in Christ. Second, Hall’s preaching confirms that he held to a biblical understanding of God’s character, adopting a Trinitarian theology at Cambridge and thus abandoning any early heterodox dabbling into the duality of the Godhead and rejecting any leanings towards Socinianism by adhering to a robust orthodox Christology.150

Third, early in his ministry Hall did indeed deny the federal headship of Adam as it relates to original sin and there is no evidence he ever changed his position.151 He also once famously debated Andrew Fuller regarding total depravity, and differed with Fuller regarding how reason and “proofs” could be employed to argue for such things as God’s existence. However, Hall’s language regarding sin as found in his sermons seems


151 Walker notes how B. B. Warfield analyzed the New Divinity and how they rejected the imputation of Adam’s sin and their view that men are condemned only for their own sin, a view identical to that which Hall held. It is unclear, however, how much Hall may have been influenced by the New Divinity.
to indicate that Hall moved towards Fuller’s Calvinistic understanding of depravity.\(^\text{152}\)

Fourth, Hall seemed to hold to the Calvinistic understanding of conversion and regeneration, believing the sinner to be dead in his trespasses and reliant solely upon the Spirit’s work to have new life in Christ. Fifth, although Hall never changed his position regarding particular redemption and although some of his language is remarkably “metaphysical” in relation to Christ’s death, Hall certainly seems to affirm the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death on the cross.

Sixth, although Hall clearly had sympathies with Baxter, his sermons argue for the traditional Calvinistic understanding of justification by faith through the imputed righteousness of Christ. Austin Walker has suggested that Hall’s theology was closer to the analysis neonomianism of Richard Baxter, but he obviously fails to account for Hall’s sermons that not only use the language of imputation but forcefully defend it as fundamental biblical doctrine. There are several others sermons by Hall related to justification and faith, and therefore any assertion that Hall “espoused a less than biblical doctrine of justification by faith” needs to be provisionally shelved until further study into Hall’s theology of justification is conducted.

A number of reasons can be given as to why Hall as a preacher is to be viewed as a theological exemplar, or to use Oliver’s term, a “catalyst,” for theological change. One of the most immediate ways one can view Hall as a theological exemplar in his preaching is during his Cambridge ministry. Hall’s impact at Cambridge cannot be overstated. The congregation prided themselves on selecting a new pastor who held what

\(^\text{152}\)For further analysis of Hall’s views on depravity, see Macleod, “Life and Teaching,” 362–66. Macleod analyzes Hall’s alongside Calvin and Fuller and essentially notes two points of contrast: Hall’s denial of federal headship and Hall’s elevation of reason.
they considered “radical doctrinal convictions” and who was almost as “liberal and unshackled as they were.” Hall had gone to Cambridge with “every intention of modifying the church’s views and with no intention at all of having them modify his.”

After Hall’s first sermon, a stirring defense of the atonement, a member of St. Andrews rebuked him, “Mr. Hall, this preaching won’t do for us: it will only suit a congregation of old women.” Hall wittily responded: “Do you mean my sermon, sir, or the doctrine?” When the man replied that his concern was over Hall’s doctrine and described it as befitting “the musings of people tottering upon the brink of the grave, and who are eagerly seeking comfort,” Hall replied forcefully, “Thank you, sir, for your concession. The doctrine will not suit people of any age, unless it be true; and if it be true, it is not fitted for old women alone, but is equally important at every age.”

In another instance, the senior deacon at Cambridge, William Hollick, reported that it was Hall’s preaching that kept him from becoming a Socinian, if not an outright infidel. It was not only Hall’s sermons, however, but also his larger pastoral ministry that impacted the people of Cambridge, and not always in a gentle fashion. On one occasion a supporter of Joseph Priestley, who had overheard Hall speaking well of the Birmingham minister, approached Hall and said, “Ah! sir, we shall have you among us soon, I see!” Hall replied, “Me among you, sir! me among you! Why, if that were ever

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154 White, St. Andrews Street Baptist Church Cambridge, 19.


the case, I should deserve to be tied to the tail of the great red dragon, and whipped round
the nethermost regions to all eternity!”157 John Greene, who first became acquainted with
Hall at Cambridge, best summarizes the theological example Hall set through his
preaching ministry at St. Andrews Street:

These discourses, however, as he delivered them, were by no means deficient in
orthodoxy. He divided rightly the word of truth, giving to every one his portion of
meat in due season . . . Such was the peculiarity of his situation, that, when I first
became acquainted with him, he was engaged in laying the foundations, raising the
outworks, and establishing the evidences of Christianity, before he could build up
his people in their most holy faith.158

Hall’s preaching was of such theological importance that at a time when he
was severely depressed and doubting the benefit of his ministry, one of the young people
praised the work of God through Hall in the church and stated, “we hear nothing of
Socinianism now, sir!”159

Hall’s influence was also seen in individuals personally impacted by his
preaching ministry. John Ryley of Cambridge and Thomas Wheeler of Dunstable both
relocated to Leicester to sit under Hall’s preaching.160 Elizabeth Coltman (1761–1838)
left the Greet Meeting, a Presbyterian congregation, and moved her membership to
Harvey Lane.161 His wonderful example can also been seen in the men who were
converted or called to ministry while sitting under his preaching. Consulting the church

159Greene, “Reminiscences,” 27.
161Timothy Whelan, Nonconformist Women Writers, 401–02, n. 132.
records at Harvey Lane, Sheila Mitchell records that John Mack, a Scotsman, arrived at Harvey Lane one Sunday in uniform “carrying an authorization to preach.” Mitchell notes that young man had probably been bought out of the army, “either by Hall or at his instigation.” Mack would pastor the congregation at Clipstone from 1814 to 1831.

Thomas Wheeler had wrestled with religious conviction at Northampton, but was not baptized until he heard Robert Hall preach in Dunstable. Mitchell writes, “So impressed was he that he left his job and followed Hall to Leicester in order to sit under his ministry.” Wheeler would serve a brief stint as a deacon at Harvey Lane. William Goodrich, previously a General Baptist, was ordained by Hall and sent out from Harvey Lane to Ravensthorpe, Northamptonshire. John Goodrich was baptized by Hall in 1808 and sent to Bristol in 1816 to prepare for the ministry. He was later sent to Langham, Essex, to serve as pastor. John Blakewell was baptized in 1823 and entered Bristol Academy although he later joined the Methodists. Edmund Hull was baptized in 1821, and after studying at Bristol became minister at Kingsbridge in 1831. William Simpson, another young man who had come to Harvey Lane from the General Baptists in 1812, was sent from Harvey Lane to be pastor at Bythorne. Finally, Thomas Woolston was sent from Harvey Lane in 1816 to a ministry among the villages.

Hall’s influence can also be seen in how he affected other ministers, some of whom were his contemporaries and others of whom would follow him. When James

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162 Sheila Mitchell, Not Disobedient: A history of United Baptist Church, Leicester including Harvey Lane 1760–1845, Belvoir Street 1845–1940, and Charles Street 1831–1940 (Leicester: United Baptist Church, 1984), 44.

163 Mitchell, Not Disobedient, 44.

164 Mitchell, Not Disobedient, 44.
Phillippo Mursell was ministering in Wells, he became acquainted with Hall. Mursell’s son Arthur, who later wrote his father’s biography, wrote, “And it was while residing there that Mr. Mursell formed the acquaintance of the illustrious Robert Hall, whose matchless eloquence and lofty attributes exercised so marked an influence upon his mind and methods.”\(^{165}\) Hall had such a remarkable impact on Mursell that his son remarked that it was Hall’s influence that led his father to succeed him at Leicester, and thus “to give preference to the advances made by the Leicester Church over the equally pressing overtures of the church in Birmingham.”\(^{166}\) Mursell kept a portrait of Hall in his study and would frequently gaze upon it while perusing Hall’s sermons which, alongside the works of Andrew Fuller, were his constant guide in the ministry next to the Scriptures.

Although Harvey Lane did not accept open communion while Hall was the pastor, Hall did establish what was known as the “Little Church,” which allowed paedobaptists to attend services at Harvey Lane, while not holding full membership or participating in the church ordinances. Hugh Evans at Broadmead had actually started the concept of the “little church” when a group of paedobaptists needed a place to worship, to celebrate their own Lord’s Supper, and to conduct their own church affairs.\(^{167}\) Hall took the practice to Harvey Lane where numerous paedobaptists would worship,


\(^{166}\) Mursell, *James Phillippo Mursell*, 26. In this section of the book, Arthur Mursell includes the letter Hall wrote to James Phillippo Mursell to persuade him to take the Leicester pastorate, Mursell, *James Phillippo Mursell*, 26–31. Later he includes another letter and says that Hall sent his father a total of six letters all relating to the opening at Leicester (135–38).

\(^{167}\) C. Sidney Hall and Harry Mowvley, *Tradition and Challenge: The Story of Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol from 1685 to 1991* (Bristol: Broadmead Baptist Church, 1991), 19. The authors show how the “little church” practice at Broadmead lasted almost a hundred years until the two churches joined in 1853.
although they were not full members.\textsuperscript{168} It did not take long, however, for Mursell to lead the church to adopt open communion as its practice. Upon a return to Leicester, Hall remarked, “You must be a wonderful man, Mr. Mursell; you’ve done in a month what I could not do in eighteen years.”\textsuperscript{169} Mursell mimicked Hall in many ways, however, and it was clear that he had accomplished something for which Hall had clearly paved the way.

Robert Hall was a theological exemplar, not because he was a model pastor-theologian as Fuller or rigorous theological systematician in the vein of Gill but because he was a preacher who neglected theology in his preaching. This is the most striking feature of Hall’s preaching ministry. He was a catalyst for change not necessarily because he personally abandoned or modified certain tenets held by both his Particular Baptist forefathers and contemporaries but because he neglected the consistent and vigorous defense of such theology in the pulpit.

Again it should be repeated that Hall did not neglect theology entirely in his preaching. Analyzing Hall’s theology from his sermons is often easy, as Hall makes clear and forceful arguments in his defense of biblical doctrine and in opposition to theological errors seen in systems such as Socinianism and antinomianism. Other sermons, such as \textit{On the Substitution of the Innocent for the Guilty}, while fully orthodox, almost seem like an exercise in what Hall wished to avoid the most: metaphysical speculation. Still other sermons neglect a robust presentation entirely in favor of a more

\textsuperscript{168}Of this practice, Sheila Mitchell writes, “In later years these were referred to as “communicants” and their number was always given separately alongside the annual church statistics” (Mitchell, \textit{Not Disobedient}, 51).

\textsuperscript{169}Mursell, \textit{James Phillippo Mursell}, 33.
pietistic approach to preaching.

No other observer captures the essence of Hall’s theological preaching as succinctly or clearly as the “correspondent” who provided a critical analysis of Hall’s writings for *The Pulpit* following Hall’s death. First, he praises Hall for his religious sentiments and how they were proclaimed. He observed:

The sentiments of this author may be truly designated by a term, in our opinion, superior to the common and current phrases of orthodox or evangelical, viz. scriptural. From those high and sacred sources, though as independent a thinker as ever breathed, he drew all his religious tenets. The doctrine of the Trinity – the incarnation – the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit – the atonement – justification by faith – regeneration – the obligation of the moral law on believers – personal holiness – the resurrection – the judgment – the future state of rewards and punishments, of eternal duration – are not merely admitted, but inculcated, with the views of a philosopher, the energy of a champion, the learning of a scholar, the eloquence of an orator, and the affection of a friend.\(^{170}\)

It is the critique later provided from this correspondent that rightly defines Hall as a theological exemplar. He declared:

But nothing human is faultless; and every human production is a legitimate subject of criticism: the sun has spots in him. In Mr. Hall’s discourses, there is too little theology, and the Scripture are too sparingly quoted. Neither does he present the truth in any decisive character, of Calvinistic or Arminian; so that his sentiments on these points cannot be known from his works; while truth compels us to add, there is sometimes too much sharpness and acrimony discovered, for a minister, whom the apostle has said is “to be gentle toward all men.”\(^{171}\)

There were probably numerous factors that led to the theological controversies the Baptists faced in the latter nineteenth century. This decline in robust theological sermons, however, must certainly have been one cause of the increasing erosion of doctrinal fidelity among the Baptists. If this was the case, then Hall certainly must have

\(^{170}\text{A Critical Analysis of the Writings of the Late Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. [From a Correspondent],” *The Pulpit* 430 (1831), 287.}\)

\(^{171}\text{“Critical Analysis of the Writings of the Late Rev. Robert Hall,” 287.}\)
been one of the primary catalysts, and it would have been easy for him to exert such a powerful influence, because no other Baptist at the time had the widespread celebrity status that Hall held.
CHAPTER 5
THE FAME OF ROBERT HALL, JR: THE PREACHER AS A CULTURAL CELEBRITY

Romanticism and the Rise of Celebrities in England

According to Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), to celebrate an individual was “to commend” or “to praise.” As Hall’s life and ministry were coming to a close, Johnson’s dictionary still included a very simple entry for the word “celebrity”: “fame, celebration.”¹ Even in this simple definition, however, there is an important distinction. There is a sense in which anyone can be praised, and thus celebrated, but to achieve the status of a celebrity seems to require a wide and continuous succession of praise, for what else would bring a person “fame.” A celebrity, therefore, is here thought of as one who was lavished with such praise and commendation that they achieved an unprecedented level of fame.

Throughout history there have always been individuals who became celebrities, especially in a secular context and primarily through power, wealth, or privilege. While the church has always had its central figures and leading characters, it rarely had individuals that could be considered cultural celebrities. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England, however, provided fertile soil for the budding of new celebrities, both secular and religious, through an environment increasingly

¹Samuel Johnson, Johnson’s Dictionary (Boston: Benjamin Perkins and Company, 1828), 56.
shaped by the tenets of the Romantic movement.²

Romanticism was not simply a movement of literary taste and excellence. David Bebbington has noted that Romanticism “was well fitted to be a vehicle for religious thought.”³ Bebbington admits he is not using the term Romanticism in the “narrow sense of the literary generation that was fading by the 1820s” but in the “broad sense of the whole mood that was inaugurated by that generation and lasted throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.”⁴ It is this “mood” that stressed feeling, intuition, and human experience as they are influenced by human perception, nature, and history.⁵ In a later work, Bebbington uses similar terms more fully to discuss the “permeation” of Romanticism throughout the nineteenth century as it emphasized the “will, spirit, and emotion.”⁶ In this latter work, Bebbington deals with critical issues such as Romanticism’s impact on evangelicalism’s views on evolutionary thinking and the doctrines of God, the Bible, and the atonement. It is his section on the “language of religion” that begins to reveal how Romanticism and its emphasis on human experience created a new environment for preachers and preaching. He writes, “The result was to


³D. W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s (London: Routledge, 1989), 80.

⁴Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 80–81.

⁵Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 81.

encourage an exuberant grandiloquence that, in its ablest exponents, overwhelmed awed congregations.”

There is at least one other crucial contextual factor for an understanding of Hall as a celebrity. Robin Jarvis has argued that during the Romantic period “the peculiar nature of the alliance between the Church and State meant that religion and politics were tightly interwoven.” Jarvis divides the period into two main phases: the impact of the French Revolution in the 1790s, and post-war radicalism leading to reform in the period from 1828–1832. While the latter period was at the close of Hall’s life and ministry, the former period was when Hall was in his prime and when he was being established as a national celebrity, both for his politics and his preaching. The swirling and often unstable political and religious world, along with the new “mood” ushered in by Romanticism, make it easy to see how the cultural atmosphere became pregnant, simply awaiting the birth of celebrities.

**Lord Byron: The Poet as Cultural Celebrity**

Romanticism gave great impetus to the rise of the cult of celebrity in England, something that is seen clearly in figures such as George Gordon (1788–1824), later known simple as Lord Byron, who became a celebrity perhaps just as much for his personality as for his poetry. Ghislaine McDayter begins his work on Byron by introducing the “myth” that Byron became an “overnight sensation” and simply “awoke

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7Bebbington, *Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 161.

8Jarvis, *The Romantic Period*, 130.
to find himself famous one sunny morning in the spring of 1812."\(^{9}\) This was something entirely new with regard to literary figures and McDayter writes, “Authors had certainly been popular before and had even inspired adoring followers but Byron’s popularity demanded an altogether new term to describe its power: *Byromania.*”\(^{10}\) It was often a “mass hysteria” described by McDayter as follows:

Byron was the first to bask in this glow of “mob” adoration, and he reportedly watched the excitement he inspired with a blend of satisfaction and bemusement. . . . crowds gathered outside his publisher’s office on Albemarle Street in the hope of a momentary glimpse of Byron’s trademark “sardonic smile” or a copy of his newest blockbuster publication. The poet’s every social activity was recorded and he became the most sought-after guest at the table of the rich and famous. Women fainted upon meeting him, . . . men envied him, and a deluge of fan letters poured in from all over the country.\(^{11}\)

Quite often those who became celebrities did so because of intentional efforts and outrageous self-promotion and Byron was no different. Numerous reasons have been offered for Byron’s rapid rise to fame. First, he was renowned for his handsome appearance, which caused him to be adored by hoards of emotionally charged females but which he often purposefully enhanced by sleeping with curl papers in his hair. He had an electric personality that often made him a lightning rod for both criticism and praise. Byron appealed to many because of the sheer genius, novelty, and Romantic spirit of his writings, and “legitimate men” often greatly esteemed him for his rebellion against “the old order” in favor of freedom and individual experience.\(^{12}\) McDayter sees the cult of


\(^{10}\)McDayter, *Byromania and the Birth of Celebrity Culture*, 2.

\(^{11}\)McDayter, *Byromania and the Birth of Celebrity Culture*, 2

celebrity that surrounded Byron as being the confluence of all these factors as well as his “British chauvinism, autobiographical curiosity, and by his much advertised sex appeal.”13

Such celebrities were not limited, however, to secular life. Religious life was also greatly impacted by Romanticism, and many of the same traits that created celebrities in secular life, for the first time, caused preachers to become national sensations.

**Whitefield, Irving, Chalmers, and Hill: Preachers as Cultural Celebrities**

As has been mentioned, the rise of religious celebrities was not wholly dependent upon Romanticism. Before the advent of the Romantic Movement, the mid-eighteenth century saw the rise of the first real celebrity in the religious culture of England, the great preacher and evangelist George Whitefield (1714–1770). Whitefield was perhaps the most famous religious figure of the eighteenth century, and his popularity spread far and wide, even across the Atlantic and throughout the colonies leading him to become a celebrity, even being called America’s first celebrity.14 Whitefield’s legacy is well known as his powerful oratory drew thousands at a time to hear the famous preacher.

There is one factor that distinguished Whitefield from other preachers who


would become celebrities. Harry Stout argues that Whitefield sought to be a celebrity. While Whitefield’s intentions are debatable, Stout does gather evidence that at the very least, Whitefield understood certain self-promotional tactics. He writes, “From his youth, he wanted to be a star, and the particular egotistical self-promotion he displayed in his career was very much in the manner of the great actor.”

Stout’s entire work discusses how, although most clerics steered clear of self-promotion, Whitefield used it along with aggrandized theatrics in his preaching to establish his fame wherever he went. Stout suggests Whitefield “neglected no art or medium as he began the steep climb of self-promotion.” As his celebrity status increased, Stout argues that Whitefield used his “genius for self-promotion” to “build on the momentum.”

Soon other preachers would rise to prominence, their sermons attended by crowds of attentive and often adoring auditors and published for a society ravenous for their works. Rowland Hill (1744–1833), the longtime pastor of Surrey Chapel in London, became a renowned preacher who spoke to thousands throughout England. The slow rise of preaching celebrities extended beyond England to neighboring Scotland where ten years after Whitefield died, Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847), preacher, theologian, and eventual leader of the Free Church of Scotland was born. His ministry


was remarkable and he quickly attained the status of a celebrity. Crowds gathered to hear Chalmers preach and his popularity spread throughout Scotland and England, especially after his visits to London. Robert Hall was impressed by Chalmers and knew of his rising popularity and wrote to him after one of Chalmers’s visits to London:

It would be difficult not to congratulate you on the unrivalled and unbounded popularity which attended you in the metropolis, but that I am convinced, from the extreme modesty of your nature, such an overwhelming tide of distinction and applause would be quite distressing to you. When you consider the thousands, however, who have probably benefitted by the unparalleled energy of your public ministrations, you will be more easily reconciled to the inconvenience inseparable from high celebrity. The attention which your sermons have excited is probably unequalled in modern literature, and it must be a delightful reflection that you are advancing the cause of religion in innumerable multitudes of your fellow-creatures, whose faces you will never behold till the last day.

Edward Irving (1792–1834) was born in Scotland and worked as an assistant to Thomas Chalmers, but garnered a widespread notoriety primarily after his move to England to pastor the Caledonian Church at Hatton Garden, London. Unlike other preachers, but much like Lord Byron, Irving was an eccentric and electric personality who amazed his audiences. Like Hill and Chalmers, even more like Whitefield, Irving often sought to create an image that would enhance his celebrity. Bebbington writes,

His capacity for self-dramatisation was enhanced by a striking physical appearance – an athletic figure standing six feet two inches, with a strong, rich bass voice. In

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20Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, vol. 1, 429.

his later years the hair, in the manner of an artistic genius, was parted right and left so as to hang down on his shoulders ‘in affected disorder.’ During 1823 his eloquence attracted the cream of fashionable society, so that on one Sunday no fewer than thirty-five carriages bearing aristocratic coronets were counted outside his church.22

During this period of religious life in England, and especially regarding nonconformist preachers, it must again be noted that no single factor led to an individual becoming a celebrity. The preachers mentioned above were all very different. From the ingenuity and energy of Whitefield to the Romantic-inspired eccentricities of Irving, celebrities were being born across a broad range of religious affiliation. A study of history and simple human experience instructs, however, that there are always some common factors exhibited among men who experience such notoriety.

