

ARTICLE IX.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO HISTORY.

No. I.—LETTERS OF DR. JOHN RYLAND TO DR. STEPHEN WEST.

[Dr. John Ryland was born in Warwick, England, January 29th, 1753; was educated by his father, Rev. John C. Ryland, a noted instructor, author, and minister, pastor of a Baptist church at Warwick, afterwards at Northampton, England. Before Dr. Ryland was five years old "he read a chapter of the Hebrew Bible to the celebrated Hervey." In his seventeenth year he was approbated as a preacher; he preached as an assistant to his father until 1781, when, at the age of twenty-eight, he was ordained as his father's colleague at Northampton. He became, on his father's removal, sole pastor of the Baptist church at Northampton, and continued in this office until 1793, when he was called to reside at Bristol, England, as pastor of the Broadmead Chapel, and President of the Bristol Educational Society, a "Theological Institute." He preached at Northampton more than twenty years, at Bristol more than thirty, in all more than fifty years; and he died at Bristol in 1825. During his whole career he delivered "not less than eight thousand six hundred and ninety-one sermons, and at two hundred and eighty-six distinct places." Robert Hall says that Dr. Ryland's "attainments in the Hebrew language were profound, that he had a general acquaintance with the principles of science, and that his reading was various and extensive." "He had a passion for natural history, in the pursuit of which he was much assisted by the peculiar structure of his eyes, which were a kind of natural microscopes. The observations he made on various natural productions, without the aid of instruments, were really surprising; and though the peculiarity in his visual organs deprived him of the pleasure of contemplating the sublime and magnificent features of nature, it gave him a singular advantage for tracing her minuter operations." He published the following works: "Christianae Militiae Viaticum," "Considerations on Baptism," "Life of Andrew Fuller," and a large number of smaller works. In 1826 were published two volumes of "Pastoral Memorials, selected from the Manuscripts of the late Rev. John Ryland, D.D.," with a Memoir of Dr. Ryland, by his son, Jonathan Edwards Ryland; in 1862 appeared a new edition of his "Hymns and Verses on Sacred Subjects, with a Memoir by Dr. Hoby." The following correspondence illustrates the sympathy which Dr. Ryland had with what was called the "New Divinity" of President Edwards, Dr. Bellamy, Dr. Samuel Hopkins, and other Hopkinsian divines; the processes through which many English theologians were brought into a like sympathy; the connection between the "New Divinity" and the missionary

enterprise, etc., etc. For a more full account of Dr. Ryland see works of Robert Hall, Vol. i. pp. 205-224; Vol. ii. pp. 416, 417; Vol. iii. pp. 278-280; John Foster's Life and Correspondence; Allibone's Dictionary of Authors; but more especially Dr. Ryland's Memoir by Jonathan Edwards Ryland.]

MY VERY DEAR SIR :

Yesterday (March 30, 1814), I received your most welcome letter, and another from Mr. Lyman Beecher, for which I return my sincerest thanks. My time is exceedingly occupied, being at the head of an academy for young ministers (which was till lately the only one established on a permanent foundation for our denomination); having, besides, a large congregation, and a good deal of the concerns of our mission on my hands. Probably Captain Edwards would give you some little account of our situation.

Since the death of my dear correspondent, Dr. Edwards, I have scarcely had time to seek out another, and the unhappy disputes between the two countries have rendered it more difficult to find a mode of intercourse. I heard, also, a few times from Dr. Hart, Dr. Stillman, and Dr. Foster, and indeed from Dr. Hopkins; but they are all gone. A parcel from Counsellor Edwards came to hand, after lying several years in London. It was Dr. Edwards who sent me your book on the Atonement, in 1787, which I read with much pleasure. I have no taste to intermeddle with politics; and, as nothing can give me more pleasure than to hear such accounts of the work of my God as are contained in your letter and Mr. Beecher's, over which I shed many tears of joy, so no misunderstanding between the governments of the two countries can check my love to the people of God, on your side of the water as well as elsewhere. So far as I (that am no politician) can judge, the fault lies with your governors, especially since the Repeal of the Orders in Council; but you cannot help that. All my prayer is for the restoration of peace. But if all the world who know not God were mad (and certainly they are not much better), they that are born of God must love one another.

