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“HE WORKED OUT HIS SALVATION WITH FEAR AND  
TREMBLING”: THE SPIRITUALITY OF  
JOHN RYLAND, JR.

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Theology

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by  
Keith Alan Tillman  
December 2014

**APPROVAL SHEET**

“HE WORKED OUT HIS SALVATION WITH FEAR AND  
TREMBLING”: THE SPIRITUALITY OF  
JOHN RYLAND, JR.

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To Victoria: Thank you for your patience and your support and your love.

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## PREFACE

As one studies historical and theological writings, it becomes apparent that God's people are separated merely by the years of life, while they are connected through their love for God and the practices of this love lived out in their spirituality. Presently, throughout the world, believers meet and worship God according to Scripture, their culture, and the traditions that have shaped the church over the past two millennia. These practices prove that no one generation of believers is an island surrounded by the waters of religion. Church history proves that each generation of Christian, because of the previous generation of believers, has much to be thankful for. God has graciously introduced me to the writings of our Patristic Fathers, the Reformers and Puritans, and Evangelical and Fundamentalists. Their investment in the kingdom of God has borne much fruit throughout this church age, and I am eternally grateful to them all.

A special word of thanks to Dr. Michael Haykin, my supervisor on this project, who, through countless meetings, Skyping, and emails, encouraged and guided me throughout this process. He introduced me to John Ryland, Jr., and provided a wealth of knowledge and resources in helping me achieve my goal and expand my own spirituality through the study of the Particular Baptists.

Also, I would like to extend my love and gratitude to Alexander and Ellen, our two teenage children, who have been extremely patient throughout this process. The long hours of reading and writing are difficult on the entire family, but they never complained and have always shown their support, even when I had to read in the camper while they played on the beach. God has truly blessed us with two wonderful children, and I pray that this process has helped them in their spiritual progress.

The most influential person in my life and the one to whom I share the most

gratitude is my wife, Vicki. She has done nothing but support and encourage me in every aspect of my seminary training, in both my Master of Divinity and Master of Theology. Her long hours of work were followed many times by tedious hours of proofreading this project and giving her grammatical suggestions. She is the only one who truly understood the depths of sacrifice that have gone into the research, reading, and writing of this thesis, and for her understanding and perseverance I am eternally grateful. Her dedication to God is inspiring to me and to our children, and her sacrificial love, next to God's grace, is the most rewarding blessing that God has ever given me.

Finally, I give praise to God the giver of grace and mercy who has given me guidance and direction in my spiritual pilgrimage and has bestowed upon me His enabling grace to complete this project. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Rev 4:11 NASB).

Keith A. Tillman

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2014



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Robert Hall, Jr.<sup>1</sup> (1764–1831), while preaching the funeral of John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825), said, “Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of time to a religious regulation, he [Ryland] ‘worked out his salvation with fear and trembling.’”<sup>2</sup> Hall described Ryland’s meticulous practices of “looking back on the turns and vicissitudes” of life as a way of acquiring “new lessons of prudence and piety.”<sup>3</sup> The journey of Ryland’s spiritual life as a theologian and pastor is a journey of change and influence that was “worked out” in his life through key influential mentors, theological controversies, and a zealous love for God and His gospel message to the world. Hall portrayed Ryland’s character as having a “certain timidity of spirit,”<sup>4</sup> yet it never caused him to shrink from speaking out against doctrinal errors or to neglect his leadership qualities that would have affected many in that generation. Ryland began his personal summary of Baptist beliefs by stating,

As we are directed, by the apostle Peter, to be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us; so would we wish to do the same as

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed look at the life and ministry of Robert Hall, Jr., see Robert Hall, *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall* (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830); John Green, *Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, Late of Bristol, Angus* (London: Westley and Davis, 1832); Hamilton MacLeod, “The Life and Teaching of Robert Hall, 1764–1831” (M.A. thesis, University of Durham, 1957); Cody Heath McNutt, “The Ministry of Robert Hall, Jr.: The Preacher as Theological Exemplar and Cultural Celebrity” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

<sup>2</sup>Robert Hall, Jr., *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D. D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co. 1825), 34.

<sup>3</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 34.

<sup>4</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 35.

to every part of our religious practice; and we desire to do this also with meekness and fear.<sup>5</sup>

This statement describes the character of Ryland as a determined defender of the faith; while at the same time, it displays his pastoral care as he encouraged conviction of truth through “meekness and fear.”

Ryland, although not widely known among today’s church, “had a very significant ministry as a faithful pastor, mission visionary and influential educator” that greatly influenced the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists and significantly contributed to the shaping of modern Baptist churches.<sup>6</sup> His piety, according to Hall, had a great effect on Baptist life of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> As President of Bristol Baptist College, he was charged with educating about two hundred students over the course of his tenure. He brought to them a Calvinism that included an Edwardsean open call to respond to the gospel, as well as a zeal for missions and evangelism. Ryland also guided the students, and his churches, through the difficult controversies involving antinomianism<sup>8</sup> and, what was called, the “modern question.”<sup>9</sup> The latter dealt with Calvinism and the free offer of

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<sup>5</sup>John Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from their Christian Brethren . . . with a Letter on the Subject of Communion*, by the Late W. Clarke, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1827), 1.

<sup>6</sup>Grant Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” in *The British Particular Baptists: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2000), 2:77.

<sup>7</sup>Norman S. Moon, *Education for Ministry: Bristol Baptist College, 1679–1979* (Bristol, England: Bristol Baptist College, 1979), 37.

<sup>8</sup>For a detailed analysis and history of the antinomian conflict among British Baptists, see Gertrude Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History: With Special Reference to the Period 1640–1660* (London: Cresset, 1951); George Melvyn Ella, *Law and Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Eggleston, CO: Go Publications, 1996); Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001); Robert Oliver, *History of English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 2006); Mark Jones, *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcome Guest?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013).

<sup>9</sup>For a detailed analysis of the modern question or hyper-Calvinism versus evangelical Calvinism among British Baptists, see Curt D. Daniel, “Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995); Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*; Paul L. Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* (Nashville: B & H, 2010).

the gospel, while the former dealt with the law of Moses as a rule of life for the believer.

It is recorded that Ryland “preached 8,691 sermons in 286 places and all this before the days of railway.”<sup>10</sup> The former Senior Tutor and librarian at Bristol Baptist College, Norman Moon, recorded that Ryland published thirty-four sermons and addresses through the college, the Baptist Missionary Society, and his churches. He exercised great influence within the Baptist denomination by publishing key association sermons, prefaces of other great works, and treatises on key theological issues, as well as authoring numerous hymns. Despite Ryland’s propensity for publishing his sermons, very little academic work has been completed on Ryland, including a study of his spirituality as it relates to his theology concerning the law and the gospel. Hall said,

Piety, indeed was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably above the level of ordinary Christians. . . . “Devotion appeared to be the principal element of his being. . . . It was next to impossible to converse with him without perceiving how entirely it pervaded his mind, and imparted to his whole deportment an air of purity, innocence, and sanctity, difficult for words to express.”<sup>11</sup>

This dissertation focuses on Ryland’s “devotion” to God by examining his spirituality in terms of his theology concerning the law and gospel. It explores his theological growth through the reading of Jonathan Edwards and his friendship with John Newton, as well as the Antinomian conflict within the Particular Baptist community, specifically with the Antinomian preacher William Huntington (1745–1813).

### **Thesis**

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to discover Ryland’s spirituality in his life, ministry, and writings as it related to his views concerning the law and the gospel and his zeal for loving God through the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world, as well as, his adherence to and teaching on the law of Moses as a rule of life for the

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<sup>10</sup>Moon, *Education for Ministry*, 35.

<sup>11</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 25.

church. It explores the antinomian controversy within the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, focusing on the teaching of William Huntington, a key proponent of antinomianism. It seeks to answer the question of what influence John Ryland had on the antinomianism controversy and how his theology of the law and the gospel affected his own piety. This dissertation also analyzes the life and ministry of Ryland by exploring his relationships with influential friends and mentors, examining his theological treatises and association letters, and exploring his sermons and evolving theology.

### **Personal Interest**

In the spring of 2007, I accepted my first pastorate of a small, rural church located in East Tennessee. As one would expect, I anticipated a great revival among God's people with many calling upon the name of the Lord for salvation, tremendous numerical growth, and a heart for a deeper understanding of the Word of God. Although all three of these were experienced in my church, I also discovered that there was a great need within the church, including myself, of a better understanding of progressive sanctification and how that sanctification is lived out in the life of a believer, as well as in the church. It was during this time that God began to press upon my heart to look back within the realm of church history to discover a true biblical spirituality that can be lived out in the modern church. It became apparent that much knowledge could be obtained from our past, especially within the area of Baptist church history.

My goal for returning to seminary to work on my Master of Theology was to obtain a better understanding of biblical sanctification and/or holiness. When I met with my supervisor, Michael Haykin, he suggested several individuals within the sphere of Baptist teaching, including John Ryland, Jr. Ryland was an intriguing character because

he was raised in the Christian faith by a father who adhered to high Calvinism,<sup>12</sup> but Ryland had to determine through his own study his personal thoughts and practices of piety in his own life, even in areas that would ultimately differ from his father, including John Collett's seemingly high Calvinistic tendencies within the Modern Question controversy.<sup>13</sup> Ryland was not unlike most church members today, especially in the Southern parts of the United States. He was raised in church, but struggled to achieve his own identity in Christ. Much of this identity was influenced by other great men of the faith, including Jonathan Edwards, Andrew Fuller, John Newton, and Robert Hall. Reading about his spiritual journey and piety is very encouraging and needful within the church today.

Another interesting fact about the life and ministry of John Ryland, Jr., is that although the church possesses many of his published sermons, theological writings, and letters, there has been very little scholarship on the life and thought of Ryland, including his theological ideas concerning the law and the gospel.

### **History of Research**

John Ryland, Jr., was a prolific publisher of his own works: "Numerous sermons and charges were published by Ryland, and he drew up many recommendatory

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<sup>12</sup>The phrase "high Calvinism" or "hyper-Calvinism," as it is more readily known in the twenty-first century, is an extremely complex theological position which has generated much debate within historical Calvinism. For the concern of this thesis, high Calvinism implies a position within the boundaries of Calvinism that rejects the theological importance of the free offer of the gospel to sinners. Michael Haykin described this perspective as centered on the doctrine of eternal justification, whereby, the elect have been brought into union with Christ, justified from sin, and adopted into Christ's kingdom "by God in eternity past." See Michael A. G. Haykin, "Hyper-Calvinism and the Theology of John Gill" (lecture, True Church Conference at Grace Life Church, Muscle Shoals, AL, February 19-20, 2010), 5–6, accessed October, 23, 2013, <http://www.andrewfullercenter.org/files/hyper-calvinism-and-the-theology-of-john-gill.pdf>. For reasons concerning the designation of "high Calvinism" over "hyper-Calvinism," see Richard A. Muller, "John Gill and the Reformed Tradition: A Study in the Reception of Protestant Orthodoxy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (New York: Brill 1997), 51–56.

<sup>13</sup>Haykin, "Hyper-Calvinism," 1–4.

prefaces for religious works and for biographies of his friends.”<sup>14</sup> His father published young Ryland’s first theological work, *The Plagues of Egypt, by a School-boy Thirteen Years of Age*, which led Ryland into a ministry of publishing his sermons and hymns. He is recognized as being a promoter of evangelical views among Baptists and published several sermons concerning the problems of Pelagian pride and Antinomian licentiousness.<sup>15</sup> Essentially a scholar, he was widely read, concerned about accuracy in detail, and interested in subjects outside his own field.<sup>16</sup> Given all of this academic notoriety, and his tenure as President of Bristol Baptist College, one would think that Ryland would have been studied and written about extensively. Surprisingly, very little academic work has been produced specifically on John Ryland, Jr.

In the last century, several small biographical works of Ryland have appeared in various works concerning the Particular Baptists.<sup>17</sup> Also, a handful of articles have been written concerning the life and theology of Ryland, including his salvation experience and theological ideas concerning baptism and the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup> In my research, I have found no dissertations on John Ryland and no academic work on his sermons as they relate to his spirituality involving his teaching on the law and the gospel.

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<sup>14</sup>Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography* (repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1921–22), s.v. “Ryland, John.”

<sup>15</sup>H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrion, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. “Ryland, John.”

<sup>16</sup>Matthew and Harrion, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Ryland, John.”

<sup>17</sup>Biographical works on Ryland include Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham, England: Evangelical, 1994); Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr.”; Bruce D. Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>18</sup>Five important articles on Ryland’s life and ministry are H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” *The Baptist Quarterly*, n.s., 4 (1928–1929): 17–26; L. G. Champion, “The Letters of John Newton to John Ryland,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 27 (1977–78): 157–63; L. G. Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 28 (1979–1980): 17–29; Michael Haykin, “‘The Sum of All Good’: John Ryland, Jr., and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Churchman* 103, no. 4 (1989): 332–53; and Michael A. G. Haykin, “John Ryland, Jr. (1735–1825), and Theological Education,” *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 70, no. 2 (1990): 173–91.

## **Methodology**

This dissertation examines the writings of John Ryland in order to develop a better understanding of his spirituality as it related to his theology concerning the law and the gospel. The dissertation begins with an in-depth biography of John Ryland to better understand the theological culture in which Ryland was trained and the ministerial achievements of Ryland as a pastor and President of the Bristol Baptist College. It then examines the antinomian controversy by exploring the theology of the antinomian preacher, William Huntington, and his conflicts with other Baptists pastors and writers, as well with Ryland himself. The paper then explores the writings of Ryland to discover his thoughts and analysis of antinomianism as it related to the law of Moses as a rule of life for the believer, as well as his leadership through this controversy which helped to shape the direction of the Particular Baptist. The dissertation then looks at how Ryland's theology of the law and gospel shaped and developed his personal spirituality.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE LIFE OF JOHN RYLAND, JR.

Robert Hall, Jr., in his sermon at the funeral of Ryland, spoke about the life of Christ being enjoined with his disciples in “humility, forbearance, gentleness, kindness, and the most tender sympathy with the infirmities and distresses of our fellow-creatures; and his whole life was a perfect transcript of these virtues.”<sup>1</sup> Hall, with great care, outlined the character of Christ and described the friendship given to Jesus by John the beloved disciple. His intent was to portray the perfect example of a life lived in God and then to compare the life of Ryland, favorably, to this perfect example:

It is a homage due to departed worth, whenever it rises to such a height as to render its possessor an object of general attention, to endeavor to rescue it from oblivion; that when it is removed from the observation of men, it may still live in their memory, and transmit through the shades of the sepulcher some reflection, however faint, of its living luster.<sup>2</sup>

Hall thought the life lived by Ryland was worthy of respect and emulation, because it emulated the life of Jesus Christ.

In his early biography of the Rylands, entitled *The Three Rylands*, James Culross described John Collett Ryland, Ryland’s father, as a “man of original talent and temperament,” while he described John Ryland as an “ordinary type.”<sup>3</sup> What Culross described as ordinary, Hall described as a man of deep piety. Hall said, “Piety, indeed

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Hall, Jr., *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D. D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1825), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 22.

<sup>3</sup>James Culross, *The Three Rylands: A Hundred Years of Various Christian Service* (London: Paternoster Row, 1897), 69.



was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably above the level of ordinary Christians.”<sup>4</sup>

Although a man of great influence within religious circles, Ryland was a man remarkably “clothed” in humility.<sup>5</sup> Hall said that the humility of Ryland was an extraordinary character trait, yet it never “prompted him to depreciate his talents, nor to disclaim his virtues, to speak in debasing terms of himself, nor to exaggerate his imperfections and failings.”<sup>6</sup> In describing Ryland’s humility, Culross wrote,

His activity in religious matters was very great; but it was always others who put him forward, and not himself, and from all sources it appears that constant humility of spirit and modesty of manner distinguished him with a special charm which added greatly to his usefulness.<sup>7</sup>

This character trait of Ryland influenced those within his church and those whom he mentored and taught in college. William Rhodes, of Damerham, a former student, spoke of the character of Ryland as being simplistic and mild “which pervaded his [Ryland’s] constant intercourse with us that the awe which so much goodness and mental vigour naturally tended to inspire in us was absorbed in cordial affection for him as our best earthly friend.”<sup>8</sup>

Even in conflict, Ryland was firm to stand upon convictions, but displayed this candor humbly before his disputant. Culross described Ryland as being as “firm as he was courteous.”<sup>9</sup> Ryland said,

I simply wish to state my own views of the subject, that no one may conceive of them as either better or worse than they actually are. Let the reasons I have given of

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<sup>4</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 25.

<sup>5</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 26.

<sup>6</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 26–27.

<sup>7</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 72.

<sup>8</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 85.

<sup>9</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 86.

my opinions be impartially examined, that everyone who reads them may either accede to them or reject them, as conscience shall dictate.<sup>10</sup>

Hall portrayed Ryland's character as having a "certain timidity of spirit,"<sup>11</sup> yet it never caused him to shrink from speaking out against doctrinal errors nor from neglecting his leadership qualities that would have affected many in that generation. Ryland began his personal summary of Baptist beliefs by stating,

As we are directed, by the apostle Peter, to be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us; so would we wish to do the same as to every part of our religious practice; and we desire to do this also with meekness and fear.<sup>12</sup>

This statement described the character of Ryland as a determined defender of the faith; while at the same time, it displayed his character as one with humility as he encouraged conviction of truth through "meekness and fear."

### **Ryland's Background**

John Ryland was born in 1753 at Warwick, a small town of Warwickshire, England, located about 30 miles Southeast of Birmingham, to the Reverend John Collett Ryland (1723–1792),<sup>13</sup> and Elizabeth Frith (d. 1779). Ryland's birth placed him into a family with a long history of religious reformation and dissent from the Church of England. Spiritually, the Rylands descended from the mature ecclesiology and distinctive Baptist teachings of John Spilsbury (1593–1658), William Kiffin (1616–1701), and Hanserd Knollys (1599–1691). Church historian Thomas Nettles called these men "the

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<sup>10</sup>John Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from their Christian Brethren . . . with a Letter on the Subject of Communion, by the Late W. Clarke*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1827), vi.

<sup>11</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 35.

<sup>12</sup>Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 1.

<sup>13</sup>For a comprehensive study of the life of John Collett Ryland, see John Rippon, *The Gentle Dismission of Saints from Earth to Heaven* (London: 1792); William Newman, *Rylandiana: Reminiscences Relating to the Rev. John Ryland, A.M.* (London: George Wightman, 1835); Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 11–66; Peter Naylor, "John Collett Ryland (1723–1792)," in *The British Particular Baptists: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 1:185–201.

pioneers of the Particular Baptists.”<sup>14</sup> According to historian A. C. Underwood, the Particular Baptists arose out of the Reformation “as secession from an Independent Church” with Calvinistic theology.<sup>15</sup> They “believed in a restricted and, therefore, particular atonement, confined to the elect alone.”<sup>16</sup> Michael Haykin, Baptist historian and seminary professor, described the origins of these Particular Baptists as an emergence out of the English Puritans in the early to mid-seventeenth century. The Puritans were convinced that they could not fully reform the state Church of England and, therefore, chose to separate from the Church creating independent protestant congregations.<sup>17</sup> These independent congregations were together known as Nonconformists or Dissenters.

Ryland’s great-grandfather, John Ryland, of Hinton-on-the-Green, Warwickshire, a member of a nonconforming Baptist church in Alcester, lived in a time of persecution of Baptists. James Culross described him as a member of a yeoman family with strong convictions concerning religious nonconformity. He incurred fines totaling 1,200 pounds “for not attending his parish church” as was required by the law.<sup>18</sup> These religious conformity laws, called the Clarendon Code, were a series of legal statutes passed from 1661 to 1665 during the reign of Charles II. The Clarendon Code successfully re-established the preeminence of the Anglican Church and ended toleration for dissenting religions. Because of these laws, Ryland’s great-grandfather was forced into hiding on several occasions. This persecution of nonconformists lasted until the

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<sup>14</sup>Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2005), 1:111.

<sup>15</sup>A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Baptist Union, 1947), 56.

<sup>16</sup>Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 56.

<sup>17</sup>Haykin, *The British Particular Baptist: 1638–1910*, 1:16.

<sup>18</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 11.

passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689 under the reign of William III. This act ended nearly thirty years of overt persecution against the Particular Baptists, and prompted Benjamin Wallin (1711–1782), pastor of Maze Pond Baptist Church of London, to say, “The Most High sent the glorious King William the Third, and saved us.”<sup>19</sup>

Ryland’s father, John Collett Ryland, was born October 12, 1723, to Joseph Ryland, a prosperous cattle farmer, and Freelove Collett (d. 1729), “a woman of a sweet and godly character.”<sup>20</sup> John Collett was described by historian H. Wheeler Robinson as having a head-strong and passionate character.<sup>21</sup> William Newman, the first principal of Stepney College, recalled an incident involving John Collett and his father in Newman’s *Rylandiana*.<sup>22</sup> Newman said,

At twelve years of age he [John Collett] teased his father so much for a gun that he knocked him down with a stick; and then, to make it up with him, he gave him one. Soon after, as he was setting it down (not regarding the trigger) against a box, the whole charge went into the ceiling. After this his father gave him a horse. He bought spurs; and the faster the horse galloped the more he spurred him. At length the horse threw him against a bank, and left him there bleeding most profusely.<sup>23</sup>

This head-strong characteristic of John Collett defined how he approached everything, including his spiritual life as a Baptist. He was a staunch Calvinist along the lines of his good friend John Gill<sup>24</sup> (1697–1771) and gave proof of this with

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<sup>19</sup>Cited in Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham, England: Evangelical, 1994), 15.

<sup>20</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 12.

<sup>21</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, “A Baptist Student—John Collett Ryland,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1926): 25–33.

<sup>22</sup>Newman, *Rylandiana*, 1835.

<sup>23</sup>Cited in Robinson, “A Baptist Student,” 26.

<sup>24</sup>For more information concerning the life and theology of John Gill, see Graham Harrison, *Dr. John Gill and His Teaching* (London: The Evangelical Library, 1971); Curt D. Daniel, “Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Thomas Ascol, “The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D. D.* (Harrisonburg, VA: Gano, 1992).

“blandishments of Wesley’s Arminian theology.”<sup>25</sup>

John Collett had a great passion for liberty and even supported the colonist of America in their pursuit of independence, despite the fact that his younger son, Herman Witseus (1760–1838), served in the British Army and fought against the colonists in the American War of Independence.<sup>26</sup> John Collett’s passion for American independence and support of them in the war probably led to the following statement by Robert Hall, Jr., a student of John Collett, “I trembled at the idea of being left with such a bloody-minded master.”<sup>27</sup>

John Collett, the son and grandson of strong independents, was a bulwark within the Particular Baptist Church. Northamptonshire pastor, John T. Brown, speaking in 1862, said of him,

From every relic that we have, from the margins of books where his genius has expressed itself; from the orations that he delivered, from the books that he wrote, from the anecdotes circulate respecting him, from all the traditions and everything we can gain, he seems to have been a man with enough stuff in him, and vigour of brain, and fiery energy, and real genius, to have made many men.<sup>28</sup>

John Rippon, speaking at John Collett’s funeral, said, “God grant that when we come to die, our defects may be as few as his, and our Christian virtues half as many.”<sup>29</sup> He was a man of “original talent and temperament”<sup>30</sup> and “for zeal and fidelity he had few equals, and none could surpass the bold and daring nature of his eloquence.”<sup>31</sup> William Field, in

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<sup>25</sup>T. S. H. Elwyn, *The Northampton Baptist Association* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1964), 30.