First, the most common pattern of individuals attaining the status of a celebrity was the course and substance of their work, so in regard to preachers, their ministry of public proclamation of the Scriptures. These preachers saw their reputations enlarged among the populace as their sermons were published and as they addressed increasingly large crowds, often for special occasions. For dissenting preachers particularly, those who made appeals for liberty and for the importance of individual Christian experience also endeared themselves to the masses.

However, their reputations were often heightened by a dynamic or eccentric personality, displayed outside the pulpit in social conversation and private correspondence often marked by brilliance and wit. Finally, it must not be forgotten that physical appearance also played a vital role in sealing one’s status as a celebrity. These preachers saw their popularity spread nationwide by word of mouth and by various forms

22Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 78–79.
of media. As their lives ended, their memories were often honored at funerals attended by the masses, and their names and legacies endured in print and in art.

As the eighteenth century came to a close and nonconformity continued to navigate its way through the turbulent waters of religious life in England, celebrities were arising in every sphere of life and in seemingly every religious sect and denomination, except however among the Baptists. In a period where dissent often meant instability, the Baptists needed a voice, perhaps a celebrity. The Baptists had numerous individuals who had been leaders within their ranks, but they never had a true celebrity among the wider culture. Their first celebrity would come in the form of a man who did not seek such a status, but who by his persona and incomparable talents propelled him to fame. The first true cultural celebrity among the Baptists was Robert Hall, Jr.

**The Lion of Leicester: Hall as a Conversationalist**

Although it was Robert Hall’s brilliant mind and incomparable ability as a preacher that commenced and then solidified his status as a celebrity, he was possibly just as famous among those who interacted with him as a man and a conversationalist. He possessed a vivacious yet eccentric personality, which, when combined with his quick wit and biting sarcasm, heightened his reputation. William Jay (1769–1853) said that Hall’s “powers of conversation were equal to those of his preaching” and that some “have thought they even surpassed them.”

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enjoyed the company of “cultivated females, who had the taste to lend him an ear.”

Throughout his life, however, Hall loved good company and some of the most well-known memories of Hall were from his social life and private conversations. George Gilfillan (1813–1878) recalls how Hall was constantly bombarded with visitors, often distinguished men or ministers, who were certain to “circulate his repartees, and spread abroad his fame.”

Gilfillan writes:

We have met with some of those who have seen and heard him talk and preach, and their accounts have coincided in this – that he was more powerful in the parlor than in the pulpit. He was more at ease in the former. He had his pipe in his mouth, his tea-pot beside him, eager ears listening to catch his every whisper – bright eyes raining influence on him; and, under these varied excitements, he was sure to shine. His spirits rose, his wit flashed, his keen and pointed sentences thickened, and his auditors began to imagine him a Baptist Burke, or a Johnson Redivivus, and to wish that Boswell were to undergo a resurrection too. In these evening parties he appeared, we suspect, to greater advantage than in the mornings, when ministers from all quarters called to see the lion of Leicester.

Hall would impress people with his speech, which was often “rapid, ready, clear, and pointed – often brilliant, not unfrequently wild and daring,” and yet the large doses of ether and laudanum he took often caused him to be “strung up always to the highest pitch.” Gilfillan noted that many men would have been “unnerved” by such a regimen, but for Hall “it added greatly to the natural brilliance of his conversational powers, although sometimes it appears to have irritated his temper.”


26Gilfillan, Third Gallery of Portraits, 78.

27Gilfillan, Third Gallery of Portraits, 78.

28Gilfillan, Third Gallery of Portraits, 79.
Recalling both family and personal memories of Hall, John Dix (1829–1864) recorded, “In the foremost rank of modern Pulpit Orators, was Robert Hall, and he was scarcely less eccentric as a man, than remarkable as a preacher.” Then he wrote,

Long before I ever saw this truly great man, I had heard his name frequently mentioned in my father’s family, and Iearly learned to associate it with all that was great and extraordinary. My mother would tell me how she had often seen him, when a student in the Baptist Theological College, at Bristol, pacing the streets with only one stocking on, or occasionally with two on one foot. And from all quarters, I gleaned such information respecting him, as made me long to behold the man of whom such stories were related.

The stories told of Hall were circulated continuously and by scores of individuals. Arthur Mursell wrote, “Large collections of morceaux from the conversational stores of Robert Hall have been sent forth into the world.” Mursell then commented on how his father would tell his children and his friends stories of Hall hour after hour. In his biography of his father, Mursell includes two such popularly-reported anecdotes of Hall’s wit and sarcasm. Once a conceited, yet apparently unskilled and unready, young preacher desperately wanted to preach and reminded Hall “we are told not to wrap up our talent in a napkin.” Hall then responded, “You needn’t go to the expense of a napkin, sir; a pocket-handkerchief will cover all that you will ever find to put into it!” On another occasion, during Hall’s recovery period earlier in his ministry, someone harshly

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30 Dix, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, 57.


33 Mursell, *James Phillippo Mursell*, 77.
remarked, “Dear Mr. Hall, what brings you here?” to which Hall responded, “What will never bring you here, sir – too many brains.”

Hall’s sarcasm had made people wary of him earlier in life, yet as his popularity increased, it seemed his witty, yet often piercing banter, served to heighten his fame. Once when Hall was touring a cathedral with J. P. Mursell, Hall remarked about the Bishop’s throne, “Oh that’s the Bishop’s throne, is it, sir? a very fine piece of work, sir. . . The Bishop had better make the most of it; it’s all of heaven he’ll ever know!”

On another occasion, a young minister whom Hall heard preach asked for his opinion on the sermon. Hall told the eager young preacher that there “was one fine passage.” When the young man excitedly asked for Hall to clarify, Hall obliged, “Why, Sir, the passage I allude to, was your passage from the pulpit to the vestry.”

Before ever hearing Hall preach, John Dix had the opportunity of beholding some additional eccentricities of Hall’s personality related to his public ministry. Dix had gone to Bristol to hear Hall preach, and Hall soon entered the vestry surrounded by a great number of ministers. Hall was evidently in pain, and Dix describes how the events unfolded:

After he had divested himself of his great coat, he had a pipe and some tobacco brought him, and having puffed away for a little time, he pulled off his dress coat, lay down on his back on the hearth rug, and was soon enveloped in a cloud of smoke. This, I learned, was his usual habit, before entering the pulpit. The agony he endured compelled him to spend a great portion of his time in a recumbent position, and it was only by the use of tobacco and opium, in large quantities, that he could ever obtain even comparative ease. His custom was to smoke prodigiously

34Mursell, James Phillippo Mursell, 77.

35Mursell, James Phillippo Mursell, 24.

36Dix, Pen and Ink Sketches, 65.
until the very moment arrived when it was required of him to commence his sermon. He would then rise, leave his pipe at the door of the pulpit, in readiness for him to resume his Nicotian habit, the moment after he had concluded his discourse.37

Dix later wrote that Hall was so addicted to his pipe that often after preaching Hall would light his pipe using the fire from the pulpit lamps.38 These types of idiosyncrasies literally made of Hall a legendary figure.

During Hall’s day, a new trend was for individuals to keep and trade memento albums, often seeking simple signatures or brief correspondence from society’s notable individuals. Hall was so popular that people would often send him their albums requesting Hall’s signature and a few lines from his pen. A lady friend of John Dix asked him to pass her album along to Hall. The response the woman received was vintage Hall. Along with his signature, in an almost illegible hand, Hall had written, “It is my humble opinion that albums are very foolish things.”39

Hall was not simply remembered as a man who kept elite company. The people in his congregations adored him, a reality that often made things more difficult for those who followed in Hall’s footsteps. After Hall left Harvey Lane, his successor J. P. Mursell visited a “humble” woman in the congregation, and finding her busy with her household duties replied that they could pray together at a later time when it was more

37 Dix, Pen and Ink Sketches, 59.
38 Dix, Pen an Ink Sketches, 69. Dix also wrote how those who spent time in Hall’s company were often treated to humorous situations that resulted from aspects of Hall’s unique personality such as his absentmindedness. One evening at a large tea party in Bristol, Hall drank numerous cups of tea and asked for a fresh tea spoon each time. When the lady serving the tea became perplexed as to the location of all her tea spoons, all eyes were fixed on Hall until he moved from his seat where twenty-six spoons were then discovered in the place where he sat. Dix wrote, “On Hall’s returning to the room, he was informed of his unconscious petty larceny, but he disclaimed all knowledge of the affair,” Pen and Ink Sketches, 66.
39 Dix, Pen and Ink Sketches, 66.
convenient. The woman remarked, “Why, Mr. Hall, he used to come and see me, and he never went away without a word of prayer. He’d sit upon a lump of coal, and smoke his pipe, and then kneel down and pray against the wash-tub as if it had been an altar.” The personal characteristics that exemplified Hall, both the man and his ministry, were simply the shell of Hall’s celebrity. None would argue, however, that the inner substance of his celebrity was his incomparable ability as a preacher.

The Thousand-Stringed Harp: Hall as a Rhetorician

While Hall was certainly notable as a conversationalist, it was his preaching that made him a true celebrity. S. A. Swaine considered Hall to be the most distinguished student ever to attend Bristol Baptist College and called Hall “probably the most eloquent of sacred orators who as yet have lived.” Joseph Cottle (1770–1833) praised Hall as a writer of “pre-eminent excellence,” but then called him “a sacred orator that exceeded all competition” and said “as a preacher, he stood, collected in solitary grandeur.” Cottle even recalled the testimony of the Scottish philosopher and mathematician Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), who said that Hall had all the “excellencies of Addison, Johnson, and Burke, without their defects.” A report after Hall’s death praised his preaching as “far superior, in magnificence of thought and expression, to ordinary preaching” and

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40Sheila Mitchell, Not Disobedient: A history of United Baptist Church, Leicester including Harvey Lane 1760–1845, Belvoir Street 1845–1940, and Charles Street 1831–1940 (Leicester: United Baptist Church, 1984), 50.

41Stephen Albert Swaine, Faithful Men; or, Memorials of Bristol Baptist College, and Some of Its Most Distinguished Alumni (London: Alexander & Shepheard, 1884), 100.

42Joseph Cottle, Early Recollections; Chiefly Relating to the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge, During His Long Residence in Bristol, (London: Longman, Rees, & Co., 1837), 1:98.

43Cottle, Early Recollections, 100.
described Hall’s preaching “like harmony poured forth by a harp of a thousand strings.”

A Striking Physical Appearance

Hall’s physical appearance contributed to his powerful effect as a preacher and rhetorician. Early in his ministry his strong athletic build stuck people, and even as time progressed his commanding presence awed his congregations. Before he even stepped behind the sacred desk, Hall’s physical presence could captivate some of his auditors. John Foster (1770–1843) recalls:

But, for myself, I doubt whether I was not quite as much arrested by his appearance . . . immediately before the sermon . . . With his eyes closed, his features as still as in death and his head sinking down almost on his chest, he presented an image of entire abstraction. It was interesting to imagine the strong internal agency which it was certain was then employed on the yet unknown subject about to be unfolded to the auditory.

Hall’s appearance made an immediate and profound impression on those who had only heard of him but had never seen him. John Dix remembered the first time he saw Hall:

After we had waited for about a quarter of an hour, Mr. Hall made his appearance. He was rather below the average height, stout, and inclining to corpulence. His chest was very broad and capacious – the face large, and its features massive. His eyes were large, dark, and full, and his forehead high and broad. The head, which was bald, except at the back, and over the temples, had an indescribable grandeur to it. The worst part of his face was the mouth, which was very large, and the under lip somewhat protruded; the chin was large and projecting. This gave an appearance of heaviness to his general aspect. Brougham once said of his physiognomy, ‘Robert Hall has a face – the upper part of which belongs to an angel, the lower to a demon.’

Although Dix attributes this last saying to Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868), later


45For the two most famous portraits of Hall, see Appendix 2, Figures A2 and A3.


47Dix, Pen and Ink Sketches, 58–59.
known simply as Lord Brougham, J. B. Waterbury believes Hall himself first uttered the saying. In his own description of Hall’s appearance, Waterbury says, “Mr. Hall’s appearance was striking. He possessed an athletic and well-proportioned figure, eyes of uncommon lustre, expressive of sharp wit and lofty intellect, unassuming modesty, winning frankness of manner, and an enthusiasm that readily kindled and communicated its fire to others.”

Waterbury then noted:

As he grew older, the forehead – a calm, majestic pile – was denuded towards the crown, giving additional force and dignity to the whole countenance. He had an unconquerable aversion to having his likeness taken, but it was secured clandestinely while preaching. His friends hung it in his study over night, and watched the effect. Scrutinizing the picture for a while, he place his hand midway over the face, and said to himself – such is the story – ‘The upper part, forehead and eyes, angelic; the lower, mouth and chin, Satanic.’

It seems that all who heard Hall were struck by his appearance and made a description of it necessary for any review of Hall’s preaching. Cottle commented that Hall had a “dignified figure that secured the deference which was never exacted; a capacious forehead; an eye, in the absence of excitement, dark, yet placid, but when warmed with argument, flashing almost coruscations of light, as the harmonious accompaniments of his powerful language.”

Hall’s eyes were a feature that often mesmerized his congregations. Newton Bosworth made the following remark about Hall’s eyes: “Whether beaming with benignity, or lighted up with intelligence, or blazing with intense and hallowed feeling, that eye indicated sentiments and emotions which words were not made to express.”

\[^{48}\]Waterbury, Sketches, 92.

\[^{49}\]Waterbury, Sketches, 93.

\[^{50}\]Cottle, Early Recollections, 99.
Cottle recalled, “the eye, that always awed, progressively advanced in expression; til warmed with his immortal subject it kindled into absolute radiance, that, with its piercing beams, penetrated the very heart.” George Gilfillan described Hall’s appearance thus:

Yet his face was far from being a handsome one. Indeed, it reminded some people of an exaggerated frog’s. But the amplitude of his forehead, the brilliance of his eye, and the strength and breadth of his chest, marked him out always from the roll of common men, and added greatly to the momentum both of his conversation and his preaching.

Foster likewise records, “His personal appearance was in striking conformity to the structure and temper of his mind. A large-built, robust figure was in perfect keeping with a countenance formed as if on purpose for the most declared manifestation of internal power, a power impregnable in its own strength, as in a fortress.”

**A Beautifully Modulated Voice**

Hall’s voice was rather feeble not possessing the resounding nature of other famous orators. Foster famously wrote that Hall “uniformly began his sermons in a low voice.” In addition to his faint volume, he also did not have “much compass or variety of tone.” Although his “tones” were often low and often kept constant during the introductory portion of his discourses, when his excitement was aroused his vocal changes were described as being “beautifully modulated.” His voice was also described

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54 Foster, “Observations,” 100.

as “eminently flexible and harmonious.”⁵⁶ There were occasions, however, when “owing to some affection in his throat, his speech was, at short intervals, interrupted by a short spasmodic cough.” It was almost a rule that Hall began his sermons in a voice that required “utmost stillness to catch the opening sentences.”⁵⁷ As he continued, however, his voice “gathered strength, lost its huskiness, rolled out in augmented volume . . . until every auditor was chained and led captive by an almost super-human eloquence.”⁵⁸

John Dix even remembered how the buildings in which Hall preached were often modified to both the preacher’s personality and ability. When he had heard Hall at Bristol, Dix remembered,

> The aisles had all been carpeted, an unusual thing, it is necessary to state, in those days, in order that no scuffling of feet should disturb the preacher, who was nervously alive to the slightest noise, and whose voice was so low, and at times tremulous, that unless perfect stillness was kept, it was a matter of difficulty to hear him.⁵⁹

**A Guileless Gesture**

Hall was not one for dramatic movement in the pulpit, rarely gesturing at all.⁶⁰ Dix wrote, “His favorite – or rather, his usual attitude – was, to stand and lean his chest against the cushion, his left arm lying on the Bible, and his right hand slightly raised, with the palm toward the audience.”⁶¹ Often there would be a “gentle swaying motion of

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⁵⁶Cottle, *Early Recollections*, 100.

⁵⁷Waterbury, *Sketches*, 93.

⁵⁸Waterbury, *Sketches*, 93.


⁶⁰For a pen and ink drawing showing Hall in the pulpit, using only the slight gesture of a raised hand see Appendix 2, Figure A4.

⁶¹Dix, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, 64.
his body as he poured forth a torrent of words.” Unless he was attacked by pain during a sermon, Hall’s face even kept an unaffected expression. Foster wrote, “That countenance was usually of a cool, unmoved mien at the beginning of the public service; and sometimes, when he was not greatly excited by his subject, or was repressed by pain, would not acquire a great degree of temporary expression during the whole discourse.”

**A Masterful Use of Language**

Hall’s ability to expound on any subject is described by many of his auditors as seemingly effortless. Dix wrote, “As he warmed with his subject, he poured forth such a continuous stream of eloquence, that it seemed as if it flowed from some inexhaustible source.” He added that Hall’s “fluency was wonderful, and his command of language unsurpassed” and that he had “the eloquence of an angel” and “seemed like one inspired” whose ideas “flowed forth without effort.” Another auditor remembered Hall’s smooth delivery and stated “that every sentiment he uttered was clothed in as mellifluous expressions as, perhaps, ever fell from the tongue of man.”

Hall’s effortless ability and masterful command of language was not without preparation. Waterbury clarifies, “He had the rare talent of putting down in his memory trains of thought and illustrations of varied beauty and sublimity, so that what seemed to

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64 Dix, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, 63.

65 Cottle, *Early Recollections*, 100.
be impromptu was the result of careful study and meditation.\textsuperscript{66} The ease with which Hall spoke was the result of a mind that had carefully and meticulously arranged its thoughts. Hall often remarked that he “premeditated the order and the train of thought, which he called cutting channels for the onflowing current, and then trusted to the occasion for the appropriate language.”\textsuperscript{67} Hall’s analytical ability brought ease to his preaching. Joseph Cottle summarized Hall’s ability well:

This habit of minute and general analysis, combined, as it was, with his fine, luminous intellect, enabled him, with almost intuitive discernment, to perceive, promptly, whatever was valuable or defective in the productions of others; and this faculty being conjoined with solid learning; extensive reading; a retentive memory; a vast store of diversified knowledge, and a logical mind; gave him at all times, an inobtrusive reliance on himself, with an inexhaustible mental treasury, that qualified him, alike, to shine in the friendly circle, or to charm, and astonish, and edify, in the crowded assembly.\textsuperscript{68}

\textbf{An Incomparable Imagination}

Hall was obviously well known for a brilliant mind, but it was his imagination that often sparked the greatest wonder among his hearers. This imagination afforded Hall the ability to illustrate and provide spectacular imagery throughout his sermons. One author wrote, “He uses the finest classical allusions, the noblest images, and the most exquisite words, as though they were those which came first to his mind; and which formed his natural dialect.” In the words of another: “The works of this great preacher are, in the highest sense of the term, imaginative, as distinguished not only from the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66}Waterbury, \textit{Sketches}, 96.
\item \textsuperscript{67}Waterbury, \textit{Sketches}, 96–97.
\item \textsuperscript{68}Cottle, \textit{Early Recollections}, 101–02.
\end{itemize}
didactic, but from the fanciful.”

He continued,

His noblest passages do but make truth visible in the form of beauty clothe upon abstract ideas, till they become palpable in exquisite shapes. The dullest writer would not convey the same meaning in so few words, as he has done in the most sublime of his illustrations. Imagination, when like his of the purest water, is so far from being improperly employed on divine subjects, that it only finds its real objects in the true and the eternal.

Although Foster writes of how the “power or activity” of Hall’s imagination declined during the latter years of his ministry, one can still understand the force of this aspect of Hall’s preaching when Foster writes of how Hall used “those striking images in which a series of thoughts seemed to take fire in passing on, to end in a still more striking figure, with the effect of an explosion.”

A Simplistic Sermon and Rapid Delivery

Hall’s eloquent language has been noted, however, his sermons were typically of a simple structure. When Hall was at Cambridge he normally preached from six to twelve verses of Scripture, dividing the sermon into an longer introductory section of observation and explanation and a more concise concluding section of personal appeal and application. While his sermons always referenced numerous Scriptures, as his methodology changed, especially at Leicester, his latter sermons tended to focus on fewer verses, so that his published sermons usually only list a verse or two at the head of each discourse, and even those verses were often minimally discussed.

Although Hall had a mastery of language and the ability to wax eloquent, he

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70“On Pulpit Oratory,” 186.

often kept his language simple. An analyst of Hall’s writings provides, perhaps, the best and most succinct description of Hall’s preaching style. He wrote,

   His style is purely English, destitute of every eccentricity, and perfectly natural. In it there are no hackneyed expressions of ordinary divines, and very few technical phrases. Every word is in its proper place; and yet seems as if it had dropped where it is. There is point without antithesis, and harmony without tinkling – learning without pedantry, and elegance without affectation. It is not the blooming wild, but the cultivated garden. Nothing low or light in it. It is happy combination of the dignity of history, and the elegance of poetry, with the flow of oratory, and the gravity of Scripture.72

   Early in his preaching ministry Hall would write his sermons out in full but rarely used notes in the pulpit. He once told Joseph Cottle that notes always “hampered” him.73 Notes were not altogether unimportant, however, for Hall advised J. P. Mursell, “I would advise you, sir, to always have some written work under your hand, for the purposes of mental discipline; but I would not write elaborately for the pulpit. My own habit is to fold the subject round in my mind in the study, and to unfold it in the pulpit.”74

   Hall was known as a rapid talker from his childhood and he was no different in the pulpit.75 Greene remarked, “His delivery was uncommonly rapid, occasioned by the astonishing flow of his ideas, which literally struggled for utterance.”76 His speech was


75Of Hall’s rapid speech, Robert Hall Warren writes, “It has been noticed that some of his descendants have inherited this rapidity of speech, and when it is combined with the second characteristic the result is appalling.” It certainly was not “appalling” in Hall’s preaching, but was indeed one of the characteristics that caused people to flock to hear him. See Warren, *The Hall Family* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1910), 35.

so rapid, in fact, that it made it extremely difficult for anyone to accurately record his sermons. One author records how short hand writers from London would attempt to take down Hall’s sermons, only to lay down their pens “in amazement and despair.” As Hall progressed through his sermons, his speech only gained momentum and speed. One hearer commented on Hall’s stunning conclusion, “The Rev. Gentleman concluded this head of discourse by one of the most rich, splendid amplifications on the inducements to repentance we ever heard; but the rapidity of his utterance, the multiplicity of his figures crowding upon the imagination and feelings, defied all attempts at writing, and fixed the reporter like a statue in admiration of the preacher.”