I have felt, all my days, a love for New England, like that of the Jews for the Holy Land. Mather's "Magnalia," in my childhood, and Edwards's works as I grew towards manhood, with the accounts of revivals in Gillies's Historical Collections, have made me ever feel a strong affection toward your country. Perhaps Captain Edwards could tell you I had put his grandfather's name on my second son, and if God had been pleased to order the sex of my younger children differently, I should have had David Brainerd and Joseph Bellamy born in my house.

I have often been ready to marvel at one thing, — that the fishers of men always seem to fish with a line only, and that you so often fish as with a net. One or two instances I have seen a *little* resembling your draughts, and have heard of one or two more. To be sure, here it is seldom the

case that a whole town is under the care of an evangelical minister. We are intermixed with dry-churchmen, or unevangelical dissenters. In the Church of England, indeed, there is a great increase of evangelical ministers. We have more than twenty in Bristol, or within five miles. They held their Mission Society here last week; we shut up our evening meetings, and attended the services, which were very pleasant. Almost every one spoke kindly of other missions. They collected above £500. We have in Bristol three Baptist churches, two Independents. The Presbyterians here are rank Socinians, as are almost all of that denomination in England. There is a large tabernacle here, chiefly supplied by Independent ministers, who come for a month or six weeks. There is also a chapel of Lady Huntington's, three Wesleyan Methodist chapels (one very large), many Quakers, and a small Moravian congregation. All the evangelical dissenters are united pretty cordially. In the monthly lecture the Baptists, Independents, and tabernacle are united, and in the monthly prayer-meeting the Wesleyans and Lady Huntington's people join also. We generally breakfast together (the ministers of all these congregations) once a fortnight, at each other's houses in rotation. I have a very agreeable intercourse with the evangelical Episcopalians, though they hardly dare to come to meeting, for fear of their superiors. In this respect, we are above them, and also in being able to lend them our meeting-houses, in case a church is repairing or rebuilding, which is a favor that they cannot return on any account, though some who are the least friendly to us have, in several instances, been glad to accept it.

We have lately heard a good deal of pleasing intelligence from our missionaries in India. We are in hope daily to hear of the arrival of one of my students at Jamaica; and this afternoon we have received the permission of Government to send one out to Java, or Amboyna. This last circumstance will occasion my being exceedingly hurried, so that I fear I shall not be able to write to Mr. Beecher at present. I am not sure how far off from him you are; but, if I should get a conveyance for this letter before I can possibly address another to him, I would beg you to present to him my Christian love, and tell [him] I feel unspeakably indebted to him for his letter and the kind and liberal spirit it breathes.

If I did not think myself right in the particulars wherein I differ from you, I should immediately avow my change of sentiment. But, of course, every honest man thinks his own opinion most scriptural. But I never could find my love to my Paedobaptist brethren impeded by thinking differently on that subject. Indeed, I think some subjects of diversity of judgment which do not change a man's usual denomination are far more important than others which do. But all who love our Lord Jesus, and in whom I can trace his image, I am sure ought to be dear to me. I have, for some years past, often thought of two sentences in what is called the Apostles' Creed: "I believe [in] the catholic church, the communion of