<sup>26</sup>Elwyn, *The Northampton Baptist Association*, 31.

<sup>27</sup>Elwyn, *The Northampton Baptist Association*, 30.

<sup>28</sup>Elwyn, *The Northampton Baptist Association*, 30.

<sup>29</sup>Peter Nalor, “John Collett Ryland (1723–1792),” in *The British Particular Baptist*, 1:185.

<sup>30</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 69

<sup>31</sup>Nalor, “John Collett Ryland,” 1:200.

his book *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town and Castle of Warwick*,<sup>32</sup> said that John Collett “possessed . . . considerable abilities.”<sup>33</sup> John Collett was a man with a strong personality who had a creative and eccentric mind, and he “saw clearly that if England was to be saved the children must be educated.”<sup>34</sup> As J. T. Brown stated, John Collett spiritually made many men, but the one whom he had such great influence on was his own son John Ryland.<sup>35</sup>

### **Ryland’s Early Childhood and Salvation**

Although there are few biographies of John Ryland, all of them describe him as being a precocious child. From the very beginning of Ryland’s life, his mother and father had great influence in his academic achievements. Culross recorded a story that was told to him:

The parlour fireplace was fitted with Dutch tiles representing Bible characters and events, and in the tiles the mother found a picture-book for her child in which a grand procession of patriarchs and prophets, heroes and kings, confessors and martyrs, passed before the imagination and appealed to the heart of the boy.<sup>36</sup>

Although Ryland’s mother had a great influence on him, it was his father who was the catalyst for his son’s academic prowess, even at an early age. From a young child, John Ryland was a student of his father. At the age of five, young Ryland could read Psalm 23 in Hebrew, and it is reported that he recited this Psalm before James Hervey (1714–1758), the noted clergyman and writer, as well as a member of the Holy Club, which included such notable Christians as John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield.

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<sup>32</sup>William Field, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town and Castle of Warwick* (Wakefield, England: S. R., 1969).

<sup>33</sup>Nalor, “John Collett Ryland,” 1:200–01.

<sup>34</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 25.

<sup>35</sup>Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, 31.

<sup>36</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 70.

Ryland had a propensity for learning, and it became a driving force of his character throughout his life.

Pastor and Baptist historian, Grant Gordon, noted, “He (John Collett) valued languages, particularly the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek,”<sup>37</sup> and he instilled this passion into his son. This was recognized by his father in his diary entry on August 28, 1764:

John is now eleven years and seven months old; he has read Genesis in Hebrew five times through; he read through the Greek Testament before nine years old. He can read Horace and Virgil. He has read through *Telemachus* in French! He has read through Pope’s *Homer*, in eleven volumes; read Dryden’s *Virgil*, in three volumes. He has read Rollin’s ancient history, ten volumes 8vo. And he knows the Pagan mythology surprisingly.<sup>38</sup>

John Collett was extremely proud of his son’s inclination towards knowledge. H. Wheeler Robinson said, “There is more than paternal pride in those words; there is the sense that he is giving to his boy that which he was once so eager to win for himself.”<sup>39</sup> This hunger and inclination for knowledge led Ryland to become a teacher at his father’s college at the age of fifteen and fueled his passion for writing and publishing throughout his ministry, including becoming the Principal of Bristol Baptist College.

In Ryland’s thirteenth year, he began to experience convictions concerning salvation and sin. At this same time, John Collett had many students enrolled in a boarding-school that he started and served as teacher, and his son had ample opportunity to befriend these students. Ryland recorded in his own account of his salvation that many of the students had been “awakened” under the teaching of his father.<sup>40</sup> Three of the

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<sup>37</sup>Grant Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” in *The British Particular Baptist: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2000), 2:77.

<sup>38</sup>Cited in H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Life and Faith of the Baptists*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Kingsgate, 1946), 64.

<sup>39</sup>Cited in Michael Haykin, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Times, 2006), 46.

<sup>40</sup>Cited in H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” *The Baptist Quarterly*,

students began to gather and walk “up and down the Yard by Mr. Roses Wall” discussing “Jesus Christ and the salvation of their souls.”<sup>41</sup> Ray, a member of this trio, conversed with Ryland concerning “something or another” when Ray abruptly ended their conversation to go and join the trio at their appointed time for discussion and fellowship. Ray had told Ryland he had to leave for “something better,” which offended Ryland until he found out it concerned spiritual matters. Ryland admitted that this “something better” was that hope that he had for his own soul, because he “thought they were going to heaven” while he was left behind.<sup>42</sup> Ryland confessed that because of his father, he had head knowledge of the things of Christ, but had yet to obtain true conversion.<sup>43</sup> Gordon recorded that Ryland read through Joseph Alleine’s *Alarm to the Unconverted*, Richard Baxter’s *A Call to the Unconverted* and John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*,<sup>44</sup> and with much self-examination and prayer, Ryland cried out to the Lord for salvation.

Over the next year, like his father, Ryland experienced much doubt in his faith. Culross recorded the words of John Collett which revealed the elder Ryland’s desperation and the darkness of his soul. John Collett said, “If there is ever a God in heaven or earth, I vow and protest in His strength, or that God permitting me, I’ll find Him out; and I’ll know whether He loves or hates me, or I’ll die and perish, soul and body, in the pursuit and search.”<sup>45</sup> The tortured spirit of John Collett found its way into his son’s salvation experience. Ryland said, “I was sometimes Cold, sometimes doubting, sometimes

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n.s., 4 (1928–1929): 18.

<sup>41</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 18.

<sup>42</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 18.

<sup>43</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 18.

<sup>44</sup>Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr.,” 2:79.

<sup>45</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 17.



middling for awhile nothing very particular happened, once the Devil had the Impudence to tell me Christ could not save me.”<sup>46</sup> Ryland’s doubts brought him great despair, wanting to be “like the pigeon” or a “stone” in the garden with no worries of hell.<sup>47</sup>

Ryland recorded in his diary:

Miserable, dull, doubting, fearing, sorrowfull [*sic*], weeping, O what shall I do, have I begun or no? Mr. Austin, Mastr. Everard, my Mamma & dear Mastr. Ray tried to Comfort me but in vain for Jesus dont [*sic*] speak Comfort and I fear I shall never have any Joy any more.<sup>48</sup>

Yet it was through these times of doubt that God grew Ryland’s faith and developed in him a hunger for God’s Word. In Ryland’s account of his salvation, he revealed that it was the reading and the preaching of the Word of God that helped his doubts subside: “I have not been fed with Spoon Meat nor did the Lord give me a promised home but sent me to hunt my Venison where I could.”<sup>49</sup>

On September 8, 1767, Ryland heard the great Anglican preacher, George Whitefield (1714–1770), preach at Castle Hill Church in Northampton from Isaiah 61:10. Whitefield reminded Ryland of Isaiah’s words:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. (Isa 61:10 KJV)

Whitefield’s sermon encouraged Ryland in his quest for assurance, and three days later he was baptized by his father in the River Nene near Northampton.<sup>50</sup> Ryland admitted that his doubts continued for some time thereafter. In May 1768, John Collett preached

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<sup>46</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 20.

<sup>47</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 22.

<sup>48</sup>Cited in Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr.,” 2:79.

<sup>49</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 25.

<sup>50</sup>Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography* (repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1921–22), s.v. “Ryland, John.”

on Isaiah 55:1 and Isaiah 40:1-2. After hearing these Scriptures, Ryland proclaimed that he was “freed from Doubts” and declared this to be a “sweet Season” in his life.<sup>51</sup> It was also within this time that Ryland revealed a more pastoral character within himself: “I have been within this last Year very much troubled at the Doubts of others as bad almost as if they were my own souls Troubles.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Early Ministry and the Friendship of John Newton**

From an early age, Ryland, like his father, showed much promise for ministry and academics. Culross said, “His activity in religious matters was very great.”<sup>53</sup> This was apparent in Ryland when soon after he received assurance of salvation, he joined a group of young boys at the academy, often being asked to address his fellow school mates.<sup>54</sup> John Collett recognized his son’s abilities, and on May 3, 1770, Ryland preached his first sermon where his father pastored at College Lane Baptist Church in Northampton. Soon after this first preaching opportunity: “He began preaching in area churches and homes and in mid-week meetings at College Lane”<sup>55</sup>—“a work which he did so affectionately and modestly that he won the hearts of all who knew him.”<sup>56</sup>

When Ryland was eighteen years old, College Lane Baptist Church asked him to preach 138 times. The church found him diligent in his work and saw a willingness in him to accept even the most minor opportunities to serve: “Ryland always did the little which lay to his hand, and found that by doing the ‘next thing’ life became right in

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<sup>51</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 24.

<sup>52</sup>Cited in Robinson, “The Experience of John Ryland,” 26.

<sup>53</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 72.

<sup>54</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 72.

<sup>55</sup>Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr.,” 2:80.

<sup>56</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 73.

opportunities of usefulness.”<sup>57</sup> This eagerness to serve and preach led College Lane to invite young Ryland to preach from the “clerk’s desk” (the normal place from which the pastor would preach) instead of standing in the “table-pew” (the place where announcements were given and where the congregation would be led in singing), where he had previously preached. In August 1771, the congregation at College Lane formally “recognized his pastoral giftedness by officially signing a written statement of his call to ministry.”<sup>58</sup>

It was at this same time that John Collett began to introduce his son to some very influential Christian pastors, scholars, and hymn-writers. In 1768, his father took Ryland to hear the high-Calvinist pastor, John Gill (1697–1771), preach in London. In that same year, Ryland and his mother attended three sermons by Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795). The next year, Ryland and his father “‘went to see Mr. Whitefield’—only three months before Whitefield’s final voyage to America.”<sup>59</sup> They also heard Augustus Toplady (1740–1778), the author of the hymn “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me,” preach on Psalm 23. Ryland exclaimed upon hearing this exposition by Toplady, “I found my soul much melted with a sense of divine love.”<sup>60</sup> This expansion in Ryland’s relationships and influence was culminated in 1768, when John Newton (1725–1807),<sup>61</sup> the famed Anglican pastor and author of “Amazing Grace,” invited Ryland to visit him in Olney.

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<sup>57</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 73.

<sup>58</sup>Grant Gordon, *Wise Counsel: John Newton’s Letters to John Ryland, Jr.* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 9.

<sup>59</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 75.

<sup>60</sup>Cited in Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 75.

<sup>61</sup>For more information concerning the life and ministry of John Newton, see Richard Cecil, *Memoirs of the Rev. John Newton, Late Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolchurch Haw: With General Remarks on His Life, Connections, and Character* (London: L. B. Seeley, 1820); Bernard Martin, *John Newton: A Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1950); Jonathan Aitkin, *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

This invitation began a mentoring relationship between Newton, forty-three, and fifteen year old Ryland, which developed into a great friendship that lasted until Newton's death in 1807. This relationship proved to be an invaluable endeavor for Ryland, resulting in great personal philosophical and theological growth.<sup>62</sup>

In 1771, the same year that College Station officially called Ryland into the ministry, Ryland published his first full-length book entitled *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel, and the Various Branches of Vital Experience. For the Use of True Christians*.<sup>63</sup> Ryland described *Serious Essays* as “one-hundred and twenty-one Pieces in various measures; the result of four years labor and pleasure.”<sup>64</sup> It was 268 pages of poetry, with many of the poems focused on controversial theological doctrines, including the soteriological debates between Calvinists and Arminians. Gordon drew the following conclusions from *Serious Essays*: “The publication no doubt appeared with the support, and probably the strong encouragement, of his father, as most of the pre-publication subscribers were friends of the older Ryland (a staunch Calvinist), his church, and his school.”<sup>65</sup> Ryland garnered much praise for his work, even receiving positive reviews from the April 1771 issue of *Gospel Magazine*. They wished him great success and “that his heart may be kept humble at our dear Lord's feet.”<sup>66</sup> In order to stress humility in the young writer, John Newton seized the opportunity to critique Ryland's work and to disciple him in humility. In the first letter written by Newton to Ryland,

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<sup>62</sup>John Newton and John Ryland developed a life-long friendship that included at least eighty-three letters of correspondence between the two men. None of the letters written by John Ryland survived, but Grant Gordon gathered the eighty-three letters from Newton to Ryland. See Gordon, *Wise Counsel*.

<sup>63</sup>Hereafter called *Serious Essays*.

<sup>64</sup>John Ryland, *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel and the Various Branches of the Vital Experience* (London: J. W. Pasham, 1821), A2

<sup>65</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 9.

<sup>66</sup>Cited in Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 10.

Newton pointed out Ryland's many grammatical mistakes and poor poetic writing choices. Newton prefaced his letter with a declaration of love for his young protégé, but his intent was clearly to usher in a sense of humility in the young poet in order to admonish Ryland. Newton said, "Your comfort and success eminently depend upon your being humble. And if the Lord loves you and has sent you, he will find ways and means to humble you."<sup>67</sup> Newton clearly saw himself as an agent of God's admonition to Ryland, yet he called on Ryland to accept this rebuke from a friend who truly cared enough of him to tell him the truth. It took Ryland three months to finally respond to Newton as was evident in Newton's second letter to Ryland on January 16, 1772.<sup>68</sup>

Several things were evident of Ryland in this first encounter with John Newton. First, Ryland was willing to learn and to take constructive criticism. In Newton's second letter in January 1772, he wrote, "I am pleased with the spirit you discover; and your bearing so well to be told of the mistakes I pointed out to you, endears you more to me than if you had not made them."<sup>69</sup> Second, Ryland's willingness to take criticism revealed a desire in Ryland's heart for spiritual growth at the hands of someone else other than his father. An example of this came in the fifth letter written to Ryland in April 1773, when Ryland was struggling with his own identity and his own self-afflicted criticisms.<sup>70</sup> Newton encapsulated Ryland's letter by re-introducing Ryland's concerns in the first paragraph of his letter back to Ryland: "You ask me, in your letter, 'What should

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<sup>67</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 16.

<sup>68</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 19.

<sup>69</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 19.

<sup>70</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 33, cited by Gordon in his footnotes that "this letter, 'On a Believer's Frames,' was published in the *Gospel Magazine*, April 1773, pp. 185–91, and eventually compiled in *Twenty-six Letters on Religious Subjects to which are called Hymns*, by Omicron (1774). This copy is taken from *Works*, vol. 1, pp. 253–61. The recipient was not identified, but Ryland identifies himself as such in a notation he made in his transcription of Newton's letter, 10 May 1773. This is confirmed by Newton's reference to the fact in his 1 August 1775 letter to Ryland." Omicron was a pseudonym used by Newton to publish a series of articles for *Gospel Magazine*.

one do when one finds oneself always still, quiet, and stupid, except in the pulpit.”<sup>71</sup>

Ryland was transparent before Newton, and Newton’s advice to him was one from a spiritual mentor to his younger student:

The great question is, How we are practically influenced by the word of God, as the ground of our hope, and as the governing rule of our tempers and conversation? The Apostle exhorts believers to rejoice in the Lord always. He well knew that they were exposed to trials and temptations, and to much trouble from an evil heart of unbelief; and he prevents the objections we might be ready to make, by adding, “And again I say, Rejoice:” as if he had said, “I speak upon mature consideration. I call upon you to rejoice, not at some times only, but at all times. Not only when upon the mount, but when in the valley. Not only when you conquer, but while you are fighting. Not only when the Lord shines upon you, but when he seems to hide his face.”<sup>72</sup>

Third, Ryland’s encounter with Newton demonstrated his Christ-like spirit of gentleness. Hall described Ryland as a man who “practised” the spiritual fruit of gentleness.<sup>73</sup> Hall said of Ryland, “Possessed of a temper naturally quick and irritable, he had, by the aid of reason and religion, so far subdued that propensity, that it was rarely suffered to appear; and when it did, it was a momentary agitation which quickly subsided into kindness and benignity.”<sup>74</sup> In Newton’s first letter, Newton addressed the preaching style of Ryland and gave him advice on how to engage in controversial debates. In his preface to the *Serious Essays*, Ryland said, “As a manner, I have not aimed to please critics; as to matter, I have aimed to displease Arminians.”<sup>75</sup> Newton said, “I had rather you aim to be useful to them, than to displease the Arminians.”<sup>76</sup> Gordon recorded that on Ryland’s personal copy of *Serious Essays*, Ryland, taking the advice of Newton, blocked

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<sup>71</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 33.

<sup>72</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 35–36.

<sup>73</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 28.

<sup>74</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 28.

<sup>75</sup>Ryland, *Serious Essays*, xxi.

<sup>76</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 15.

out the words “aimed” and changed the sentence to read “I have not feared to displease the Arminians.”<sup>77</sup> This change was also reflected in the second edition published in 1775, and revealed a gentle corrective spirit in Ryland. Newton proved to be a great ally and mentor in the spiritual growth of John Ryland, mainly through his two to three letters per year from 1771 to 1807, but he was also a respected friend and colleague.

In 1780, Ryland married Elizabeth Tyler, the daughter of Robert Tyler of Banbury. In 1787, she gave birth to their only child, John. Elizabeth grew greatly ill after giving birth and died on January 23, 1787, only a few weeks after the birth. Ryland’s father sent a letter of encouragement to his son during Elizabeth’s illness. John Collett wrote,

One of the greatest difficulties of a life of faith is to realize the hand, and eye, and presence of Christ, in every event and every moment of life. The Lord actuates the whole frame of the natural and spiritual world; not a single motion in heaven, earth, or hell, but passes under his inspection and overruling influence. The great concern of our minds will be to approach him as near as possible, and live in a humble subjection to his will. He is our all in all for ever.<sup>78</sup>

The death of Elizabeth and the sole care of an infant son was a heavy burden for Ryland to carry. On the day that Elizabeth died, Newton, who had not received word of Elizabeth’s death, wrote a letter to Ryland dated January 23, 1787. Arriving the day after Elizabeth’s death, the letter must have been such a welcomed encouragement. Newton expressed great empathy for Ryland’s situation and reminded Ryland, as John Collett had done, of the providential and sovereign hand of a loving God. Newton said, “I pray for her, that he may enable her quietly and cheerfully [to] commit herself into his hands. And I pray for you, that you may do the same.”<sup>79</sup> Newton further reminded Ryland of the sovereignty of God and that, no matter if Elizabeth lived or died, it would be to the

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<sup>77</sup>Cited in Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 17.

<sup>78</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 184.

<sup>79</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 186.

“chief good” of Ryland, and Newton assured him that God would strengthen his faith as to say, “Thy will be done.”<sup>80</sup> In a letter dated February 2, 1787, after Newton had learned of Elizabeth’s death, he called upon Ryland to reflect upon his calling and to not allow grief to deceive and hurt his life or his ministry: “Attend to your health and your calling. Ride, walk, talk; change air and objects now and then. Time, prayer, and especially praise, will relieve you.”<sup>81</sup> Newton called Ryland a “soldier” and “leader in the Lord’s army,” and this was the salve that brought comfort and deliverance to Ryland’s emotional wounds. Two years later Ryland married Frances Barrett of Northampton, and they had three daughters and one son, Jonathan Edwards Ryland.<sup>82</sup>

### **Ryland’s Theological Adjustments**

These emotional challenges for Ryland coincided with some major theological shifts in his thoughts concerning Calvinism,<sup>83</sup> or what may best be understood as “High-Calvinism.” On record the first person to question young Ryland’s thoughts concerning soteriology was John Newton. In his first letter, written in 1771, Newton said, “Let me advise you to aim at plain and experimental things, and endeavor rather to affect your hearers’ hearts with a sense of the evil of sin, and the love of Jesus, that to fill their heads

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<sup>80</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 186.

<sup>81</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 189.

<sup>82</sup>For more information on Jonathan Edwards Ryland, see Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 95–103.

<sup>83</sup>For more information on Calvinism, see Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931); Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973); Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982); R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God: Know God's Perfect Plan for His Glory and His Children* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986); R. K. McGregor Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong with Freewill Theism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996); R. C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Carlisle, PA: Paternoster, 1997); Timothy George, *Amazing Grace: God's Initiative: Our Response* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2000); Ernest C. Reisinger and D. Matthew Allen, *Beyond Five Points* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2002); Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2006).



with distinctions.”<sup>84</sup> Newton was referring to a “battle” that was brewing among the Particular Baptists, called the “Modern Question.” Thomas Nettles described the Modern Question as “whether it is the obligation of the unregenerate to repent of sin and believe in Christ.”<sup>85</sup> Also, this issue raised another question, according to Nettles, “as to whether gospel preachers should call on sinners in general to repent of sin and come to Christ.”

Ryland was schooled on the writings of John Gill, a close associate of John Collett. Robert Oliver, pastor and historian, has called John Gill the most “powerful advocate of orthodoxy” of the Particular Baptist of the eighteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Gill served as pastor of the influential Hornsleydown Baptist Church in London that was once pastored by Benjamin Keach (1640–1704). While serving as pastor, Keach drew up a *Covenant and Articles of Faith* for the church that was based upon the *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*.<sup>87</sup> When Gill became pastor of Hornsleydown and re-affirmed Keach’s Covenant in 1719, he omitted the “free offer of the gospel, which Keach included under the heading of effectual calling.”<sup>88</sup> This omission of the “free offer of the gospel” and Gill’s belief in the doctrine of eternal justification, led many to accuse Gill of hyper-Calvinism.<sup>89</sup> Charles Spurgeon labeled Gill as the “Coryphaeus of hyper-Calvinism” within the Particular Baptists.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 15.

<sup>85</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:100.

<sup>86</sup>Robert Oliver, *History of English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2006), 4.

<sup>87</sup>Also called the Second London Baptist Confession.

<sup>88</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 6

<sup>89</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, “Hyper-Calvinism and the Theology of John Gill” (lecture, True Church Conference at Grace Life Church, Muscle Shoals, AL, February 19–20, 2010), 5–6, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.andrewfullercenter.org/files/hyper-calvinism-and-the-theology-of-john-gill.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 15.