**The Prince of Preachers: Hall as a Cultural Celebrity**

Few compared to Hall, not only in his estimation as a popular preacher but especially regarding the effect he could have on his listeners. Lavish praise of his preaching and its effects were circulated among periodicals of his day cementing his status as a celebrity. In the February 1821 edition of *The London Magazine*, an article appeared entitled “On Pulpit Oratory.” It is listed as the first in a series of brief articles written on the subject and was subtitled simply, “Introduction; With Remarks on the Reverend Robert Hall.” The author began by commenting on the “decline of eloquence” in the political realm, in the courts of law, in orations given at charitable occasions, and then remarked upon the diminution of eloquence in the pulpit, lamenting that in England

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“the oratory of the pulpit has made so little progress.” The author then criticized ministers who did not faithfully fulfill their calling with zeal, both among the Church of England and the Protestant Dissenters, and yet offered exceptions in the likes of Jeremy Taylor (d. 1667) or George Whitefield. Then the author turns the reader’s attention to Robert Hall, whom he calls “perhaps the most distinguished ornament of the Calvinistic Dissenters.”

These types of reports caused Hall’s name to be commonplace throughout England. One anecdote proves this true. When James Mackintosh died unexpectedly in 1832 before submitting his memories of Hall to Olinthus Gregory, who was preparing Hall’s Works, Gregory instead turned to the brilliant Baptist essayist John Foster who penned Observations on Mr. Hall’s Character as a Preacher. Foster agreed reluctantly, because he felt the public already rightly esteemed Hall. Foster seems to allude to the numerous accounts and reviews of Hall’s preaching that had circulated when he wrote, “the public, besides, have been extensively and very long in possession of their own means of forming that judgment which has pronounced him the first preacher of the age.”

This celebration of Hall’s ministry began very early. Although they eventually endured a painful schism, Caleb Evans loved Hall, and in a letter to Mary Steele of Broughton, called him a “Man of Genius, Taste, & Sublimity of Soul” and stated that “I shall die in peace, & be happy to withdraw & leave the Church to be illuminated warm’d

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80 On Pulpit Oratory, ” 185.
81 Foster, “Observations,” 95.
& cheer’d by his rising beams.”  

In another letter to Steele, Evans wrote of how Hall’s preaching “awes, edifies, and delights me.”

In her diary from September 22, 1786, Jane Attwater speaks of her excitement to hear Hall, whom she called the “celebrated genius,” preach at Salisbury. As Hall continued his regular preaching duties at Broadmead in Bristol, it is noted, “his preaching excited an unusual attention, the place of worship was often crowded to excess, and many of the most distinguished men in Bristol, including several clergymen, were among his occasional auditors.” William Jay of Bath became acquainted with Hall when Hall was at Bristol and wrote, “He had been for some time before noticed, but he was then exciting peculiar attention, and rising into great fame.” By the time Hall was twenty-two, he was asked to preach the annual sermon for the Bristol Education Society, a task usually reserved for an older, more renowned preacher.

One writer said, “His eloquence, partaking the qualities of the two great masters and exemplars of the Grecian and Roman school, had no superior then, and is not likely to have any hereafter. In his peculiarities as a pulpit orator he was alone, and stood

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83 Caleb Evans, Downend, to Mary Steele, Broughton, [Tuesday], 19 July 1785,” in *Nonconformist Women Writers, 1720 – 1840*, 3:309.


87 Macleod, “Life and Teaching,” 64.
out in strong relief.”

The commentator then observed, “Others may have made a greater impression on promiscuous audiences, but none have gone down deeper in the reflective and cultivated British mind.”

The descriptions of Hall’s preaching may seem exaggerated, but the vast number of such similar reports shows Hall’s true greatness as a preacher from the very beginnings of his ministry. Joseph Cottle remembered Hall’s early preaching “when there was an energy in his manner, and a felicity, and copiousness in his language, which vibrated on the very verge of human capability,” and then later similarly described Hall’s abilities as “almost superhuman.”

George Gilfillan, along with others, argued that Hall’s preaching “was never so powerful after his derangement” and yet wrote,

To have heard him in Cambridge, must have been a treat almost unrivalled in the history of pulpit-oratory. In the prime of youth and youthful strength... his fancy exuberant, his language less select, perhaps, but more energetic and abundant than in later days; full of faith without fanaticism, and of ardor without excess of enthusiasm; with an eye like a coal of fire; a figure, strong, erect, and not yet encumbered with corpulence; a voice not loud, but sweet... and an utterance rapid as a mountain torrent — did this young apostle stand up, and, to an audience as refined and intellectual as could then be assembled in England, “preach Christ and him crucified. ... Sentence followed sentence, each more brilliant than its forerunner, like Venus succeeding Jupiter in the sky... shiver after shiver of delight followed each other through the souls of the hearers.”

Olinthus Gregory described the effects of Hall’s Cambridge preaching thirty years later and said that his memories were just as vivid as ever. The scene he recalled would be repeated throughout Hall’s ministry. He wrote,


89 Waterbury, *Sketches of Eloquent Preachers*, 90.


From the commencement of his discourse an almost breathless silence prevailed . . . Not a sound was heard but that of the preacher’s voice—scarcely an eye but was fixed upon him—not a countenance that he did not watch, and read, and interpret, as he surveyed them again and again with his rapid, ever-excursive glance. As he advanced and increased in animation, five or six of the auditors would be seen to rise and lean forward over the front of their pews, still keeping their eyes upon him. Some new or striking sentiment or expression would, in a few minutes, cause others to rise in like manner: shortly afterward still more, and so on, until, long before the close of the sermon, it happened that a considerable portion of the congregation were seen standing.92

Crowds flocked to hear him at Cambridge, and some “travelled sixteen miles to be present at the afternoon services.”93 It has already been noted that Hall’s popularity drew vast numbers of university students and faculty from Cambridge to the Baptist church at St. Andrews Street, yet Macleod makes this even more clear when he demonstrates often fifty students or more attended St. Andrews Street, which would have been a third of the entire student body at Cambridge.94 It should also be noted that during this time Hall received an invitation from Shute Barrington (1734–1826), the Bishop of Durham, to become part of the established church in a position of “high preferment.”95 Macleod concisely summarizes Hall’s celebrity, “He accepted many invitations to preach in other towns, so that within a few years his influence extended far beyond his own town and denomination.”96

Even when Hall moved away from the large city of Cambridge, the public


reports of his ministry continued. On April 23, 1823, the first issue of The Pulpit was published in London. This issue indicated that the publication was “designed to be the vehicle, not of any particular class of religious opinions, but of such real information and practical instruction as may be acceptable to all who acknowledge one common Redeemer.” It further indicated that it would contain “A Report of Sermons delivered in London during each Week, accompanied occasionally with critical remarks.” During the latter years of his Leicester ministry, Hall’s sermons, especially any delivered in or near London, were often transcribed and quickly published by The Pulpit, occasionally followed by remarks about the captivating scene of Hall’s preaching.

One such occasion happened just a few months after The Pulpit began its publication. On Tuesday, September 2, 1823, Hall preached at West Bromwich from Luke 15:7, “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” The remarks after the sermon are the most striking. They read:

Out of London there is not in all England at the present moment a preacher of greater reputation than Mr. Hall of Leicester. His pulpit talents have excited an interest which is not confined to the town or county blessed as the seat of his ministry, but is extended far and wide over the whole kingdom. We have not ourselves had an opportunity of witnessing his extraordinary powers, and are indebted to the kindness of a friend for the specimen of them which we have now the pleasure of laying before our readers, but from every thing we have heard, we entertain no doubt that he well deserves all the popularity which he has acquired.

A similar scene occurred during one of Hall’s rare visits to London. On June 20, 1827, Hall visited the Great Queen Street Chapel, Lincoln’s Inn, and delivered a sermon for the anniversary of the Baptist Missionary Society. The sermon was published

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97The Pulpit 1 (1823), 1. I am extremely grateful for the assistants in the famous Bodleian Library, Oxford University, for their help in finding these early issues of The Pulpit.
in *The Pulpit* the very next week and following the sermon were these remarks:

Those who have heard of Mr. Hall’s splendid talents, and are aware how rarely that gentleman visits the metropolis, will not be surprised to hear that the very spacious chapel, kindly lent to this Institution by the Wesleyan Methodists, was besieged at a very early hour, and that ultimately it was crowded to excess. We regret to say, that hundreds did not obtain admission; and that, of the many who did obtain admission, hundreds heard but a few sentences of this interesting sermon. Mr. Hall’s voice is so exceedingly weak, and the effort to raise it is so painful to him, that he cannot but disappoint his friends and admirers when he preaches in a large place.98

During his Leicester pastorate, Hall travelled frequently for special occasions. Once he went back to Bristol to preach “on the occasion of a Missionary Anniversary.” John Dix accompanied his father, a deacon at the church hosting Hall, to hear the celebrated preacher. His recollection is striking, but not unordinary:

The building, although it wanted yet an hour to the time fixed for commencing the service, was densely thronged in every part – and perhaps a more intellectual assemblage had never been gathered together. So popular was the great orator at this time, that it was no uncommon thing for the Professors, at Oxford and Cambridge, to leave their respective Universities on Saturday evenings – post to Leicester, some hundred and fifty miles or so, hear two sermons from Hall, and return to their homes after the evening services – thus sacrificing two nights’ rest, for the sake of indulging in what was considered to be one of the highest intellectual treats.99

Dix later described the scene even more vividly, “The edifice was literally full, almost to suffocation.”100 Throughout Hall’s discourse the people were fascinated while a “breathless silence reigned throughout the vast assemblage,” and Dix recalled how, “It was curious to observe how every neck was stretched out, so that not a word which fell from those eloquent lips should be lost; and the suspended breathings of those around me


99 Dix, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, 58.

100 Dix, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, 58.
evinced how intently all were hanging on his charmed words.”

Macleod writes of how funerals in Hall’s day “were usually associated with lengthy sermons and elaborate services, and as a leading preacher he was commonly in demand.” Citing primary source material, Macleod gives the description of one such funeral for a member of the Friar Lane General Baptist Church also in Leicester. The account read:

The interest excited at this time was beyond all former example in this town, in reference to any private character, in the memory of the oldest person living. Almost an hour before the commencement of worship the Meeting-House was nearly filled; and such was the pressure of people of all denominations to gain admittance that it created the most serious alarm. Above two thousand persons were crowded within the walls, the seats being generally filled double, and every spot of the room was completely occupied. Some hundreds waited about the doors; and the street to a considerable extent was blocked up. More than a thousand people, it is believed, could not gain admittance even in the chapel yard, and of course, were obliged to retire without hearing a word of the sermon, which was peculiarly expressive and pathetic, and admirably adapted to the character of the deceased and the state of the audience.

Of his preaching in the latter years at Bristol and his special visits to nearby locations,

Gregory wrote,

On these occasions the anxiety to hear him preach was as great as it had ever been; while his sermons were characterized in a high degree by the qualities that had long distinguished them, – with the addition of a stronger manifestation of religious and benevolent affections, a still more touching pervasiveness of manner, continued with an increasing intensity of feeling, with deeper and deeper solemnity of appeal; the entire effect being greatly augmented by the sudden introduction, just as the last sentence seemed dropping from his lips, of some new topic of application or of caution, most urgently pressed; as though he could not cease to invite, to warn, to expostulate, until the “Great Master of assemblies” vouchsafed to him the assurance

101 Dix, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, 63.

that he had not been pleading his cause in vain.  

John Greene remembered Hall having the greatest impact on his hearers when he delivered a sermon at Bristol on the words “Beloved, now we are the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” After a brief review of the sermon’s main thought, Greene provides the astounding result of Hall’s discourse:

These were some of the general ideas; but it is impossible to give a conception of the sermon but from its effects. A clergyman, who had never heard Mr. Hall before, observed to his friend, at the close of the service, that he never heard anything like it; and that he could hardly tell whether he was in the body or out of it. Several persons were taken ill from the extraordinary excitement. A physician of my acquaintance told me on the Monday afternoon that he had not got over the impression. Several of the deacons and others declared that they had never heard anything equal to it. I did not recover from the effects before the Wednesday.

Greene asked Hall if he had heard about the sermon’s effects. Hall had not heard the reports but was very surprised for he felt the sermon was not remarkable and perhaps even “inferior.”

Greene became concerned that some who had never heard Hall preach would consider his reminiscences of Hall as grossly exaggerated. In a footnote of his recollections of Hall, he attempted to buttress his own efforts by recounting the amazing effect Hall’s preaching once had on Fuller’s congregation at Kettering. Greene wrote,

It may be forgiven, therefore, if I mention what occurred at Kettering about thirty years ago, an account of which I received soon after from several persons who were present. The sermon on *The Vanity of Man apart from his Immortality* . . . was originally prepared at the request of the venerable Andrew Fuller, and delivered at a meeting of ministers at Kettering. The house was greatly crowded, and the excitement became intense. The preacher had proceeded but a little way, when, as

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was very frequently the case, the whole congregation had risen from their seats; he went on a little farther, when a large number were standing where they should have sat, and long before the sermon was concluded, not a few, altogether unconscious of the fact, were standing on the tops of the pews. After he had done, the preacher retired to the vestry, and one of the ministers rose to announce the hymn to be sung; it was some time before he could so far collect his powers as to do this, and this done, the choir attempted again and again, but in vain, to sing it. A minister ascended the pulpit to pray, but he was utterly incapacitated for the act, and Mr. Hall was literally compelled to return to the pulpit to offer the closing prayer and to dismiss the congregation. After that time, Mr. Hall chose, on public occasions, whenever he could do it, to conclude the service with a short prayer immediately after the sermon.105

Although Hall’s preaching clearly had a physical and emotional effect on its hearers, the enduring impact was significantly spiritual. One hearer said,

He is always easy, but never undignified; simple, but grand; affluent in his thoughts and his words, but never ostentatious: and the total effect of his discourses is, as with a burning arrow, to penetrate the mind with this abiding conviction, that the truths he has been inculcating, are of paramount value to all created things, and to induce a solemn dedication of ourselves to the great purpose and objects of religion.106

An excerpt from a sermon delivered in 1910 at a three-day event celebrating two hundred fifty years of the Harvey Lane Baptist Chapel recounts Hall’s ministry,

We think of Robert Hall as one of the makers of modern Leicester, a prince of preachers and a man of God.
We think of him as an orator for the King of kings, electrifying his audiences so that men journeyed from London by coach to hear him, and unconsciously left their seats to crowd round the pulpit and consciously laid their all at the feet of his Master.
We think of him using his gifts of heart and tongue on behalf of the oppressed weavers of Leicester, lifting up the poor and outcast, fighting for the liberty of the Press and freedom of conscience, pleading for every good cause which exalted the honour and righteousness of God, and secured the proper liberty and happiness of humanity. And in the face of the most cruel attacks and the bitterest criticism Robert Hall proved that the voice and then are mightier than the sword.
We think of him as a hero, having in his early ministry and throughout his life


a disease which never allowed him to stand upright without agony, and in later life a disease which caused him excruciating pain whenever he lay down. Yet he bore it all without either complaining or diminution of labour.

We think of him as a humble-minded Christian – ah! we ought to have thought of him first as this – dedicating himself in these solemn words while still a minister of this Church: “I disclaim all right to myself from henceforth, to my soul, my body, my time, my health, my reputation, my talents, or anything that belongs to me. I confess myself to be the property of the glorious Redeemer, as one whom I humbly hope He has redeemed by His blood to be part of the first-fruits of His creatures.” There is the secret of his eloquence, his heroism, and his majestic battling on behalf of the people against all forms of evil and oppression.107

Each church Hall served was enlarged numerically and physically, with building modifications often occurring multiple times. Sheila Mitchell has noted that although the highest record of membership during Hall’s ministry at Harvey Lane was two-hundred forty-two, the “actual congregations were much larger.”108 In fact, Harvey Lane had not had to wait very long to see the benefit of having Hall as their pastor. Only eighteen months after his arrival the chapel in Harvey Lane was enlarged to hold 800 people, and less than ten years later in 1817 had to be enlarged again, this time to accommodate 1,000 people. Collecting funds for such a project was not easy in a place like Leicester, as William Carey had experienced during his own pastorate. But Hall’s popularity led many prominent citizens in Leicester to contribute to these building campaigns.

Hall’s vast knowledge and incomparable oratorical skills made a very widespread impact among people of every class, especially those who were

107“Harvey Lane Baptist Chapel, Leicester, Jan. 30th, 1760–Jan. 30th, 1910,” Souvenir of Tri-Jubilee (February 6th, 9th, and 13th, 1910), 12–13. This excerpt was included here in full because the document in which it was found is an unpublished pamphlet. The document consulted here is located at the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University.

108Mitchell, Not Disobedient, 45.
distinguished. John Dix remembered seeing Lord Brougham and James Mackintosh in
the crowd when Hall preached at Bristol. Dix describes the appearance and behavior of
each man in meticulous detail and then declares, “It is needless to say that Hall’s pulpit
talents must have been very great, to have attracted such men as those I have just
mentioned.”

Dix then speaks of how he often saw ministers of the Church of England
attending Hall’s sermons as well as “members of the Bench of Bishops, who, having
thrown aside their mitres, crosiers, and lawn sleeves submitted . . . for the sake of hearing
the Cicero of the day.”

In another work, Dix also mentioned that Plunket would often
hear Hall at Broadmead and had once remarked “until he heard Hall, the Prince of
Preachers, he did not know what preaching really was.”

Throughout Hall’s ministry, distinguished people made every effort to hear
him preach. Sheila Mitchell writes, “In fact we are told that barristers on the Midland
circuit never missed the opportunity to hear Hall’s preaching, such was his knowledge of
the law and political economy.” Among these were Robert Lush (1807–1881), later
Lord Justice of the Court of Appeal, and John Mellor (1809–1887), later the mayor of
Leicester. Often people would take the London Mail Coach on Saturday and then

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111 John Dix, *Pen Pictures of Popular English Preachers: With Limnings of Listeners in Church
and Chapel* (London: Partridge and Oakey, 1852), 112.

112 Mitchell, *Not Disobedient*, 46. Barristers, alongside solicitors, made up the two classes of
lawyers in the legal system of England.

return on Sunday or Monday. Arthur Mursell confirmed Hall’s reputation when he wrote, “During this latter period, the high-backed pews frequently contained such listeners as Henry Brougham, Pollok, Denman, and many of the forensic luminaries who happened to be ‘on circuit’ during the assizes, who came to study and enjoy the transcendant periods of the loftiest and most classic sacred orator of the century.”

Joseph Cottle wrote that Hall “broke down all distinction of sects and parties,” and then added, “On one of his visits to Bristol, a competent individual noticed in the thronged assembly, an Irish Bishop, a Dean, and thirteen Clergymen.” Macleod even notes that American visitors overseas frequented Hall’s services because they had been so impressed with some of his works, which were already being published in America.

Hall’s popularity also caused him to develop unique, often surprising, friendships. One of Hall’s closest friends in Leicester was Thomas Robinson (1749–1813), the vicar of St. Mary’s. Robinson and Hall worked together to establish an Auxiliary of the Bible Society in Leicester in 1810. J. W. Morris recalled the opening meeting:

Walking together to the public meeting, on the day appointed for instituting the new society, he took Mr. Hall by the arm when the latter immediately observed, ‘On such an occasion, sir, this is the way things ought to be.’ The other quickly replied, ‘Yes, my brother, and this is the way that things shall be.’ In this manner they entered the town hall, locked in each others arms, and were greeted with the

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acclamations of the whole assembly.\textsuperscript{118}

Of Hall’s friendship with Robinson, Sheila Mitchell has observed, “Despite Mr. Robinson’s coolness towards Nonconformity as a whole and the fact that several of his congregation were received into membership at Harvey Lane, the relationship between the two was never anything but cordial and respectful.”\textsuperscript{119}

It was generally agreed that Hall’s power in preaching diminished in his latter years. Foster writes, “It appears to be the opinion of all those attendants on his late ministrations, who had also been his hearers in former times . . . that advancing age, together with the severe and almost continual presence of pain, had produced a sensible effect on his preaching, perceptible in an abatement of the energy and splendor of his eloquence.”\textsuperscript{120} Foster makes clear, however, that this “abatement” had not become the consistent rule of Hall’s preaching and may in fact have been more of an exception. Foster demonstrates this by recounting hearing several of Hall’s sermons, probably from the early 1820’s, that had been “delivered in so ardent an excitement of sentiment and manner as I could not conceive it possible for himself or any other orator to have surpassed.”\textsuperscript{121}

Hall’s status as a celebrity had an enormous impact on his own life and ministry, each church he served, but also on the larger Baptist denomination. One author said, “Through him the Baptist churches gained an elevation in the eyes of their

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\textsuperscript{118}Morris, \textit{Biographical Recollections}, 238.
\textsuperscript{119}Mitchell, \textit{Not Disobedient}, 50.
\textsuperscript{120}John Foster, “Observations,” 96.
\textsuperscript{121}John Foster, “Observations,” 96.
\end{flushright}
countrymen which they had not before enjoyed. It was impossible to sneer at a sect with which such a man had deliberately chosen to identify himself.”