saints." Now, scarcely any man, out of the church of Rome, will say that his denomination is *the* catholic church. But I believe that expression most properly belongs to all who are really written in heaven and renewed by the Holy Spirit; and I infer that no man is sound in the Apostles' Creed who does not believe himself more truly akin to all them that he himself expects to meet in heaven, than any external form can make him to be related to those that he does not and cannot hope to meet there. Though I do not suppose the creed was actually made by the apostles, yet I believe these two Articles, thus explained, are in the strictest sense apostolic; and I trust I do believe that all who are really sanctified have one common interest, and are, indeed, living members of one common body, of which our blessed Emmanuel is really the head, and are really animated by one Spirit. I should think myself, at best, a most diseased member of the body of Christ, if I had not a fellow-feeling for every one who really loves and resembles him, which no outward agreement on things concerning which truly regenerate men can differ would in any wise equal. If a churchman, who so often repeats that expression, is more united to carnal churchmen than he is to regenerate dissenters, he is not sound in the Apostles' Creed; and if a Baptist, or any other dissenter, is more united to unconverted dissenters or Baptists than to regenerate churchmen, he is not sound in the faith. On this plan I desire ever to act, and to guard against every [thing] that would really savor of another spirit.

Good Mr. Beecher alludes, in a most candid manner, to the change of two of your missionaries. I trust there is no room to believe that any of our brethren used any intemperate measures to gain them over, but that the change was merely the result of their own reflections. I am sure I never pulled for a proselyte, in this respect, in my life. Let the truth prevail, with whatever party God knows it is to be found; but if we are right, speaking the truth in love is the likeliest way to convince our brethren that they are mistaken. And a shame would it be if an agreement in fifty important Articles should not do more to unite us than a disagreement in two or three, or even four or five inferior points can do to divide us.

If God should not yet call you home to his kingdom, I shall always be extremely glad to hear from you, and, above all, to hear of your success in the work of the Lord. We have had an unusual number of deaths,—some very happy ones,—in my congregation, and but few additions. One is proposed to the church this week, and another or two expected. Oh, that the arm of the Lord may be revealed. The other two Baptist churches have had pretty large additions lately.

May ever blessing attend you and your dear flock.

I am, my dear sir, yours most cordially,

JOHN BYLAND.

[Address: "Rev'd Dr. Stephen West, Stockbridge, Mass."]

Baptist Academy, Bristol,

March 27, 1815.

VERY DEAR SIR:

I hope Captain Edwards received and delivered to you the little packet I sent by him. After refusing to see a newspaper for several months, because I could not endure to hear of war between Britons and Anglo-Americans, among both of whom there are so many heirs of the same heavenly inheritance, I am now able to rejoice in peace being restored between these countries; though in Europe the storm is gathering afresh, and threatens the most tremendous consequences. However, I am glad to have an opportunity of writing again to one whom I so highly respect, and I hope this letter will find that your work is not yet finished. Intercourse has long been greatly impeded, and, perhaps, may still be attended with some difficulty, and my time is exceedingly occupied; yet your kindness in writing before makes me wish for the pleasure of hearing from you again, and especially of finding that the work of the Lord is still going on in your own congregation, and in other parts of your country.

I have been lately reading afresh the second volume of Dr. Strong's Sermons. I assent to nearly everything he advances; yet, taken as a whole, I feel that I could scarcely answer two objections which many readers in this country would bring. He introduces but *little* scripture, and especially he gives a smaller proportional exhibition of the *love* and *grace* of Christ than the generality of our best preachers. Is it not possible to go to an extreme in this respect? I doubt not that many go to a contrary extreme. But still I think these would more probably be amended by intermixing just views of the relation which subsists between the gospel and the moral government of God, than by dwelling so largely on what they too often omit, and omitting what not only they, but Paul, oftener introduces. You will excuse the freedom of this remark. While many have talked much of the love of Christ to sinners, who have scarcely noticed how exceedingly his sufferings display the evil of sin, some of your brethren dwell so much on the Saviour's magnifying the law and government of God, as almost to lose sight of such phrases as, God *commendeth* his love, and *herein* is love! God *so* loved the world! At least they hardly give full scope to the feelings these expressions seem calculated to inspire. I suspect we are all in danger, in the present state of imperfection, of having our minds so engrossed by attention to a few important truths, as to have them drawn off from a due attention to other truths; and the evident defect in the latter case, prejudices others against the very things we wish to enforce upon them.

[Address: "Rev. Dr. Stephen West, Stockbridge, Connecticut."]

MY DEAR SIR:

April 3d, 1815.