Gill had great influence on young Ryland. Michael Haykin recorded that “either in 1768 or 1769 Ryland spent an entire year reading some of his father’s most cherished theological works by divines such as Brine and Gill.”<sup>91</sup> It should be noted that up to this time in Ryland’s life, he had not studied or been exposed to other points of view concerning these questions. Therefore, his father’s High-Calvinists views became his own. Reflecting on this period of his life, Ryland stated,

When I first entered on the work of the ministry, though I endeavored to say as much to sinners as my views on this subject would allow, yet was shackled by adherence to a supposed systematic consistency, and carefully avoided exhorting sinners to come to Christ for salvation.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to Newton, Ryland was influenced by several other men outside of the Baptist faith. In 1772, at his father’s request, Ryland invited Rowland Hill (1744–1833), at this point a deacon in the Church of England, to preach at College Lane. In Hill, who was described as a second George Whitefield (1714–1770), Ryland was exposed to a Calvinist who openly urged the sinner to respond to the preached gospel. In the three visits by Hill to Northamptonshire, thousands heard Hill preach and many were converted. Ryland was greatly influenced by the evangelical spirit of Hill, and this evangelical spirit “would certainly have shown Ryland that Calvinism and fervent evangelism are not mutually exclusive.”<sup>93</sup>

Another non-Baptist influence came through the writings of Jonathan Edwards. By 1776, “Ryland was all but convinced that High-Calvinism was unbiblical in its view of preaching the gospel.”<sup>94</sup> A major contributor to Ryland’s change in theology came from Ryland’s in-depth study of Edwards’ *Freedom of the Will*.<sup>95</sup> Edwards argued that “a

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<sup>91</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 77

<sup>92</sup>Cited in Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 78.

<sup>93</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 82.

<sup>94</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 139–40.

<sup>95</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that*

person's possession of natural faculties such as reason and will renders him or her accountable to God for the proper use of them."<sup>96</sup> Therefore, man, according to Edwards, has a responsibility to God for remaining in their sin even if they are unable, in their own strength, to turn from their sin and turn towards God.<sup>97</sup> Human responsibility to God in salvation was a major theological shift for Ryland, and it also demonstrated Ryland's openness to others outside of the Particular Baptists. Ryland, like Edwards, held to the view that if only one soul was on the "way to destruction . . . there would still be a necessity for those who know the terrors of the Lord, and the worth of souls, to persuade men to flee for refuge."<sup>98</sup>

In May 1779, Robert Hall, Sr., a founding member of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, preached a sermon at the Northamptonshire Association on Isaiah 57:14: "Cast ye up, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling blocks out of the way of my people."<sup>99</sup> This sermon, and later a published book, was entitled *Help to Zion's Travellers*, which focused on the proclamation of the gospel to sinners. Hall, Sr., wrote,

If any one should ask, Have I a right to apply to Jesus the Saviour, simply as a poor, undone, perishing sinner, in whom there appears no good thing? I answer, Yes; the gospel proclamation is, "Whosoever will, let him come." "To you O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Prov. Viii. 4. The way to Jesus is graciously laid open for every one who chooses to come to him.<sup>100</sup>

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*Freedom of Will which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Vertue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1754).

<sup>96</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 140.

<sup>97</sup>Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 140.

<sup>98</sup>John Ryland, *Salvation Finished, as to the Impetration, at the Death of Christ, and with Respect to its Application, at the Death of the Christian: A Funeral Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Robert Hall, sen.* (London: Sold by Matthews, Vernor, Ash, and Button, 1791), 11.

<sup>99</sup>Haykin, *The British Particular Baptists*, 1:206.

<sup>100</sup>Cited in Haykin, *The British Particular Baptists*, 1:207.

Hall, Sr., taught that the gospel presentation was to be delivered to everyone, yet Ryland was clear on the Calvinism of Hall, Sr., when he said that Hall, Sr., was “deeply convinced of human guilt and depravity, and very zealous for the honor of sovereign grace.”<sup>101</sup> Hall, Sr., also believed that gospel “invitations” should be “addressed to sinners” to allow the sinner to “know his election, or prove his regeneration.”<sup>102</sup> Ryland agreed with the assessment of Hall, Sr., that “a change of heart must precede faith, but unknown renovation cannot be the ground of the sinner’s first encouragement to apply to the Saviour, or that on which his right to confide in him is founded, because it is unknown.”<sup>103</sup> His point was that sinners need to know they are sinners in order to believe they need a Savior. Ryland said, “Mr. Hall remained as strenuous an advocate as ever for the necessity and efficacy of divine influence, to induce sinners or saints to comply cordially with their indispensable duty.”<sup>104</sup>

By 1783, Andrew Fuller<sup>105</sup> (1754–1815), Ryland’s closest friend, was ordained as pastor at Kettering, a church in the Northamptonshire Association. Three years after his ordination to Kettering, Fuller published *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*. In this book, Fuller “argued cogently for the congruity between divine sovereignty and

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<sup>101</sup>John Ryland, preface to Robert Hall, *Help to Zion's Travelers: Being an Attempt to Remove Various Stumbling Blocks out of the Way, Relating to Doctrinal, Experimental and Practical Religion* (London, 1781; repr., Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), viii.

<sup>102</sup>Ryland, *Help to Zion's Travellers*, ix.

<sup>103</sup>Ryland, *Help to Zion's Travellers*, ix.

<sup>104</sup>Ryland, *Help to Zion's Travellers*, viii.

<sup>105</sup>For more information concerning the life and theology of Andrew Fuller, see John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrate; in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Button & Son, 1818); Gilbert S. Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: Carey Press, 1942); Tom Nettles, “Andrew Fuller (1754–1815),” in *The British Particular Baptists: 1638–1910*, vol. 2 (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2000); Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptist*; Paul Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* (Nashville: B & H, 2010).

human responsibility.”<sup>106</sup> For Fuller, this agreement between the sovereignty of God and human responsibility opened the door “onto the vast world of gospel-preaching to the nations.”<sup>107</sup> At about this same time, Ryland announced that he “now considered the call of the Gospel as addressed to sinners indefinitely as the elect come under that character, and no man can know them by any other, till Grace distinguishes them.”<sup>108</sup> Ryland’s brother-in-law stated,

In this respect he [Ryland] now agrees with Calvin himself & all the principal Calvinistic Divines, as Dr. Owen, Mr. Hallyburton, Mr. Flavel, Dr. Witsius, Mr. Bunyan, Mr R. & E. Erskine, Mr. Whitefield; and those worth men once so useful in this neighbourhood Mr. Davis and Maurice of Rowel.<sup>109</sup>

This openness to preaching the gospel to the nations proved to be the most productive theological change in the life and ministry of John Ryland, Jr., and it had a significant effect throughout the kingdom of God and throughout mission fields of the world, although Ryland’s father was not too pleased with his son’s new soteriological views. John Collett believed this zealous pursuit of “truth” was like an “old dog, lying in the dark” that would draw away “many good men. . . . The devil threw out an empty barrel for them (Robert Hall, his son, and Andrew Fuller) to roll about, while they ought to have been drinking the wine of the kingdom.”<sup>110</sup>

### **Ryland’s Ministry at Northampton**

In 1781, when Ryland was twenty-eight years old, College Lane Baptist Church of Northampton called him to serve alongside his father as co-pastor, and by

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<sup>106</sup>Nettles, “Andrew Fuller,” 2:102.

<sup>107</sup>Nettles, “Andrew Fuller,” 2:97.

<sup>108</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “Northamptonshire and the Modern Question: A Turning Point in Eighteenth Century Dissent,” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 16, pt. 1 (April 1965): 121–22.

<sup>109</sup>Nuttall, “Northamptonshire and the Modern Question,” 122.

<sup>110</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 63.

1786, John Ryland succeeded his father as sole pastor of College Lane. Hall described Ryland's pastorate at College Lane as "eminently acceptable and useful."<sup>111</sup> Ryland was never, as a preacher, one who received the highest accolades or "attained the highest summit of popularity," but as Hall said "he was always heard with attention."<sup>112</sup> Ryland's sermons focused on producing "instantaneous conviction" and were "ready to pour [themselves] forth as a libation on the sacrifice of the faith and obedience of his converts."<sup>113</sup> He preached to see a change within his church. In *A Candid Statement*, Ryland said, "As we are directed, by the apostle Peter, to be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us; so would we wish to do the same as to every part of our religious practice."<sup>114</sup>

### **Northamptonshire Baptist Association**

Ryland's piety affected every part of his life, including his preaching. Former professor and pastor, Thomas McKibbens, writes, "People loved John Ryland foremost because of his transparent piety. No sham, no affectation, no pretense—he was aglow with the gospel."<sup>115</sup> Ryland exclaimed, "I preach the truth with a loud voice, and sometimes labour to come close to the consciences of my hearers."<sup>116</sup> Newton recognized Ryland's labor in preaching: "In a word, as I approve of your zeal, I shall be glad for your own sake if you will approve and adopt a little of my prudence. I wish my letter may be a

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<sup>111</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 23.

<sup>112</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 24.

<sup>113</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 24.

<sup>114</sup>Ryland, *A Candid Statement*, 1.

<sup>115</sup>Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr., *The Forgotten Heritage: A Lineage of Great Baptist Preaching* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 59.

<sup>116</sup>John Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials: Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Revd. John Ryland, D.D. of Bristol: With a Memoir of the Author* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1828), 2:54.

bridle to you.”<sup>117</sup> Ryland’s zeal was not bridled at Northampton. He faithfully kept up with his pastoral duties, yet he was “in labours more abundant; far from confining his ministry to a single spot, he diffused its benefits over a wide circle, preaching much in the surrounding villages.”<sup>118</sup>

Ryland was also very much involved in the Northamptonshire Baptist Association and was instrumental in its relevancy and survival, especially in the early days of the Association, which formed in 1765. Ryland “was one of a group of [Particular Baptist] ministers . . . who were beginning to throw off the shackles of hyper-Calvinism” or high-Calvinism.<sup>119</sup> Ryland’s involvement in the association led to the creation of monthly “prayer meetings set up under the prayer call of 1784,” which “developed into monthly missionary prayer meetings.”<sup>120</sup>

Within the Association, Ryland also had the opportunity to write circular letters that were published and distributed throughout the Association. These circular letters, according to Northamptonshire Baptist Association historian T. S. H. Elwyn, dealt with weighty theological subjects that showed “how much the people of the Association thought about their life in Christ and their religion generally.”<sup>121</sup> Ryland wrote and published two circular letters for the Association. His first letter, “The Nature, Evidences and Advantages of Humility,” was sent in 1784; and his second letter, “Godly Zeal,” was sent in 1792.<sup>122</sup> “Godly Zeal” addressed the possession of a “fervent disinterested

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<sup>117</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 74.

<sup>118</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 23.

<sup>119</sup>H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography in Association with The British Academy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. “John Ryland.” See also n. 83 on Calvinism on p. 24 of this dissertation

<sup>120</sup>Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, 18.

<sup>121</sup>Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, 19.

<sup>122</sup>Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, 100.

affection” or “holy zeal.”<sup>123</sup> This theme of holy affection was of paramount importance to Ryland, and it revealed a clear indication of Jonathan Edward’s deep influence on the piety of Ryland concerning religious affections or holiness. In a diary entry dated May 12, 1786, Ryland commented on Edwards’ influence on him through *Religious*

*Affections*:

I believe I may fairly attribute some confusion in my ideas, when so very young, to the want of more distinct instruction on some heads. O that my father had then thoroughly studied Edwards on the Affections! it might have rendered his ministry more useful to me and others.<sup>124</sup>

Samuel Hopkins, the first biographer of Jonathan Edwards, said that “testing the spirits and determining the marks of genuine piety were life-long concerns of Edwards.”<sup>125</sup>

Likewise, Ryland said that “zeal is fervent, active benevolence” derived from the whole law of God and lived out in the believer’s life.<sup>126</sup> Ryland believed that the practice of holiness has a deep connection with the propagation of the truth of God’s Word, and that the best example of this is the demonstration or “visible influence” that the gospel has on the believer’s life. Ryland called this the “holy tendency.”<sup>127</sup> Within this holy tendency, Ryland “held in abhorrence those pretended religious affections which have their origin and termination in self.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>John Ryland, “The Northampton Letter on Godly Zeal,” in *The Baptist Annual Register, for 1790, 1791, 1792, and part of 1793*, ed. John Rippon (London: n.p., 1793), 421.

<sup>124</sup>Cited in Michael Haykin, “‘The Sum of All Good:’ John Ryland, Jr., and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Churchman* 103, no. 4 (1989): 332–53.

<sup>125</sup>John E. Smith, “Testing the Spirits: Jonathan Edwards and the Religious Affections,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 27, nos. 1 and 2 (Fall/Winter, 1981–1982): 27.

<sup>126</sup>Ryland, “The Northampton Letter,” 421.

<sup>127</sup>Ryland, “The Northampton Letter,” 424.

<sup>128</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 41.



## Antinomianism Controversy

Ryland also found himself embroiled in the antinomianism controversy, both in the Association and as pastor of College Lane. Robert Oliver described this controversy as one being filled with personal character attacks and bitterness. Ryland's main opposition in the antinomianism controversy was William Huntington (1745–1813).<sup>129</sup> Huntington's primary teaching point was that "the law is the saint's first husband and schoolmaster; and it is the bondservant's only rule, but 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;' and 'against such there is no law.'"<sup>130</sup> "The moral law," according to Huntington, "was binding on the unbeliever, but was not a rule of life for the Christian."<sup>131</sup> Huntington said, "All the non-elect are under the law to Christ. But the believer is under grace to Christ."<sup>132</sup> Denouncing Huntington's antinomian writings, Ryland preached at the 1787 annual Association meeting with a sermon entitled "The Law Not against the Promises of God." Ryland taught that since Christ had "approved the summary of the law given in Matthew 22:37–40,"<sup>133</sup> Christ had therefore given the law to the Christian as a way to continually express a love and devotion to God. Ryland said,

To me it appears a most marvellous instance of the deceitfulness of sin, if any man can think himself a friend to evangelical religion, who by sinking unbelievers below all obligation, and raising believers above all obligation, almost annihilates both

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<sup>129</sup>For an in-depth look at the life and theology of William Huntington, see chap. 3 of this dissertation. For additional information about Huntington, see Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Huntington, S. S.* (London: Farncombe and Son, 1909); G. M. Ella, *William Huntington, Pastor of Providence* (Darlington, England: Evangelical, 1994); Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 112–45; much of Huntington's work can be accessed at William Huntington (1745-1813), accessed October 26, 2013, <http://www.williamhuntington.net>.

<sup>130</sup>William Huntington, "The Broken Cistern and the Springing Well," in *The Works of William Huntington, S. S.* (London: T. Bensley, 1811), 11:313.

<sup>131</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 124.

<sup>132</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 11:66.

<sup>133</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 117.

duty and sin, and so leaves no room for the exercise of either pardoning mercy or sanctifying grace.<sup>134</sup>

The antinomian controversy directly affected College Lane when a restive member invited Huntington to Northampton to preach. Ryland led the church in excommunicating this member which proved to only deepen the abusive language of Huntington towards Ryland. Ryland, commenting on Huntington's disdain from him, said, "Had it pleased God to remove me from this world at any period between the year 1791 and the death of this man, no doubt he would have added my name to the list of those who were struck dead for not receiving him."<sup>135</sup>

### **Baptist Missionary Society**

Perhaps Ryland's greatest contribution as pastor of College Lane Baptist Church and as a minister in the Northampton Association was the creation of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS).<sup>136</sup> In 1783, John Ryland baptized William Carey (1761–1834).<sup>137</sup> It was reported by John Webster Morris (1763–1836), Baptist minister and author, that William Carey posed a question in a meeting of the Northamptonshire Association in 1785.<sup>138</sup> Carey reportedly asked "whether the command given to the apostles [to 'teach all nations'] was not obligatory on all succeeding ministers to the end

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<sup>134</sup>Hall, *Help to Zion's Travelers*, x–xi.

<sup>135</sup>Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 40.

<sup>136</sup>For an in-depth history of the Baptist Missionary Society, see Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society: 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).

<sup>137</sup>For more information concerning the life and ministry of William Carey, see S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey, D. D., Fellow of Linnaean Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923); Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1991); William Travis, "William Carey: The Modern Missions Movement and the Sovereignty of God," in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 323–36.

<sup>138</sup>J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev Andrew Fuller* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1830), 96–97. John Ryland, Jr., denies this event ever took place. The only known record of it is in Morris' writings on Fuller.

of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent.”<sup>139</sup> Morris recorded that John Collett Ryland said, “Nothing could be done before another Pentecost, when an effusion of miraculous gifts, including the gift of tongues, would give effect to the Commission of Christ as first.”<sup>140</sup> This public rebuke from the older Ryland, however, did not stop the passion of Carey to step foot on foreign soil with the gospel sent out from Britain.

In 1791, at the Easter meeting of the Northamptonshire Baptist ministers, John Sutcliff (1752–1814) and Andrew Fuller preached messages that once again stirred the heart of William Carey. That night he proposed the formation of a society focused on foreign missions. The association, minus John Ryland who had to leave in order to preach in Northampton, discussed Carey’s proposal, but nothing was conceived on that evening. In May 1792, Carey seized his opportunity to again bring up the idea of a mission society before the association in a sermon he preached from Isaiah 54. His point was that God was expanding His kingdom and that it was every Christian’s duty to attempt to spread the gospel around the world. Carey exclaimed, “Expect great things. Attempt great things.”<sup>141</sup> That night a resolution was made to form a Baptist society for taking the gospel to the “heathen,”<sup>142</sup> and on October 2, 1792, the Particular Baptist Missionary Society of the Northamptonshire Association of Ministers was formed for the express purpose of propagating the gospel among the heathen. Ryland was a part of the BMS for the rest of his life, and “he did not cease to his last hour to watch over its progress with

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<sup>139</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 60.

<sup>140</sup>Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings*, 96–97.

<sup>141</sup>John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859), 15.

<sup>142</sup>John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register: for 1794, 1795, 1796–1797* (London: Dilly, Button, and Thomas, 1798), 375, 419.

parental solicitude.”<sup>143</sup> Hall said Ryland was “resolved to send the gospel to the remotest quarter of the globe.”<sup>144</sup> This society saw the gospel preached throughout the world and even had a hand in the British abolition movement.<sup>145</sup>

### **Ryland’s Ministry at Bristol**

Broadmead Baptist Church of Bristol has an unusual entry on a large plaque listing their former pastors: “The Rev. John Ryland, D. D.: first invited by the Church in Broadmead, 1792; accepted the call of the Church, 1794.”<sup>146</sup> Gordon writes, “These simple lines mark an eventful period in the life of John Ryland, Jr., when he was caught between the appeals of two Baptist churches.”<sup>147</sup> At the same time that Ryland was helping to start the BMS, he was asked to preach a series of sermons at Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol. Broadmead’s pastor, Caleb Evans<sup>148</sup> (1737–1791), who was also the third principal of Bristol Baptist Academy, died leaving an opening for both pastor of the church and principal of the seminary. Newton, hearing about Ryland preaching at Bristol, said, “I wish you much comfort and usefulness while you are at Bristol, but I cannot say that I wish you may be induced to leave Northampton.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 46.

<sup>144</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 46.

<sup>145</sup>Stanley, *History of Baptist Missionary Society*, 68–105.

<sup>146</sup>Cited in Grant Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.,” *Baptist Quarterly*, n.s., 34, no. 5 (1992): 214.

<sup>147</sup>Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.,” 214.

<sup>148</sup>For a comprehensive study of the life and ministry of Caleb Evans, see Norman S. Moon, “Caleb Evans, Founder of The Bristol Education Society,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 24 (1971–1972): 175–90; Roger Hayden, “Evangelical Calvinism among Eighteenth-Century British Baptists with Particular Reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the Bristol Baptist Academy, 1690–1791” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele, 1991), 209–40; and Kirk Wellum, “Caleb Evans (1737 – 1791),” in *The British Particular Baptists: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 1:213–33.

<sup>149</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 261.

Ryland found himself in a unique situation. The church at Bristol recognized that Ryland was uniquely qualified to be both the pastor at Broadmead and the principal at the seminary, yet College Lane was unwilling to release Ryland to Bristol. With both churches adamant in their positions, Ryland said, “I am justly ashamed to find myself made of so much consequence and wish I may prove worth half this struggling for.”<sup>150</sup> With the third request from Bristol to Northampton, the church of College Lane reluctantly agreed and sent a letter to Broadmead Baptist Church with a release and a commendation for the Rylands. Ryland officially accepted the post at Broadmead as pastor of the church and principal of the seminary on January 25, 1794; within two weeks, the Rylands were in Bristol where Ryland would remain at these posts until his death in 1825.<sup>151</sup>

### **Bristol Baptist Academy**

In 1792, the degree of D. D. was conferred upon Ryland by Brown University of Rhode Island, USA, and from this point on in his life, he was known simply as Dr. Ryland.<sup>152</sup> Culross described Ryland’s position as principal of the seminary as the “main work of his life.”<sup>153</sup> Like his father, Ryland was committed to the “importance of academic preparation for those entering pastoral ministry.”<sup>154</sup> He was convinced that a formal theological education was extremely important and absolutely necessary for all men seeking to become pastors. Haykin writes, “Ryland could describe the academic

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<sup>150</sup>Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.,” 221.

<sup>151</sup>Gordon, “The Call of Dr. John Ryland, Jr.,” 223.

<sup>152</sup>John T. Godfrey and James Ward, *The History of Friar Lane Baptist Church, Nottingham* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1903), 83.

<sup>153</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 83.

<sup>154</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825), and Theological Education,” *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 70, no. 2 (1990): 176.

setting as a place where the theological student could enter ‘deeply into those treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are hid in Christ Jesus’ (cf. Col. 2:3).”<sup>155</sup> One such student, William Rhodes of Damerham, said, “No tutor could be more loved or revered” than Ryland.<sup>156</sup> Rhodes was delighted to “express the deep and tender veneration” for his “recollections of the wisdom and excellence he [Ryland] manifested towards me and many others while under his care.”<sup>157</sup> Ryland stated in *Advice to Young Ministers, respecting their preparatory Studies*,<sup>158</sup> it is “highly expedient that every large body of Christians should possess some learned ministers; and the greater their numbers and attainments the better.”<sup>159</sup>

At the seminary, Ryland had the opportunity to teach “Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, he taught his students theology, church history, sacred antiquity, rhetoric, and logic.”<sup>160</sup> In all, Ryland had the opportunity to influence and teach about 200 students during his time as president of the College. Fuller said of Ryland becoming principal of the seminary, “Your views of divine truth, I consider as of great importance in the Christian ministry. Go then, my Brother, pour them into the minds of the rising generation of ministers.”<sup>161</sup> Ryland’s ministry at Bristol, rooted in his evangelical Calvinism, helped fuel a revival among the Particular Baptists. Haykin writes, “Ryland

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<sup>155</sup>Haykin, “John Ryland, Jr.,” 191.

<sup>156</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 39.

<sup>157</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 39.

<sup>158</sup>John Ryland, *Advice to Young Ministers, Respecting Their Preparatory Studies: A Sermon Preached June 25, 1812, in the Meeting-House in Devonshire Square, London: Before the Subscribers to the Academical Institution at Stepney, for the Education of Candidates for the Ministry of the Baptist Denomination* (Bristol: E. Bryan, 1812).