The Titanic Figure: Hall’s Celebrity After Death

When Hall died, J. B. Waterbury wrote, “One of the brightest lights of the British pulpit was extinguished.” After Hall’s death, another correspondent poignantly wrote that praise for Hall was pouring “from all quarters in the public ear, agreeably disturbing the distressing silence of death, and successfully counteracting the greediness of the grave.” Some of the praise was simplistic prose and some was poetic eulogy.

Poetry

One such example was a poem written by a woman giving only the name Emma. The poem was published in The Pulpit in 1831 and was titled “Lines Written By a Hearer of the Late Lamented Robert Hall, On His Death.” It read,

Humbled is the voice that power touched from above –
Held every listening faculty in thrall;
Breathed o’er the sorrowing heart in tones of love,
Till earth was veiled, and Heaven was all in all.

Dimmed is the speaking eye, in whose mild fire
A Saviour’s tender zeal reflected glowed;
And cold the heart that throbbed with warm desire
To win repentant souls to Heaven and God.

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123Waterbury, Sketches of Eloquent Preachers, 90.


Yet not for thee, blest saint, our tears shall flow –
Thy conflict o’er – the glorious victory won;
Hope, faith, and love, no longer chained below,
Beneath the weight of mortal pangs to groan.

No! let celestial contemplation soar
To that empyreal fount of light and youth,
Where, dimly gazing through a glass no more,
Thy raptured spirit hails Eternal Truth.

There has thou felt thy Lord’s approving smile;
There sung, in Heaven’s own notes, his boundless grace:
There may we meet, unscathed by doubt or guile,
Thy joy and crowns before they Father’s face!

A lengthier poem appeared in the April 1831 edition of The Evangelical Magazine. The author, listed as Aliquis, wrote the poem on March 5, 1831 and included the text of Acts 11:24, “He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost.” The author praised Hall’s character and ability and clearly shared Hall’s ecumenical spirit. The poem read:

A star has fall’n, a brilliant gem,
That long on favour’d Sion shone;
And, like the star of Bethlehem,
Led on to make the Saviour known.

Yes, pious Hall, whose mighty pow’rs,
Whose glowing zeal and ardent love,
Illumin’d this dark world of ours,
Now shines with spirits bright above.

Twas sweet to hear his pleading voice
The mysteries of grace unfold;
His themes were deep, his language choice,
Like incense in a vase of gold.

The talents by his God conferr’d
Were dedicated to his praise;
His treasures were the sacred word,
His lustre, their reflected rays.

Tho’ chief amid the straitest sect,
He fear’d not their partition wall,
Nor differing brethren dar’d reject,
But held *communion* with them all.

The rich endowments of his mind
Were not possess’d by him alone;
But, like a public grant, design’d
For every church and time to own.

In loyalty and conscience pure,
He urg’d for British rights his pen,
And taught the world a doctrine sure,
For legal rule and free-born men.

With modest unobtrusive aim,
He pass’d his peaceful way along;
Unconscious of his honest fame,
Regardless of the fickle throng.

He knew th’ inquirer’s way to guide,
For he had doubtful subjects weigh’d;
He knew to soothe the mourner tried,
For God had been his strength and aid.

In him what various gifts were found!
The scholar’s lore, the tutor’s skill,
The genius vast, the preacher sound,
The polish’d scribe, the friend’s goodwill.

Rever’d, belov’d, and much admir’d,
He, meekly, vain applause withstood,
Yet to the higher meed aspir’d,
Of hon’ring God, and doing good.

His work was done – and conquests made –
His faith the sting of death defied –
He upward look’d to heav’n, and said,
“Oh come, Lord Jesus, come!” – and died. ¹²⁶

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An Intriguing Portrait of Hall

Although Hall’s fame and influence was often praised with the written word, his status as a key figure among the celebrated Baptists is also depicted in art. Several solo portraits had been painted or engraved during Hall’s life, despite his extreme animosity to having his likeness rendered. One famous composite picture from the nineteenth century, however, includes portraits of fifteen influential Baptist figures, mostly Particular Baptists, but seems to highlight Hall above the rest. The picture must have been fairly famous for Roger Hayden recalls it “hanging in the vestry of village churches, as well as my own chapel.”

In the portrait, William Carey, Joseph Kinghorn, John Ryland, Jr., and Andrew Fuller, four leading Baptist preachers, are seated on the front row along with the Baptist essayist John Foster (1770–1843). The back row is occupied on the left by the missionary quartet of Joshua Marshman (1768–1837), William Ward (1769–1823), William Knibb (1803–1845), and Thomas Burchell (1799–1846). In the central position of the back row stands John Rippon (1751–1836) alongside the only two General Baptists Dan Taylor (1738–1816) and John Deodatus Gregory Pike (1784–1854). Standing in the far right of the portrait are William Steadman (1764–1837) and Samuel Pearce (1766–1799).

Some aspects of analysis are pure speculation. The grouping of the individuals

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127 For this portrait, see Appendix 2, Figure A5. See: A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: The Baptist Union Publication Department, 1947), 168; and Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends, and his times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994), 215. Interestingly, the picture as it appears in *One Heart and One Soul* does not name J. G. Pike or Robert Hall, Jr.

128 Personal e-mail correspondence with Roger Hayden, January 12, 2012.
on the left side of the picture seems to show the artist’s desire to draw attention to the missionary movement, as well as perhaps the abolition movement in Jamaica. The sheer number of Particular Baptists ministers in the portrait compared to General Baptists may suggest the artist depicting the former group’s superiority to the latter. However, it must also be noted that the inclusion of Dan Taylor and J. G. Pike, as well as Hall’s central position, may also indicate the artist’s sympathies could have sided more with the ecumenical Hall and the libertarian leaning General Baptists.\(^{129}\) Roger Hayden has expressed his feeling that the picture “has everything to do with Jonathan Edwards” and the “release Jonathan Edwards brought them all.”\(^{130}\) Because of this, he also suggests the picture “has everything to do with the Baptist Union . . . and the escape from hyper-Calvinism to a missionary church.”\(^{131}\)

One facet that seems undeniable, however, is Hall’s commanding central position. His well-known balding figure is standing with a book in his hand, mostly likely meant to be a Bible. This posture is almost certainly drawing attention not only to Hall’s greatness as a preacher but also to the fact that many in his day considered him to the greatest among the Baptists, if not all of England.

**The Statue of Robert Hall in Leicester**

Hall’s successor at Harvey Lane, James Philippo Mursell (1799–1885), had intended some kind of tribute to Hall in Leicester. One day in 1868, Mursell was walking

\(^{129}\)I have discussed this picture at length with Michael Haykin and my analysis of the picture is indebted to his own opinions as expressed in our personal conversations.

\(^{130}\)Roger Hayden, e-mail message to the author, January 12, 2012.

\(^{131}\)Roger Hayden, e-mail message to the author, January 12, 2012.
along New Walk in Leicester with his son, Arthur Mursell, and John Burton, when Burton said, “Well, the Memorial Tower being accomplished, what think ye of the idea of placing in the centre of that oval a fine, colossal, marble statue of the great Robert Hall.” While there was initially some concern over the expense of such an endeavor, a committee was eventually formed to oversee the project with Leicester mayor John Baines serving as the chairman, Burton as secretary, and Mursell as honorary secretary. John Birnie Philip (1824–1875), a prominent English sculptor of the nineteenth century was commissioned for the project, and over 600 individuals from throughout England made financial contributions towards a final cost of over one thousand pounds. Since Philip was relying solely upon portraits of Hall, Mursell and Burton visited the sculptor’s studio throughout the project offering suggestions on Hall’s likeness.

On November 2, 1871, a ceremony and banquet were held to unveil the massive statue of Hall on the south side of De Montfort Square in Leicester. The base of the statue was made of Cornish granite in two main parts. The bottom piece was an octagonal foundation that stood almost two feet tall. Next, was an enormous cylindrical pedestal standing over eight feet tall and inscribed in gilt letters with the words “Robert Hall” on the front and “Born 1764 – Died 1831” on the back. The statue depicts Hall as in the act of speaking, one hand raised, and the other leaning on a book inscribed “THE WORD” and wearing a waistcoat, a morning coat, knee breeches, and silk hose with a fur-collared cloak over his shoulders. The statue has been worn throughout the years, and

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133 For two photographs of this statue, see Appendix 2, Figures A6 and A7.
many who pass by it today do not even know who Robert Hall was. When one considers this enormous statue and the widespread influence of Hall’s life and ministry, only Graham Hughes’s summary of Hall’s celebrity suffices,

Robert Hall’s name has been associated in the minds of his spiritual descendants chiefly with his oratory. But oratory is one of the least enduring foundations of abiding fame. Hence, with the passing of the years, his true stature has become somewhat obscured. That he has other claims to remembrance—his place in the struggle for liberty and in the efforts to procure justice for the worker, for instance—needs also to be emphasized. Nor should it be forgotten that the Baptists in particular and Nonconformity in general acquired a new esteem in the eyes of many who had hitherto been disdainful because, as one historian put it, ‘It was impossible to sneer at a sect with which such a man had deliberately chosen to identify himself.’ His fellow Dissenters shared in the lustre [sic] which shone around his name. He raised their status in the eyes of his countrymen by being one of them. For, as one admirer said of him, “Everything about him, even to his physical sufferings, was titanic.”

CHAPTER 6

HALL’S SERMONS OF NATIONAL RECOGNITION:
THE MAKING OF A CULTURAL CELEBRITY

Hall in Political Context

Hall’s removal from Bristol in 1790 to the congregation at St. Andrews Street, Cambridge, meant he would now be the pastor of one of the most politically radical Particular Baptist congregations in England. At this point, he had already had a taste of politics, for the ongoing slave trade had forced Hall’s public entrance into politics in Bristol in 1788. He assisted Granville Sharp’s Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave-trade in England and later helped write Bristol’s abolition petition to Parliament.¹

Hall went on to publish two works on dissent in the 1790s that established him as a leading voice among dissenting ministers. In September 1791, Hall published Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom. He was but twenty-seven years old. It was a severe attack on ministers such as John Martin (1741–1820) and John Clayton (1778–1826) who attempted to persuade dissenters to abstain from engaging in politics. Hall’s basic argument was freedom of religion, and he opposed the ideas of passive obedience and non-resistance to government espoused by Edmund Burke and Bishop Horsley. Hall instead followed men like Richard Price (1723–1791) and Joseph Priestley

(1733–1804) in support of the French Revolution.\(^2\)

Over the next two years, things changed drastically in England. In November 1792, the French promised aid to all who pursued liberty, and therefore many dissenters were immediately branded as traitors. Often attempts to weave politics into preaching were halted by imprisonment or violence. In the midst of this chaotic situation, however, the brilliant young Hall penned his *Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty*, in which he addressed the fundamental principles of liberty and dissent and tackled larger issues such as the need for Parliamentary reform. The pamphlet was so popular three editions were printed in less than six months.

Cambridge was a center of the political firestorm. Many in the congregation at St. Andrews expected Hall would share and satisfy their heterodox theology and their radical politics, but they were soon sorely disappointed. Like many radical dissenters, Hall had initially been supportive of the French Revolution and the principles of liberty espoused in the early days of the Revolution. Summarizing the feeling of the dissenters, Macleod notes that they considered the Revolution “a just judgment on the tyranny and oppression of the French aristocracy, and they hoped it would stimulate parliamentary reform in England.” They also hoped that such a revolution would lead to a rise in religious freedom and moral virtue. Hall, along with others, soon began to see that their cries for liberty had instead resulted in those who “were constantly exerting themselves to

Hall saw these effects spread to Cambridge where some began to espouse the political tenets of William Godwin (1756–1836), and Hall began to see a dangerous link between radical politics and atheism, or as he would call it, infidelity. Timothy Whelan writes, “Hall had recognized during his trial candidacy that the linkage between radical political dissent and Socianism was tighter at St. Andrew’s than in any other Particular Baptist congregation in England at that time, and he resisted that connection.”

Although Hall firmly adhered to the fundamental principles of dissent, he moved away from the more radical ideas held by some members of his congregation, including his friend Benjamin Flower (1755–1829), editor of the Cambridge Intelligencer.

Hall’s shifting political ideology, a move away from the pursuit of liberty at all costs, led to conflicts with other individuals such as Henry Crabb Robinson (1775–1867). Timothy Whelan has suggested that it may have been a series of exchanges with Robinson that “finally led the brilliant dissenting minister to commit his views on Godwinism and infidelity to paper” resulting in his most famous sermon, Modern Infidelity Considered.

**Modern Infidelity Considered**

Hall seemed to understand well the magnitude of the occasion and the impact this particular sermon would have, for in preparing to preach the sermon, he would often awake several times during the night and write down thoughts or passages he feared he

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would forget. The sermon was first preached at Bristol in October 1800 and then at Cambridge in November. Immediately Hall was pressed to publish the sermon and his friend Olinthus Gregory agreed to supervise the process. Hall had not published anything since his *Apology for the Freedom of the Press* in 1793, and his chronic pain so affected him that it took him more than seven weeks to complete the manuscript, often writing while lying on the floor in utter agony. Joseph Cottle (1770–1853) heard Hall preach *Modern Infidelity Considered*, and when comparing the sermon to the printed discourse, described the former as “greatly its superior.” But the pamphlet *Modern Infidelity* soon captivated the nation and answered the question of why Hall and many others had changed their opinions about the revolution. As Angus Hamilton Mcleod argued, “Hall’s eloquent answer in this sermon was that the Revolution had been permeated with atheism.”

The Sermon

As the biblical text, Hall chose a portion of Ephesians 2:12, “Without God in the world.” Hall begins by stating the necessity of Christian ministers to “stand ready to repel the attacks and impiety of error, under whatever form they may appear.” Hall then gives a striking comparison of the church to Moses’s burning bush, in which he

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7 Cottle, *Early Recollections*, 105.


9 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 23.
understands the church will always be “encompassed with flames, but will never be consumed.”

He then shows how the church often injures itself, and he provides the example of how post-Reformation believers were more concerned with “defending subtleties” than “enforcing plain revealed truths,” an error which resulted in “the lovely fruits of peace and charity perished under the storms of controversy.”

Just when controversies erupt within, the enemy attacks from without. Therefore, Hall quickly asserts one of his fundamental tenets when he says, “Thus infidelity is the joint offspring of an irreligious temper and unholy speculation, employed, not in examining the evidences of Christianity, but in detecting vices and imperfections of professing Christians.”

Next, Hall moves into a survey of history, tracing the “various stages” and “higher gradations of impiety” from Lord Edward Herbert (1582–1648) to Henry IV of Bolingbroke (1678–1751) to David Hume (1711–1776). Hall then declares, “Since his time skeptical writers have sprung up in abundance, and infidelity has allured multitudes to its standard: the young and superficial by its dexterous sophistry, the vain by the literary fame of its champions, and the profligate by the licentiousness of its principles. Atheism the most undisguised has at length begun to make its appearance.”

Hall saw the advancing influence of atheism in England and summarized the intentions of the

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10Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 23.
12Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 23.
movement. He stated: “Animated by numbers, and imboldened [sic] by success, the infidels of the present day have given a new direction to their efforts, and impressed a new character on the ever-growing mass of their impious speculations.”¹⁵

Hall then briefly recounts several arguments for the existence of God, understanding the public would want such a display of reason in a discourse of this type. Hall offers, however, that he will do so “in as few and plain words as possible” because he desires to hasten to the real substance of his sermon.¹⁶ He first utilizes the argument from design to support the existence of God. He considers the “marks of design” of both “machinery” and the “human body,” recognizing the exquisite and intricate detail of each.¹⁷ Next, he moves to argue against the “eternal succession of finite beings” and against the theory of a “plurality of gods.”¹⁸ However, “The more immediate object of this discourse,” is to show the dual effect of infidelity on morals and on the formation of character.¹⁹ First, Hall intends to demonstrate that “the skeptical or irreligious system subverts the whole foundation of morals.”²⁰ Hall understood that in the system of infidelity then being promoted in the “present world,” the practice of virtue was often “at war with self-preservation” and the “greatest good.”²¹ Therefore, Hall encouraged his

¹⁶Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 25.
¹⁷Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 25.
hearers to understand how modern infidelity was “infallibly a system of enervation, turpitude, and vice.”

Hall then delineates the two consequences that he saw inevitably following from the system of infidelity.

First, Hall understood that infidelity would bring about the “frequent perpetration of great crimes, and second, it would result in the “total absence of great virtues.”

The increase of crime would be inevitable because Hall knew that nothing could restrain the infidel, not even the idea of remorse or the dread of punishment. Hall asserts that “the most prosperous career of vice, the most brilliant successes of criminality, are but an accumulation of wrath against wrath.”

Hall then details how terror, evil, suspicion, and hatred will result in “incalculable calamities and horrors” if modern infidelity were ever to triumph.

Hall then discusses how infidelity will leave the soil “barren” of “great and sublime virtues.”

Again Hall displays keen insight, arguing that virtue disappears when society is controlled by those who stake “the whole happiness of his being on the events of this vain and fleeting life.”

In affirming that infidelity is unfavourable to the higher class of virtues, we are supported as well by facts as by reasoning. We should be sorry to load our adversaries with unmerited reproach: but to what history, to what record will they

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Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 27.

Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 27.


appeal for the traits of moral greatness exhibited by their disciples? Where shall we look for the trophies of infidel magnanimity or atheistical virtue? Not that we mean to accuse them of inactivity: they have recently filled the world with the fame of their exploits; exploits of a different kind indeed, but of imperishable memory, and disastrous lustre. . . . Combine the frequent and familiar perpetration of atrocious deeds with the dearth of great and generous actions, and you have the exact picture of that condition of society which completes the degradation of the species – the frightful contrast of dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices, where every good thing is mean and little, and every thing evil is rank and luxuriant: a dead and sickening uniformity prevails, broken only at intervals by volcanic eruptions of anarchy and crime. 28

England had seen the chaos the resulted from the French Revolution, a movement often dominated by infidelity, and Hall’s words demonstrate his awareness that the rise of infidelity in England would mean the same magnification of recklessness and debauchery and the consequent shrinking of morality and virtuous existence.

Hall then returns to infidelity’s second influence on society, namely the destruction of the formation of character. It first destroys character by abolishing “moral taste.” Hall remarks, “In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent, -- in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the skeptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.” 29 Hall then adds, “When the knowledge of God was lost in the world, just ideas of virtue and moral obligation disappeared along with it.” 30 Hall encourages his hearers to understand that the only remedy is once again to strive earnestly to know the “true character of God,” for


only a right knowledge of God can bring about a “pure and perfect standard of virtue.”

Hall then offers a second way that infidelity destroys character. He asserts, “Modern infidelity not only tends to corrupt the moral taste, it also promotes the growth of those vices which are the most hostile to social happiness. Of all the vices incident to human nature, the most destructive to society are vanity, ferocity, and unbridled sensuality; and these are precisely the vices which infidelity is calculated to cherish.” Hall vehemently attacks vanity arguing that eventually it “degenerates into arrogance,” is then “exasperated into malignity,” and finally “corrupted into envy.” For Hall, vanity was the hallmark of the French Revolution, and Hall saw its deadly effects encroaching on his homeland. He stated, “The same restless and eager vanity which disturbs a family, when it is permitted in a great national crisis to mingle with political affairs, distracts a kingdom.”

Conversely, Hall asserts that “humility is the first fruit of religion.” He declared, “Religion, and that alone, teaches absolute humility; by which I mean a sense of our absolute nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. . . . The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favour.”

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32 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 32.
33 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 32–33.
34 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 34.
35 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 35.
Hall then addresses how infidelity breeds “ferocity” or “inhumanity.”

The tenets of a religious system show the “dignified character of man.” Hall then clearly distinguishes the danger of the system of infidelity regarding the very nature of man. He states,

Let the skeptical principles be admitted, which represent him, on the contrary, as the offspring of chance, connected with no superior power, and sinking into annihilation at death, and he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. The characteristic difference is lost between him and the brute creation, from which he is no longer distinguished, except by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions.

The logical end of such a system, for Hall, was clear. His brilliant rhetoric shines when he states,

From these human principles results the following important inference – that to extinguish a human life by the hand of violence must be quite a different thing in the eyes of a skeptic from what it is in those of a Christian. With the skeptic it is nothing more than diverting the course of a little red fluid, called blood; it is merely lessening the number by one of many millions of fugitive contemptible creatures. The Christian sees in the same event an accountable being cut off from a state of probation, and hurried, perhaps unprepared, into the presence of his Judge, to hear that final, that irrevocable sentence, which is to fix him for ever in an unalterable condition of felicity or woe.

After a brief summary of how the atheism of Epicurus and the Romans, as well as that of the French of Hall’s day had always led to the destruction of life in violent war, Hall concludes this section with another masterful monologue. He says,

As the heathens fabled that Minerva issued full armed from the head of Jupiter, so no sooner were the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, than they gave birth to a ferocity which converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins; the seat of voluptuous refinement, of pleasure, and of arts, into a

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36 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 36.

37 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 36.

38 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 37.
theatre of blood. . . Settle it therefore in your minds, as a maxim never to be effaced or forgotten, that atheism is an inhuman, bloody, ferocious system, equally hostile to every useful restraint and to every virtuous affection; that, leaving nothing above us to excite awe, nor round us to awaken tenderness, it wages war with heaven and with earth: its first object to dethrone God, its next to destroy man.\textsuperscript{39}

Next, Hall turns to the final vice of “unbridled sensuality.” He even shows how laws are enacted to “restrain” the passions and “to confine their indulgence within such limits, as shall best promote the great ends for which they were implanted.”\textsuperscript{40} Hall reviews the benefits and blessings of sexuality within the Christian system, articulating a beautiful defense of the biblical view of marriage and family, but then forcefully declares, “The aim of all the leading champions of infidelity is to rob mankind of these benefits, and throw them back into a state of gross and brutal sensuality.”\textsuperscript{41}

Before moving to his conclusion, Hall lists three “circumstances” of the infidelity then swirling about that he views as “new and alarming.” First, Hall demonstrates how this is the “first attempt which has ever been witnessed, on an extensive scale, to establish the principles of atheism.”\textsuperscript{42} Second, Hall shows how “the efforts of infidels to diffuse the principles of infidelity among the common people is another alarming symptom peculiar to the present time.”\textsuperscript{43} Whereas previous movements of atheism circulated primarily among the “polished classes,” the new infidelity intends

\textsuperscript{39}Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 39.