In my last I noticed two objections which most persons in this country would be greatly disposed to bring against Dr. Strong's Sermons: (1) That there was more use of argumentation than of scripture

(2) That there was not a proportionate display of divine *love* in the way of salvation, but a continual and almost exclusive reference to the display of God's regard to his *own* rights, in the plan of redemption, whereas the scriptures certainly dwell very frequently and emphatically on the former. These objections do not hinder my pleasure in reading these sermons, but I am aware that many of my friends (ministers and others), would have a great deal to say on the latter especially. I judge that our divines have too much neglected what Dr. Strong so often introduces, yet I myself feel unable to vindicate him from the charge of dwelling on his favorite views too disproportionately.

But there is one point of great importance, stated in Strong's Sermons (Vol. ii. Sermon xii. p. 241): "In most cases, those who are savingly brought home to the Redeemer by submission," etc., down to the bottom of the page. I need not quote the whole paragraph as I suppose you have the book. To this statement very great objections would be made by most of our English preachers. Perhaps I come too near you to state them with full force. "This quietness and peace of submission, of coming and casting themselves at the feet of a sovereign God, and consenting that he should do his own pleasure," is what they do not understand, and what they think unscriptural and inconsistent with the gospel. It is God's *revealed will* that they should without delay fall in with the plan of salvation, *willingly come to Christ for life*. But say they, you require men to *pause before they apply to Christ*, and dwell for a while on the glory of God in their condemnation. Thus you keep them back from an immediate application to Christ, and they suspect you require this submission as a sort of qualification for mercy. God requires men to be willing to be saved in his own way; you require men to be *first* willing to be damned, *before they may hope to be saved*. What example have we of this in scripture? Paul did not treat the Philippian jailor thus, nor Peter the Jews who had voted for Christ's crucifixion. "Although they have no hope, no joys, in the light of God's reconciled countenance, yet they feel a quietness that is new," etc., says Dr. Strong. I know President Edwards in the Northampton Narrative describes exercises nearly similar, which I dare not censure. Yet still I have some suspicion that his successors, Dr. Hopkins, and his followers, have pushed matters somewhat too far. I can conceive it possible for God so to impress the mind with a sense of his perfect rectitude, both in the demands and in the penalty of his law, as [to] fill the mind with awe and submission, while yet uncertain of a gracious reception by the Saviour. But ought we to delay the immediate exhibition of an all-sufficient and gracious Saviour, able to save to the uttermost, and who will in no wise cast out? Few persons are awakened who have not repeatedly heard the gospel already. If they believe what they have often heard, they can have no room to suspect they will be rejected, if they apply to Christ. God is not used, I suppose, first to regenerate the

soul, and then try (if I may so express myself) what reception such a soul would give to law without gospel, and, after a while, try what reception it would give to the gospel, or what effect the gospel would have upon it. It is his command that sinners should come to Christ for salvation, and believe his readiness to receive them, not that they should stand speculating on the possibility and equity of his rejecting them; nor yet that they should pause and reflect on the impossibility of their believing without special grace, thinking, what shall we do if God will not give us faith. The scriptures represent repentance and faith as the immediate duty of all to whom the gospel is published.

I am not sure whether I have expressed myself with sufficient clearness to show you where the generality of our ministers would demur, if not more strongly object, to the statement of some on your side of the water. I know Marshall and Hervey have stated things very exceptionably on the other side, and that many who would not define the first act of faith as an assurance that Christ is mine, do yet sometimes speak as if no one could be justly condemned for not loving God, but in consequence of the exhibition of pardoning mercy at least in a more general way. Faith in pardoning mercy, say they, must beget hope; and then hope beget love. I cannot fall in with *this* representation. It seems to me to set aside the need of the work of the Spirit, except by the medium of nearly the same principle that reconciled Amasa to David's party, when David offered to make him generalissimo, instead of Joab. I think repentance must, at least in the order of nature, precede faith, and that nothing spiritual can precede love. No man can give a perfect definition of *hope* without including love in its nature. And the same is, I think, equally true of *faith*. It must include a cordial approbation of the truth, a resting with complacency in God's method of saving sinners. Mere natural truth may be believed independently of the state of the heart. Moral truth cannot. I may believe the sun is the centre of our system, though I should be as willing the earth should be the centre, if it would answer the same end. Or I may believe that Buonaparte has been re-established in France, though I had rather he were still confined to Elba. But I can [not] believe I am infinitely to blame for breaking God's law, or that it was an excellent thing for Christ to magnify the divine law, while I am under the dominion of a carnal mind.