<sup>159</sup>Cited in Gordon, *The British Particular Baptists*, 2:91.

<sup>160</sup>Matthew and Harrion, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “John Ryland.”

<sup>161</sup>John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated: in the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Button and Son, 1818), 226.

was thus instrumental in paving the way for the tremendous growth the Baptists were to experience in the nineteenth century.”<sup>162</sup> For example, in 1816, there were twenty-two students studying at the school, and most of them became Baptist pastors or missionaries “imbued with Ryland’s evangelical Calvinism and commitment to revival.”<sup>163</sup>

While at Bristol, Ryland was never far from the BMS, and his heart for missions was always a part of the theological education. In 1815, after the death of close friend Andrew Fuller, Ryland became the secretary of the BMS. During this time, Ryland saw twenty-six of his students become missionaries with the BMS and, with others, “took steps toward the formation of the London Missionary Society.”<sup>164</sup>

### **The Death of Ryland and His Legacy**

For thirty-one years, Ryland served Broadmead Baptist Church and Bristol Baptist Academy, becoming a key leader among the Calvinistic Baptist community. His influence reached from the settlements of Bristol to the entire world. Ryland traveled about 39,000 miles<sup>165</sup> and “preached 8,691 sermons in 286 places and all this before the days of railways!”<sup>166</sup> Ryland’s final sermon was preached from the Broadmead pulpit on the first Sunday of January 1825. Culross described Ryland’s last days:

Through the month he continued to decline, and on the 30<sup>th</sup>, the day after he had entered on his seventy-third year, he completed a ministry that had extended over fifty-five years. He lingered on painlessly till May 30, when he fell asleep. The

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<sup>162</sup>Haykin, “The Sum of All Good,” 336–37.

<sup>163</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, “John Ryland, Jr.—‘O Lord, I would delight in Thee:’ The Life and Ministry of John Ryland, Jr., Appreciated on the 250th Anniversary of his Birth,” *Reformation Today* 196 (November–December, 2003): 13–20.

<sup>164</sup>Godfrey and Ward, *The History of Friar Lane*, 218.

<sup>165</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 83.

<sup>166</sup>Norman S. Moon, *Education for Ministry: Bristol Baptist College 1679–1979* (Bristol, England: Bristol Baptist College, 1979), 35.

bystanders observed that he passed away with a serenity which no language could adequately describe.<sup>167</sup>

On June 5, 1825, Hall preached Ryland's funeral at Broadmead. Focusing on Ryland's piety, Hall said, "Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of time to a religious regulation, he [Ryland] 'worked out his salvation with fear and trembling.'"<sup>168</sup> Ryland lived his life with an Edwardsean "holy zeal," thereby encouraging his students to "study Divinity practically and devotionally. Enquire, What affections towards God should this truth excite? For what purpose is it revealed in the divine word? What use can I make of it in my own practice? Do I indeed fall in with its genuine tendency?"<sup>169</sup> Ryland's self-examinations produced a religion that was apparent in its fruit: a humble servant devoted to his work and his people. Hall said, "A successor you may easily procure, but where will you find one who will so 'naturally care for your state?'"<sup>170</sup> Hall concluded Ryland's funeral sermon with the reading of 2 Peter 3:11–13:

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

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<sup>167</sup>Culross, *The Three Rylands*, 89.

<sup>168</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 34.

<sup>169</sup>Gordon, "John Ryland, Jr.," 92.

<sup>170</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 41.



CHAPTER 3  
ANTINOMIANISM AND THE CONTROVERSY  
WITH WILLIAM HUNTINGTON

In 1787, at the annual Northamptonshire Baptist association meeting, John Ryland preached the sermon *The Law not against the Promises of God*. Ryland said, “Supporting then the divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, the proofs of which are numerous and conclusive, surely nothing can be of greater Importance, than a right understanding of the LAW of God, and of his glorious GOSPEL.”<sup>1</sup> This law and gospel sermon addressed the Antinomian debates that were plaguing the Particular Baptists in the eighteenth century, and it reflected upon the heated disputes that took place within this controversy between Particular Baptist pastors and William Huntington. In his sermon, Ryland accused those who teach Antinomian theology of being “superficial” readers of the apostle Paul.<sup>2</sup> A. C. Underwood suggested that the spread of Antinomianism was the result of the Particular Baptists’ failing to properly train their pastors.<sup>3</sup> These Antinomian debates, according to Robert Oliver, “produced divisions among them [English Particular Baptists] that proved to be deeper than those caused by the debates about the terms of communion or the preaching of the gospel.”<sup>4</sup> Underwood would have agreed with

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<sup>1</sup>John Ryland, *The Law Not against the Promises of God: A Sermon Delivered at the Annual Association of the Baptist Ministers and Churches, Assembled at Leicester, May 30, 1787* (London: J. Buckland, 1787), 4. This book is discussed and analyzed in chap. 4 of this paper.

<sup>2</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Baptist Union, 1947), 128.

<sup>4</sup>Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 2006), 112.

Oliver’s assessment of such division since he described Antinomianism as the “heresy which brought them into disrepute.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Antinomianism—The Debate**

Antinomian literally means “against (anti) God’s law (nomos).”<sup>6</sup> Scottish theologian John “Rabbi” Duncan (1796–1870) described Antinomianism as the only real “heresy” that exists, because all sin, in reality, is against the law of God.<sup>7</sup> Although this definition is etymologically correct, it does not develop the scope of the controversy concerning the Antinomian debates that gripped the Particular Baptists in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. William Young, in his article published in the *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, “discusses the difficulties of definition, pointing out that Luther coined the term, Antinomian, to describe those who opposed the Law, but subsequent debates, especially in the seventeenth century, widened the definition considerably.”<sup>8</sup> In her book, *Antinomians in English History*, Gertrude Huehns, former lecturer of history at the University of Otago, cited an original English document entitled *The Antinomian Conclusions as Understood by Most Auditors in 1644*. The document described the beliefs of Antinomians, using seven general statements or “conclusions:”

- (1) That God doth never inflict punishment upon the Elect for his sins.
- (2) That God is never angry with his children.
- (3) That God sees no sin in those that are his.
- (4) That only such as are elected, are at all times beloved of God, in what condition soever they be, be they never so great sinners, yea in the very act of sinne it selfe.
- (5) That sanctification of life, in duties of Piety, is nothing at all esteemed of God.
- (6) That the godly finds [*sic*] no difficulties in the way to Heaven, but live in much pleasure and delight in this world.
- (7) That those who belong to God, are able in this world presently to distinguish between God’s people and the wicked.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 128.

<sup>6</sup>Mark Jones, *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology’s Unwelcomed Guest?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 1.

<sup>7</sup>Jones, *Antinomianism*, 1.

<sup>8</sup>Cited in Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 113.

<sup>9</sup>Cited in Gertrude Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History: With Special Reference to the*

What Huehns pointed out is the very definition of doctrinal Antinomianism. She went on to describe how this doctrinal Antinomianism had its roots in the early church. Huehns described how early Christians were inclined in their newly found liberty, to “press the tenets of their belief to their most extreme conclusions,” thus recognizing their deliverance from the condemnation of sin under the law, as well as releasing the new believer from the “moral demands of the Decalogue.”<sup>10</sup> It is this emphasis on the doctrine of being released from the moral aspects of the law through Christian liberty that is at the heart of the debates within the Calvinistic Baptists. Gill noted that the “innocent doctrine” of Christian liberty, can “open a door to licentiousness!”<sup>11</sup> In more recent days, Nuttall has described this as “Calvinism’s peril.”<sup>12</sup> Although Calvinism does not necessarily entail Antinomianism, it can “degenerate into Antinomianism of a dry, doctrinal kind, in which God’s predetermination of all things not only precedes human action, including obedience to God’s law, but precludes it, makes it gratuitous for those already predestined to salvation.”<sup>13</sup> This gratuitous idea of sin and the effects of sin on the believer has led Mark Jones to say that “most Antinomians held to a view that God sees no sin in the believer, which means believers’ sins can do them no harm.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the sins of the believer, according to Huehns’ and Jones’ understanding of doctrinal Antinomianism, have no real effect within their relationship with God, making

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*Period 1640–1660* (London: Cresset, 1951), 8.

<sup>10</sup>Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History*, 11-12.

<sup>11</sup>Cited in Jonathan White, “A Theological and Historical Examination of John Gill’s Soteriology in Relation to Eighteenth-Century Hyper-Calvinism” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010): 171.

<sup>12</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, “Calvinism in Free Church History,” *The Baptist Quarterly*, n.s., no. 22 (1968): 425.

<sup>13</sup>Nuttall, “Calvinism in Free Church History,” 425.

<sup>14</sup>Mark Jones, “Against the Law,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, December 1, 2013, accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/against-law/>.

“divine chastisement” an unbiblical concept to the Antinomian. Gill, on the other hand, argued that the idea of sin “doing no harm, was never a received tenet of any body or society of Christians among us; no, not even those who have been called Antinomians.”<sup>15</sup> Because of his high-Calvinism, Gill himself was accused by some as teaching doctrinal Antinomianism, but he clearly refuted doctrinal and practical Antinomianism in his writings, including in *The Law Established by the Gospel*.<sup>16</sup>

By the eighteenth century, the scope of the Antinomian debates within the Particular Baptist community and other Christian communities, centered on the duty of the believer to keep the law of Moses as a rule of life.<sup>17</sup> James Rely (1721–1778), who had been converted under George Whitefield, caused a major stir in London concerning his doctrinal and practical Antinomianism.<sup>18</sup> Rely, who broke away from Whitefield sometime after 1747, came into opposition with John Wesley. In 1761, Wesley accused Rely of teaching practical Antinomianism in churches throughout Bristol, Bath,

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<sup>15</sup>Cited in White, “A Theological and Historical Examination,” 168.

<sup>16</sup>White argued that John Gill said, “‘There is a lawful and there is an unlawful use of the law.’ He proceeds to say, ‘The unlawful use of the law is to seek for life, righteousness and salvation by it.’ He then lists the lawful uses of the law ‘and which are not made void by the doctrine of faith.’ First, the law’s design is ‘to inform us of the mind and will of God.’ He calls the law ‘a transcript of his holy nature and unchangeable will.’ Gill’s view of the law, as discussed in chapter five, ‘points out to us our duty both to God and man.’ Second, the law convinces of sin. The law, by itself, does not ‘spiritually and savingly, convince of sin; for this is the work of the Spirit of God: but then the Spirit of God makes use of the law to work in men thorough convictions of their sinful, lost, and miserable condition by nature.’ A third use of the law is ‘to be as a glass to believers themselves.’ This third use means the law shows believers ‘the deformity of their souls by sin, and the imperfection of their obedience; whereby they grow out of love with themselves, and quit all dependence on their own righteousness for justification.’ A fourth ‘use of the law,’ also to believers is ‘to make the righteousness of Christ more dear and valuable to them for when they see how imperfect their own righteousness is.’ A fifth use of the law is as ‘a rule of life.’ It shows the saints how they are to act, walk, and converse. A sixth use of the law is in Gill’s discussion concerning the law. However, this use is for unbelievers. While believers are no longer under the condemnation of the law, for those outside of Christ the law pronounces them guilty ‘and accuses them . . . it is the killing letter, the ministration of condemnation and death unto them. Thus the law, as to these uses of it, both to saints and sinners, is not made void by the doctrine of Faith.’” Cited in White, “A Theological and Historical Examination,” 172.

<sup>17</sup>Underwood, *A History of English Baptists*, 133.

<sup>18</sup>For a comprehensive study of the controversy surrounding James Rely, see Wayne K. Clymer, “The Life and Thought of James Rely,” *Church History* 11, no. 3 (1942): 193-216; Alexander Golden, *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*, vol. 48, accessed March 10, 2014, [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rely,\\_James\\_%28DNB00%29](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rely,_James_%28DNB00%29).

Gloucestershire, and Birmingham.<sup>19</sup> As the controversy grew, in 1770, Abraham Booth (1734–1806), long-time Particular Baptist pastor of the Prescot churches of London, wrote a book entitled *The Death of Legal Hope, the Life of Evangelical Obedience*,<sup>20</sup> which warned Baptists to avoid Antinomian licentiousness and its fatal extremes.<sup>21</sup> The premise of Booth’s argument against Antinomianism was that “Christians are not under the Law as a Covenant of Works, that is, as a means of salvation; but once saved, the Law is ‘a Rule of Moral Conduct to Believers.’”<sup>22</sup> *The Death of Legal Hope* revealed the tension that had developed by 1770 within the Particular Baptists involving Evangelical Calvinism’s and High-Calvinism’s understanding of justification by faith alone and how this act of God’s grace is lived out in the life of a believer and to what extent the law was significant in the continued sanctification of the believer. Jonathan Bayes summed up the debate when he said,

Both parties are at one in their rejection of practical Antinomianism. However, whereas the doctrinal Antinomians conclude that sanctification is achieved by the direct work of the Spirit alone, the advocates of the third use (of the law), while acknowledging that the Spirit is the enabling cause of sanctification, also give the law a role when employed by the Spirit.<sup>23</sup>

By the 1780s, the Particular Baptist community in England and Wales were also embroiled in this controversy regarding the use of law in the believer’s life. Ryland was aware that many ministers were being attacked by “ignorant professors (though wise in their own eyes) who would revile such preachers, who think it their duty to explain the moral law, and insist upon its spirituality and excellence.”<sup>24</sup> One such attacker was

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<sup>19</sup>Golden, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>20</sup>Abraham Booth, *The Death of Legal Hope, The Life of Evangelical Obedience: An Essay on Galatians 2:19* (London: W. Button, 1794).

<sup>21</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 112–13.

<sup>22</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 113.

<sup>23</sup>Cited in Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 114.

<sup>24</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 118.

William Huntington who would become the face of the Antinomian side of this controversy; so much so, that by the 1790s Andrew Fuller dubbed Antinomianism as “Huntingtonianism.”

### **William Huntington: A Brief History**

William Huntington was born on February 2, 1745, to Barnabas Russell and Elizabeth, who was the wife of William Hunt, an employee of Russell. Huntington, whose birth name was also William Hunt, called his step-father

“a poor, quiet, honest, God-fearing man, who was shut out of his own bed for years by a wretch;” and as he speaks with sorrow rather than severity of his mother, we may assume that she was an unwilling victim to the licentiousness of a coarse and brutal tyrant.<sup>25</sup>

Huntington was baptized in November 1750 at the age of five, and registered as William Hunt, the son of William and Elizabeth Hunt.

Huntington received a rudimentary education at the Cranbrook grammar school in Kent and began working odd jobs as “a gentleman’s servant, gunmaker’s apprentice, sawyer’s pitman, coachman, hearse driver, tramp, gardener, coalheaver, and popular preacher.”<sup>26</sup> In 1762, Huntington entered into the service of the Rector of Frittenden, Henry Friend, in Kent. While serving with Friend, Huntington met and had an affair and a child with Susan Fever, a tailor’s daughter.<sup>27</sup> According to Huntington, who was still legally known as William Hunt, he was refused an opportunity to marry Fever and was ordered to make “quarterly contributions” to the family that he did not possess. In 1769, in order to conceal his identity from his past at Frittenden and the Frittenden

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<sup>25</sup>Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Huntington, S. S.* (London: Farncombe & Son, 1909), 2.

<sup>26</sup>Clare Brant, “Huntington, William (1745–1813),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed March 9, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14243>.

<sup>27</sup>Brant, “Huntington, William (1745–1813).”

Parish authorities, Huntington officially changed his name from Hunt to Huntington.<sup>28</sup> This name change, and the fact of a concealed son, haunted Huntington for many years. In 1792, Huntington responded to the accusations made by Rowland Hill (1744–1833) that concerned warning people to dismiss Huntington’s teaching based upon his past discretions. Huntington said to Hill, “Your digging into all the follies of my youth, and bring them forth at your church-meeting before an hundred people, concerning my name, child, &c. &c. which I have published to the world at large.”<sup>29</sup>

After some time had passed, Huntington received news that Fever had remarried and had died. It was at this point that Huntington, being more financially able, “honourably gave the parish thirty pounds” and received a receipt that “blotted out” the debt of Huntington in the Frittenden parish books.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, to Huntington,

This crime of mine was blotted out of the book of God’s remembrance, when the Saviour entered the Holy of Holies, with his own blood; it was blotted out of the book of my conscience almost twelve years ago, by the application of the Saviour’s atonement.<sup>31</sup>

In 1773, four years after marrying Mary Short (1742/3–1806), Huntington had a vision while pruning a pear tree. In this vision, Huntington claimed to be visited by a blood-stained Jesus Christ who brought assurance to Huntington that he was now “under the covenant love of God’s elect.”<sup>32</sup> Huntington described this conversion experience in detail in his *The Kingdom of Heaven Taken by Prayer* in which “released from the

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<sup>28</sup>The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* speaks of the significance of Huntington changing his name. It reads, “with that peculiar attitude to language evident in his religious writings, he added ‘ing’ by analogy with works for vices (such as lying and swearing), and ‘ton’ to indicate he was a vessel of the Lord.” Brant, “Huntington, William (1745–1813).”

<sup>29</sup>William Huntington, “The Moral Law Not Injured by the Everlasting Gospel,” in *The Works of the Reverend William Huntington, S.S.* (London: T. Bensley, 1811), 11:208.

<sup>30</sup>William Huntington, “The Kingdom of Heaven Taken by Prayer,” in *The Works of the Reverend William Huntington*, 1:61.

<sup>31</sup>Huntington, “The Kingdom of Heaven,” 61.

<sup>32</sup>Cited in Brant, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14243>.

bondage of his failure, he rose to heights of religious ecstasy.”<sup>33</sup> In 1776, Huntington began preaching and was ordained as a dissenting minister at an independent church in Woking, Surrey, by Torial Joss (1731–1797), a former associate of George Whitefield.<sup>34</sup> Over the next few years, Huntington’s popularity grew exponentially due to successful pastorates and a prominent itinerant ministry that saw him journeying into Plymouth, Bristol, Birmingham, Leicester, and Helmsley in Yorkshire. By 1782, Huntington began preaching regularly in London’s Margaret Street Chapel. Huntington’s successful pastorates and prominent itinerant ministry led to his followers building Providence Chapel which was crowded for every service until Huntington’s death in 1819. Describing Huntington’s preaching ministry, Oliver said, “His thirty-year ministry in the West End of London gave him a prominence which no other minister of similar views had ever enjoyed.”<sup>35</sup> In a time when many Particular Baptists were leaving the high-Calvinists views of Gill and Brine, and adhering to more moderate or Evangelical Calvinism, Huntington’s high-Calvinist beliefs attracted those who still held to Gill’s teachings. Yet, it was not high-Calvinism that brought Huntington into great controversies with Ryland’s father, John Collett, Maria de Fleury, Andrew Fuller, the young Ryland, and other evangelical Calvinistic Baptists. The controversy centered on his unorthodox teaching concerning the believer’s absolute freedom from the law’s authority as a rule of life. This “Antinomian” teaching brought great fame to Huntington, as well as placing him in the center of the great Antinomian debates of the Particular Baptists in the late eighteenth century.

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<sup>33</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 120.

<sup>34</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 120.

<sup>35</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 120.



## Huntington and the Antinomian Debates

In time, William Huntington became a major influence within the Particular Baptist circles as a popular speaker and author, even though he was not affiliated with a Particular Baptist church. While Huntington was a very popular preacher and developed a large following, it was his vitriolic debates with Particular Baptist pastors and authors that brought him notoriety, especially his ideas concerning union with Christ and the moral law as it related to the believer's life. Oliver said, "Discerning readers soon realized that while there was a measure of orthodoxy in his writings, they did not stand in the mainstream of historic Calvinism, he displayed an equally remarkable looseness when quoting from it."<sup>36</sup>

### Union with Christ/Sanctification

Sinclair Ferguson, a reformed theologian and author, speaking on the topic of sanctification, argued that Reformed theology "has always placed special emphasis on the subject."<sup>37</sup> The underlying thought of sanctification in the life of the believer, according to the Reformed teaching, especially through Calvin, was the idea of a believer entering into "union with Christ." Ferguson writes, "Few axioms are more central to Reformed teaching than the theology and practice, doctrine and lifestyle are partners joined together by God."<sup>38</sup> David Willis-Watkins said, "Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ is one of the most consistently influential features of his theology and ethics, if not the single most important teaching that animates the whole of his thought and his personal life."<sup>39</sup> According to Calvin, piety takes its root in the believer through this "mystical union"

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<sup>36</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 142.

<sup>37</sup>Sinclair Ferguson, "The Reformed View," in *Christian Spirituality*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 47.

<sup>38</sup>Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 47.

<sup>39</sup>Cited in Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality: A Practical Theological Study from our Reformed and Puritan Heritage* (Darlington, England: Evangelical, 2006), 3.

with Christ; therefore, it is through this union that Calvin views the believer's communion with Christ, as well as the participation in Christ's life. Ferguson said that the New Testament presents Christ as the "author," "captain," or "pioneer" of salvation (Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10; 12:2) in the sense that Jesus is the "author" of one's sanctification.<sup>40</sup> Ferguson's point, which Calvin could also make, is that Jesus creates sanctification in the believer through union "out of his own incarnate life, death and resurrection."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, Christ is the believer's sanctification. Like Calvin and other reformers, Huntington proclaimed this idea of the mystical union between Christ and the believer, but Huntington, because of his high-Calvinism, saw the union with Christ as being a bond formed through the "everlasting love" of the elect in Jesus Christ.

In January 1791, Maria de Fleury (1753–1794), in *Antinomianism Unmasked and Refuted*, compared moderate evangelical Calvinism with high-Calvinist Antinomianism.<sup>42</sup> In this work, she charged that "high-Calvinists" denied "vital experimental, personal union, wrought in the soul by faith."<sup>43</sup> Although de Fleury never mentions Huntington by name, Huntington took offense to de Fleury's charge as she went on to say, "Tremble, lest the God you affront, the holy Jesus, whose name you profane,

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<sup>40</sup>Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 49.

<sup>41</sup>Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 49.

<sup>42</sup>Maria de Fleury, *Antinomianism Unmasked and Refuted; and the Moral Law Proved from the Scriptures of the Old and New-Testament, to be Still in Full Force as the Rule of the Christian's Conduct* (London: T. Wilkins, 1791). Hereafter referred to as *Antinomianism Unmasked*. De Fleury wrote, "The Antinomian thinks that the moral law is not to be considered as the rule of a believer's conduct; that sorrow for sin is unnecessary; that God never chastises his people on the account of sin, or hide from them the light of his countenance, that there is no spiritual warfare or conflict between the two natures in a Christian: 'that if the influence of the Spirit is now necessary to make men believe the gospel then God has not accommodated his gospel to mankind.' He denies the possibility of a believer's grieving the Holy Spirit of God; he speaks slightly of the means of grace and scoffs at all Christian experience and every idea of heart holiness, and humble walking with God: some have even gone so far as to say, they could not sin because there is no sin in a believer." de Fleury, *Antinomianism Unmasked*, 13. This was not necessarily in reference to Huntington. The only contemporary that de Fleury mentioned in *Antinomian Unmasked* specifically was James Rely.