\textsuperscript{40}Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 39.

\textsuperscript{41}Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 39.

\textsuperscript{42}Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 44.

\textsuperscript{43}Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 45.
to “enlist disciples from among the populace.” Hall argues that “the infidels of the present day are the first sophists who have presumed to innovate in the very substance of morals.”

Hall then moves to close the discourse with a few “serious reflections.” Hall reviews the words of Peter and Jude who warned that characters such as those advocating infidelity with its ungodly influences would arise and bring great harm to the world and the church. Hall knew the promises of the Scriptures and so could declare that infidelity would be an “evil of short duration.” He declares,

Its enormities will hasten its overthrow. It is impossible that a system which, by vilifying every virtue, and embracing the patronage of almost every vice and crime, wages war with all the order and civilization of the world; which, equal to the establishment of nothing, is armed only with the energies of destruction, can long retain an ascendancy. It is in no shape formed for perpetuity. Sudden in its rise and impetuous in its progress; it resembles a mountain-torrent, which is loud, filthy, and desolating; but, being fed by no perennial spring, is soon drained off and disappears.

Hall vividly reminds his hearers of the atrocities of the French Revolution and exhorts them to “consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyment of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honours, and to princes the stability of

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44 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 45.
45 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 46.
46 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 46.
47 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 47.
Hall continues to show how Christianity and its example always triumph over infidelity. He asks,

Where are the infidels of such pure, uncontaminated morals, unshaken probity, and extended benevolence, that we should be in danger of being seduced into impiety by their example? Into what obscure recesses of misery, into what dungeons have their philanthropists penetrated, to lighten the fetters and relive the sorrows of the helpless captive? What barbarous tribes have their apostles visited; what distant climes have they explored, encompassed with cold, nakedness, and want, to diffuse principles of virtue and the blessings of civilization?

Hall then endeavored to show his hearers that the matters he has addressed are not just national and temporal but rather are primarily individual and certainly eternal. He encourages his audience to godliness and reminds them “the religion of Jesus is alone sufficient to make them good and happy.” He further warns, “Jesus Christ seems to have his fan in his hand, to be thoroughly purging his floor; and nominal Christians will probably be scattered like chaff.” For Hall, real Christianity had nothing to fear, and he notes that if people would be attentive to the “signs of the times,” they would observe how “real religion is evidently on the increase.” Hall then returns to his text for his closing appeal. He first envisions the context, stating, “The Ephesians, in common with other Gentiles, are described in the text as being, previous to their conversion, without God in the world; that is, without any just and solid acquaintance with his character,

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50 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 49.
51 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 50.
52 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 51.
destitute of the knowledge of his will, the institutes of his worship, and the hopes of his favour.” Hall then concludes,

But since all events are under divine direction, is it reasonable to suppose that the great Parent, after suffering his creatures to continue for ages ignorant of his true character, should at length, in the course of his Providence, fix upon falsehood, and that alone, as the effectual method of making himself known; and that, what the virtuous exercise of reason in the best and wisest men was never permitted to accomplish, he should confer on fraud and delusion the honour of effecting? . . . We therefore feel ourselves justified, on this occasion, in adopting the triumphant boast of the great apostle: Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.54

The Effect of the Sermon

Not everyone was thrilled with Hall’s efforts. Hall’s former friend and church member Benjamin Flower, the editor of the Cambridge Intelligencer, was outraged that Hall had turned away from his previous radical position held in the early 1790’s. The most virulent attack came in a sixty-page pamphlet from Anthony Robinson, who defended atheism and excoriated Hall.

The overwhelming response to Modern Infidelity, however, was positive. After Hall’s death, a writer for The Baptist Magazine published a memoir for Hall in which he said, “The sermon on Modern Infidelity extended the reputation of Mr. Hall, as a writer, far beyond the limits of his party or denomination, and rendered his productions henceforth a matter of interest to the public at large, to a degree, which, perhaps, the

53 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 51.

54 Hall, “Modern Infidelity Considered,” 52.
works of no dissenting writer had previously attained.” Of the popularity of *Modern Infidelity*, B. R. White notes that it “caused an almost national stir and went through several editions. It was as widely applauded and as widely condemned.” The controversy, however, helped to draw a number of members of the university to Hall’s Baptist congregation at St. Andrew’s Street. Hall had expressed the sentiment of the nation, so much so that the sermon quickly went through many editions, including an American and French edition. Macleod has gathered a brief list of the many who praised Hall during this time as a direct result of this sermon including such leading figures as Henry Brougham (1778–1868), William Pitt (1759–1806), and Samuel Parr (1747–1825). Hall experienced a considerable and immediate “extension of his reputation” due to this sermon and *Modern Infidelity* has long been considered one of the world’s greatest sermons.

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57There are three early editions of this sermon at the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, and these show the importance and popularity of the sermon. See Robert Hall, *Modern Infidelity Considered, With Respect to Its Influence on Society: in a Sermon, Preaching at the Baptist Meeting, Cambridge*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: M. Watson, 1800). Multiple parties in Bristol and London also sold this fourth edition. Also see, *Modern Infidelity*, 8th ed. (London: Richard Edwards, 1814) and *Modern Infidelity*, 9th ed. (London: W. Button and Son, , 1816)


59Gregory, “Memoir,” 42.

Reflections on War

Hall preached two sermons related to the Napoleonic wars. These sermons came just a couple of years later after *Modern Infidelity* and once again had the dual effect of captivating a nation facing peril and establishing Hall as a national celebrity. On June 1, 1802, Hall preached the annual sermon for the Benevolent Society at the Baptist Meeting in Cambridge.\(^{61}\) The Treaty of Amiens had been signed in March, providing a temporary peace in the war with Napoleon, and the first of June had been appointed as a day of thanksgiving throughout England.\(^{62}\) Gregory succinctly summarizes Hall’s *Reflections* when he states: “he endeavoured first to awaken the gratitude of his auditors by a most touching picture of the horrors of war, from which Europe had just escaped; and then to apply the gratitude so excited to acts of benevolence.”\(^{63}\)

The Sermon

In the preface to the published work, Hall provides a brief apology for the *Reflections*.\(^{64}\) Hall is aware that some will feel it an “impropriety to introduce political reflections in a discourse from the pulpit” but he admits his desire is to have minimal interaction in party politics, and in his professional duties, none at all.\(^{65}\)

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\(^{62}\) For a very helpful, concise contextual background to the events leading up to this sermon, see Macleod, “The Life and Teaching of Robert Hall,” 160.

\(^{63}\) Gregory, “Memoir,” 46.

\(^{64}\) Robert Hall, “Reflections on War,” in *Works*, 1:55–76.

\(^{65}\) Hall, “Reflections on War,” 57.
he has dwelt “too much on the horrors of war for a thanksgiving sermon,” to which Hall answers that peace can only be truly appreciated when “exactly proportioned to the calamity of war.”

Hall’s text is Psalm 46:8–9 and as written out in his *Works* reads, “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.” At the outset, Hall stresses that the previous decades of peace in England owe themselves to the “merciful interposition of Providence.” For Hall, the peace enjoyed in England can have “disadvantages” as well. England has looked upon war with indifference and has felt little compassion for those who have been involved in war. As Hall remarks, “To awaken those sentiments of gratitude which we are this day assembled to express, it will be proper briefly to recall to your attention some of the dreadful effects of hostility.”

He continues by describing war as the “most awful scourge that Providence employs” and the “garment of vengeance with which the Deity arrays himself.” What follows in the sermon can be divided into a consideration of how war creates misery for the happy and how war replaces virtue with criminality.

Hall strives to reveal the difficulty of understanding the “rapid extinction of innumerable lives” caused by war. “To perish in a moment, to be hurried

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66 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 57.
67 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 59.
68 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 59.
69 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 60.
instantaneously,” Hall says, “without preparation and without warning, into the presence of the Supreme Judge, has something in it inexpressibly awful and affecting.” Very few European families had been left unaffected by the estimated half-million individuals killed since the wars commencing after the French Revolution of 1789. In war, Hall thus notes, death reigns “without a rival, and without control.” Death normally takes the “feeble and the aged,” but in war it takes the “vigorous and the strong.” Despair is brought to widowed mothers who lose children in war: they are deprived of “everything but the capacity of suffering.”

The ravages of war are not only death, however, but also the “diseases and slow torments” that befall others. Here Hall’s masterful use of language shines:

What a scene then must a field of battle present, where thousands are left without assistance and without pity, with their wounds exposed to the piercing air, while the blood, freezing as it flows, binds them to the earth, amid the trampling of horses and the insults of the enraged foe! If they are spared by the humanity of the enemy and carried from the field, it is but a prolongation of torment. Conveyed in uneasy vehicles, often to a remote distance…they are lodged in ill-prepared receptacles for the wounded and the sick…Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, no mother, or sister is near to soothe their sorrows, relieve their thirst, or close their eyes in death. Unhappy man! And must you be swept into the grave unnoticed and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your sufferings or mingled with your dust!

Hall enumerates further the sufferings of soldiers, through either their exposure to “unwholesome diets” or “sickly climates”, and concludes, “their life is a continual scene

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70 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 60.
71 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 60.
72 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 60.
73 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 61.
74 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 61.
of hardships and dangers.”

Hall not only details the suffering of individuals but that of villages and countries. He understands his hearers will have great difficulty picturing the ravages caused by invading armies, so he picturesquely describes the “rich harvests” being “consumed in a moment or trampled under foot,” the “cottages of peasants given up to flames,” the silence of peaceful industry replaced with the sounds of “slaughter and blood,” and the “chastity of virgins and of matrons violated.” Contemplation of these scenes “forces on us this awful reflection, that neither the fury of wild beasts, the concussions of the earth, nor the violence of tempests are to be compared to the ravages of arms; and that nature in her utmost extent, or, more properly, divine justice in its utmost severity, has supplied no enemy to man so terrible as man.”

Then there are the economic effects of war, through the depletion of youthful populations and the national wealth. His address was the annual sermon of the Benevolent Society, and so it is no surprise that Hall then remarks: “Of all people the poor are on this account the greatest sufferers by war, and have the most reason to rejoice in the restoration of peace.” War can be a fatal blow to national prosperity, Hall judges, for it interrupts the commerce of those engaged in the hostility. The far-reaching effects of war are outlined with Hall’s classic imagery-laden rhetoric, “The plague of a widely

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75 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 61.
76 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 62.
77 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 62.
78 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 62.
79 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 62.
extended war possesses, in fact, a sort of omnipresence, by which it makes itself everywhere felt; for while it gives up myriads to slaughter in one part of the globe, it is busily employed in scattering over countries exempt from its immediate desolations the seeds of famine, pestilence, and death.”

For Hall, Christian statesmen should realize all of these copious troubles brought on by war and should pursue every possible alternative to war.

Hall’s then looks at the “influence of national warfare on the morals of mankind.” Turning to the apostle James, Hall discusses how the Scriptures ascribe the existence of war to the disorderly passions of men.” To Hall, war “reverses” all the rules of morality and is a “repeal” of the principles of virtue. Hall urges

Hence the morality of peaceful times is directly opposite to the maxims of war. The fundamental rule of the first is to do good; of the latter to inflict injuries. The former commands us to succour the oppressed; the latter to overwhelm the defenceless. The former teaches men to love their enemies; the latter to make themselves terrible even to strangers.

Hall then clarifies two important points. First, he states that the immoral characteristics just mentioned are not to be assigned to every person engaged in war. Second, he then explains that not all cases of war are unlawful. Hall believed that injustice among mankind often caused war to be necessary and even lawful. Hall understood, however, that there is a sense of “false greatness” and “delusive splendor” often attached to wars

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80 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 63.
81 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 63.
82 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 63.
83 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 64.
84 Hall, “Reflections on War,” 64.
and their leaders.\textsuperscript{85} Therefore, he sees it as his obligation, and the duty of true religion, to show the deformity of war.

Hall judged that the moral effects of war on people were greater than “that which affects their property or their lives.” For Hall, war disrupts the calm and peace of everyday life and thus causes serious spiritual reflection and the duties of piety to be neglected. This results in the “sanctuary of God” often being forsaken and often forces people to “acquire a hard and unfeeling character.”\textsuperscript{86}

Hall exhorts his hearers to acknowledge the hand of God in bringing peace to a “crisis so unexampled in the annals of the world.”\textsuperscript{87} According to Hall, thanksgiving to God’s providence is even more appropriate because of the two distinguishing traits of this war, namely the large number of nations involved in it and the spirit of animosity in which the Napoleonic wars had been conducted. A time of reflection and thanks was especially suitable, for the Treaty of Amiens, in Hall’s opinion, did not necessarily entail a “lasting tranquility”; in fact it may indeed be only a “respite.”\textsuperscript{88}

Hall then shifts to the subject of peace and says, “Let us now turn to the pleasing part of our subject, which invites us to contemplate the reasons for gratitude and joy suggested by the restoration of peace.”\textsuperscript{89} Hall expressed hope for peace, but encouraged also the restoration of the spirit of peace. For Hall, when the spirit of peace

\textsuperscript{85}Hall, “Reflections on War,” 65.

\textsuperscript{86}Hall, “Reflections on War,” 65.

\textsuperscript{87}Hall, “Reflections on War,” 65–66.

\textsuperscript{88}Hall, “Reflections on War,” 67–68.

\textsuperscript{89}Hall, “Reflections on War,” 68.
prevails in the hearts of men, there is no better way for believers to imitate their heavenly Father. England had already seen a “reduction in the price of bread,” and Hall added, “Every cottager, we hope, will feel that there is peace; commerce return to its ancient channels, the public burdens be lightened, the national debt diminished, and harmony and plenty again gladden the land.”90 Hall also praised the preservation of the constitution, and admonished the crowds to “love it sincerely, cherish it tenderly, and secure it as far as possible on all sides, watching with impartial solicitude against every thing that may impair its spirit or endanger its form.”91

Hall’s final appeal here is to “cherish the spirit of religion” for it alone is the source of “tranquility and order.”92 In keeping with the spirit of Modern Infidelity, Hall demonstrates how France was viewed by so many as the “utmost pinnacle of prosperity,” but how everything there “seemed to flourish but religion and virtue.”93 Thus, God had unleashed “from his treasures a weapon he had never employed before” to punish the nation.94 Hall insisted,

Our only security against similar calamities is a steady adherence to this religion; not the religion of mere form and profession, but that which has its seat in the heart; not as it is mutilated and debased by the refinements of false philosophy, but as it exists in all its simplicity and extent in the sacred Scriptures; consisting in sorrow for sin, in the love of God, and in faith in a crucified Redeemer. If this religion revives and flourishes among us, we may still surmount all our difficulties, and no weapon formed against us will prosper: if we despise or neglect it, no human power

90Hall, “Reflections on War,” 68–69.
91Hall, “Reflections on War,” 69.
92Hall, “Reflections on War,” 69.
93Hall, “Reflections on War,” 69.
94Hall, “Reflections on War,” 70.
can afford us protection.95

Having already noted the impact the war was having on the poor, Hall appeals to believers to live charitably. He says, “Happy are they whose lives correspond to these benevolent intentions...how much on the contrary, are those to be pitied, in whatever sphere they move, who live to themselves, unmindful of the coming of the Lord.”96 He concludes by demonstrating how the selfish unbeliever will be astonished as he beholds the “poor members of Christ...united to their Lord.”97 These final sentences reinforce Hall’s status as a master orator, for he says,

How will they be astonished to see them surrounded with so much majesty! How will they cast down their eyes in their presence! How will they curse that gold which will then eat their flesh as with fire, and that avarice, that indolence, that voluptuousness which will entitle them to so much misery! You will then learn that the imitation of Christ is the old wisdom: you will then be convinced it is better to be endeaed to the cottage than admired in the palace; when to have wiped the tears of the afflicted, and inherited the prayers of the widow and the fatherless, shall be found a richer patrimony than the favour of princes.98

The Effect of the Sermon

Comparing Reflections to Modern Infidelity, John Webster Morris observes of the former: “The style is more chastened, the figures are less splendid, but the glow of patriotism is unabated.”99 Within this sermon one can see the originality of Hall’s

95Hall, “Reflections on War,” 70.
96Hall, “Reflections on War,” 75.
97Hall, “Reflections on War,” 75.
98Hall, “Reflections on War,” 75.
99Morris, Biographical Recollections, 159.
ideas. One commentator on Hall’s ministry praised Hall’s originality, and then cites several lines from *Reflections on War* as his example and concludes: “No man in reading Hall is ever reminded of any other author.” Macleod summarizes the sermon’s effect, “It is not known by how much the Society benefited by Hall’s eloquence, but the sermon was everywhere hailed with delight. It is a clear example of Hall’s genius for saying the right thing at the right time and in the right way, and was justly applauded.”

**Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis**

It was only a year before the peace brought by the Treaty of Amiens crumbled and Bonaparte began his attack on England. On October 19, 1803, a fast day was declared, and Robert Hall delivered a sermon at Bridge-Street, Bristol, that was later published as *Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis*.

**The Sermon**

With Jeremiah 8:6 as his text, “I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle,” Hall calls for those sentiments that would be approved by God, sentiments not exhibited by the Israelites who had

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100 A third edition of this sermon is housed at The Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University. See Robert Hall, *Reflections on War: A Sermon, Preached at the Baptist Meeting, Cambridge, on Tuesday June 1, 1802, Being the Day of Thanksgiving for a General Peace*, 3rd ed. (London: Whittingham and Rowland, 1810).


stubbornly refused to repent and had followed their own dangerous course of action. Hall acknowledges that God is “attentive to the conduct of men at all times . . . peculiarly so while they are under his correcting hand.” 104 Thus, Hall lays out his theme clearly,

We are this day assembled at the call of our sovereign, to humble ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, under a sense of our sins, and to implore his interposition, that we may not be delivered into the hands of our enemies, nor fall a prey to the malice of those who hate us. It is surely then of the utmost consequence to see to it, that our humiliation be deep, our repentance sincere. 105

Hall divides the sermon into an examination of wrong sentiments and then an endeavor “to substitute more correct ones in their stead.” 106

First, Hall recognizes that political inquiry and speculation into the causes of such a season are necessary, but he urges his hearers to consider that questions of causality in the very moments of war are unhelpful. Hall asks, “What alleviation have you afforded to perplexity and distress? They still exist in all their force.” 107 Instead the nation should “acknowledge the hand of God” and realize “a deep sense of his dominion.” 108

While we attend to the operation of second causes, let us never forget that there is a Being placed above them, who can move and arrange them at pleasure, and in whose hands they never fail to accomplish the purposes of his unerring counsel. The honour of the Supreme Ruler requires that his supremacy should be acknowledged, his agency confessed; nor is there any thing which he more intends by his chastisements than to extort this confession, or any thing he more highly

104 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 85.

105 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 85.

106 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 86.

107 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 86.

108 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 86.
resents than an attempt to exclude him from the concerns of his own world.\textsuperscript{109} Hall then identifies a second dangerous sentiment, the reliance upon “an arm of flesh” for safety rather than upon God.\textsuperscript{110} Hall agrees that military labor and preparation are essential and so argues for a balance between wise preparation and humble dependence. He clarifies,

\begin{quote}
If to depend on the interposition of Providence without human exertion be to tempt God; to confide in an arm of flesh without seeking his aid, is to deny him: the former is to be pitied for its weakness, the latter to be censured for its impiety; nor is it easy to say which affords the worst omen of success. Let us avoid both these extremes; availing ourselves of all the resources which wisdom can suggest or energy produce, let us still feel and acknowledge our absolute dependence upon God.\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

The third improper sentiment is the “wanton and indiscriminate censure of the measures of our rulers.”\textsuperscript{112} Although Hall believed in free speech and the right to moderate and decent criticism of government, he held still, “There is a respect, in my apprehension due to civil governors on account of their office, which we are not permitted to violate even when we are under the necessity of blaming their measures.”\textsuperscript{113} Hall considered unanimity during a season of war as necessary and defamation of leaders and administrators during such a time as “criminal.”\textsuperscript{114}

The fourth sentiment Hall decries is the belief that victory will ensue because

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\textsuperscript{109}Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 86.
\textsuperscript{110}Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 87.
\textsuperscript{111}Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 87.
\textsuperscript{112}Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 87–88.
\textsuperscript{113}Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 88.
\textsuperscript{114}Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 89.
\end{flushright}
of “supposed superiority in virtue to our enemies.”[115] Citing the biblical example of the Egyptians and the Assyrians, Hall admits the “cup of divine displeasure” has been poured on “guilty nations”, but urges the consideration that judgment “often begins at the house of God.”[116] Hall further shows how the comparative guilt of individuals and nations can never be rightly judged by fallen man, but only by the Supreme Judge. Hall clearly delineates the rejection of truth and religion in France, but concludes,

Were we indeed a religious people, were the traces of Christianity as visible in our lives as they are in our creeds and confessions, we might derive solid support from the comparison of ourselves with others; but if the contrary be the fact, and there are with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God, it will be our wisdom to relinquish this plea; and instead of boasting our superior virtue, to lie low in humiliation and repentance.[117]

The final sentiments Hall rejects are “general lamentations and acknowledgements of the corruptions of the age,” which must not be excluded, but which alone provide no answers.[118] Hall knew some would attribute war to “the impiety of the age” or the “irreligion of the rich” or “the immorality of the poor,” but such generalities, Hall says are “too vague and indistinct to make a lasting impression.”[119]

Before offering exhorting his hearers to demonstrate the proper sentiments, Hall briefly discusses the issue of national sins, and the wrong opinion that providence has allowed a season of war simply because of the transgressions of leaders and

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legislatures. Hall’s conclusion is that “the greater part of the crimes committed in every
country are perpetrated by its inhabitants in their individual character,” and as opposed to
national sins, Hall asserts, “it is these . . . which chiefly provoke the divine judgments.”
Again, Hall appeals to the Scriptures where the prophets more frequently denounced the
sins of the people rather than those of the leaders.