We have just heard of a sore trial befalling Felix Carey, Dr. Carey's eldest son, who was going up to Ava, and cast away in a storm on the river; his wife, two children, and four maid-servants drowned, and he narrowly escaped with his life.

May grace mercy and peace be with you.

I am, dear Sir, your cordial brother, JOHN RYLAND.

I beg my kind respects to Capt. Edwards and all his family, and Rev. Mr. Beecher.

[Address: "Rev. Stephen West, D.D. Stockbridge, Connecticut, North America."]

MY DEAR SIR :

I have but short notice of Captain Edwards's return, and can only send a hasty line by him. My dear brother Fuller is gone, and I shall now have to bear the brunt of them that cry out against American divinity. An angry attack has been made already on the funeral sermon I published for my dear friend, in the *New Evangelical Magazine*, which is chiefly conducted by one Jones, who wrote the *History of the Waldenses*. He has a little tinge of the Sandemanian sourness, though not so much as he had some years ago. Still, he is disposed to cavil at the idea of disinterested love, and, in fact, will not try to understand what we mean by it. Many infer at once that we would have people regardless of their own salvation. I have had unspeakable difficulty to make some understand me, who, I cannot doubt, possessed the sincerest love to Christ for his own excellency, and who delighted in the law of God after the inner man.

We continue to hear good news from India; but our brethren are viewed with great jealousy by many persons in power, who can hardly believe it safe to let heathenism be attacked by simple argument, and seem more jealous for the cause of idolatry and superstition than the Brahmins themselves. Hence Mr. Chamberlain has been lately ordered down from Sindbuna, and John Peters forbidden to give the scriptures to the native soldiers in Orissa.

I was unspeakably pleased, some time ago, when Mr. Simeon of Cambridge was in town, who read me the memorials to Sir Evan Nepean, drawn up by your missionaries at Bombay. It gave me a very high opinion of their religion and good sense. I am endeavoring to prepare *Memoirs* of my dear departed friend, for which I have good materials; but it will take a considerable time to transcribe and arrange them. Though I am not yet sixty-three, yet the removal of my old friends makes me feel as if I was got very old, and must soon expect to remove hence. I have no particular complaint, and can preach three times a day without weariness, but am soon fatigued in walking. I am very glad to find your health is continued, and shall be highly gratified by hearing from you again. I hope the Lord is still succeeding your labors.

I am, dear sir, your cordial friend and brother,

Bristol, Sept. 12, 1815.

JOHN RYLAND.

[Address: "Rev. Dr. West, Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Forwarded by Mr. Timothy Edwards, with his best respects to Dr. West."]

VERY DEAR SIR :

Sept. 17, 1816.

Some months ago I sent you a copy of my dear brother Fuller's *Life*, which I hope you received safely. I should be thankful for your free remarks on the same. I since received your welcome letter, and rejoice to hear that the dew of heaven is descending around you.

May your own congregation soon receive another season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

By the bye, the accidental mention of the dew puts me in mind of Psalm cxxxiii. Our translators have supplied a good deal in the 3d verse "and as the dew." Now if the supplement were left out, the dew of Hermon could not be said to descend on the Mountains of Zion. And if the supplement be retained, why should the dew descending on Zion, a dry rock, I suppose, without verdure, be mentioned? I have queried whether the Psalmist does not, in the latter part of the psalm, make a transition from the subject of brotherly love to a different subject, not unnaturally connected with it, viz. the doctrine of divine influence.