<sup>43</sup>William Huntington, "The Broken Cistern and the Springing Well," in *The Works of the Reverend William Huntington, S.S.*, 11:22.

should awaken his wrath, should take his glittering sword into his hand, and in his hot displeasure, hold you up as public monuments of his hatred for sin.”<sup>44</sup> Huntington’s personal affront stemmed from an “extraordinary pamphlet war”<sup>45</sup> that de Fleury and Huntington had engaged in for several years and through which de Fleury accused Huntington of being a high-Calvinist Antinomian, a charge that Huntington fervently denied. Huntington thought that de Fleury “jumbled” his doctrine concerning the law of Moses, thus linking him to the teachings of the known antinomian and universalist, James Rely.<sup>46</sup>

A few weeks after de Fleury’s pamphlet was released, Huntington addressed his thoughts concerning union with Christ in “The Broken Cistern and the Springing Well.” In *Antinomianism Unmasked*, de Fleury argued that “by faith” the believer is brought into a mystical union in Christ. With great passion, Huntington disagreed that union in Christ was brought about by faith. He held to the idea of eternal union with Christ and argued that if faith could “work a vital, experimental, personal union, in the soul, one would think that faith itself must be a divine person, because it is the efficient or working agent of vital union, which is what none but God can work.”<sup>47</sup> Huntington’s view of eternal union with Christ seemed to echo John Gill’s theological understanding of union in Christ. In his Ph.D. dissertation on John Gill, Jonathan White noted that Gill’s understanding of eternal union was not a novel idea, but it also did not align with most in the reformed tradition.<sup>48</sup> Gill argued,

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<sup>44</sup>Fleury, *Antinomianism Unmasked*, 67.

<sup>45</sup>Timothy Whelan, “‘For the Hand of a Woman, Has Levell’d the Blow:’ Maria De Fleury’s Pamphlet War with William Huntington, 1787–1791,” *Women’s Studies* 36, no. 6 (2007): 432.

<sup>46</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 136.

<sup>47</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 22.

<sup>48</sup>White, “A Theological and Historical Examination,” 75.

It is generally said that they are not united to Christ until they believe, and that the bond of union is the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on ours. I am ready to think that these phrases are taken up by divines, one from another, without a thorough consideration of them.<sup>49</sup>

Gill's understanding of union was found in the everlasting love of God showered upon his elect. Using Ephesians 1:4, Gill posited that "there is an election-union in Christ from everlasting."<sup>50</sup> Gill argued, "How they could be considered in Christ, without union to him, is, what I say, is [*sic*] hard to conceive."<sup>51</sup> His point was that Paul's teaching on "eternal election" is the picture of God's eternal love for his people and their eternal union.

Huntington made the same argument regarding eternal union with Christ. As Gill appealed to the eternal election of God as the point of union with Christ, and not faith, Huntington also appealed to the eternal election of God toward his people. According to Huntington's interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:6, it is only God's "eternal love" alone that brings the "sinner sensibly into the bond of the Covenant," not the faith of the believer.<sup>52</sup> Huntington continued,

The former (faith) is not the efficient of the latter (union), but the former (faith) is the effect of the latter (union), love and faith are both fruits of the Spirit; but, as charity is greater than either faith or hope, it is not likely the lesser should work the greater. . . . Faith works by love, and the exercises of it works or produces patience; but it never works union.<sup>53</sup>

To Huntington, there was no work of faith or love that perfects union with Christ. Union with Christ, according to Huntington, was not by faith, but by the eternal election of God. His faith did not procure for him union, but Huntington was "made nigh by the blood of

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<sup>49</sup>Cited in White, "A Theological and Historical Examination," 78.

<sup>50</sup>Cited in White, "A Theological and Historical Examination," 78.

<sup>51</sup>Cited in White, "A Theological and Historical Examination," 66.

<sup>52</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 23.

<sup>53</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 23.

Christ, before they were brought nigh by effectual calling.”<sup>54</sup> Huntington’s theology is a departure from the Reformed understanding of union with Christ through the faith of the believer. For instance, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* states, “The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.”<sup>55</sup> De Fleury well captured this tradition when she said, “This faith unites the soul to the Lord Jesus Christ; and, the moment the believer is made partaker of it, he becomes one Spirit with the Lord.”<sup>56</sup>

Huntington countered de Fleury with the notion that faith would be a very weak “uniting bond” and would not last past the death of the believer.<sup>57</sup> Further, when de Fleury spoke of faith that made Christ precious in the life of the believer, Huntington responded,

For my part, I believe that, and that only, which constrains man to hate sin, is the love of the Almighty to him; which, and only which, can produce a godly sorrow for sin, and a hatred to it. . . . When I was on the brink of black despair under the Law, I had a clear view and a strong faith in the holiness, justice, and beauty of God. The excellence of these, however, did not attract my love, but drove me to desperation and madness. I pitied myself, loved sin in my heart, and wished that there was no God at all. But, when pardoning Love operated upon my grief and sorrow, and produced repentance never to be repented of, then I loved the Lord with all my heart and soul; not because he was holy and beautiful, but because of his goodness, loving-kindness, tender mercy, pity, and compassion, to such a cursed wretch as I was.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, according to Huntington, faith is not the giver of victory over sin in the soul of the sinner. As Huntington said, “If faith can do this, I should have no objection to fall down and worship it.”<sup>59</sup> His critics would have agreed with Huntington that a sinner

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<sup>54</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 24.

<sup>55</sup>Cited in Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 736.

<sup>56</sup>Cited by Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 26.

<sup>57</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 26–27.

<sup>58</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 27.

<sup>59</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 28.

loves God because God loved him or her first. They would also agree with Huntington's view that faith is not the "giver of victory over sin." Most Particular Baptists, by the late eighteenth century, however, parted company with Huntington when they argued that union in Christ was realized in the elect at the point of faith.

By his union in Christ, Huntington believed he had overcome the world/sin in Christ and that this same Christ made him a conqueror with power over the enemy.<sup>60</sup> This conquering union of Christ, made effective by God's pardoning love, brought Huntington into a state of holiness: "For my part, I find no other way of obtaining holiness, either in heart or life, but by enjoying union and communion with Christ."<sup>61</sup> Therefore, for Huntington, a holy life was obtained through union with Christ and not "by fervent prayer in private, humble confession, reading, meditating, and diligence in the use of means."<sup>62</sup> Huntington believed that de Fleury forced upon her readers this idea of sanctification as being a progressive action. In relation to de Fleury's thoughts on holiness, he said that "it is all forced: there is no one part of it that flows from a savoury, unctuous experience in the heart; nor yet from the power, influence, or enjoyment, of the Spirit upon the soul."<sup>63</sup> De Fleury argued that sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit within the soul of the believer as "it appears from the word of God."<sup>64</sup> Huntington countered, "The elect, as considered in Christ (union), were sanctified from eternity in the purpose of God; and their sanctification was held forth in the promise of God, and in their covenant head they were sanctified, when he offered up himself."<sup>65</sup> Robert Oliver rightly described

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<sup>60</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 28.

<sup>61</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 30.

<sup>62</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 30.

<sup>63</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 31.

<sup>64</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 31.

<sup>65</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 32.

Huntington's views on eternal sanctification in the "purpose of God," as being "passive" in nature.<sup>66</sup> For Huntington, there was no further working of the Holy Spirit personally sanctifying the believer through the means of grace: "As to sanctification which is called a personal thing, wrought upon the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, I know nothing of . . ." <sup>67</sup> Huntington believed that when he came into eternal union with Christ, there was no need for personal spiritual growth; therefore "his passive doctrine of sanctification . . . had no room for the idea of progressive sanctification."<sup>68</sup> This belief was born out of his ideas concerning eternal union with Christ.

In Huntington's "The Moral Law," addressed to Rowland Hill, Huntington dealt with the idea of sanctification:

Sanctification, as it respects us, is, in the highest sense, God's act of predestinating us to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ, His choosing us in him, appointing our redemption by him, and our meetness for glory by the Spirit through him: all which was complete.<sup>69</sup>

Huntington's thoughts of sanctification begin in the book of Genesis when God appointed the seventh day to be a day of rest. God sanctified this day of rest to himself and appropriated this day for his service.<sup>70</sup> Huntington believed that this day of rest "prefigured" the day when God's elect would rest from "impious rebellion and war with his Maker, from legal labour for life, and from the intolerable burden of sin; as well as an eternal rest from the indwelling of sin in heaven."<sup>71</sup> Therefore, the elect were eternally sanctified in union with Christ, and by the death of Christ, the elect were "for ever

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<sup>66</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 127.

<sup>67</sup>Huntington, "The Broken Cistern," 33.

<sup>68</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 127.

<sup>69</sup>Huntington, "The Moral Law," 232.

<sup>70</sup>Huntington, "The Moral Law," 230.

<sup>71</sup>Huntington, "The Moral Law," 230.

perfected.” As Huntington interpreted 1 Thessalonians 4:4, the

highly-favoured soul should live, walk, and act, becoming an object of God’s choice, the purchase of a Saviour’s blood, and as a living temple of the Holy Ghost, redeemed from among men, set apart by the Spirit, and ordained for heaven, is called sanctification.<sup>72</sup>

As for the idea of a continuing, progressive sanctification, Huntington said, “I know no more what they mean by it, than they do who preach it.”<sup>73</sup> Addressing Caleb Evans

(1737–1791) in “The Broken Cistern,” Huntington said,

As to sanctification being a progressive work, it is best to consent to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, lest we set poor weak believers to inquiring how long this progressive work is to be on the wheels, what part of it is wrought, what measure of it is required, and how much remains to be done: and like Sarah with her bondwoman, they begin to forward the business by the works of the flesh, instead of lying passive to be worked on. “He that believeth shall not make haste,’ but he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.”<sup>74</sup>

Since believers have an eternal union with Christ in their lives, Huntington viewed the act of sanctification as a completed task. He urged the elect to lay “passively” before God without any effort on their part to progressively be sanctified:

I would not exchange what Christ has done for my soul, and by the Spirit wrought in me, and done by me, for all the sanctification of this book; nor for all the personal holiness, fruitfulness, and good works, of five hundred such Authors, put them all together.<sup>75</sup>

For Huntington, the eternal love and predestining actions of God are the source of a believer’s obedience in life, and such obedience is not found in the Christian’s liability to be obedient to the commandments of Moses: “Good works do not spring from the will of God’s commandments, but from his will of purpose: ‘created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 233.

<sup>73</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 233.

<sup>74</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 33.

<sup>75</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 33.

<sup>76</sup>William Huntington, “A Letter to the Rev. Caleb Evans, M. A.,” in *The Works of the*



According to Huntington, since God entered into union with the elect from eternity past, and in this union there is Christ's holiness, righteousness, and sanctification, there is no reason for the written law to further sanctify Christ's elect. These thoughts of Huntington stemmed from his high-Calvinist beliefs in eternal justification, and like many, Huntington did not separate out from this belief his ideas of sanctification.<sup>77</sup> Because of this, many labeled Huntington an Antinomian. In this, they were drawing upon an older tradition of defining Antinomianism. For example, Thomas Watson (1620–1686) said,

The Antinomians erroneously hold that we are justified from Eternity. This Doctrine is a Key which opens the Door to all Licentiousness; what sins do they care they commit, so long as they hold they are *ab Aeterno*, justified whether they repent or no.<sup>78</sup>

Also, Francis Turretin (1623–1687), speaking of eternal justification, agreed that justification is decreed by God in eternity, but unlike Huntington, Turretin rejected the idea that God's eternal decree of justification of his elect took place outside of the point-in-time of faith by the believer: "The decree of justification is one thing; justification itself another—as the will to save and sanctify is one thing; salvation and sanctification itself another."<sup>79</sup> The foundation of Huntington's teaching concerning being "in Christ," is that there is a perfect union; not that Huntington believed in perfectionism, but Huntington, through this eternal union with Christ, was out of the bonds of the law. As he

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*Reverend William Huntington*, 10:86.

<sup>77</sup>Francis Turretin (1623–1687) defined eternal justification as "those who 'maintain that [justification] is an imminent act in God which was prepared from eternity.' This differs from those who either regard justification as 'transient, terminating in us and which takes place only in them and in this life,' or those 'who hold that it is postponed to the last and decretory day' at the 'public tribunal of Christ.'" Cited in Robert J. McKelvey, "The Error and Pillar of Antinomianism: Eternal Justification," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Oakville, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 224.

<sup>78</sup>McKelvey, "The Error and Pillar of Antinomianism," 224.

<sup>79</sup>McKelvey, "The Error and Pillar of Antinomianism," 225.

said, sarcastically, “Make the law your only rule of life; read it, keep your eyes upon it, and live by it; and I will pray that I will be kept dead to the law, and alive unto God.”<sup>80</sup>

### **The Moral Law**

The second idea of distinction in the theology of Huntington, and perhaps the most alienating doctrine that he taught, dealt with his understanding of the law, particularly the moral law as it related to the believer. In his *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, Oliver noted, “Evangelical Christians have agreed that justification brings about a complete deliverance from the condemnation of the law and establishes a new relationship with God, which is not determined nor controlled by the moral law.”<sup>81</sup> Huntington would have agreed that the moral law did not control justification, however, he believed and taught further that the moral law of Moses was binding only upon the unbeliever; it was not binding as the rule of life for the elect in Christ: “Thus, all the non-elect are under the law to Christ. But the believer is under grace to Christ: it is the law of the spirit of life in Christ that makes the believer free from the law of death engraved on tables of stone.”<sup>82</sup> Huntington’s theology emphasized clearly that “the Law of Moses is not the Saint’s rule of life.”<sup>83</sup> De Fleury described this thought of Huntington’s as the “grand Antinomian tenet.”<sup>84</sup> Huntington’s rejection of the moral law as a rule of life is the foundation of the Antinomian debates and separated him from his fellow dissenters, and specifically the English Particular Baptists.

In the *1689 Confession*, Particular Baptists declared that, for believers, the

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<sup>80</sup>William Huntington, “The Rule and the Riddle,” in *The Works of the Reverend William Huntington*, 8:151.

<sup>81</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 113.

<sup>82</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 66.

<sup>83</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 287.

<sup>84</sup>Cited in Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 34–35.

moral law represented the “rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty and directs and binds them to walk accordingly.”<sup>85</sup> Even John Gill, who held similar beliefs as Huntington concerning union with Christ, said,

[The Law] is of use to saints and true believers in Christ . . . to be a rule of life and conversation to them; not a rule to obtain life by; but to live according to; to guide their feet, to direct their steps, and to preserve them from going into bye and crooked paths.<sup>86</sup>

Oliver said about Gill,

Gill has been accused of doctrinal Antinomianism, but it is evident that his teaching on the believer’s duty to keep the moral law is in harmony with both the mainstream Puritanism of the seventeenth century and the evangelical Calvinism of men like Booth in the late eighteenth century.<sup>87</sup>

Ryland, speaking about Antinomians, said,

The eminent divines, who verged to an extreme respecting the obligation of sinners to repent and believe the gospel, would have reprobated this doctrine, as tending to the greatest licentiousness. Dr. Gill, Mr. Brine, Mr. Toplady, &c. utterly condemned so vile a sentiment.<sup>88</sup>

Within the circles of the Particular Baptist, Antinomians were considered heretics and not worthy of fellowship. This is evident in Ryland’s referencing of the Modern Question controversy, which revealed that there is still fellowship among the competing thoughts of duty of the unbeliever and the gospel call. Ryland clearly distanced himself and refused fellowship to any who would deny “the law of God as rule of conduct to believers. . . . The apostolic axiom, ‘where there is no law there is no transgression,’ justly leads us to conclude, that they who are below or above law have no guilt, and need no Saviour.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Cited in Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 115.

<sup>86</sup>Cited in Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 112.

<sup>87</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 116.

<sup>88</sup>Robert Hall, *Help to Zion's Travelers: Being an Attempt to Remove Various Stumbling Blocks out of the Way, Relating to Doctrinal, Experimental and Practical Religion* (Boston: Lincoln, Edmands, & Co., 1833), x.

<sup>89</sup>Hall, *Help to Zion's Travellers*, xi.

As stated previously, Huntington did not accept that his teaching was Antinomian, and in fact, Huntington believed that his enemies were the real Antinomians,<sup>90</sup> and those who disagreed with him were “without God,”<sup>91</sup> because his beliefs were truly “the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>92</sup>

In “The Broken Cistern,” Huntington described his foundational understanding of the moral law: “I believe the law to be the only rule of righteousness, and life too, to every one that is under it;”<sup>93</sup> but for Huntington the elect are never under the law of Moses, since there is no dual aspect of the law. Utilizing Paul’s words in Romans 3:19,<sup>94</sup> Huntington wrote, “We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.”<sup>95</sup> If one is under the law, then one is under the curse of the law. He said, “I conclude, the law is the saint’s first husband and schoolmaster, and it is the bondservant’s only rule.”<sup>96</sup> Therefore, the law can be the “only rule of righteousness,” but only for the non-believer, because the non-believer is still under the law. Huntington said, “The master’s commanding will is the bondservant’s rule; it is the creditor’s handwriting, and the debtor’s account book.”<sup>97</sup>

An important aspect of Huntington’s understanding of the law is the fact that, for the most part, when he is dealing with the unbeliever, he speaks specifically about the

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<sup>90</sup>Huntington, “The Rule and the Riddle,” 48.

<sup>91</sup>Huntington, “The Rule and the Riddle,” 48.

<sup>92</sup>Huntington, “The Rule and the Riddle,” 48.

<sup>93</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 38.

<sup>94</sup>Huntington cited Rom 3:19, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

<sup>95</sup>Huntington, “The Rule and the Riddle,” 216.

<sup>96</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 313.

<sup>97</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 287.

moral law of Moses. Huntington, speaking of the writings of Paul, said,

It is strange that the believer is not commanded to look to Moses the lawgiver, and to the bondwoman (Hagar) that is under the law, instead of looking to Abraham our father, and to Sarah that bare us, whom God called alone, and blessed and increased.<sup>98</sup>

Huntington's point is to make his reader aware of the fact that Abraham received his promised blessing four hundred and thirty years before the law, or before "our only rule of life was given."<sup>99</sup> The question that was asked by Huntington was what law or rule did Abraham, Abel, Enoch, and Noah follow? His answer was the "law of faith."<sup>100</sup> Paul said, "By faith Abraham, when he was called—went out not knowing whither he went."<sup>101</sup> The everlasting rule of life for the elect, including all the spiritual children of Abraham, is faith. Huntington said, "But if the letter of the law be the only rule that the believer is to walk and live by, then he walks by sight, not by faith."<sup>102</sup> "Thus faith appears to be the believer's rule of life, according to the will of God in Christ Jesus; and the letter of the law is the bond-children's rule of life; he that doth these things shall live in them."<sup>103</sup> Huntington's argument was that he does not make void the law of God, for the law of God is still the authority over the non-elect; but for the elect, Huntington believed he had "sufficiently proved that Paul's rule of life and walk was faith" and not the law of Moses.<sup>104</sup>

While Huntington's detractors would agree that the elect is to "walk by faith,"

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<sup>98</sup>Huntington, "The Rule and the Riddle," 54.

<sup>99</sup>Huntington, "The Rule and the Riddle," 55.

<sup>100</sup>Huntington, "The Rule and the Riddle," 55.

<sup>101</sup>Cited in Huntington, "The Rule and the Riddle," 55.

<sup>102</sup>Huntington, "The Rule and the Riddle," 55.

<sup>103</sup>Huntington, "The Rule and the Riddle," 58.

<sup>104</sup>Huntington, "The Rule and the Riddle," 59.

they could not concur with Huntington when he “insisted that the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ had no connection with the law.”<sup>105</sup> Even when Huntington was confronted with seemingly contrasting statements by Jesus, “If you love me, keep my commandments,” he responded “When Christ mentions those words, my commandments, he never once means, in all the four evangelists, the moral law; he never puts the word, my, to that.”<sup>106</sup> Huntington did not deny the words of Christ. He believed that Christ’s commandments were the words of eternal life, while the “killing letter engravened on stones,” the moral law, differed from the commands of Christ.<sup>107</sup> Huntington clearly separated out the gospel and law, as it pertained to the elect. This separation followed his theological views concerning Jesus’ teachings on the mount found in Matthew 5.

**Huntington and the Sermon on the Mount.** In “The Moral Law,” Huntington defended his thoughts concerning the purpose of the law by addressing Jesus’ teaching on the mount in Matthew 5. In Huntington’s opening paragraph, he made reference to Matthew 5 as being used against him on at least three different occasions. As already noted, one such occasion was by Rowland Hill. Huntington addressed Hill by saying,

Having been repeatedly informed of the many public cautions and warnings that you have given to various congregations against me and my doctrine, which have all been drawn from the fifth chapter of Matthew’s gospel; I have therefore presumed to shew mine opinion of every text in that chapter which you have either opened, brought forth, or mentioned: and, having published them.<sup>108</sup>

Huntington accused Hill of mangling the text in order to “knock your humble servant about the head.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 124.

<sup>106</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 381.

<sup>107</sup>Huntington, “The Broken Cistern,” 382.

<sup>108</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 207.

<sup>109</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 235.

Huntington began his teaching on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount by noting that Jesus ascended a "certain mountain." In answering his critics, Huntington laid out his interpretation of Jesus' words "think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."<sup>110</sup> According to Huntington, Jesus' words must be prefaced by the "allusion" of Jesus ascending the mountain to teach. This allusion was a reference to the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, found in Deuteronomy 12 about which Moses is instructing the Israelites concerning their covenant with God.

Huntington said,

In allusion to Gerizim, the Saviour ascends this mount; and, having got his little church with him, which he had just founded, and which church is to stand to the world's end, he opens his mouth, and pronounces the blessings of the everlasting gospel upon them.<sup>111</sup>

In Deuteronomy 12, God commanded that his covenant people prepare two stones, whitewashed with the Mosaic Law written on the stones and set up on Mount Ebal (v. 4). Peter Craigie, former religious studies professor, described this scene in his commentary on Deuteronomy:

Six of the tribes would stand on the slopes of Mount Gerizim and six would stand on the slopes of Mount Ebal; they would represent respectively the blessing that followed upon obedience of the law and the cursing that was subsequent to the disobedience of the law.<sup>112</sup>

Huntington said, "The blessing was to be put on Mount Gerizim, which represented Mount Zion; and the curse was to be put upon Mount Ebal, which represented Mount Sanai."<sup>113</sup> For Huntington, Ebal displayed the "bond children, who are in the flesh, collected together, and standing fast in the old Adam, under the yoke of Moses; which, at

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<sup>110</sup>Matt 5:17, as printed by Huntington, "The Moral Law," 235.