Having already referred several times to the sovereign work of God, Hall first
exhorts his hearers to “a devout acknowledgment of the hand of God.” Hall declares,
“Important as this disposition is, under all circumstances, it is what more especially suits
the present crisis, and which the events we have witnessed are so eminently calculated to
impress.”

Second, Hall says, “it behooves us to feel and confess, in national calamities,
the tokens of his displeasure.” He then lists a few of “the most alarming symptoms of
national degeneracy.” The first symptom is the departure from Christian truth,
especially the doctrines of the fall and of redemption, which Hall calls “the two grand
points on which the Christian dispensation hinges.” After a brief defense of the
perfection of Christian truth, Hall explains,

Indifference and inattention to the truths and mysteries of revelation have led, by an

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120 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 92.
121 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 94.
122 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 94.
123 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 94.
124 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 95.
125 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 95.
easy transition to a dislike and neglect of the book which contains them; so that, in a Christian country, nothing is thought so vulgar as a serious appeal to the Scriptures; and the candidate for fashionable distinction would rather betray a familiar acquaintance with the most impure writers than with the words of Christ and his apostles.  

For Hall, this infidelity “is nothing more than a noxious spawn . . . bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted Christianity.”

Hall’s language is equally striking as he discusses the next symptom, the decline of personal piety. Hall insists, “A lax theology is the natural parent of a lax morality.” He then distinguishes a moral shift that he feels is different from any preceding age. Previous generations placed religion first, social morality second, and the physical good of others as subordinate to both. Hall remarks, “Everything is now reversed. The pyramid is inverted: the first is last, and the last first.” Hall’s observation is that everything now is done out of expediency. After a protracted discussion of the current philosophy of expedient morality, Hall encourages his hearers to “return, then, to the safe and sober paths of our ancestors; adhering, in all moral questions, to the dictates regulated and informed by the divine word.”

Hall’s next symptom of “degeneracy” is the “growing disregard to the external duties of religion; the duties more especially of the Lord’s day, and of public worship.”

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126 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 96.
127 Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 96.
Attendance in Lord’s day worship had rapidly declined, and Hall rails against both the “highest and lowest classes” who disregard or condescend Sabbath duties, and with “sincere reluctance,” he denounces those who hold military exercises on Sunday. He urges, “When we consider how important an institution the Christian Sabbath is, how essential to the maintenance of public worship, which is itself essential to religion, and what a barrier it opposes to the impiety and immorality; is it not to be lamented that it should ever have been, in the smallest degree, infringed by legislative authority.”

Although Hall mentions that the final proof of degeneracy to be discussed is the “universal profaneness which taints our daily intercourse,” he makes a brief digression against the slave trade. As Hall begins to bring his address to a close, he invites his audience to consider that “the only expedient which remains to be adopted is an immediate return to God.” While Hall seeks to beseech the entire nation to true repentance, he quickly admits that repentance is chiefly a personal concern. He then advises a speedy return to the spirit and practice of the gospel. The final portion of this sermon was a rallying cry to the English people, even to those who would defend the country, to rely upon their God in the firm belief that he would deliver them from their enemy.


\[133\] Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 102–03.

\[134\] Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 104.

\[135\] Hall, “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,” 105–06.
The Effect of the Sermon

Benjamin Flower was one of very few people who disapproved of this sermon. He wrote stinging criticisms of Hall, but they were scarcely heard in the general public. Of the remarkable effect of the sermon, Hall’s biographer and friend Olinthus Gregory wrote,

This sermon, perhaps, excited more general admiration than any of the author’s former productions; on account of its masterly exposure of prevailing errors, its original and philosophical defence of some momentous truths, and its remarkable appropriateness to the exigencies of the crisis. The last ten pages were thought by many (and by Mr. Pitt among the number) to be fully equal in genuine eloquence to any passage of the same length that can be selected from either ancient or modern orators. Hall’s reputation was once again significantly enlarged from the effect of this sermon, just as with the previous two. All three of these famous sermons were linked to the Napoleonic wars, and Macleod summarizes their impact, “Their popularity was widespread. They were preached with dignity and power, and in each of them Hall stands out as a man who had his finger on the pulse of the nation and who could express its feelings to perfection. This was the chief reason for their astonishing success.”

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137Waterbury, Sketches, 98.


139A first edition of this sermon is housed at the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University. See Robert Hall, The Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis: A Sermon Preached at Bridge-Street Bristol, October 19, 1803; Being the Day Appointed for a General Fast (London: C. Whittingham, 1803).

Funeral Sermon for the Princess Charlotte of Wales

Although these previous three sermons had captured national attention during his Cambridge ministry, an event of national significance during Hall’s Leicester pastorate once again brought Hall’s name great fame throughout England. Princess Charlotte, the extremely popular only child of King George IV, died in childbirth in November 1817. The grief that struck the nation was unparalleled. Thousands of sermons were preached throughout England and over a hundred of those were published.141

Each sermon had its own particular nuances, and some preachers apparently even felt inclined to “identify specific reasons for God’s judgment.”142 Hall’s approach, however, was much different and simply attempted to “affirm that a providential chastening was taking place.”143 His sermon attempted to drive his hearers to consider their mortality and the prospects of eternity while simultaneously being propelled to self-examination and confession of sin during a time when God’s hand of judgment had stricken the nation. This sermon would be Hall’s last major address to capture the heart of the nation.

The Sermon

Hall delivered the sermon at Leicester in his Harvey Lane pulpit on November 6, 1817. His text was Jeremiah 15:9, “She hath given up the ghost: her sun is gone down


143 Wolfe, “British Sermons on National Events,” 196.
while it was yet day.”  

Hall begins by showing how the occasion of Princess Charlotte’s death was a remarkable opportunity for “enlightened teachers” to “impress the mind with the lessons of wisdom and piety.” For Hall, these types of events easily gave preachers the ability both to encourage and admonish the hearts of their hearers because “attention is awake, an interest is excited, and all that remains is to lead the mind, already sufficiently susceptible, to objects of permanent utility.” What a remarkable opportunity then for a preacher: “He originates nothing; it is not so much he that speaks as the events which speak for themselves; he only presumes to interpret their language, and to guide the confused emotions of a sorrowful and swollen heart into the channels of piety.” Hall recognized that Princess Charlotte’s death had caused “commiseration and concern” throughout the “great empire” and warned that “not to survey it with attention, not to permit it to settle on the heart, would betray the utmost insensibility.”

One reason Hall offers for carefully considering these events is further to understand the providence of God. Hall encourages his hearers to place their trust in God, understanding the interconnectedness of God’s providence and his revelation of himself in Scripture. Hall states,

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144 Robert Hall, “A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of Her Late Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte of Wales,” in Works, 1:177–203.


To those of us who have access to both these sources of information they serve to illustrate each other: the obscuritites of Providence are elucidated by Scripture; the declarations of Scripture are verified by Providence. One unfolds, as far as it is suitable to our state, the character and designs of the mysterious agent; the other displays his works; and the admirable harmony which is found to subsist between them strengthens and invigorates our confidence in both.\footnote{Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 180.}

For Hall, the illustration of God’s sovereignty over all matters is best seen in the individual narratives of the Scriptures and not simply in “general propositions.” He offers the lives of Abraham and Joseph as a first example, and the moves to the work of Christ as the ultimate paradigm for understanding the providence of God. The trust that believers have in a future hope and resurrection is not based on blind or abstract propositions alone, but by doctrines supported by experience and events which appeal to the senses. He concludes this illustration by stating,

In order to rescue us from the idolatry of the creature and the dominion of the senses, He who is intimately acquainted with our frame makes use of sensible appearances, and causes His Son to become flesh and to pitch his tent among us, that by faith in his crucified humanity we may ascend, as by a mystic ladder, to the abode of the eternal.\footnote{Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 180.}

Hall then summarizes his main argument, which is that God conveys the lessons of his providence “by clothing the abstractions of religion in the realities of life,” for in so doing he causes his followers to avoid the “objects of speculation” which “affect us but little.”\footnote{Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 181.}

Hall provides another example. He states, “We all acknowledge, for example, our constant exposure to death, but it is seldom we experience the practical impression of

\footnote{Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 181.}
that weighty truth, except when we witness the stroke of mortality actually inflicted.”

Then Hall provides a forceful transition:

It is thus that Providence is addressing us at the present moment, and if we are wise we shall convert the melancholy event before us, not to the purposes of political speculation, fruitless conjecture, or anxious foreboding, but (what is infinitely better) to a profound consideration of the hand of God; and then, though we may be at a loss to explore the reason of his conduct, we shall be at none how to improve it.

Hall’s eloquence paints a remarkable picture of the importance of this moment for spiritual reflection, a time in which God has been pleased to “extinguish in an instant the hopes of a nation, to clothe the throne in sackcloth, and involve a kingdom in mourning.”

Hall then turns his attention to some “particulars” of the events that had just unfolded. The first that “strikes the attention” is the high “rank” of Princess Charlotte. Hall states that she “appears to have been placed on the pinnacle of society for the express purpose of rendering her fall the more conspicuous, and of convincing as many as are susceptible of conviction that man at his best estate is altogether vanity.” Once again Hall’s mastery of language shines as he describes Charlotte as the “object of universal admiration,” and then declares how God “after conducting her to an eminence whence she could survey all the glories of empire as he destined possession, close her

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eyes in death.”\textsuperscript{156}

Next, Hall addresses the magnitude of this national calamity. Hall quickly admits that “catastrophe” is “not a rare occurrence.”\textsuperscript{157} He explains how mothers often die in childbirth and that their loved ones are often stricken with grief and left to mourn alone. The world often sees how “the hope of an individual is crushed, the happiness of a family is destroyed.”\textsuperscript{158} He then makes the distinction with this event of national significance. He offers, “But when the great lights and ornaments of the world, placed aloft to conduct its inferior movements, are extinguished, such an event resembles the Apocalyptic vial poured into that element which changes its whole temperature, and is the presage of fearful commotions, of thunders, lightnings, and tempests.”\textsuperscript{159}

Hall then shows how individuals such as Charlotte are often considered to be the “favourites of fortune” because God has blessed them with “bounties and indulgences” that are often far “beyond the ordinary measure of allotment.”\textsuperscript{160} Hall continues this theme in vivid description, detailing how the mighty and powerful often seem untouchable, but then remarks, “As the necessary consequence of these sentiments, when great reverses befall the higher orders, the mind experiences a kind of revulsion; the contrast of their present with their past situation produces a deeper sympathy than is

\textsuperscript{156}Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 182.

\textsuperscript{157}Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 183.

\textsuperscript{158}Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 183.

\textsuperscript{159}Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 183.

\textsuperscript{160}Hall, “Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte,” 183.
experienced on other occasions.”

He then argues,

The sight of such elaborate preparations for happiness rendered abortive, of a majestic fabric so proudly seated and exquisitely adorned suddenly overturned, disturbs the imagination like a convulsion of nature, and diffuses a feeling of insecurity and terror, as though nothing remained on which we could repose with confidence.

In the middle of this portion of the discourse, Hall sets forth one of the sermon’s goals. He states, “Let me rather avail myself of the awful dispensation before us, to suggest a warning to the possessors of these envied distinctions not to overrate their value, nor confide in their continuance, which at most are but the flower of the field, as much distinguished by its superior frailty as by its beauty.”

Hall sets forth a warning to his hearers that they should deeply consider their fleeting lives and thoroughly reflect on “this transitory abode.” Recognizing the vanity of worldly titles and pleasures, Hall then forcefully displays the coming judgment for all men. He says,

These artificial decorations, be it remembered, are not, properly speaking, their own; the elevation to which they belong is momentary; and as the merit of an actor is not estimated by the part which he performs, but solely by the truth and propriety of his representation, and the peasant is often applauded where the monarch is hissed, so when the great drama of life is concluded, He who allots its scenes, and determines its period, will take an account of his servants, and assign to each his punishment or reward, in his proper character.

Hall then moves to a detailed discussion of the righteous and wise justice and judgment of God, as opposed to this world where justice is often marked by backward

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“irregularities,” where “merit is often depressed, vice exalted.” Hall once again encourages his hearers to “prefer an eternal recompense with God” and so to “submit to be controlled by his will, and led by his spirit.” Hall understands that not all will gladly receive his observations, and so exhorts that they indeed are the ones to which “the warning voice should be directed, the eternal world unveiled.” The admonition is especially necessary, according to Hall, for those enjoying the “smiles of fortune” and the “associations of pleasure” offered by the world in its fallen state.

In keeping with his line of impassioned appeal, Hall then makes another dramatic and abrupt transition. He states,

Let them turn their eyes, then, for a moment, to this illustrious princess; who, while she lived, concentrated in herself whatever distinguishes the higher orders of society, and may now be considered as addressing them from the tomb. . . . Born to inherit the most illustrious monarchy in the world, and united at an early period to the object of her choice . . . she enjoyed (what is not always the privileges of that rank) the highest connubial felicity, and had the prospect of combining all the tranquil enjoyments of private life with the splendor of a royal situation. Placed on the summit of society, to her every eye was turned, in her every hope was centred, and nothing was wanting to complete her felicity except perpetuity.

Hall clearly wanted his auditors to feel the gravity of such a situation, and so he continues discussing the grand life of Charlotte. He then offers this sharp statement: “One thing only was wanting to render our satisfaction complete in the prospect of the accession of

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such a princess; it was, that she might become the living mother of children.”  

Hall goes to considerable lengths to portray vividly the grand expectations and hopes of both Charlotte herself and the nation at large. Hall even felt that the anticipations of the nation may have “outstripped” her own. He then adds,

We fondly hoped that a life so inestimable would be protracted to a distant period, and that, after diffusing the blessings of a just and enlightened administration, and being surrounded by a numerous progeny, she would gradually, in a good old age, sink under the horizon, amid the embraces of her family and the benedictions of her country. But alas! these delightful visions are fled, and what do we behold in their room but the funeral pall and shroud, a palace in mourning, a nation on tears, and the shadow of death settles over both like a cloud! O the unspeakable vanity of human hopes! the incurable blindness of man to futurity! ever doomed to grasp at shadows, to seize with avidity what turns to dust and ashes in his hands, to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.  

Turning to Isaiah 40:6-8, Hall demonstrates how God used Isaiah to present “the human race itself withering under the breath of his mouth, perishing under his rebuke; while he plants his eternal word, which subsists from generation to generation, in undecaying vigour, to console our wretchedness and impregnate the dying mass with the seed of immorality.”

For Hall, the death of the Princess should not be considered a subject of regret, and individuals should recognize the joy Charlotte was now experiencing. The imagery Hall then evokes is mesmerizing and thus became a very famous passage from this sermon:

Other objects occupy her mind, other thoughts engage her attention, and will continue to engage it for ever. All things with her are changed; and viewed from

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that pure and ineffable light for which we humbly hope religion prepared her, the lustre of a diadem is scarcely visible, majesty emits a feeble and sickly ray, and all ranks and conditions of men appear but so many troops of pilgrims, in different garbs, toiling through the same vale of tears, distinguished only by different degrees of wretchedness.

In the full fruition of eternal joys, she is so far from looking back with lingering regret on what she has quitted, that she is surprised it had the power of affecting her so much; that she took so deep an interest in the scenes of this shadowy state of being, while so near to an eternal weight of glory; and, as far as memory may be supposed to contribute to her happiness by associating the present with the past, it is not the recollection of her illustrious birth and elevated prospects, but that she visited the abodes of the poor, and learned to weep with those that weep; that, surrounded with the fascinations of pleasure, she was not inebriated by its charms; that she resisted the strongest temptations to pride, preserved her ears open to truth, was impatient of the voice of flattery; in a word, that she sought and cherished the inspirations of piety, and walked humbly with her God. This is fruit which survives when the flower withers – the only ornaments and treasures we can carry into eternity.  

Hall thus beseeched his congregation to consider of first importance the matters related to their souls and to eternity. He laboriously considers the great difficulty that surrounds persuading humanity to consider eternal matters while living in this world. He offers, “How strange it is then that, with the certainty we all possess of shortly entering into another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect; that we seldom permit it to penetrate us; and that the moment the recollection recurs we hasten to dismiss it as an unwelcome intrusion.” Still, Hall encouraged his people to “fix their attention firmly on another world.”

Next, comes a major turning point in the sermon where Hall again shifts his focus, but this time in a doctrinal direction. According to Hall, the reason mankind must


so vehemently reject the examination of their souls’ readiness for eternity is a “moral” reason. Hall argues:

The conclusion to which we are conducted is confirmed by inspiration, which assures us that a great revolution has actually befallen the species; and that, in consequence of the entrance of sin into the world, we have incurred the forfeiture of the divine favour, and the loss of the divine image. In this situation it is not difficult to perceive the economy adapted to our relief must include two things, the means of expiating guilt, and the means of moral renovation: in other words, an atoning sacrifice and a sanctifying Spirit.  

Hall then commends the work of the Savior and suggests that “every requisite which we can conceive necessary in a restorative dispensation is found in the gospel.”  

Hall understands the palatability of the gospel is even more difficult than the mere observation of eternal matters, but he offers, “Be assured, my Christian brethren, it is by a profound submission of the soul to this doctrine, offensive as it may be to the pride of human virtue, repugnant as it undoubtedly is to the dictates of philosophy, falsely so called, that we must acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace.”  

God’s plan of salvation in Christ is readily available to all who will call upon the name of the Lord, none will be turned away because of “weakness” or “ignorance,” and thus Hall encourages all who may be “thirsty” to “partake of the water of life freely.”  

As Hall nears his conclusion, he discusses how man is “made for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness,” but he then exposes the sufferings that await

unbelievers in eternity. He then adds, “But is time to draw the veil over this heart-withering prospect, remembering only what manner of persons we ought to be, who are walking on the brink of such an eternity, and possess no assurance but that the next moment will convey us to the regions of happiness or of despair.”

Hall’s appeals to the unbeliever continue to mount as he draws to a close. He urges the lost to listen to the “first whisper” of the gospel just as Elijah heard the “still small voice” of God. He exhorts them to let the “light of truth” be “admitted in its full force.” He reminds them “the sight of a penitent on his knees is a spectacle which moves heaven.”

Hall then proclaims,

When a new a living way is opened into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, not to avail ourselves of it, not to arise and go to our Father, but to prefer remaining at a guilty distance, encompassed with famine, to the rich and everlasting provisions of his house, will be a source of insupportable anguish when we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enter into the kingdom of God, and ourselves shut out.

Hall closes by reminding his countrymen that it is beyond the scope of his calling to discuss all the political ramifications of this great event, but he does allot a significant section to recounting the sufferings God had allowed the nation to endure and the blessings he gave in their preservation from their enemies and the establishment of their strength. Distinguishing the solemn occasion of the princess’s death from the calamities

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of war, Hall concludes,

How different the example of mortality presented on the present occasion? Without the slightest warning, without the opportunity of a moment’s immediate preparation, in the midst of the deepest tranquillity, at midnight, a voice was heard in the palace, not of singing men and singing women, not of revelry and mirth, but the cry, Behold, the Bridgegroom cometh. The mother, in the bloom of youth, spared just long enough to hear the tidings of her infant’s death, almost immediately, as if summoned by his spirit, follows him into eternity.  

Hall then further describes the scene in vivid detail:

Unmoved by the tears of conjugal affection, unawed by the presence of grandeur and the prerogatives of power, inexorable Death hastened to execute his stern commission, leaving nothing to royalty itself but to retire and weep. Who can fail to discern, on this awful occasion, the hand of Him who bringeth princes to nothing, who maketh the judges of the earth as vanity; who says, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth; and he shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble?

Hall reminds his hearers that the name “Charlotte Augusta” would never be mentioned by his countrymen “without tears,” but then closes with these solemn words, “Should her lamented and untimely end be the means of giving that religious impulse to the public mind which shall turn us to righteousness, the benefits she will have conferred upon her country in both worlds will more than equal the glories of the most prosperous and extended reign.”

The Effect of the Sermon

Of all the sermons preached for Princess Charlotte, Hall’s was clearly one of

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the most popular, running to nine editions before the end of 1818. Of this sermon, John Dix wrote that it “created such a sensation, that it was to be found in the hands of rich and poor.” Another writer viewed this sermon as a specimen of the “grandeur” of Hall’s thoughts. He wrote, “Great minds when excited will throw out great thoughts. What has ever equaled the idea which he has given us of the worth of our souls, in his funeral sermon for the Princess Charlotte?”

Each of these four famous sermons was widely distributed; numerous editions of each were published over the following months. These sermons had first established and then solidified Hall’s reputation as the best preacher among the Baptists, and perhaps the greatest in all of England.

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190 John Wolfe, “British Sermons on National Events,” in A New History of the Sermon, 196. There are two editions of Hall’s sermon housed at The Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University. See Robert Hall, A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of Her Late Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte of Wales, Preached at Harvey-Lane, Leicester, November 16, 1817, 3rd ed. (Leicester: Thomas Combe, 1818). The popularity of the sermon is also evident by its running to a sixteenth edition in 1827. See Robert Hall, A Sermon, 16th ed. (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1827).