As the dew of Hermon (a very fruitful hill) is *that* which descended on Mount Zion, etc., i.e. as is the natural dew on Mount Hermon, so is the spiritual dew on Mount Zion.

Brotherly love was especially promoted among the Israelites by all the males assembling at the temple three times a year, whither the godly Israelites went up in hope of spiritual refreshment, etc., "For there the Lord commanded the blessing," etc. Hence the two subjects are naturally connected.

I had but ten copies of brother Fuller's Life, as I gave the whole profit to my deceased brother's family, or I would have gladly sent one to Mr. Lyman Beecher also. We have lately had several clergymen, who have left the established church [and] at length become Baptists. But though I could not object to their agreeing with me on that point, yet I have no pleasure in their adopting our opinion respecting baptism, as they are much infected with Antinomianism, and fond of the worst expressions they can borrow from Dr. Crisp. Nor do they seek an acquaintance with the most respectable ministers in our connection, but indulge a groundless suspicion that we do not preach the gospel. They are men of large fortune. It is quite a new experiment of Abaddon to employ gentlemen of rank in a warfare in which he has been used to employ coalheavers and blackguards. I sent Mr. Baring brother Fuller's Life, and Mr. Snow the translation of Witsius' Animadversiones Irenicæ. I wish God may cure them of this "fretting leprosy," or I had rather they had joined any denomination than ours. Alas how prone are men to error, on the right hand and the left!

I wish great success to your society for the education of pious youth. Our building, erected five or six years ago, contains thirty-three studies, with thirty-three bedrooms over them, but our funds will scarcely support our present number — twenty-five. We never take any but members of churches whose gifts have been previously tried, and who are recommended by the churches as possessing hopeful piety and talents. Training up graceless lads for the ministry, in hope they might be converted afterward, seems to have ruined the English Presbyterians, who are now almost uni-

versally Socinianized. Our present set of students are as hopeful as any I have known. Four or five are intended for missionaries.

Earnestly wishing you the best of blessings

I remain, dear sir, your cordial friend,

JOHN RYLAND.

[Address: "Rev. Stephen West, D.D., Stockbridge, Berkshire, Massachusetts, North America."]

ARTICLE X.

NOTICES OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

A. GERMAN WORKS.

Luthardt: Die Lehre von den letzten Dingen. The second edition of a work on Eschatology published about ten years ago. It consists of Essays, theological and exegetical—amongst the latter a translation and brief exposition of the Apocalypse. The former are headed: The Prophetical Word and the Church; The Ecstasies of believers and Irvingism; Eschatological Questions; Survey of the Contents of the Prophetical Word. The passages discussed are Matt. xxiv. 25; Rom. xi. 11-32; 1 Cor. xv. 20-28; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18; 2 Thess. ij. 1-12. The whole book deserves careful reading.

Sack: Theologische Aufsätze. A republication of six Essays by the venerable and eminent author of the "Christliche Apologetik," "Christliche Polemik," and other valuable works. The subjects are: The Relation of Wisdom to Science (the term used, as in Germany, for science generally); Contributions to Christian Ethics; State and Church; The Feeding of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 2-9); The Reformed (Calvinist) Doctrine of the Supper; Observations on Schiller's "Maid of Orleans."

Merk: Das Gedicht von Hiob. A critical edition of the Hebrew text of the Book of Job, with translation and introduction. Full of bold and original ideas and suggestions, which few will be disposed to accept as they stand, though all may note them with interest.

Dietzsch: Adam und Christus. An exegetical monograph on Rom. v. 12-21, by a rising German theologian, since suddenly snatched away by death. The monograph evinces great learning, and for its materials alone will be of considerable service to theologians; but it is scarcely a thoroughly satisfactory discussion of this difficult passage.

Schwalb: Christus und die Evangelien. A series of ten lectures delivered at Bremen, in connection with the *Protestanten-Verein*. Dr. Schwalb has much to say in praise of Jesus. He styles him, for example, the "greatest genius in the domain of the religious life"; but he treats