<sup>111</sup>Huntington, "The Moral Law," 237.

<sup>112</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 330.

<sup>113</sup>Huntington, "The Moral Law," 236.

last, will be all dispersed, and carried away as with a flood.”<sup>114</sup> Therefore, Huntington’s reference to Ebal in comparison with Sanai was an equation that Ebal was the place of the curse and the home of the Mosaic Law. As for those on Mount Gerizim, Huntington described them as “fitly” representing “the elect in union with the Savior.”<sup>115</sup> Those on Mount Gerazim were the family of the New Adam who lived on Mount Zion, while those on Mount Sanai, represented the old Adam under the curse of the law.

A key aspect to Huntington’s beliefs concerning Gerizim and Ebal centered upon his understanding of the separation of the two mountains. Craigie, commenting on Deuteronomy 27, writes,

The ark, together with the Levitical priests who attended it, would be set in the middle of the valley, with the two groups of tribes on either side of it. Although the details of the ceremony are no longer certain, the symbolism seems fairly clear. The ark, containing the covenant tablets, was in the middle. The people were either obedient to the law of the covenant or disobedient; there was no half-way house.<sup>116</sup>

For Huntington, one was either on Mount Gerizim, the elect of God in union with Christ, free from the curse of the law, or on Mount Ebal, under the curse and obligated to the law; there was nothing in between, and the law would never be transferred from the mount of curse to the mount of Zion. Therefore, for Huntington, the curse of the law could never jump from Ebal onto the elect at Gerizim; if so, the elect would be under the bondage of the curse once more. In making this point, Huntington said,

And this I do insist upon, that bondage, hardness of heart, revealed wrath, enmity against God, desperation, curses, hell and damnation, are the best things that men can fetch from the killing letter of the law of Moses; whether the man be a believer or an infidel it matters not. The law will pursue the believer if he goes there, Christ alone is his refuge; it will entangle the believer, and yoke him again if he looks for help there.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 237.

<sup>115</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 237.

<sup>116</sup>Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 330–31.

<sup>117</sup>Huntington, “The Rule and the Riddle,” 103.



As Huntington continued teaching through Matthew 5, he connected Mount Gerizim with Jesus ascending the mount in order to bless his new church: “He (Jesus) opens his mouth, and pronounces the blessings of the everlasting gospel upon them: and to let us know that his little church was Mount Zion, he calls it a city set on a hill that cannot be hid.”<sup>118</sup> Therefore, the Beatitudes of Jesus represent his “execution” of the will of the Father to pronounce blessing upon the church, ushering in a new dispensation to “shake” the elect out from under the Mosaic Law.<sup>119</sup>

Also, as there are two mountains, one for blessing and one for cursing, Huntington believed there were two audiences on the mount with Jesus. The first is the elect, who Jesus blessed with the Beatitude proclamation, calling them the “the light of the world, and the salt of the earth,” and second, the non-elect, that Jesus labeled as “Scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites.”<sup>120</sup> Huntington’s thought was that when Jesus was preaching the Beatitudes he was blessing his church only: “All that has been said is applicable to the children of God, and to none else.”<sup>121</sup> Now, as for Jesus’ words, “think not that I am come to destroy the law,” Huntington believed that Jesus, at this point, began to teach the non-elect in the audience who would have expected to hear about the doctrines of the law. For Huntington, Jesus was explaining that he did not come to set aside the law or to abolish the law because “mine elect would have no schoolmaster, the bond servant would have not rule, the sinner no transgression, the judge no sentence, and the ungodly no damnation.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, the only reason for the law in the life of the elect is so the elect can learn of the Father and desire the yoke of Christ. As for the non-

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<sup>118</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 237.

<sup>119</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 237–38.

<sup>120</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 265.

<sup>121</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 265.

<sup>122</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 266.

elect, the use of the law is the “only and eternal rule of life and righteousness, to all the reprobate, to every bond child, vain jangler, proud doer, self-righteous, self-sufficient, and independent Pharisee.” Therefore, Huntington taught that the law will never be voided because Christ would never “destroy the condemning authority, or to mitigate the rigour, of the law.”<sup>123</sup>

### **Huntington and Ryland**

By 1791, Huntington had managed to make himself *persona non grata* to most English Particular Baptist pastors, and had engaged in many discordant controversies with a variety of ministers. In a letter to Joss, Huntington admonished him for preaching against Huntington’s thoughts concerning the law and Antinomianism, and warned Joss of those who had opposed him:

My good friend knows that many have laboured long and hard in reproaching me. But what have they gained by it. . . . Mr. Evans went on till God struck him down and then went mad and last [God] sent him to his grave . . . and as for Maria and John Ryland, they are no more.<sup>124</sup>

Ryland commented on Huntington’s bravado, “Had it pleased God to remove me from this world at any period between the year 1791 and the death of this man, no doubt he would have added my name to the list of those who were struck dead for not receiving him.”<sup>125</sup> Ryland’s and Huntington’s theological disputes, which are discussed in the next chapter, as well as Ryland theology concerning sanctification, were the foundation of many sermons and letters written by Ryland in his offense against antinomianism within the Particular Baptist.

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<sup>123</sup>Huntington, “The Moral Law,” 268.

<sup>124</sup>William Huntington, “A Letter to the Rev. Torial Joss,” in *The Works of the Rev. William Huntington, S.S.*, 12:303–4.

<sup>125</sup>John Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 40.

## CHAPTER 4

### A MOTIVATED SPIRITUALITY

In 1787, the same year Ryland preached his great treatise against Antinomianism, “The Law Not against the Promises of God,” he received a letter from John Newton concerning William Huntington. Newton wrote, “I believe the preacher you mention has been troublesome enough in many places. And I do not wish you his company at Northampton. But, if he should make a visit there, you need not fear him.”<sup>1</sup> Grant Gordon, in his commentary on this letter from Newton, is convinced that the “preacher” referenced by Newton is Huntington.<sup>2</sup> Since Newton was responding to a letter from Ryland, it is obvious that the presence of Huntington in the Northampton area was causing quite a stir in College Lane Church and bringing anxious moments to Ryland and the church. The “College Lane Minute Book” recorded a decrease in membership “from 206 in 1782 to 183 in 1792.”<sup>3</sup> Gordon has argued that this decrease in membership was partly due to Ryland’s conflict with Huntington concerning Antinomianism, which led to the excommunication of John Adams and his family.<sup>4</sup> Newton reminded Ryland that “such men [Huntington] are among the various kinds of fans, which the Lord

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<sup>1</sup>Grant Gordon, *Wise Counsel: John Newton’s Letters to John Ryland, Jr.* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 195.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 195. See Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Oxfordshire, England: Baptist Historical Society for the Strict Baptist Historical Society, 2001), 6–29.

<sup>3</sup>Grant Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825),” in *The British Particular Baptists: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2000), 2:82.

<sup>4</sup>Gordon, “John Ryland, Jr.,” 82.

employs to winnow the wheat, and to separate the chaff.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1791, Huntington responded to the excommunication of the Adams’ family with his *Excommunication and the Duty of All Men to Believe, Weighed in the Balance*. This pamphlet brought Ryland and Huntington into a personal debate over the modern question and involved Huntington’s outlining what he believed Ryland to hold regarding the law and the gospel. As discussed in chapter 2, the accusation from several members of Ryland’s College Lane Church, as well as Huntington, was that Ryland had changed his theological teaching concerning the law and the gospel from that of Ryland, Sr., and other high-Calvinists of the Particular Baptists after he accepted the position of pastor of College Lane. George Ella has described Adams as looking on in “horror as he saw his pastor [Ryland] departing from the old paths and using all his energies to lead and cajole his flock into following him along bitter waters and into swampy pastures.”<sup>6</sup> In a poem, Adams wrote of Ryland, “Calvin the champion’s laid aside, free grace is trodden down, and now we see Arminian pride in pulpits wear the crown . . . the comforts of the gospel now they are afraid to name, but urge the duties of the law with ardent love and flame.”<sup>7</sup> Adams accused Ryland of rejecting the teachings of Calvin concerning the use of the law and being “influenced by Fuller” several years after Adams joined the church, altering the “covenantal promises” made by Ryland to Adams, when Ryland was called to be co-pastor of College Lane. Huntington chided Ryland when he said,

But pray, sir [Ryland], did you, at your ordination, confess, or make it the chief article of your confession before the church, that you should set the law of Moses before every member of Christ, as his only rule of life and conduct? And that you should enforce the everlasting gospel as the only rule of duty for the unconverted?<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 195.

<sup>6</sup>George M. Ella, *Weighed in the Balance: John Ryland versus William Huntington or Excommunicating the Sheep in Order to Feed the Goats* (East Sussex, England: Huntington, 1998), 27–28.

<sup>7</sup>Ella, *Weighed in the Balance*, 29.

<sup>8</sup>William Huntington, “Excommunication and the Duty for all Men to Believe, Weighed the

Huntington believed that Ryland was a false teacher leading his church back under the curse of the law by preaching the law of Moses as a rule of life to the church. Michael Haykin noted,

Though he [Huntington] was not a Baptist, numerous Baptists imbibed his argument that the moral law should not be considered as a pattern for the Christian life and that any, like Ryland, who did regard it as such were simply nothing more than “Pharisees” and guilty of “undervaluing Christ’s imputed righteousness.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Huntington, Ryland was departing from the “household of faith,” and thus he concluded: “If he [Ryland] departs from the faith, the faithful should depart from him.”<sup>10</sup>

In the letter of excommunication sent to Adams from College Lane, the church claimed that Adams had had ten years to examine Ryland before the church called him to be co-pastor, and Adams “appeared at that time to unite in our unanimous choice.”<sup>11</sup> The church further defended Ryland by saying, “Nor do we know of any alteration of his sentiments that has taken place since that time.”<sup>12</sup> In opposition, Huntington defended Adams: “Mr. Ryland was the first aggressor; he cast off his first confession, and then wanted Mr. Adams to cast off his first faith. He is the first man that ever found out that the gospel is a rule for the unconverted, and the law the only rule for the saint.”<sup>13</sup> In light of the confrontation between Huntington and Ryland, and Huntington’s attack on Ryland’s spirituality, this chapter briefly explores Ryland’s understanding of Calvinism and determines a timeline of his theological shift from high-Calvinism to Evangelical

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Balance,” in *The Works of the Reverend William Huntington, S. S.* (London: T. Bensley, 1811), 11:141.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Haykin, “He Went about Doing Good: Eighteenth-Century Particular Baptists on the Necessity of Good Works,” *American Theological Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (2010): 59.

<sup>10</sup>Huntington, “Excommunication,” 141.

<sup>11</sup>Ella, *Weighed in the Balance*, 38–39.

<sup>12</sup>Ella, *Weighed in the Balance*, 39.

<sup>13</sup>Huntington, “Excommunication,” 146.

Calvinism. It also delves into Ryland's spirituality concerning the law and the gospel and how this greatly affected Ryland as a pastor and in his own personal spirituality.

### **Ryland's Calvinism: Evangelical**

The foundation of Ryland's theology derived from the teachings of the American pastor and writer, Jonathan Edwards. As mentioned in chapter 2, the earliest traces of Ryland's theological shift toward evangelical Calvinism came from his exposure to Edwards. In 1773, Ryland wrote on the inside cover of Samuel Hopkins' (1721–1803) biography *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Jonathan Edwards*, “an inestimable one” containing “the life of the greatest, humblest and holiest of uninspired men.”<sup>14</sup> He also wrote that Edwards' book, *An Account of the Life of David Brainerd*, was one of his most prized possessions.<sup>15</sup> Champion argued that “theologically Jonathan Edwards represented the revitalization of Calvinism under the new conditions” that were influenced by the philosophies of John Locke and the Great Awakening that took place in his Northampton, Massachusetts, church in 1734.<sup>16</sup> What he meant by this was that Edwards interpreted Calvinistic doctrines in light of the experiences of the Great Awakening and the intellectual challenges of the Enlightenment. This shift in Edwards' understanding of Calvinism justified his practice of “preaching to the unconverted in the expectation of a response and for the validity of a warm and personal type of piety which avoided any superficial sentimentality by its acceptance of moral obligations.”<sup>17</sup> This theological teaching by Edwards profoundly influenced young Ryland. In 1774, during a

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<sup>14</sup>L. G. Champion, “The Theology of John Ryland: Its Sources and Influences,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1979): 18.

<sup>15</sup>Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 18.

<sup>16</sup>Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 19.

<sup>17</sup>Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 19.

time of increase at the church in Northampton, Ryland wrote to Newton expressing his desire for Newton to read the writings of Edwards. In his return letter, Newton referenced his church being in decline and requested Ryland to send him the works of Edwards. Newton said, “I should be glad of a copy of Halyburton’s<sup>18</sup> sermons, and Edwards’s book you speak of, if you can procure them for me I will pay and thank you.”<sup>19</sup> The timeline of this exchange between Newton and Ryland is important to understand because when those parishioners in the College Lane Church, who were influenced by Huntington, claimed that Ryland changed his position after accepting the call as co-pastor at College Lane, the evidence rather reveals that Ryland changed from his views around 1773, long before he was called as co-pastor at College Lane in 1781.

### **A Moral Inability**

Ryland’s theological shift in the mid-1770s, however, did not dislodge Ryland from his Calvinistic foundation and his emphasis on the sovereignty of God in salvation through divine grace. Leonard Champion said, “Ryland always maintained that man’s salvation is entirely the work of God.”<sup>20</sup> In 1780, one year before accepting the position of co-pastor at College Lane, Ryland preached at Kettering, Northamptonshire, to a gathering of ministers on *God’s Experimental Probation of Intelligent Agents*. Ryland began by stressing the absolute sovereignty of God in his creation of “which he now governs with resistless sway, according to his own good pleasure.”<sup>21</sup> God’s sovereignty,

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<sup>18</sup>Thomas Halyburton (1674–1712) was a Scottish Theologian and Professor of Divinity at St. Leonard’s College in St. Andrews. Halyburton was committed to Reformed theology and licensed to preach in the Church of Scotland by Queen Anne. See Thomas Halyburton and Robert Burns, *The Works of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton: with an Essay on His Life and Writings* (London: T. Begg, 1837).

<sup>19</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 63.

<sup>20</sup>Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 19.

<sup>21</sup>John Ryland, *God’s Experimental Probation of Intelligent Agents. A Sermon Preached at a Meeting of Ministers, at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, October 3, 1780* (Northampton, England: Thomas Dicey, 1780), 4.

according to Ryland, is found in God's "honour, holiness, and justice" to receive any "sinner whatsoever that shall cordially fall in with" the gospel, and "bestow upon him eternal salvation."<sup>22</sup> Ryland even proclaimed to the sinner that if they would return to God, through Christ, God would receive them into his salvation.<sup>23</sup> Yet, Ryland continually emphasized that the "sovereignty of the Spirit's work in salvation cannot be employed as an excuse by impenitent sinners to justify their refusal to respond to the gospel."<sup>24</sup> He recognized that God continually sends the gospel to the sinner, and that the sinner is morally responsible to respond positively to the gospel call, but Ryland also clearly taught that the sinner is morally unable to choose that which is "spiritually good:" "Neither judgments nor mercies, threatenings nor invitations, can prevail with him to abandon his idols, without a divine energy attending [*sic*] them, without an entire renovation of the temper of his mind by the Spirit of God."<sup>25</sup> Ryland's understanding of moral inability stemmed from his reading of Edwards' *Freedom of the Will*. Edwards believed that God and Jesus were naturally praiseworthy by all men "even though their characters were such that they could do only what was best."<sup>26</sup> He said,

We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing, when we can't do it if we will, because what is most commonly called nature don't allow of it, or because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will; either in the faculty of understanding, constitution of body, or external objects. Moral inability consists not in any of these things; but either in the want of inclination; or the strength of the contrary inclination or the want of sufficient motives in view, to induce and excite the act of the will, or the strength of the apparent motives to the contrary. Or both

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<sup>22</sup>Ryland, *God's Experimental Probation*, 30.

<sup>23</sup>Ryland, *God's Experimental Probation*, 30.

<sup>24</sup>Michael Haykin, "The Sum of All Good: John Ryland, Jr., and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Churchman* 103, no. 4 (1989): 235.

<sup>25</sup>Ryland, *God's Experimental Probation*, 31.

<sup>26</sup>George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 444.



these may be resolved into one; and it may be said in one word, that moral inability consists in the opposition or want of inclination.<sup>27</sup>

Edwards' point is that if there is a desire to love God and a will to love God, but there is a natural inability to perform that desire, then one is not responsible for the non-performance. On the other hand, if there is a natural ability or an unhindered ability to perform that desire, then there is an obligation or duty to love God. If one has a natural ability to love God and this ability is not performed, then the ability is not external, but internal. Therefore, if one does not love God, yet has the natural ability to love God, then the issue becomes an internal or moral inability to love God. In other words, Edwards understood that the natural duty of all men was to love God, even if they morally would not. This belief, for Ryland, was a clear break from the teachings of many high-Calvinists, including Huntington, who believed that since mankind, because of sin and separation from God, cannot exercise saving faith apart from God, the unbeliever is under no obligation to believe until God gives them faith. Ryland countered,

The operations of the Holy Spirit are neither the Source nor the Measure of Duty, though they are the undoubted Cause of a Sinner's Compliance with Duty. For total depravity, or the entire Absence of supreme Love to God, is no justifiable excuse, nor can it free us from the obligation to be wholly and exclusively devoted to this service.<sup>28</sup>

Ryland's adherence to Edwards' assessment that mankind possessed the natural ability to repent and believe the gospel, but lacked the moral ability to comply, further bolstered Ryland's belief in the Holy Spirit's sovereignty in salvation. "Unless the very heart be changed by efficacious grace," said Ryland, "the more God tries men by

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<sup>27</sup>Cited in C. Samuel Storms, "Jonathan Edwards on the Freedom of the Will," *Trinity Journal*, n.s., 3, no. 2 (1982): 145. Storms offers a helpful illustration of Edwards' beliefs concerning natural ability and moral inability: "If it is placed upon man as a duty from God to give money to the poor, and yet, through no fault of his own, he has no money to give, he is not blameworthy for not giving. He labors under a natural inability. But if he has the money and does not want to give, he labors under a moral inability (a lack of the needed disposition and inclination of heart) and thus is to be blamed" (146).

<sup>28</sup>Cited in Haykin, "Sum of All Good," 236.

convictions the more it's [*sic*] deceit and wickedness will appear."<sup>29</sup> Ryland summed up his understanding of divine election by stating, "God should chuse [*sic*] whom he pleases to make them the subjects of his special grace."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, in this 1780 sermon Ryland "allows for an appeal to be made to sinners but any response made will be due to 'efficacious grace.'"<sup>31</sup>

In Huntington's response to the excommunication of Adams from College Lane, he sarcastically addressed Ryland's "curious quibble, and nice distinction" between natural and moral inability. Like Edwards, Ryland interpreted his Calvinism in line with the commands of God to proclaim the gospel to the sinner and the eternal law of all creation to love God (which is discussed later). Huntington said about the unconverted, "man is not able, he has not ability, or his natural inability is such, that he cannot, without the Spirit of God, be obedient to Mr. Ryland's evangelical rule of duty."<sup>32</sup> Ryland's Calvinism would agree with Huntington in the moral inability of the sinner to respond to the gospel, but Ryland, because he believed in the natural ability of mankind, stressed in his sermons "the obligation upon believers of making the gospel known to all mankind."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, mankind always has a natural ability and a moral obligation to love God even if they have a moral inability to love God.

### **Duty of the Unbeliever**

In *Christ Manifested and Satan Frustrated*, preached on Christmas Day 1781, Ryland demonstrated his belief in the gospel proclamation to sinners by telling his

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<sup>29</sup>Ryland, *God's Experimental Probation*, 32.

<sup>30</sup>Ryland, *God's Experimental Probation*, 36.

<sup>31</sup>Champion, "Theology of John Ryland," 20.

<sup>32</sup>Cited in Ella, *Weighed in the Balance*, 62.

<sup>33</sup>Champion, "Theology of John Ryland," 20.

hearers of the works of Satan and concluded by describing the atoning work of Christ for sinners: “Though you should account yourselves the very chief of sinners, that is no objection to your coming to Christ.”<sup>34</sup> Ryland proclaimed that a sinner’s “sin, guilt, and misery” are not enough that Christ would not receive the sinner to salvation. He reminded them of Jesus’ words that if they come to Christ, he will not cast them away. This proclamation of the gospel to sinners, however, did not change Ryland’s understanding of the sovereignty of God in salvation; it expanded his understanding by including the responsibility of preaching the gospel to sinners: “Therefore those who know the efficacious grace of God in Christ must make every exertion to confront all men with the gospel, calling upon them to recognize what they owe to God and to yield themselves in faith.”<sup>35</sup>

In 1788, two years after accepting the call to become the pastor of College Lane, Ryland preached a sermon on the occasion of the death of Joshua Symonds entitled “Christ, the Great Source of the Believer’s Consolation; and the Grand Subject of the Gospel Ministry.” His first point of the sermon dealt with the knowledge of God being the only hope for the sinner. Utilizing Paul’s words in Philippians 3:8, “I doubtless count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,” Ryland was convinced that the only hope for sinners is “the knowledge of which Christ himself was the grand object . . . who he is, and what he is to us.”<sup>36</sup> This is the message that Ryland so desperately wanted to make known to all mankind. Champion observed, “A

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<sup>34</sup>John Ryland, *Christ Manifested and Satan Frustrated: A Sermon preached at the Meeting-house, in College Lane, Northampton, December 25, 1781* (London: Thomas Dicey and Company, 1782), 48.

<sup>35</sup>Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 20.

<sup>36</sup>John Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer’s Consolation, and the Grand Subject of the Gospel Ministry: A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Joshua Symonds, Pastor of the Congregational Church which Assembles at the Old Meeting in Bedford. Preached November 27, 1788* (London: J. Buckland, 1788), 6.

sermon preached at Carter Lane in 1800 affirms strongly that all mankind is sinful and that sin leads inevitably to condemnation and death, consequently all men must be told of God's grace in Christ, for men perish apart from Christ."<sup>37</sup>

In Ryland's association letter, written to the Baptist Churches in the Western Association, he also encouraged the churches to "shew also your concern for the salvation of souls at large . . . [and to] encourage village preaching, and the distribution of plain, awakening pamphlets among the poor."<sup>38</sup> This is the "practical influence," or the spirituality, of a believer in Christ who embraces the "humbling and holy doctrines of grace."<sup>39</sup> Ryland stressed that preaching the gospel to the unconverted was the believer's "infinite" obligation, but not at the cost of the sovereignty of God in salvation: "The sovereign will of God alone creates us heirs of grace, born in the image of his son, a new peculiar race."<sup>40</sup> Although he realized that the gospel message must be carried outside of a land that has been enlightened by divine revelation, he clearly believed, in his Calvinism, that "no act of man, no powers of human suasion, would have, secured your compliance with the call of the gospel, had not God, himself opened hearts, to receive those truths, which were once unpalatable to your depraved taste."<sup>41</sup>

Ryland's Calvinism, that which was derived from reading the works of Edwards, was extremely influential in shaping the Baptist churches in Great Britain in the eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup> It is not that Ryland rejected the Calvinism of his father or other

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<sup>37</sup>Champion, "Theology of John Ryland," 20.