191 Dix, Pen and Ink Sketches, 69.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

The name and legacy of Robert Hall, almost completely forgotten at the start of the twenty-first century, deserves to be remembered as a key theological exemplar and cultural celebrity in the early nineteenth century, as this dissertation has argued. At the heart of his theology was a strong spirituality of the Word that he had inherited from and shared with his Baptist forebears. He thus believed in the exclusivity, necessity, authority, and clarity of the Scriptures. He also agreed with his Baptist predecessors like John Bunyan and Benjamin Keach and contemporaries such as Andrew Fuller that preaching was an essential means of bringing this infallible Word to bear on the lives of unbelievers and of edifying and instructing the believers in the church. Previous generations of Baptist preachers had viewed preaching as a means of defending theological truth and inculcating biblical Christianity in the Baptist Churches. Like his predecessors Hall employed a common Baptist preaching methodology that was first marked by utilizing Scripture as the sole foundation for sermons. In common with his Baptist tradition Hall sought to design and deliver sermons that were simple and understandable to his hearers. Another fundamental tenet of Baptist preaching in this homiletical tradition was the belief that exposition was the best method of delivering the Scriptures to a congregation. A final element of this tradition’s homiletic philosophy was the belief that preaching that is straightforward biblical exposition was an adequate vehicle for theological instruction. With theological debates swirling on every front
during the Puritan era and “long” eighteenth century, Hall’s preaching predecessors knew that preaching must give their people a firm foundation so as to not be swayed by the shifting sands of doctrinal controversy. It was not simply controversy, however, that was in view. Preaching as a means of theological instruction also sought to help believers face the everyday challenges of the Christian life.

While Hall shared most of these attitudes about preaching, his methodology began to shift later in his career, particularly when he moved away from his intellectual Cambridge congregation to Harvey Lane in Leicester where the people were not as cultured or educated. Hall changed his preaching methodology to suit what he felt were the needs of his hearers. In doing so, he shied away from clear biblical exposition and rigorous theological instruction in favor of preaching that was topical in its orientation. Instead of working through books of the Bible as he had done in Cambridge, Hall’s new method of subject or topical preaching focused on personal and pietistic application. This method was especially prominent in Hall’s Old Testament preaching, in which he often simply used his text as a springboard for whatever topic he chose to address. It needs stressing, though, that Hall did not entirely neglect doctrinal defense and instruction in preaching, and both his published and unpublished sermons from this period of his life contain some real gems of doctrinal preaching that help clarify Hall’s later theological thought.

In his early days as a preacher, Hall struggled to find his theological identity, wavering on certain theological issues and even denying other important biblical doctrines. At Bristol, although Hall’s reputation as a preacher began to soar, many of Hall’s Baptist brethren were afraid that Hall was far gone in heterodoxy. Hall’s removal
to Cambridge, however, and the death of his father, both seemed to help Hall solidify his beliefs and finally find his theological footing. Questions about his true doctrinal convictions have remained for over a century, however, because preaching, in which there was too little theology, seems to have marked Hall’s later pastoral ministry.

However, the sermons of Robert Hall that do have a clear doctrinal substance show that Hall was not as far gone as many thought. He clearly and vigorously defended the deity of Christ against Unitarian and Socinian enemies of the gospel. He believed in the power and necessity of Scripture for both salvation and edification. He preached a gospel that understood the depths of human depravity and the necessity of the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. Although Hall denied the doctrine of particular redemption in his private correspondence and never clarified his view about the extent of Christ’s redeeming work in his sermons, his preaching frequently included a defense of substitutionary atonement. Further, he expounded the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone and labored to defend the importance of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Hall’s defense of certain biblical doctrines, especially at Cambridge, proved that he was not afraid to stand against the tides of infidelity that were beginning to rise in the nineteenth century. His preaching infuriated some individuals but saved others from apostasy. As his ministry continued, his preaching was so influential and helpful that people flocked to hear him preach and some even relocated to join his congregations. Many young men were greatly affected by Hall’s ministry, some were converted and others were called into gospel ministry. It needs emphasizing, though, that he became an exemplar, not because he was a model pastor-theologian like Fuller or a rigorous
theological systematician as John Gill but because he was a preacher, who although capable of preaching brilliant doctrinal sermons, came to neglect theology in his preaching. This tension may be the most striking feature of Hall’s preaching ministry and his role as an exemplar. He was a catalyst for change not because he personally abandoned or modified certain tenets held by both his Particular Baptist forefathers and contemporaries but because he often ignored the consistent and vigorous defense of such a theology in his pulpit. While it may have never been Hall’s intention to cause an erosion of doctrinal fidelity, his new style of preaching was certainly influential and seems to have been one cause for later theological defections from and controversies within his beloved Baptist community.

Now, the reason Hall was so influential in his own day was due to the fact that he was a cultural celebrity. The rise of Romanticism created an environment that catered to the rise of celebrities. Literary figures and politicians rose to fame, but it was a relatively new phenomenon for such a cult of celebrity to surround religious figures. It had begun with the remarkable career of George Whitefield, who although zealous for the gospel and the cause of Christ, in his early ministry seemed to have promoted himself and used genius and theatrics to become famous. As the nineteenth century opened, other preachers, such as Rowland Hill and Thomas Chalmers, also rose to fame. These men did not seek to become celebrities, although the same cannot be said of Edward Irving who was a rising star in London and who, like Whitefield, knew how to promote an image that was sure to garner fame.

In the midst of all this, the Baptists had their first true cultural celebrity in Robert Hall. He was most famous as a preacher, although there were other reasons for
his fame. As a conversationalist, he was brilliant. His quick wit and sarcasm endeared people to his company. People loved spending time with him in his home, in his study, or around the towns of Cambridge and Leicester. The stories of Hall gave even greater strength to his soaring popularity.

As a rhetorician, Hall was truly incomparable. The Baptists had never had a preacher quite like Hall, but his fame extended well beyond this circle of nonconformity. Some called him the greatest orator of his day; others went even further when they dubbed him the greatest orator who had ever lived. People flocked to hear him preach, some travelling miles to hear the Baptist celebrity. The churches he served as pastor were constantly full and each was enlarged, sometimes more than once, to accommodate the ever-increasing crowds. When Hall would preach for special occasions, which he was invited to do throughout England, the scene was always startling. The audiences would often contain some of the most distinguished individuals in English society. People were struck by Hall’s striking appearance, his peculiarly feeble voice, his inimitable imagination, and his rapid style of delivery. Often his preaching would bring auditors to their feet, even to their standing on the pews, so as to hear better his every word. Even away from his local pulpit, England heard of Hall, and the best came to see and hear the famed Baptist. Although it was difficult to take notes of or transcribe Hall’s sermons, they were often printed in periodicals and circulated throughout England.

Immediately after his death, Hall’s status as a celebrity continued to soar. People wrote poetry to express their loss and praise their preaching hero. A number of funeral sermons were published commending Hall and his ministry.¹ A massive,

¹See Appendix 3.
expensive statue of Hall was erected and placed in Leicester, the site of Hall’s longest pastorate.

Although Hall was famous for many reasons, he had first risen to fame through a series of sermons he preached at Cambridge. His sermon “Modern Infidelity” excoriated atheism and its effects on society. For years after its delivery, the sermon was published in numerous editions. Each printing made Hall more of a celebrity in England. Then, when England was engaged in the Napoleonic conflict, Hall preached “Reflections on War” and “Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis” both of which captured the attention of the nation. Finally, years later and at Leicester, Hall preached a funeral sermon after the tragic death of Princess Charlotte. Again Hall was placed in the spotlight.

Along with other elements of dissent, the Baptists had long endured the scorn of both the state and the Church of England. The fame and influence of Robert Hall, however, forced the larger culture finally to reckon with the Baptists. It was impossible to ignore them as a whole when among them there was one as celebrated as Hall. His life and ministry are an example of courage and faithfulness, and his influence has been overlooked for far too long. Further study of Hall is necessary, and it will most certainly place Hall back where he belongs, among the ranks of leading Baptist figures as a theological exemplar and a cultural celebrity.
APPENDIX 1

TABLE A1. A Catalog of Hall’s Sermons
This table is a list of Hall’s published and unpublished sermons¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sermon Title</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the Being and Name of Jehovah</td>
<td>Exodus 3:14</td>
<td>October 1814</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>3:13-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of Twelve Lectures on the Socinian Controversy</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>3:19-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Christ's Divinity and Condescension</td>
<td>Philippians 2:5-9</td>
<td>June 1813</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>3:24-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Angels</td>
<td>Hebrews 1:14</td>
<td></td>
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¹There are probably other unpublished notes of Hall’s sermons that have yet to be discovered, but this table represents the most up to date research listing all of Hall’s published and unpublished sermons. Some information is incomplete as there is not always a date or location listed. The source column specifies: 1) The sermon is found in Hall’s Works, the 4 volume American edition, “3:13-16,” indicates the sermon is found in volume 3 from pages 13 to 16 2) The sermon is found in Riley’s unpublished notes of Hall’s sermons found in the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, so “Set A, Vol. 1 . . .” indicates in which of the two sets the sermon, then the volume (which may either have no label (NL) in the original or has been relabeled for clarification in which case the original label is listed in parenthesis), and then either the page or sermon number 3) The sermon is found in some other source, in which case complete bibliographical detail is given.
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<td>Exposition of Philippians</td>
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<td>If any man lacks wisdom</td>
<td>James 1:5</td>
<td>March 3, 1811</td>
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<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>For who is this who engageth his heart to approach unto me?</td>
<td>Jeremiah 30:21</td>
<td>March 10, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 2</td>
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<td>Be still and know that I am God.</td>
<td>Psalm 46:10</td>
<td>March 10, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 3</td>
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<td>So samuel said, &quot;Hath the Lord as great delight...&quot;</td>
<td>1 Samuel 15:22-23</td>
<td>March 24, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 4</td>
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<td>For he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam</td>
<td>2 Kings 10:3</td>
<td>March 24, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 5</td>
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<td>We know that we have passed from death to life</td>
<td>1 John 3:14</td>
<td>March 17, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 6</td>
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<td>Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet</td>
<td>Isaiah 58:1</td>
<td>March 20, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 8</td>
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<td>And she said unto Elijah, &quot;What have I to do with thee&quot;</td>
<td>1 Kings 17:18</td>
<td>March 30, 1811 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 9</td>
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<td>Zion shall be redeemed with judgments</td>
<td>Isaiah 1:27</td>
<td>April 7, 1811</td>
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<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 10</td>
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<td>And I will bring the third part through the fire</td>
<td>Zechariah 13:9</td>
<td>April 7, 1811</td>
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<td>Who gave Himself for our sins</td>
<td>Galatians 1:4</td>
<td>April 14, 1811</td>
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<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 12</td>
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<td>Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous and again I say rejoice</td>
<td>Philippians 4:4</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 13</td>
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<td>Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God?</td>
<td>Psalm 10:13</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 14</td>
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<td>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness</td>
<td>Matthew 5:6</td>
<td>September 22, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 16</td>
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<td>Being justified by faith we have peace with God</td>
<td>Romans 5:1</td>
<td>no date</td>
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<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 17</td>
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<td>And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols</td>
<td>2 Corinthians 6:16</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 18</td>
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<td>Now we know that whatever the law says</td>
<td>Romans 3:19</td>
<td>November 3, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 19</td>
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<td>But know the righteousness of God apart from the law</td>
<td>Romans 3:21-22</td>
<td>November 3, 1811 pm</td>
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<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 20</td>
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<td>I have written to him the great things of the law</td>
<td>Hosea 8:12</td>
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<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 22</td>
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<td>I am crucified with Christ</td>
<td>Galatians 2:20</td>
<td>November 16, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>But your joy no one shall take from you</td>
<td>John 16:22</td>
<td>September 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 25</td>
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<td>So then everyone must give an account of himself before God</td>
<td>Romans 4:12</td>
<td>December 1, 1811</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 26</td>
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<td>Then shall I be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness</td>
<td>Psalm 17:15</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 27</td>
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<td>Verily, man at his best is altogether vanity</td>
<td>Psalm 9:5</td>
<td>May 17, 1812</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 28</td>
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<td>By faith, Abraham when he was called</td>
<td>Hebrews 11:8-10</td>
<td>June 21, 1812</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 30</td>
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<td>It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth</td>
<td>Lamentations 3:22-24</td>
<td>October 23, 1812</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol I (NL): Sermon 31</td>
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<td>An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:4</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
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<td>Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord</td>
<td>Romans 12:11</td>
<td>June 9, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 57</td>
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<td>Behold his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2:4</td>
<td>June 16, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 58/59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest</td>
<td>Micah 2:10</td>
<td>June 19, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Known unto God are all his works</td>
<td>Acts 15:18</td>
<td>June 23, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Look thou upon me, and be merciful to me</td>
<td>Psalm 119:132</td>
<td>June 26, 1816 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 62</td>
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<tr>
<td>For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened</td>
<td>Hebrews 6:4-8</td>
<td>August 4, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 63</td>
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<tr>
<td>A few observations on, He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 64</td>
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<td>On anger…swift to hear</td>
<td>James 1</td>
<td>January 26, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 65</td>
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<td>Cast they burden on the Lord and he shall sustain thee</td>
<td>Psalm 55:22</td>
<td>March 24, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 66</td>
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<td>Now abideth faith, hope, charity</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 13:13</td>
<td>July 7, 1817</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 68</td>
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<td>The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart</td>
<td>Psalm 36:1</td>
<td>August 11, 1816</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 69</td>
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<tr>
<td>And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful</td>
<td>Revelation 17:14</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 70</td>
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<tr>
<td>By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out</td>
<td>Hebrews 11:8</td>
<td>May 4, 1817</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 71</td>
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<td>And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth</td>
<td>June 29, 1817</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 72</td>
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<tr>
<td>But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you</td>
<td>September 12, 1819</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust</td>
<td>November 14, 1819</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 74</td>
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<td>O that I were as in months past</td>
<td>November 21, 1819</td>
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<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 75</td>
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<td>And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart</td>
<td>December 24, 1819</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 76</td>
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<td>For I know that though wilt bring me to death</td>
<td>February 18, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 77</td>
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<td>Or despises thou the riches of his goodness</td>
<td>February 18, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 78</td>
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<td>Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 79</td>
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<td>And for an helmet, the hope of salvation</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 80</td>
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<td>Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol II (NL): Sermon 81</td>
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<td>Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses</td>
<td>January 6, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):7-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>To all that be at Rome, beloved of God</td>
<td>January 14, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):13-20</td>
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<td>Blessed is he that considereth the poor</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):20-28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let not thine heart envy sinners</td>
<td>January 17, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I): 28-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted</td>
<td>James 1:9-10</td>
<td>January 21, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):32-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A double minded man is unstable in all his way</td>
<td>James 1:8</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):38-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path</td>
<td>Psalm 119:105</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):49-52</td>
</tr>
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<td>But now we are delivered from the law</td>
<td>Romans 7:26</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):53-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As obedient children not fashioning yourselves</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:14-15</td>
<td>January 31, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):59-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord</td>
<td>Isaiah 58:14</td>
<td>February 4, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):64-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therefore let us keep the feast</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 5:8</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):70-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the glory of God to conceal a thing</td>
<td>Proverbs 25:2</td>
<td>February 8, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):77-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And a certain man drew a bow at a venture and shot the king</td>
<td>1 Kings 22:34</td>
<td>February 11, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):81-85</td>
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<td>I was also upright before him and I kept myself from iniquity</td>
<td>Psalm 18:23</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):86-91</td>
</tr>
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<td>Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth</td>
<td>Matthew 5:5</td>
<td>February 14, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):92-96</td>
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<tr>
<td>For I know that tho wilt bring me unto death</td>
<td>Job 30:23</td>
<td>February 18, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):96-102</td>
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<td>Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness</td>
<td>Romans 2:4-5</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):103-110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is Christ divided?</td>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>February 21,</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):111-</td>
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<tr>
<td>But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that</td>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>February 25,</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):115-128</td>
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<tr>
<td>are lost</td>
<td>4:3-4</td>
<td>1821</td>
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<td>He that hath my commandments and keepeth them</td>
<td>John 14:21-23</td>
<td>March 4, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):129-135</td>
</tr>
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<td>Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul</td>
<td>Hebrews 6:19-20</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):135-141</td>
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<td>All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to</td>
<td>Matthew 7:12</td>
<td>March 11, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):141-144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
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<tr>
<td>None of us liveth to himself</td>
<td>Romans 14:7</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):145-149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmur not among yourselves, no man can</td>
<td>John 6:43-44</td>
<td>March 14, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):149-155</td>
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<td>come to me</td>
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<td>But we have this treasure in earthen vessels</td>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>March 18, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):155-171</td>
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<td>4:7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Say among the heathen the Lord reigneth</td>
<td>Psalm 96:10-13</td>
<td>March 25, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol III (labeled I):171-178</td>
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<tr>
<td>By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them</td>
<td>Hebrews 11:23</td>
<td>March 26, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they</td>
<td>John 10:27</td>
<td>April 1, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):6-12</td>
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<td>follow me</td>
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<tr>
<td>The anointing of David in the midst of his brethren</td>
<td>1 Samuel 16:1-13</td>
<td>April 8, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now it was in the heart of David my father to build</td>
<td>1 Chronicles</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):26-31</td>
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<tr>
<td>an house</td>
<td>6:7-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>And I will bring the third part through the fire</td>
<td>Zechariah 13:9</td>
<td>April 22, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):31-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the four and twentieth day</td>
<td>Haggai 2:10-</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):38-</td>
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<tr>
<td>What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me</td>
<td>Psalm 116:2</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):52-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevertheless God, that comforted those that are cast down</td>
<td>2 Corinthians 7:6</td>
<td>May 6, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should it be according to thy mind?</td>
<td>Job 34:33</td>
<td>May 13, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):69-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest</td>
<td>Hebrews 4:11</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):77-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ</td>
<td>Hebrews 6:1</td>
<td>May 20, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):87-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark the perfect man and behold the upright</td>
<td>Psalm 37:37</td>
<td>May 27, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):107-114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life</td>
<td>John 10:17</td>
<td>June 3, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):115-123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think the Scripture says in vain, The spirit that dwelleth</td>
<td>James 4:5</td>
<td>June 10, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):123-130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken this generation</td>
<td>Luke 7:31-35</td>
<td>June 13, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):130-134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou openest thy hand, and satisfies the desire</td>
<td>Psalm 145:16</td>
<td>June 17, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):134-145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 8:11</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):145-156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day</td>
<td>John 8:56</td>
<td>June 24, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):157-170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy</td>
<td>Ephesians 4:1-6</td>
<td>July 1, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol IV (labeled II):170-179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My soul waited on the Lord</td>
<td>Psalm 130:6</td>
<td>July 1, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol V (labeled III) 1-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>O wretched man that I am</td>
<td>Romans 7:24</td>
<td>July 22, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>12-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth from all sin</td>
<td>1 John 1:7</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>23-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the beginning was the Word</td>
<td>John 1:1</td>
<td>July 29, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>35-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmur not among yourselves</td>
<td>John 6:43-44</td>
<td>August 12, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>45-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The parable of the unjust steward</td>
<td>Luke 16:13</td>
<td>July 29, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>56-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the day that the Lord hath made</td>
<td>Psalm 118:24</td>
<td>August 5, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>70-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith</td>
<td>Hebrews 10:22</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>84-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God that cannot lie</td>
<td>Titus 1:2</td>
<td>August 19, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>95-104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God</td>
<td>Acts 10:41</td>
<td>September 2, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>104-112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the law having a shadow of the good things to come</td>
<td>Hebrews 10:1-10</td>
<td>September 2, 1821 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>113-119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light</td>
<td>John 3:20-21</td>
<td>September 9, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>120-128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship</td>
<td>John 4:22</td>
<td>September 16, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>129-135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O God, thou are my God; early will I seek thee</td>
<td>Psalm 63:1-2</td>
<td>September 16, 1821 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>136-146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil</td>
<td>Exodus 23:9</td>
<td>September 19, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>146-154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them</td>
<td>Isaiah 9:13</td>
<td>September 23, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>154-63</td>
</tr>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew not him</td>
<td>1 John 3:1</td>
<td>September 23, 1821 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol V (labeled III) 162-172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself</td>
<td>1 Timothy 3:15</td>
<td>October 7, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol V (labeled III) 172-180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy</td>
<td>Ephesians 4:1</td>
<td>October 7, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The desire of the righteous shall be granted</td>
<td>Proverbs 10:24</td>
<td>October 21, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well</td>
<td>James 2:19</td>
<td>October 21, 1821 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 21-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the grace of God that bringeth salvation</td>
<td>Titus 2:11-13</td>
<td>November 11, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 29-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou shalt call his name Immanuel</td>
<td>Matthew 1:23</td>
<td>November 18, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 41-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened</td>
<td>2 Cor. 5:4-5</td>
<td>November 11, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 55-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There remained yet very much land to be possessed</td>
<td>Num. 25/Joshua 13:1</td>
<td>November 25, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 65-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter</td>
<td>John 13:7</td>
<td>November 25, 1821 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 76-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call upon me in the day of trouble</td>
<td>Psalm 50:15</td>
<td>December 2, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 86-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked</td>
<td>Jeremiah 17:9</td>
<td>December 9, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 97-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear</td>
<td>Revelation 1:3</td>
<td>December 16, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 107-117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:3</td>
<td>December 16, 1821 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 117-132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For we are strangers before thee, and</td>
<td>1 Chronicles</td>
<td>December 30,</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV)</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>For I through the law am dead to the law</td>
<td>Galatians 2:19</td>
<td>December 23, 1821</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 146-156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behold the days come when I will make a new covenant</td>
<td>Hebrews 8:8-12</td>
<td>December 30, 1821 am</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 157-167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now as touching these things offered unto idols</td>
<td>1 Cor. 8:1-3</td>
<td>January 20, 1822 am</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 167-178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behold, now, I am old, I know not the day of my death</td>
<td>Genesis 27:2</td>
<td>January 8, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 178-189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the poor the gospel is preached</td>
<td>Luke 7:22</td>
<td>January 13, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 190-199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you</td>
<td>Hebrews 12:5</td>
<td>January 20, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 206-218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Amaziah said to the man of God</td>
<td>2 Chron 25:9</td>
<td>February 3, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 218-226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost</td>
<td>Matthew 18:11</td>
<td>March 3, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 227-241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Christ is not entered into the holy places made without hands</td>
<td>Hebrews 9:24</td>
<td>February 10, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 242-253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake</td>
<td>Romans 13:11</td>
<td>February 17, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 253-264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me</td>
<td>1 Samuel 12:23</td>
<td>February 24, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 264-273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His delight is in the law of the Lord</td>
<td>Psalm 1:2</td>
<td>February 23, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 273-281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest</td>
<td>Isaiah 57:20-21</td>
<td>March 31, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 281-293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you</td>
<td>Galatians 3:1</td>
<td>March 3, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 293-301</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves</td>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>March 24, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV)</td>
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<td>together</td>
<td>10:25 pm</td>
<td>March 31, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 312-322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If thou believest all things</td>
<td>Mark 9:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>How precious are thy thoughts</td>
<td>Psalm 139:17-18</td>
<td>April 21, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 322-329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have set the Lord always</td>
<td>Psalm 16:8</td>
<td>May 5, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 329-338</td>
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<tr>
<td>O thou that hearest prayer</td>
<td>Psalm 65:2</td>
<td>May 5, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 338-348</td>
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<tr>
<td>The law and the prophets</td>
<td>Luke 16:16</td>
<td>August 11, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VI (labeled IV) 348-356</td>
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<tr>
<td>Although the fig tree shall</td>
<td>Habakkuk 3:17-18</td>
<td>May 22, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 1-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>The sun shall be no more thy</td>
<td>Isaiah 60:19-20</td>
<td>May 12, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 14-22</td>
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<td>If any man will come after</td>
<td>Matthew 16:24-25</td>
<td>May 12, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 22-35</td>
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<td>Judah thou art he whom thy</td>
<td>Genesis 49:8-10</td>
<td>May 19, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 35-44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was then that which is good</td>
<td>Romans 7:13</td>
<td>May 19, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 45-54</td>
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<td>Containing an account of the</td>
<td>Genesis 23</td>
<td>May 26, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 54-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moreover the law entered that</td>
<td>Romans 5:20-21</td>
<td>June 2, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 62-73</td>
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<td>The Lord God said to the serpent</td>
<td>Genesis 3:14-15</td>
<td>June 2, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 73-86</td>
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<td>Faint, yet pursuing them</td>
<td>Judges 8:4</td>
<td>June 30, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 86-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Now when they saw the boldness</td>
<td>Acts 4:13</td>
<td>July 7, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
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<tr>
<td>and John</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funeral sermon for Mr. Burton</td>
<td>Job 14:10</td>
<td>July 7, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 113-127</td>
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<tr>
<td>For ye are bought with a price</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 6:20</td>
<td>July 14, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 128-139</td>
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<td>And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed</td>
<td>Acts 22:20</td>
<td>July 21, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 154-164</td>
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<tr>
<td>For the distressed Irish</td>
<td>Matthew 24:28</td>
<td>July 14, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 165-174</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling</td>
<td>Philippians 2:12-13</td>
<td>August 4, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set A, Vol VII (labeled V) 174-181</td>
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<tr>
<td>For ye are bought with a price</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 6:20</td>
<td>July 28, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Through sanctification of the Spirit</td>
<td>2 Thessalonians 2:13</td>
<td>July 28, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>As the truth is in Jesus</td>
<td>Ephesians 4:21</td>
<td>August 4, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now when Daniel knew the writing was signed</td>
<td>Daniel 6:10</td>
<td>August 11, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have set the Lord always before me</td>
<td>Psalm 16:9</td>
<td>August 11, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behold I was shapen in iniquity</td>
<td>Psalm 51:5</td>
<td>August 25, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While Joshua was before Jericho that he lifted up his eyes</td>
<td>Joshua 5:13-15</td>
<td>September 8, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast not away your confidence</td>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>September 8,</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:35</td>
<td>September 15, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 9</td>
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<td>1822 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>After this Jesus knowing that all things were accomplished</td>
<td>John 19:28-29</td>
<td>September 15, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For this God is our God</td>
<td>Psalm 48:14</td>
<td>September 22, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And he shall reign over the house of the Lord forever</td>
<td>Luke 1:33</td>
<td>September 22, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>He shall choose our inheritance for us</td>
<td>Psalm 47:4</td>
<td>October 27, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed</td>
<td>Lamentations 3:22</td>
<td>October 27, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol I, Sermon 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is the gift of God</td>
<td>Ephesians 2:8</td>
<td>November 3, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself</td>
<td>2 Corinthians 5:18-19</td>
<td>November 3, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled</td>
<td>John 15:25</td>
<td>November 17, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brethren, pray for me</td>
<td>1 Thessalonians 5:25</td>
<td>November 17, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christ raiseth the widow's son</td>
<td>Luke 17:11-17</td>
<td>November 24, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>And of his fullness have we all received and grace for</td>
<td>John 1:18</td>
<td>November 24, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is the wise? Where is the scribe?</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 1:20-21</td>
<td>December 1, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous</td>
<td>Psalm 33:1</td>
<td>December 8, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As for man, his days are as grass</td>
<td>Psalm 103:15-16</td>
<td>December 8, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 9</td>
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<td>And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor</td>
<td>Isaiah 9:6</td>
<td>December 15, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is not in his thoughts</td>
<td>Psalm 10:4</td>
<td>December 15, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol II, Sermon 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>And he said so is the kingdom of God</td>
<td>Mark 4:26-29</td>
<td>December 22, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol III, Sermon 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For thou shalt worship no other God</td>
<td>Exodus 34:14</td>
<td>December 22, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol III, Sermon 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God</td>
<td>2 Thessalonians 3:5</td>
<td>December 29, 1822</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol III, Sermon 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>The end of all things is at hand</td>
<td>1 Peter 4:7</td>
<td>December 29, 1822 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol III, Sermon 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>If thou Lord shouldest mark in iniquity</td>
<td>Psalm 130:3</td>
<td>January 12, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol III, Sermon 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blessed is he that considereth the poor</td>
<td>Psalm 41:1-3</td>
<td>January 20, 1823</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol III, Sermon 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>When the Son of Man shall come in his glory</td>
<td>Matthew 25:31-40</td>
<td>January 19, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol IV, Sermon 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God</td>
<td>Matthew 5:8</td>
<td>January 26, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol IV, Sermon 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The meek will he guide in judgment</td>
<td>Psalm 25:9</td>
<td>February 2, 1823</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol IV, Sermon 4</td>
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<td>Refrain from these men, and let them alone</td>
<td>Acts 5:38-39</td>
<td>February 9, 1823</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol IV, Sermon 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 12:7</td>
<td>February 9, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol V, Sermon 1</td>
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<td>Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me</td>
<td>Jeremiah 3:4</td>
<td>February 16, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol V, Sermon 2</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>To the law and to the testimony</td>
<td>Isaiah 8:20</td>
<td>February 23, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol V, Sermon 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>To be conformed to the image of His Son</td>
<td>Romans 8:29</td>
<td>March 2, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol VI, Sermon 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>More to be desired are they than gold</td>
<td>Psalm 19:10</td>
<td>March 16, 1823</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol VII, Sermon 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thou shalt not steal</td>
<td>Exodus 20:5</td>
<td>March 16, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol VIII, Sermon 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth</td>
<td>Luke 15:7</td>
<td>April 6, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol VIII, Sermon 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>For where two are three are gathered together in my name</td>
<td>Matthew 18:20</td>
<td>April 13, 1823</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol IX, Sermon 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who mind earthly things</td>
<td>Philippians 3:19</td>
<td>April 13, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol IX, Sermon 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For thus saith the Lord of Hosts; yet once, it is a little while</td>
<td>Haggai 2:6-9</td>
<td>April 27, 1823 pm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Set B, Vol X, Sermon 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>But when the Comforter is come</td>
<td>John 15:26</td>
<td>June 29, 1825</td>
<td>Camberwell</td>
<td>Pulpit, no. 117, 1825, 433-437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:21</td>
<td>June 20, 1827</td>
<td>Great Queen Street Chapel</td>
<td>Pulpit, no. 222, 1827, 321-330</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is more blessed to give than to receive</td>
<td>Acts 20:35</td>
<td>June 24, 1827 am</td>
<td>Mare Street Chapel, Hackney</td>
<td>Pulpit, no. 223, 1827, 337-343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect</td>
<td>1 Corinthians 2:6-7</td>
<td>June 24, 1827 pm</td>
<td>Rev. Mr. Steane's, Camberwell</td>
<td>Pulpit, no. 223, 1827, 343-347</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divine Faithfulness</td>
<td>Joshua 21:45</td>
<td>November 10, 1826</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Christian Observer, no. 351 1831, 134-138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose ye this day whom ye will serve</td>
<td>Joshua 24:15</td>
<td>no date</td>
<td>Broadmead Chapel, Bristol</td>
<td>The Preacher, no. 33 1831, 65-71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confirming the souls of the disciples</td>
<td>Acts 24:22</td>
<td>November 10, 1826</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Christian Observer, no. 352, 1831, 134-138</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let this mind be in you, which was also in</td>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>November 12, 1826</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Christian Observer, no. 352, 1831, 134-138</td>
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<tr>
<td>And truly our fellowship is with the Father</td>
<td>1 John 1:3</td>
<td>January 18, 1827</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Christian Observer, no. 352, 1831, 199-205.</td>
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<tr>
<td>And all Judah rejoiced at the oath</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 15:15</td>
<td>February 8, 1827</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Christian Observer, no. 353, 1831, 257-263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:18</td>
<td>February 18, 1827</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Christian Observer, no. 354, 1831, 321-326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh</td>
<td>Hebrews 12:9</td>
<td>February 25, 1827</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Christian Observer, no. 355, 1831, 385-391</td>
</tr>
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</table>
APPENDIX 2

PICTURES RELATED TO ROBERT HALL

Figure A1 – Photograph of Robert Hall’s Tomb,
Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol
Figure A2 – Portrait of Robert Hall with Signature
by N. C. Branwhite
Figure A3 – Portrait of Robert Hall with Signed Benediction
by J. Flowers
Figure A4 – Pen and Ink Drawing of Robert Hall by W. Mason
Figure A5 – Robert Hall and Other Baptist Ministers
Figure A6 – Photo of the Robert Hall Statue, De Monfort Square, Leicester
Figure A7 – Second Photo of the Robert Hall Statue, De Monfort Square, Leicester
APPENDIX 3

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF HALL’S ENDURING LEGACY

Funeral Sermons

On Thursday, March 17, 1831, just a few short weeks after the death of Robert Hall, *The Pulpit* published another of Hall’s sermons, just as had been done through Hall’s ministry. It was Hall’s sermon “Divine Faithfulness” taken from Joshua 21:45 and preached at Bristol.¹ Hall’s widespread influence and celebrity status was enhanced by this posthumous publication, but it would be expanded even further by both the quantity and substance of the funeral sermons preached and published honoring his life and ministry.

By May 1831, *The Evangelical Magazine* carried a concise overview of six different funeral sermons for Hall, each of which had already been published. Of these publications, the magazine commented,

One thing is certain, that such a sensation could only have been created by an event of the first magnitude. We believe that in and out of the national Establishment the feeling of lamentation has been general; and that the grateful remembrance of a minister of Christ so distinguished in his generation will very long survive the powerful excitement occasioned by his death.²

Hall’s impact is clearly seen in the diverse list of ministers and their locations. First, Joseph Hughes (1769–1833) had preached “The Believer’s Prospect and

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²*The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 9 (1831): 193. The magazine listed only six of these funeral sermons although more were preached and published.
Preparation Described” at Broadmead, Bristol, on Sunday, May 6, 1831. It was published in conjunction with the address given at Hall’s burial by T. S. Crisp. Hughes had also preached a sermon titled “A Resignation to the Divine Will” and taken from Job 13:14.

Newton Bosworth’s sermon “The Destruction of the Last Enemy Considered, and a Tribute to the Memory of Departed Excellence Offered” was given on March 6 at the Baptist Chapel in Stoke Newington. John Birt addressed the people of York Street Chapel, Manchester, with an address titled “The Church Bereaved of the Eloquent Orator.” Hall’s successor at Leicester, J. P. Mursell, preached “A Sermon, occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Robert Hall, M. A.” at Harvey Lane on March 6, 1831. Philip Cater also preached “The Fall of a Great Man” in the Baptist Chapel, York Street, Bath.

Thomas Swan, pastor of Baptist Church at Cannon Street, gave his funeral

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3Joseph Hughes, *The Believer’s Prospect and Preparation* (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1831). This sermon was published annexed by Crisp’s interment address and a copy of the 1831 edition of these two items is bound with other funeral sermons for Hall in a volume titled simply *Sermons for R. Hall, &c.* which is housed in the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University.


5J. P. Mursell, *A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Late Reverend Robert Hall, M. A.* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1831). This sermon is included in *Sermons for R. Hall, &c.*, and was also printed in Bristol and Leicester.

6Philip Cater, *The Fall of a Great Man* (Bath: George Wood, 1831). This sermon is included in *Sermons for R. Hall, &c.*, and the publication information says it was “printed by George Wood, Parsonage Lane; and sold by Mrs. Binns, Cheap Street, and all booksellers.”
sermon for Hall in Birmingham on March 6. A week later, on March 13, 1831, F. A. Cox
delivered his address titled “Posthumous Testimony” at Mare Street Chapel, Hackney.\textsuperscript{9}
J. E. Giles’s “Sermon, occasioned by the death of the Rev. Robert Hall, M. A.” was
preached at Salter’s Hall Chapel, Cannon Street, in London and was published “at the
request of the Church and congregation.”

All of these funeral sermons are valuable material, not only for biographical
information and anecdotes of Hall’s life, but because they display the reputation and
celebrity status he enjoyed among such a diverse array of ministers. A few extracts from
just one funeral sermon will be provided. In the weeks following Hall’s death, \textit{The
Pulpit} published one of many funeral addresses titled simply “Substance of a Funeral
Sermon, on the Death of the Rev. Robert Hall” by the Reverend Thomas Price, who had
delivered the address at Devonshire Square Chapel on March 6, 1831. The sermon’s text
was 1 Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see through a glass, dimly; but then face to face;
now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.” First, Price treats
Paul’s intention for the Corinthian believers, and then encourages and exhorts his own
people at Devonshire Square to consider the blessings of their future state in glory. Price
then turns his attention to Hall. He states, “To this subject, Christian brethren, we have
been led by the recent removal from the church on earth of one who constituted the
brightest ornament of our denomination, if not of the Christian church at large. Of such a
man as Mr. Hall it is difficult to speak without appearing to eulogize rather than to

\textsuperscript{9}F. A. Cox, \textit{Posthumous Testimony} (London: Westley and Davis, 1831). This sermon is
included in \textit{Sermons for R. Hall, &c.} and lists that three different London publishers printed it.
describe.” After briefly reviewing Hall’s time up to his student days at Bristol, Price then eulogizes:

From this period to the close of his life he occupied, by universal consent, the first rank in his profession. By principle as well as by habit a Dissenter, he refused the offer of ecclesiastical dignity, and found a more unfettered and grateful sphere for the exercise of his talents in the ranks of Non-conformity. With a style which rivaled in its purity and strength the best productions of classic times, he united a vigour of imagination and a strength of judgment which have rarely been seen in union. His public exercises commanded the admiration of all classes, and constituted him an object of national glory . . . The nobles and senators of the land confessed the power of his eloquence, and forgot for a moment their antipathy to the conventicle in their admiration of the preacher. Price then praises Hall’s spirit as “eminently enlightened and catholic.” Although Price argued Hall firmly “retained his principles as a Baptist,” that he “refused to be fettered by the trammels of a party.” He continued his adulation by stating, “Through an extensive circle he was regarded with the veneration of a sage, and his opinions were listened to as the responses of an oracle.” Price believed that Hall’s “best feature” was his “deep religious principle” and the fact that his “piety rose superior to his talents.” Still further, Price presses that Hall held a devotion that was “peculiarly simple, pure, and fervent” and that all who knew him well knew he “lived near to God.” Price then concluded the sermon with the following lines:

Thus lived and died one of the most exalted of his species. His memory is blessed; and to a distant day will his name be associated, in the recollections of those who

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knew him, with all that is splendid in talent and transcending in piety. May the mantle of the ascended prophet descend on some of his successors, that the church of God may be served by an intellect as bright and a piety as pure and fervent as that which he consecrated to his welfare.\textsuperscript{15}

The Robert Hall Society at Cambridge

Although Hall’s legacy and influence have often been forgotten or overshadowed, his name endured through the twentieth century through its attachment with several different organizations. First, in the spring of 1902, Terrot Reavely Glover (1869–1943), a former student and then teaching fellow in classics at St. John’s Cambridge, founded the Robert Hall Society for undergraduates at Cambridge through the St. Andrews Street church.\textsuperscript{16} Glover’s father was Richard Glover, a Baptist minister in Bristol. Observing a dwindling student population at St. Andrews Street and concerned for the continued cause of nonconformity, Glover attended the Baptist Union meetings at Birmingham in October 1902 to promote the interests of the Robert Hall Society. By 1903 and 1904, the Robert Hall Society had begun running a club for boys in Cambridge’s poor areas. Glover and others taught the boys from the Scriptures, and showed them how the life and times of Jesus could be applied to their own difficult surroundings.\textsuperscript{17} One cannot help but think that Robert Hall would have been overwhelmingly proud at the society’s efforts.

While other nonconformist attempts to form societies failed, the Robert Hall

\textsuperscript{9}Price, “Substance of a Funeral Sermon,” 284.


\textsuperscript{11}Wood, Terrot Reaveley Glover, 104.
Society at Cambridge lasted for most of the twentieth century, although it does not exist today. Several other organizations had been formed with Baptist divines as their namesakes, such as the John Clifford Society, the John Bunyan Society, and the William Carey Society. These four student societies, alongside others at the University of London, Oxford University, and University of Nottingham, made up the larger Baptist Students’ Federation. A card from the Easter term of 1965 lists the society’s activities such as Bible study groups, prayer meetings and Sunday tea meetings where lectures were offered from various ministers and scholars.

The Robert Hall Memorial Chapel

The “great name” of Robert Hall is also kept in memory by the church in Leicester of which he was the namesake. As Leicester expanded throughout the

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18 In a letter to Glover’s father, W. S. Aldis wrote of his admiration of the founding of the Robert Hall Society, which he heard about at the Baptist Union meetings. Aldis expressed hope for the society because of how Cambridge often saw greater success for the cause of nonconformity than other places. He indicated in the letter that similar attempts had been made to form such societies at Oxford, but that most failed and that one “collapse after one session.” Wood, Terrot Reaveley Glover, 66–67.

19 John Briggs has notified me that Ian Randall, editor of the Baptist Quarterly, has written an article on the Baptist Student Federation that will soon be published in the journal and apparently contains several references to the Robert Hall Society, including “a note that the St. Andrews Street Church in Cambridge has a considerable archive on its activities.” John Briggs, e-mail message to the author, January 28, 2012.

20 For example, this term card listed the following tea meetings and their respective lectures: April 25 on “Christians in Russia” by John W. Lawrence, the editor of Frontier; May 2 on “The Psalms in the 60’s” by H. Mowvley, tutor at Bristol Baptist College; May 9 on “We Baptists: Yesterday and Tomorrow” by G. W. Rusling, vice-principal of Spurgeon’s; May 16 on “Whither Britain — Decadence or Greatness?” by Sir Cyril Black, M. P. for Wimbledon; May 23 on “Medical Ethics” by Dr. John Aitken, Lecturer in Anatomy, London University; May 30 on “A missionary in the Age of Revolution” by A. S. Clement, Home Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society; and June 6 on “Us” by J. N. Schofield, a lecturer from the Divinity faculty. I am indebted to Martin Tarr who provided me information on the Robert Hall Society and access to the website he created for a society reunion, http://rhs.mtarr.co.uk/, accessed January 24, 2012.

nineteenth century, the Harvey Lane church where Hall had faithfully served for so many years sought to establish a presence in the West end of the city as it was experiencing rapid development. A massive red-brick building was designed by Walter Brand (1873–1958) in the Perpendicular or Tudor style, with art nouveau flourishes, and the church opened as the Robert Hall Memorial Chapel in November 1901. The church remains in operation to this day.²²

²²Information about the Robert Hall Memorial Chapel can be found at http://www.rhmbc.org.uk/, accessed October 2010. Although information about the architectural details of the building is given on the website, the website attributes the material to Katherine Rager, *English Heritage*, September 2006.
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ABSTRACT

THE MINISTRY OF ROBERT HALL, JR.:
THE PREACHER AS THEOLOGICAL EXEMPLAR
AND CULTURAL CELEBRITY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012
Chairperson: Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin

This dissertation examines the way the life and ministry of Robert Hall, Jr. (1764–1831) functioned as both a theological exemplar and a cultural celebrity. Chapter 1 sets forth the thesis and defines its terminology and introduces the research methodology and the limitations of the project. Chapter 2 reintroduces the life of Robert Hall to a generation that has forgotten him. Details of Hall’s education, pastoral ministry, mental breakdown, and death are provided here.

Chapter 3 discusses the preaching methodology Hall inherited from preceding generations of Baptists and how Hall changed that methodology over the course of his life. Chapter 4 first addresses Hall’s theological journey before observing how Hall employed different doctrines in his preaching. The chapter concludes with a concise examination of Hall as a preacher and the way he also served as a theological exemplar.

Chapter 5 investigates Hall as a cultural celebrity, in many ways the first of such among the Baptists. The root of Hall’s celebritification as a conversationalist, a rhetorician, and a preacher are all examined. Chapter 6 examines four of Hall’s most famous sermons. It was these sermons that made Hall famous across the English nation and established him as a celebrity.
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