<sup>38</sup>John Ryland, "The Sovereignty of God in Salvation," in *The Circular Letter from the Elders, Ministers, & Messengers, of the Several Baptist Churches of the Western Association*, 1797, accessed April 29, 2014, <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/1797clbritish.html>.

<sup>39</sup>Ryland, "Sovereignty of God in Salvation," 3.

<sup>40</sup>Ryland, "Sovereignty of God in Salvation," 3.

<sup>41</sup>Ryland, "Sovereignty of God in Salvation," 2.

<sup>42</sup>Champion, "Theology of John Ryland." Champion writes about the two churches that Ryland served as lead pastor, and in both churches, they grew into "strong, outward looking communities attracting

high-Calvinists, but that Ryland expanded his Calvinism “in such a manner as to make its sense of the sovereignty of divine grace both a powerful incentive to evangelism and a guiding light for Christian conduct.”<sup>43</sup>

### **The Law and the Gospel**

The second, and most substantial conflict between Huntington and Ryland pertained to Ryland’s understanding of the law and the gospel. Ryland said, “Supporting then the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the proofs of which are numerous and conclusive, surely nothing can be of greater importance, than a right understanding of the LAW of God, and of his glorious GOSPEL.”<sup>44</sup> Ryland pointed out, “If Believers are in no sense under the Law, it will follow, that they are incapable of sinning after their Conversion, ‘for all sin is the Transgression of the Law. But where there is no Law, there is no Transgression.’”<sup>45</sup> He summed up the argument of most Antinomians by stating,

All the repentance and grief for sin against God, supposed to be committed after conversion, which Believers felt while they were young and tender-hearted, was needless and useless; and is what they should guard against in future, after they come to know their Liberty as being freed in every sense from the Law.<sup>46</sup>

Ryland clearly understood the argument of the Antinomians as being set free from the

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members with considerable gifts and with abilities for leadership” (21). The churches also developed and fostered relationships with fellow Baptist churches, as well as developing relationships with other evangelical churches. Additionally, Champion makes a strong case for the theological influence that Ryland had on both Andrew Fuller and William Carey. As for Fuller, their friendship began in 1776, and evidence suggests that Ryland introduced Fuller to the writings of Edwards, and several letters through the years reveal that Ryland loaned Fuller more than one book on Edwards. Fuller became a strong advocate for Evangelical Calvinism and was a prolific writer concerning the Calvinism that both he and Ryland agreed. As for Carey, see chap. 2 of this thesis concerning Ryland’s involvement in Carey’s life, including his involvement in developing his passion for missions. Champion reveals that even after 30 years of life in India, Carey still held great affection for Ryland, calling him the “only one left of all my brethren in the ministry with whom I enjoyed sweet communion in England” (23).

<sup>43</sup>Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 21.

<sup>44</sup>John Ryland, *The Law Not against the Promises of God: A Sermon Delivered at the Annual Association of the Baptist Ministers and Churches, Assembled at Leicester, May 30, 1787* (London: J. Buckland, 1787), 4.

<sup>45</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 46.

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

law; however, for Ryland, the idea that believers were very capable of falling back into the same pernicious sins of pre-conversion was a reality that he felt Antinomians rejected: “This notion, follow, that what would have been sin in another, is no sin in a believer.”<sup>47</sup> Regarding this Antinomian belief, Ryland leveled the charge of “licentiousness” against Antinomians.<sup>48</sup> He exclaimed, “Yea, that a man after he has believed in Christ, may repeat the very worst action he ever committed before his Conversion, and not have any cause to be sorry for it, or ashamed of it, as sin against God.”<sup>49</sup> Ryland argued that to embrace such a notion would “lower the Worth of the Gospel, as well as the Authority of the Law, to an unspeakable degree.”<sup>50</sup>

Evangelical Christians, including Ryland, extolled the fact that justification brings about complete deliverance from the condemnation of the law. Ryland said, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.” He went on to affirm the “impossibility of any Sinner’s being justified by the Law, and, at the same time, must perceive the necessity, propriety, and beauty of the Way of Salvation revealed in the Gospel.”<sup>51</sup> Hence, the main question debated by Ryland and Huntington was whether the moral law continued to play any part in the Christian’s life after conversion. Huntington continually stressed in his sermons that the moral law was only binding on the unbeliever and that all of the non-elect remain under the law of Moses and the curse that the law

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<sup>47</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 47.

<sup>48</sup>Robert Hall, *Help to Zion’s Travellers: Being an Attempt to Remove Various Stumbling Blocks out of the Way, Relating to Doctrinal, Experimental and Practical Religion* (Boston: Lincoln, Edmands, & Co., 1833), x.

<sup>49</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 47.

<sup>50</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 47.

<sup>51</sup>John Ryland, *The Dependence of the Whole Law and the Prophets, on the Two Primary Commandments: A Sermon, Preached before the Ministers and Messengers of the Baptist Churches, belonging to the Western Association, at the Annual Meeting, held in Salisbury, on Thursday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1798* (Bristol, England: Briggs and Cottle, 1798), 26.

brings. Huntington accused Ryland of frustrating the law of God's grace by teaching the eternality of the law of Moses on all of mankind. He said of Ryland, "you set the law before the believer, as his only rule of life and conduct." In other words, Huntington accused Ryland of sending the believer to Moses as a rule of life, instead of Christ. He stressed his disdain for Ryland's understanding of the law and the gospel when he said,

Should any person bring a company of vagrants into Mr. Ryland's house, and leave them there to claim his affection, and all the privileges of his own children; and at the same time carry his own offspring into the Indian plantations, and put them under the rigorous rules of a negro-driver, who accuses and whips them all day long; I question not but Mr. Ryland would be greatly incensed at the application of his own doctrine!<sup>52</sup>

In *The Law Not against the Promises of God*, Ryland pointed out, through Galatians 3:13, that faith in Christ definitely delivers sinners from the bondage and penal effects of the broken law, because Christ became the curse for them. However, Ryland's expanded view of the law as the believer's rule of life "hath confirmed instead of relaxing their obligations to devote themselves to the Lord—view the Law as expanded and unfolded in all the preceptive parts of the Word of God and every part . . . sweetly enforced by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>53</sup> This view of the law greatly differed from Huntington's view in that Huntington interpreted the law in Scripture to be the law of Moses or Decalogue. Ryland said,

How unaccountable and unwarrantable must the conduct of any be, who should pretend to confine the meaning of the term moral Law to the bare limits of the Decalogue, and then go about to prove that the Law is not a sufficient Rule for the Conduct of Believers.<sup>54</sup>

In order to understand Ryland's view of the law of God being a rule of life for the believer, one must understand Ryland's thoughts concerning the law of God.

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<sup>52</sup>Cited in Ella, *Weighed in the Balance*, 58–59.

<sup>53</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 35.

<sup>54</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 35.

## The Immutability of God and the Unity of Scripture

The foundation of Ryland's teaching concerning the law and the gospel was "the Unity of the divine Essence."<sup>55</sup> In *The Law Not against the Promises of God*, Ryland's sermon preached before the Annual Association at Leicester in 1787, he built his foundation of the law and the gospel on the immutability of God and his perfect consistency:

As right reason assures us, that there can be but one infinite self-existing Being, who is the first cause and the last end of every other existence; so it would equally incline us to believe, that He who is absolutely perfect, must always maintain one uniform character: he must always act like himself.<sup>56</sup>

Ryland believed that God could never, in his perfections, contradict himself in his being or in his revelation; therefore, he reasoned that God has always maintained a uniform character that is harmonious with his divine revelation: "The Lord is in one mind, and changeth not."<sup>57</sup> In *The Law Not against the Promises of God*, Ryland quoted from James 1:17, "He is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever: and with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Since God does not change, his revelation of himself does not change; it "must resemble its's [sic] Author, in the most perfect consistency."<sup>58</sup> He argued that every part of Scripture must "be of a piece" with all of Scripture; therefore, every part of Scripture is divine, inspired and of utmost importance. Ryland saw the Bible as the perfect rule from God; hence, all of Scripture must be "the infallible standard of faith and practice."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 3.

<sup>56</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 3.

<sup>57</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 4.

<sup>58</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 4.

<sup>59</sup>John Ryland, "The Written Word Opposed to Impressions on the Imagination," in *Pastoral Memorials: Selected from the Manuscripts of the Late Revd. John Ryland, D.D. of Bristol: With a Memoir of the Author* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1826), 1:171.



In relation to the immutable nature of God and his never changing Word, Ryland asserted that “indeed the greatest part of the Bible may be assorted under these two headings” (speaking of the law and gospel)<sup>60</sup> and that knowledge about both is extremely important. Ryland brought accusation against those antinomians, including Huntington, for their superficial knowledge of the law and the gospel according to Scripture:

This Specimen of the usefulness of Ministers preaching the Law, in subserviency to evangelical purposes, may suffice to answer some ignorant professors (though wise enough in their own eyes) who would revile such Preachers who think it their Duty to explain the moral Law, and insist upon it's [*sic*] spirituality and excellence, as if these were the very kind of teachers that Paul opposed in this Epistle [i.e. Galatians].<sup>61</sup>

Logically, Ryland deduced, “We cannot rationally conceive of the all perfect Creator, giving Existence to intelligent creatures, and then leaving them to act without rule, as though they were independent of their maker and accountable to no Judge of their moral Conduct.”<sup>62</sup> This “rule,” as explained by Ryland, is “an obligation to love the supreme Good,” which Jesus commands in Matthew 22:37–40. Ryland called this “the primary, original law of God” upon which all other commands depend.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, for Ryland, this original law is eternal; as God is eternal, his law is eternal. For Ryland, “[God’s] will never suppose[d] that Christ has cancelled or lessened their obligations to obedience.”<sup>64</sup> Ryland’s reasoning was founded upon the immutable will of God for believers:

A man must renounce his reason, before he can conceive it possible for God, who knows himself to be infinitely good, to give existence to a rational creature, and

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<sup>60</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 4.

<sup>61</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 42.

<sup>62</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 6.

<sup>63</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 7.

<sup>64</sup>Cited in Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 21.

grant that creature leave to hate him with all his heart, or even to feel indifferent towards him. Nor can we rationally conceive of a number of reasonable creatures being called in existence, whose duty it should be to hate one another, or to be void of all goodwill to each other.<sup>65</sup>

Ryland saw that it was a duty for all men to love God “supremely,” and that everything that opposed this standard or law of God was a sin against God, because all men were created under this law of love.<sup>66</sup> The reasoning for is that God did not have multiple sets of laws. Ryland said, “God had not one Law for man before the Fall, and another since our Revolt; nor has he one Law for good Men, and another for bad Men.”<sup>67</sup> The immutable God has one claim upon all mankind and that is the whole heart of man and nothing less.<sup>68</sup> All of the doctrines of the prophets and apostles, including the Decalogue of Moses, are founded upon the two commandments of Christ to love God and to love thy neighbor. Ryland’s understanding of Scripture and the unchanging perfections of God demand he recognize within his spirituality that these commands of God “be acknowledged to contain the sum of our duty”<sup>69</sup> before the Fall of mankind into sin, and after the Fall.

Ryland saw the commandment to love God as “manifesting the perfection of the divine law, as making no allowance for the least deviation from this Standard.”<sup>70</sup> Ryland’s point was that the revelation of God determines the believer and the unbeliever’s obligation towards God. Ryland said that the expression of the command of God reveals that no power of the human mind is left free from its obligation. Therefore, it is the duty of all men to love God based upon the revelation of his command to love God, and there is no “abatment” of this command that depends upon the “inclination to

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<sup>65</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 7.

<sup>66</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 2.

<sup>67</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 9.

<sup>68</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 9.

<sup>69</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 20.

<sup>70</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 8.

comply.”<sup>71</sup> “In requiring love to Himself . . . God does not lower his demands, in the least, on account of our moral inability, or which is the same thing, our total disinclination, to comply with his good laws.”<sup>72</sup>

As for the law of Moses, Ryland, again, appealed to the immutability of God and that his requirements for mankind never changed; the requirements being to love God and to love your neighbor. Ryland demonstrated the relationship between the original law and the law of Moses by stressing how obvious this connection is. In his sermon concerning the *Dependence of the Law*, Ryland related the first four commandments of Moses to the supreme love of God:

If we love God supremely, we shall assuredly abhor all idolatry, whether gross, or spiritual. We shall have no other Gods before his face; prefer no other object to him, either openly or secretly, formally or virtually; but shall dread the thought of suffering any rival to usurp his place in our affections, or even to share our hearts with him.<sup>73</sup>

He continued, “If we truly love God,” we will worship only God, revere His name, and respect His Sabbaths.<sup>74</sup> Ryland’s point was that the Decalogue or law of Moses is to be obeyed because it relates to the great commandment to love God with our entire being. Since he argued that “all moral precepts, in every part of the word of God, are comprised in these [to love God and love your neighbor], and naturally flow from them,”<sup>75</sup> Ryland was obligated to preach the moral law of God, which included the law of Moses, as a rule of life to the church.

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<sup>71</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 8.

<sup>72</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 9.

<sup>73</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 13.

<sup>74</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 14.

<sup>75</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 16.

## The Moral Law of God

In responding to Ryland's excommunication letter to the Adams family, Huntington said, "There is a great difference between law and gospel, works and grace, the letter and the Spirit; and between a legal commandment and a life-giving commandment. The former bids us work for life, the later bids us live."<sup>76</sup> As discussed in chapter 3, Huntington saw the law of Moses as a law of works which is associated with the curse, distinct and separated from the law of Christ which is grace and truth. On the other hand, Ryland saw the law and gospel as consistent entities authored by the One God and harmonious in existence.<sup>77</sup> He does not place the law and the gospel in opposition to each other as Huntington did.

Ryland pled his case by appealing to the divine and eternal law to love God. As previously mentioned, Ryland said that all laws given by God are divine laws and are "universally understood [as] a rule of action."<sup>78</sup> This "primary" law originates from God's

knowledge and love of himself, his consciousness of the relation and dependence of his creatures, his regard to their truest happiness, require him to take the throne, and issue out such laws, as are necessary to the preservation of order and harmony in this universe.<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, according to Ryland, mankind was created under the divine law of God and this law was written upon the human heart before the Fall. Ryland, referencing the creation of Adam, said that Adam was created "in the image of God" and "was made upright."<sup>80</sup> Mentioning Ecclesiastes 7:29, Ryland argued that these characteristics of Adam indicate that Adam was created according to a moral conduct that consisted of

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<sup>76</sup>Ella, *Weighed in the Balance*, 59.

<sup>77</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 41.

<sup>78</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 6.

<sup>79</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 7.

<sup>80</sup>Cited in Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 8.

righteousness and true holiness. In this, Ryland reflected upon the words of God pronouncing the results of creation as “very good.” Tremper Longman agrees with Ryland’s assessment and said that “upright,” found in the Ecclesiastes passage, supports that humanity was created upright, “and the connection with the creation lends a strong support to the usual understanding that upright here is a moral and not an intellectual characteristic.”<sup>81</sup> Therefore, there was no need for written moral precepts for Adam; the law of God was written full in Adam’s heart. In an 1811 sermon preached at Bristol, Ryland exclaimed, “Before man was fallen, this law was written on his heart, so that he needed no verbal or written injunction, to love God and his neighbor.”<sup>82</sup> According to Ryland, the need for written tablets for a perfectly holy creature to love God and to love his neighbor was unnecessary. God expressed his perfect law in the heart of Adam; thus, Adam did not need to be told to love God. Ryland said, “The written Law was not made for a righteous man.”<sup>83</sup>

The need for the written law of God, the law of Moses, was a condition based upon the fall of Adam, and thus the fall of all mankind. This fall did not negate the duty of all mankind to love God. Commenting of Romans 5:13–14, which observes that sin was in the world prior to the law of Moses being given, Ryland said, “It clearly follows that all through that period, Men were considered as under some law, which was evidently no other than the law of Nature, or moral law.”<sup>84</sup> In other words, God requires to be loved with the whole heart, no matter the written law. This obligation to love God, according to Ryland, extended to angels, men and devils. There is no disinclination of the

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<sup>81</sup>Tremper Longman, III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 207.

<sup>82</sup>John Ryland, “The Last Curse on Mount Ebal,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 1:21.

<sup>83</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 9.

<sup>84</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 12.

law to love God, it is universal and extends to all “rational Creatures. It is eternal and immutable. Too good to be repealed or altered.”<sup>85</sup>

For Ryland, when speaking of the moral law in Scripture, the foundation is the idea of loving God and loving one’s neighbor. This is the law that is binding on all mankind, whether regenerate or spiritually dead under the curse. In Ryland’s *The Last Curse on Mount Ebal*, he read, “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen” (Deut 27:26 KJV). In this verse, God revealed his great displeasure with the sin of his covenantal people and made them affirm the laws’ perfect equity and to acknowledge God’s holiness. Ryland recognized the alarming nature of God’s curse under the law and confirmed that this verse is indeed speaking of the moral law of God which is “perpetually binding on all mankind.”<sup>86</sup> Yet, for Ryland, this did not mean that the law was not to be preached to the church. This moral law of God, argued Ryland, originated from the perfections of God and is a “necessary connexion between him and every intelligent creature.”<sup>87</sup> For Ryland, the law is summed up in one word, and that word is love. Paul said, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal 5:14 KJV). Ryland affirmed Paul’s insistence on love being law by comparing it to the words of Christ found in Matthew 22:36–40, wherein Jesus described the whole of the law as loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbor as our self. Ryland said that this law is explained in the Decalogue or law of Moses and throughout all of Scripture. Therefore, the law of Moses is a summary of the whole law of God which God uttered in an audible voice and wrote down on tablets. Ryland taught that Christ redeemed sinners from the curse of the

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<sup>85</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 13.

<sup>86</sup>Ryland, “Last Curse on Mount Ebal,” 20.

<sup>87</sup>Ryland, “Last Curse on Mount Ebal,” 20.

law, but not from the blessing of the law: “For surely, it is a blessed thing to have a certain standard of duty, a directory to show us how we ought to walk and please God.”<sup>88</sup>

### **The Rule of Life**

The standard of duty, as Ryland called the law, is described by most scholars as the third use of the law—the rule of life. Huntington rejected the notion that the law was the rule of life for the believer, because he described the law of Moses as the “killing law,” for both the unbeliever and the believer. . . . The covenant of works [the law of Moses] was made with man; it belongs to Adam, and all his children in the flesh that bear his image [and it will] pursue the believer if he goes there.”<sup>89</sup>

Huntington’s view of the law, as seen in chapter 3, was not the orthodox position. John Gill said, “The preaching of the law is of use both to saints and sinners.”<sup>90</sup> To the believer, Gill said the law is of use as a “rule of walk and conversation to believers.”<sup>91</sup> Robert Oliver stated that reformed teachers often referred to the preaching of the law to believers as a demonstration of the third use of the law.<sup>92</sup> Jonathan Bayes said, “The advocates of the third use, while acknowledging that the Spirit is the enabling cause of sanctification, also give the law a role when employed by the Spirit.”<sup>93</sup> The London Baptist Abraham Booth thus described the moral law:

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<sup>88</sup>Cited in Champion, “Theology of John Ryland,” 21.

<sup>89</sup>William Huntington, “A Rule and a Riddle,” in *The Works of the Reverend William Huntington*, S. S. 8:103.

<sup>90</sup>Cited in Jonathan White, “A Theological and Historical Examination of John Gill’s Soteriology in Relation to Eighteenth-Century Hyper-Calvinism” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 147.

<sup>91</sup>Cited in White, “A Theological and Historical Examination,” 147.

<sup>92</sup>Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 2006), 113–4.

<sup>93</sup>Cited in Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 114.

It is a friend and guide, pointing to the way in which the Christian ought to walk, so as to express gratitude to God for his benefits, and glorify the Lord Redeemer. It shows him also, at the same time, how imperfect his own obedience is, and so is a happy means of keeping him humble at the foot of sovereign grace, and entirely dependent on the righteousness of his divine Sponsor.<sup>94</sup>

Ryland agreed with Booth's understanding of the law and stated,

He that hath delivered his people from the Curse of the broken Covenant of Works, by being made a curse for them, Gal. 3:13, hath confirmed instead of relaxing their obligations to devote themselves to the Lord—view the Law as expanded and unfolded in all the preceptive parts of the Word of God.<sup>95</sup>

Ryland, therefore, insisted that the law of Moses was the expression of love toward God and models the eternal love of God by believers owed to God since before the fall.

Ryland described the law as “the Pattern of Sanctification.”<sup>96</sup> He asked the questions in *The Law Not against the Promises*,

Which of those prohibitions [speaking of the ten commandments] does the Gospel set aside? Does it countenance Idolatry, Will-Worship, Profanation of God's name, or of his Day? Does the Gospel teach disobedience and neglect of relative Duties?<sup>97</sup>

“Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid.”<sup>98</sup> Ryland said that God never intended to “lay aside his original rule of Government, as if it were mean and contemptible, or cruel and tyrannical.”<sup>99</sup> He considered this attitude toward the law as blasphemy towards God, because “grace reigns through Righteousness (not on the Ruins of it) unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>100</sup> Therefore, Jesus Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, and his obedience to the law

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<sup>94</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 115.

<sup>95</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 35.

<sup>96</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 32.

<sup>97</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 34.

<sup>98</sup>Cited in Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 32.

<sup>99</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 36.

<sup>100</sup>Cited by Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 36.



further demonstrates the “equity and immutable goodness of the Law.”<sup>101</sup>

Unlike Huntington, Ryland believed that the moral law of God, including the law of Moses, was an avenue used by the Spirit of God as a sanctifier in the life of the believer. Ryland did not believe that the law could change a heart, thus sanctifying a believer, but he saw the law as a “mere Rule of what is right, without any Efficacy necessarily connected with it.”<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the believer is freed from the condemnation of the law, but not at the expense of the law.

### **The Spirituality of Ryland**

When Huntington’s pamphlet against Ryland was published in 1791, Ryland found himself embroiled in the Antinomian controversy, as well as involved in a personal conflict in which Huntington questioned Ryland’s salvation. Seeking counsel on how to respond to Huntington, Ryland wrote a letter to his old mentor, John Newton. Newton had previously exhorted Ryland not to fear the presence of Huntington in the Northamptonshire area, but now the conflict was personal and was affecting the ministry of Ryland at College Lane. It was clear from Newton’s return letter in January, 1792, that Ryland was “not . . . fully determined” on whether he was going to respond to Huntington publicly or not. Newton said, “I am a little alarmed,” when contemplating Ryland’s thoughts of personally responding to the pamphlet. Newton encouraged Ryland to “Let him [Huntington] alone, and he will expose himself more effectually than you can expose him.”<sup>103</sup>

It appears that Ryland heeded Newton’s encouragement to not enflame the conflict with Huntington in print. Ryland continued to preach and write against antinomianism, but he did not engage in the personal attacks as Huntington had waged

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<sup>101</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 36.

<sup>102</sup>Ryland, *Law Not against the Promises of God*, 35.

<sup>103</sup>Cited in Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 251.

against many Baptist in the Northamptonshire area, including Ryland. Although Ryland did not personally respond, the conflict greatly affected his spirituality. One example is Ryland's preaching often spoke of the moral law of God and the supreme commandment to love God and love your neighbor. Therefore, because God's supreme commandment does not change, "the law therefore should be preached."<sup>104</sup>

Another aspect of Ryland's spirituality is his catholicity. Hall spoke of Ryland, that "though a Calvinist . . . he [Ryland] extended his affection to all who bore the image of Christ, and was ingenious in discovering reasons for thinking well of many who widely dissented from his religious views."<sup>105</sup> Speaking of Ryland's catholic spirituality, Gordon said, "While Ryland was a convinced Baptist, he also valued the wider Christian community."<sup>106</sup> This description of Ryland is evident in Ryland's reading of Edwards, who was a Congregationalist, and his long friendship with mentor Newton, who was also an Anglican. While he was comfortable with associating with those outside of the Baptist denomination, Ryland would not associate with the Antinomian.

Ryland's love for missions is another aspect of his spirituality. As discussed in chapter 2, Ryland's belief in preaching the gospel to the unbeliever fueled his passion for mission work and involvement in foreign missions which lasted until his death in 1825. Ryland's spiritual belief in the moral law of God was displayed in his passion for missions as an act of love toward God and others:

But to extend the kingdom of Christ, to diffuse religious knowledge far and wide, to help others to make known the way to eternal life, and at the same time to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, is one of the most profitable works to

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<sup>104</sup>Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, 117.

<sup>105</sup>Robert Hall, Jr., *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D. D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1825), 32.

<sup>106</sup>Gordon, "John Ryland, Jr.," 86.

men, and a good work, which most evidently evinces love to God, and faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>107</sup>

According to Ryland, missions are “profitable” for men, indicating the second eternal command of God to love others, as well as actively display “love to God.” It is evident, that the Antinomian conflict brought great awareness of his obligation to love God and others, and that this awareness permeated every aspect of Ryland’s pastorate, including his thoughts concerning church discipline and his spirituality of good works.

### **Church Discipline**

In the funeral service for Ryland, Robert Hall characterized Ryland, as pastor, as possessing a character of “timidity.”<sup>108</sup> Hall further described Ryland as one that “shrunk with an instinctive recoil from contention, and which disposed him, however his feelings might be wounded, to breathe out his complaints in the ear of friendship.”<sup>109</sup> This character trait of Ryland to seek the “ear of friendship,” was evident in his relationship with John Newton and in the multiple letters from Newton to Ryland discussing the Antinomian conflict at College Lane Church. The letters further amplify Ryland’s deep convictions concerning church discipline and the importance of church membership.

Soon after John Adams and his family were excommunicated from the College Lane Church over the conflicts with Huntington, James Hewitt, another member of College Lane affected by the teachings of Huntington, was heard railing against Ryland that he “did not preach the gospel,” and he publicly denounced Ryland as his pastor.<sup>110</sup> After multiple attempts by the deacons to reconcile Hewitt with Ryland, College Lane formally excluded Hewitt and his wife from membership on February 12, 1791. These

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<sup>107</sup>John Ryland, “The Nature and Importance of Good Works,” in *Pastoral Memorials*, 2:235.

<sup>108</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 37.

<sup>109</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 37.

<sup>110</sup>Cited in Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 247.

excommunications of rogue members defined Ryland's deep commitment to church membership and church discipline, and the same were the subject of Ryland's 1804 circular letter concerning church discipline.

Ryland saw church discipline as a way to bring honor to God and to offer benefit to the church. Church discipline, as described by Ryland, is God's "plan" to reform the church and to address "whatever is amiss or defective" in the church.<sup>111</sup> In the circular letter, he reminded his readers that "none of you were entered among the Members of our churches, by the act of others." Ryland saw church membership as a joining together of believers in "Christian Fellowship" by the constraining "love of Christ, to say to your Brethren, we will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you."<sup>112</sup> This was the charge leveled against Adams. In the church's excommunication letter, they reminded Adams that he "was not born into communion with us, nor forced into it by others; but it was entirely your own act and deed, when, by mutual consent, you became a fellow member with us."<sup>113</sup>

Ryland viewed church membership as a voluntary fellowship of believers united in the love of God and not a platform for opinions and persuasion of arguments. He prefaced this belief by reflecting on the moral law of God to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Ryland said,

Doubtless, if each individual were more under the influence of that holy love, which would lead him to watch over others, with unfeigned solicitude for their spiritual welfare, much sin might be prevented; and the church would be eased of a great deal of trouble.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>John Ryland, "The Circular Letter from the Elders, Ministers, and Messengers, of the Several Baptist Churches of the Western Association: Assembled at Shortwood, in the Parish of Horsely, in Golcestershire, May 23d & 24th, 1804," 1, accessed July 22, 2014, <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/1804clbritish.html>.

<sup>112</sup>Ryland, "Circular Letter (1804)," 2.

<sup>113</sup>Cited in Ella, *Weighed in the Balance*, 37.

<sup>114</sup>Ryland, "Circular Letter (1804)," 3.

He discouraged the church from adopting the platform of Cain, who said, “Am I my Brother’s keeper?”<sup>115</sup> To love a brother, according to Ryland, was to “go to the person himself, and endeavor to convince him of the impropriety of his conduct.”<sup>116</sup> While dealing with James Hewitt, the College Lane Record Book recorded that the deacons attempted to meet with Hewitt to discuss his accusations against Ryland and even discussed these with Hewitt before the congregation, but reconciliation was never achieved. As for Adams, the Record Book revealed that Ryland sent him two letters—the first to discuss their disagreement with one another, and the second to “let the affair drop.” Neither letter brought Adams back into a good relationship with the church.<sup>117</sup>

Church membership, for Ryland, was about accountability and encouragement to be obedient to the law of Christ:

Those laws, in the third book of Moses, are worthy of being considered as the laws of Christ: Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among the people. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise reprove thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. None can be under stronger obligations, than they who are fellow-members of a Christian church, to apply themselves that charge, thou shalt love they neighbor as thyself.<sup>118</sup>

Ryland believed to love God supremely and to love others meant that the church is obligated to warn members of sin and dangers of sin: “Love thy neighbor as thyself; and consider every lust and every idol as the worst of thieves.”<sup>119</sup>

In teaching church discipline, Ryland appealed to the words of Christ in Matthew 18:15–17, although he conceded that this scripture should not be strictly applied

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<sup>115</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 3.

<sup>116</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 3.

<sup>117</sup>Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 247. Champion records that it was inevitable that Adams was not concerned with reconciliation with Ryland or College Lane Church. Although he denied the rumors, a few weeks before the excommunication on October 30, 1791, Adams applied for and received a license to turn two cottages in Northampton into the Fish Street Chapel. The Northampton Record Office states that the license was issued on October 6, 1791.

<sup>118</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 3.

<sup>119</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 3.

to all situations. If the sin of the believer is not well-known and, therefore, does not bring reproach upon Christ, then Ryland recommended a private confrontation to make the believer aware of the sin and to convince him of the “error of his way,” but one should not be quick to exclude the believer from the fellowship. If the sin is “notoriously criminal,” and gives the enemy an avenue to blaspheme God, then the church must act swiftly to exclude the member from the church. He argued for such action by referencing to the man committing “immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles” with his father’s wife.<sup>120</sup> Ryland said that swift action “tends most to the honor of God, the comfort of the church, and the real good of the offender.”<sup>121</sup>

Another reason for excommunication, according to Ryland, was “by those who would connive at the express disavowal of the whole Decalogue, as a rule of conduct for Christians.”<sup>122</sup> This was clearly a reference to the Huntington controversies at College Lane and upheld Ryland’s decision to lead his church to exclude membership to Adam and Hewitt. Ryland’s reasoning for such action was his concern for the unity of the church; there must be agreement among its members. He said a Christian society cannot flourish “where important truth is sacrificed.”<sup>123</sup> For example,

The idea that the Moral law is no standard of duty is so destructive to all real religion; and is so inconsistent with the honor of divine grace in our pardon, and with a due value for the mortifying and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; that no error ought to be more severely censured, by all who profess to love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.<sup>124</sup>

Ryland’s concerns derived from the honor of God. God’s eternal law to love God and to love others was so expressed in the law of Moses that to deny the believer’s

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<sup>120</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 4.

<sup>121</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 4.

<sup>122</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 4.

<sup>123</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 5

<sup>124</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 5.

obligation to the law as a rule of life was to dishonor God, who “is the chief object we should ever keep in view; as in all our conduct, so especially in our church concerns.”<sup>125</sup>

As support to his belief, Ryland referenced First Corinthians 5:6–7:

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”—By duly censuring the conduct of one professor, who has fallen into sin, others may be put upon their guard, and deter[r]ed from the like wickedness: and even the offended himself may, through the blessing of God upon his own appointment, be brought to conviction, humiliation and thorough repentance. But to answer these ends, churches should act with promptitude, firmness and unanimity.<sup>126</sup>

Through the process of excluding Adams and Hewitt from College Lane, Gordon records that Ryland led his church in a time of prayer and fasting, and this time brought forth the fruit that Ryland desired for his church. Ryland told Newton, “Since the exclusion of Mr. Adams and the withdrawment of his relations, and a few others from the congregation, we have enjoyed much more peace and unanimity than heretofore and the people seem committed to each other.”<sup>127</sup>

### **Ryland’s Concern for Good Works**

Unlike Huntington, Ryland saw the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as a progressive work in the believer. The Holy Spirit works in the believer to transform him or her into a doer of good works. Haykin wrote,

It was against the backdrop of this controversy with Antinomianism that Ryland developed a central pneumatological theme in his theology, namely, that the Spirit’s work in sanctifying the believer and leading him or her to be the doer of good works is as important as his role in bringing that person to faith in Christ.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 7.

<sup>126</sup>Ryland, “Circular Letter (1804),” 7–8.

<sup>127</sup>Cited in Gordon, *Wise Counsel*, 253.

<sup>128</sup>Haykin, “He Went about Doing Good,” 60.

For Ryland, good works were a direct response to the “supreme love” of God and a “desire of the conformity to God’s moral perfections.”<sup>129</sup> Ryland taught that there was an obligation of the believer to be conformed to the character of God, and “with you who truly believe in Christ the authority of God will have infinite weight.”<sup>130</sup> This “infinite weight,” according to Ryland, is obedience to keep the commandments of God. Ryland cited Psalm 119:4–5, 128, “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. . . . Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.” Ryland then asked, “You wish to resemble God; to be imitators of God, as dear children?”<sup>131</sup> The call of Ryland was to imitate the benevolent love in good works, because this is what is “right:” “Above all, the philanthropy of God our Saviour affects your hearts; the love of Christ constrain you; you are not your own; you are bought with a price; therefore would you glorify God with your bodies and with your spirits, which are his.”<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the redeeming ministry of Christ to renew the sinner to himself constrains the believer to act according to the philanthropy of God towards others. This command of God for good works is an act of the supreme love of God and to love others. Ryland said, “Has he magnified the law and made it honorable, that you might trample on it and despise it?”<sup>133</sup> In other words, one cannot rejoice in being redeemed by Christ from the curse of the law and believe that Christ has “lessened your obligations to personal obedience.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Ryland, “Nature and importance of Good Works,” 236.

<sup>130</sup>Ryland, “Nature and importance of Good Works,” 236.

<sup>131</sup>Ryland, “Nature and importance of Good Works,” 237.

<sup>132</sup>Ryland, “Nature and importance of Good Works,” 237.

<sup>133</sup>Cited in Ryland, “Nature and importance of Good Works,” 237.

<sup>134</sup>Ryland, “Nature and importance of Good Works,” 237.



## Conclusion

Ryland's character was described by Hall as "Christian virtue, rarely if ever surpassed."<sup>135</sup> His benevolent works of love for others and his supreme love for God are a direct outflow from Ryland's understanding of the law and the gospel. Because God is immutable and his perfections never change, his commands to be loved and to love others, the moral law of God, never diminish, and for Ryland, as a pastor and as an individual believer, this moral law permeated his very life and ministry. This was demonstrated through the conflicts with the Antinomians, especially William Huntington. It shaped his evangelical spirituality by defining it through the eternal, immutable moral law of God. He said, "Study the connection between Law and Gospel, and notice how evidently all evangelical truth depends on these two commandments."<sup>136</sup>

Ryland's theological beliefs "may be summarized as that of an evangelical Calvinism that was both enlightened and ecumenical."<sup>137</sup> He held to his convictions born out from reading the works of Edwards and of preaching the gospel to the lost with an anticipation of a transformed life; yet he never strayed from the basic tenets in the sovereignty of God in salvation through God's efficacious actions, and the obligation of all mankind to believe. Though he was met with ridicule from within his church through the excommunication of Adams and others, and attacked by Huntington's pamphlet, *Weighed in the Balance*, Ryland never wavered in his spirituality concerning the love of God and of others as being the eternal law of God. Although Huntington accused Ryland of preaching that the law of Moses was the only rule of life for the believer, Ryland continually taught that the law of Moses was a curse to the unbeliever, but because of God's eternal law of love, the law was also an expression of love to God written on the

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<sup>135</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 30.

<sup>136</sup>Ryland, *Dependence of the Whole Law*, 42.

<sup>137</sup>Champion, "Theology of John Ryland," 27.

tablets of man as a rule of life for the believer. Therefore, Ryland always held to the belief that he was to teach the law to the church as a rule of life, not for salvation, but to the glory of the immutable love of God.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This thesis' primary purpose was to delve into the spirituality of Ryland as it related to his views of the law and the gospel of God, especially in light of the Antinomian conflict among the Particular Baptists. It also demonstrated how Ryland's spirituality, as related to the law and the gospel, was lived out in his life and became an influence on the churches he pastored, the Associations in which his churches belonged, as well as on the Particular Baptists and others within orthodox Christianity. A foundational concern of this thesis was Ryland's involvement in the Antinomian conflicts and his public disputes with the notoriously rancorous Antinomian William Huntington. Although Ryland was described by Hall as one who avoided conflict, this thesis demonstrated Ryland's resolve and commitment to his evangelical Calvinism and the consistency of his teaching from his theological shift in the early 1770s until his death in 1825.

As contended throughout this dissertation, Ryland worked out his salvation and spirituality primarily through the reading of the American divine Jonathan Edwards. Edwards spoke of affections and zeal that captured the mind of Ryland and shaped his spirituality differently than the high-Calvinists that preceded him among the Baptists. *The Baptist Annual Register*, a compilation of theological writings by influential pastors, published a letter by Ryland as Moderator of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association, entitled "The Northampton Letter, on Godly Zeal." In this letter Ryland demonstrated his dependence upon the Holy Spirit by offering a prayer for the association:

Surely the state both of the world, and of the church, calls loudly [*sic*] upon us all to persist in wrestling instantly with God, for greater effusions of his Holy Spirit, and

that we may be found prepared for our Lord's appearance whether in a way of judgment or mercy.<sup>1</sup>

In relation to this prayer, Michael Haykin, in his article concerning Ryland and the Holy Spirit, spoke of the "widespread revival" among the Particular Baptists of England in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Pastors like Ryland, as noted by Haykin, led their churches in "regular concerts of prayer, theological reformation, and calls to repentance."<sup>2</sup>

Ryland's spirituality, especially concerning the law of Moses, is self-described by Ryland as an act of Zeal. Ryland said, "Zeal is a fervid, vehement emotion of the mind, enflamed with love to some peculiar object, whereby it is excited to exert itself with earnestness and vigour in its behalf, and warmly to oppose every thing that threatens its injury."<sup>3</sup> For Ryland, godly zeal, therefore, is fervent love for God. This love is the original eternal standard of God which was the foundation of all Ryland's theology, including his teaching concerning the law and the gospel. This zeal for the love of God was a consistent teaching of Ryland throughout his ministry, and would prove to be the foundation of his theological thoughts concerning the law of God and his gospel.

This thesis sought to demonstrate how Ryland's zeal for the law and the gospel, in light of the eternal call of God to love God and your neighbor, affected Ryland's spirituality and that of the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as had an influence on modern day Baptists. In chapter 2, the paper explored the life of Ryland, including the emergence of an evangelical Calvinism originating from Ryland's reading of Edwards. It is this theological shift in Ryland that was foundational to the Particular Baptists' pursuit of missions and the preaching of the

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<sup>1</sup>John Ryland, "The Northampton Letter on Godly Zeal," in *The Baptist Annual Register, for 1790, 1791, 1792, and Part of 1793*, ed. John Rippon, D. D. (London: Dilly, Button and Thomas, 1793), 420.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Haykin, "The Sum of All Good: John Ryland, Jr., and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Churchman* 103, no. 4 (1989): 335.

<sup>3</sup>Ryland, "The Northampton Letter on Godly Zeal," 421.

gospel in an expectation of spiritual transformation. Before his first pastorate at College Lane, Ryland had already developed an Edwardsean theology that man has a natural ability to worship and praise God, but, because of the Fall of Adam, man possesses a moral inability to do so. This shift grew in Ryland a spirituality for preaching the gospel to the unbeliever in anticipation of a spiritual transformation and a desire to take this gospel into areas that had never received this good news.

Chapter 4 of this thesis investigated more deeply Ryland's theological shift toward evangelical Calvinism, which caused quite a stir in several high-Calvinist preachers, including William Huntington. Huntington, the subject of chapter 3, revealed his theological differences with Ryland in his ideas concerning eternal union with Christ. According to Huntington, since Christ has entered into an "eternal union" with the elect, there is no need for the gospel to be preached to the unbeliever. Huntington taught that union with Christ was not by faith; rather it was by the eternal election of God, and, therefore, the elect were brought into union with Christ before they were brought to Christ by effectual calling. Huntington clearly taught, as was demonstrated in this thesis, that the non-elect have a natural and moral inability for faith in Christ; therefore, one should not freely proclaim the gospel to all. Ryland's spirituality, derived from Edwards, rejected natural inability because God created within all mankind the desire to worship and love God, but because of the Fall of Adam, mankind was rendered morally unable to love and worship God; hence, the gospel message must be preached.

Edwards' teaching on natural ability and moral inability transformed Ryland's spirituality, creating in him a zeal for missions and evangelism. According to Ryland, this passion for missions and evangelism was also the duty or obligation of all believers. Through this paradigm shift in Ryland's theology, and through the spiritual shift in William Carey, Andrew Fuller and others, the Particular Baptists began to embrace their obligation to preach the gospel to the unbeliever, which led to the creation of the Baptist Missionary Society and the spread of the gospel into areas of the world that had never

before had access. This thesis demonstrated the importance of Ryland's leadership and involvement in the creation of the first Baptist missionary society with its purpose of preaching the gospel to the unbeliever.

Developing from Ryland's theological shift concerning the importance of preaching the gospel was his understanding of the law of Moses. For Ryland, both the law and the gospel have their foundation in the eternal law of God to love God and to love your neighbor. A significant focus of this dissertation was Ryland's teaching that the law of Moses has a use in the sanctification process of a believer, being a "third use" of the law or a rule of life for the believer. Unlike Huntington, who saw the law of Moses only as a curse for the unbeliever, Ryland understood that both the law and gospel were authored by the same God, and since God never changes, his standard for living never changes. As demonstrated in this thesis, for Ryland, the believer is obligated to follow and live out the law of Moses in order to properly love God. The law of Moses is the written law on tablets reflecting the law of God that was written in the heart of Adam before the Fall. Therefore, according to Ryland, to adhere to the law of Moses as a rule of life was a demonstration of love for God as it reflected God's eternal law in the believer. Consequently, according to Ryland, to not adhere to the law of Moses being a rule of life for the believer was considered blasphemy towards God. Hall said of Ryland, "No man was more remarkable for combining a zealous attachment to his own principles with the utmost liberality of mind towards those who differed from him."<sup>4</sup> This congenial spirit applied to Ryland in most areas of his spirituality, except for the Antinomian and those who rejected the law of Moses as a rule of life.

At Ryland's funeral, Hall reminded the church of the blessing that was given to them as a result of the "labours you have so long enjoyed" through the ministry and

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Hall, Jr., *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, D. D.: Preached at the Meeting Broadmead, Bristol, June 5th, 1825* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1825), 32.

pastorate of Ryland.<sup>5</sup> Hall said, “Where will you look for another, whose whole life is a luminous commentary on his doctrine, and who can invite you to no heights of piety but what you are conscious he has himself attained.”<sup>6</sup> Ryland’s life and ministry demonstrated his zeal for loving God through the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world and his adherence to and teaching on the law of Moses as a rule of life for the church. Hall stated “His [Ryland’s] religion appeared in its fruits; in gentleness, humility, and benevolence; in a steady, conscientious performance of every duty; and a careful abstinence from every appearance of evil.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 42.

<sup>6</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 42.

<sup>7</sup>Hall, *Death of the Rev. John Ryland*, 25.

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## ABSTRACT

### “HE WORKED OUT HIS SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING”: THE SPIRITUALITY OF JOHN RYLAND, JR.

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This thesis explores the spirituality in John Ryland, Jr.’s life, ministry, and writings. It examines the antinomian controversy within the Particular Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, focusing on the teaching of William Huntington, a key proponent of antinomianism. It seeks to answer the questions of what influence John Ryland had on the antinomianism controversy and how his theology of the law and the gospel affected his own piety.

Chapter 1 is the introduction of the thesis. It presents the main research question concerning the spirituality of John Ryland, as well as introduces the secondary questions concerning the influences of Ryland’s piety and the legacy that he left. This chapter also makes the case for the importance of a study of John Ryland’s life and ministry as it pertains to his spirituality.

Chapter 2 examines John Ryland’s life, ministry, and relationships, especially those relationships that helped shape his spiritual life. It includes detailed information concerning his family, especially his father John Collett Ryland, as well as his personal relationship with John Newton.

Chapter 3 focuses on the antinomian controversy that affected the British Particular Baptists. It details the controversy by offering an historical biography of William Huntington and by examining Huntington’s writings.

Chapter 4 discusses Ryland's conflict with Huntington and, through sermons and letters, examines Ryland's thoughts concerning antinomianism. It also examines Ryland's thoughts concerning the law and the gospel and the influence this had on his spirituality.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion, and it summarizes the presented arguments in order to answer the research question. It also presents key benefits of this study for the modern Baptist church and shows how Ryland's work continues to impact churches and missionaries of the twenty-first century.

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