ROBERT HALL, 1764-1831,
A STUDY OF HIS THOUGHT AND WORK

by

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A Thesis: Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
For the Requirement of the Ph.D. in Theology

University of Edinburgh
1948
PREFACE

In the following study of Robert Hall, it has seemed most fitting to focus the investigation on the minister's four pastorates, since it is in relation to these periods that the various aspects of his thought and work can best be understood.

The work does not profess to be a biographical study, inasmuch as Gregory, Morris, Greene, Hood, Trestrail, Hughes, and others have adequately attended to this. Except in the first chapter, which is intended to be introductory, only as much biographical detail is employed as will enable the reader to grasp the full import of Hall's thought and achievements. Also, in order to make clearer the significance of his ministry, brief historical incidents bearing upon his times are noted at the outset of the chapters dealing with his different pastorates.

Research for this investigation has led the writer to those places most closely connected with Hall during his own lifetime, and, in all, it has enabled an American Baptist to learn more of and appreciate more fully one of the most interesting figures, as well as one of the most important periods, in the development of Baptist history. If the writer had followed the pattern of most existing articles and works on Hall, he would probably have written in
much more laudatory terms than, in fact, he has done; but he has rather sought to be as unprejudiced and objective as possible in his treatment of the subject.

The British reader will note that the authority for spelling and punctuation has been that of a standard American dictionary, and it is to be hoped that this will offer no undue hindrance in the perusal of the thesis.

G. J. G.

Edinburgh

(and

Pittsboro, N.C., U.S.A.)
TABLE OF DATES

1764  Robert Hall born, the 2nd of May
1775  Attended John Ryland's School at Northampton
1778  Baptized and joined Church at Arnesby
1778  Entered Bristol Academy
1779  Preached first sermon at Clipston
1780  Ordained at Arnesby
1781  Entered King's College, Aberdeen
1785  Received M. A. degree from Aberdeen University
1785  Became assistant minister at Broadmead and
      Tutor at Bristol Academy
1791  Accepted call from Stone Yard Church, Cambridge
1791  Death of his father
1793  Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for
      General Liberty
1800  Modern Infidelity Considered
1803  Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis
1804  First mental collapse
1805  Recurrence of mental difficulty
1806  Left Cambridge
1807  Accepted call from Harvey Lane Church, Leicester
1808  Marriage
1813  An Address on the Renewal of the Charter of the
      East India Company
<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1815</td>
<td>Terms of Communion</td>
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<td>1817</td>
<td>Awarded degree of Doctor of Divinity</td>
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<td>1817</td>
<td>Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte</td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Appeal on the Subject of the Frame-Work Knitters' Fund</td>
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<td>1823</td>
<td>Lectured against Socinianism</td>
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<td>1824</td>
<td>Address on the State of Slavery in the West India Islands</td>
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<td>1826</td>
<td>Returned to Broadmead Church as Pastor</td>
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<td>1827</td>
<td>Preached at the Baptist Missionary Society in London</td>
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<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>Died at Bristol, the 21st of February</td>
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CONTENTS

Preface ii

Table of Dates iv

I.  EARLY DAYS AND EDUCATION 1

1.  His Parents 1

2.  Home and Bristol Training 7

3.  At the University of Aberdeen 18

II.  FIRST MINISTRY AT BRISTOL, 1785-1791, THOUGHT AND PROBLEMS 24

1.  Historical Background of the Period 24

2.  Assistant Pastor in Broadmead and Tutor at Bristol Academy 31

3.  His First Publications 42

4.  Clash with Caleb Evans and Theological Position 49

III.  MINISTRY AT CAMBRIDGE, 1791-1806, POLITICAL WORKS AND THEOLOGY 59

1.  Political and Historical Background 59

2.  At Cambridge and Political Thought 76

3.  His Theology 106

4.  Effects of His Mental and Physical Illness 139

IV.  MINISTRY AT LEICESTER, 1807-1826, WIDENING FIELD vi
OF THOUGHT AND ACTIVITIES

1. Historical Background 147
2. His Relations with Other Communions 154
3. His Missionary Endeavors 162
4. His Social Consciousness 168
   (1) The Slavery Issue 168
   (2) Efforts for the Laboring Class 171
   (3) Interest in Education 178
5. His Doctrinal Controversies 183
   (1) Socinianism 183
   (2) The Lord's Supper 191

V. SECOND MINISTRY AT BRISTOL, 1826-1831, THE PASTOR AND PREACHER 210
1. Final Years 210
2. His Work as a Pastor 218
3. His Pulpit Ministry 223

VI. CRITICAL ESTIMATE AND REVIEW 238

Appendix A 246

Bibliography 252
CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS AND EDUCATION

1. His Parents

To know a man, his mind and his thought, some idea of the roots from whence he springs must be appreciated. Most aptly is this the case with the Reverend Robert Hall. His parents and especially his father made an impression upon him which steadfastly remained through all his days. The son, ever conscious of a paternal influence, esteemed it the greatest favor which Providence had bestowed upon him to have possessed such a father, "whom in all the essential features of character," he said, "it will be my humble ambition to imitate." This aspiration was in a great measure realized; for the son not only bore a striking resemblance to his father, but even more, he was much like him in the make-up of his mental and spiritual faculties. A cursory observation of the elder Hall will reveal some of the numerous ways in which the father and the son were alike.

It was into a poor yet respectable family of farming people that the elder Robert Hall was born, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in April, 1728. In his early days, he attended a Presbyterian "meeting" but the pastor of this church did more to hinder than to help him. While still a youth, he

1 Robert Hall, Help to Zion's Travellers, (Preface to 3rd ed. by the younger Hall) p. xxviii
became most dissatisfied with his spiritual welfare. Day in and day out he worried about his condition. In addition to this mental and spiritual anguish, he met with a series of accidents which caused him serious bodily injury, but it was his apparently unpardonable sins which gave him more concern than his physical disabilities. At length, through a careful study of the Bible, he came to full salvation and joined the fellowship of another Presbyterian church. It was not long after he had united with the Presbyterians that a Baptist group licensed a house about twelve miles from his home. Hall, then about twenty years old, possessed a particular dislike for Baptists. Along with two friends, he went to argue with the Baptist minister on the subject of baptism. On two separate occasions the Baptist preacher was too clever for his young contestants, and the final outcome was that Robert Hall, at the age of twenty-four, became a Baptist himself.

Shortly afterward Hall felt the call to preach, and in 1753, he left Northumberland to become the pastor of a Baptist church in Leicestershire, at the little village of Arnesby. Upon his arrival in Arnesby, he found the people most plain and poor, "but he habitually entertained so low an opinion of himself" that he felt capable of preaching only to such a congregation. The trials and difficulties

3 Ibid., p. 22
which confronted him were aggravated by a scheming trustee of the church, who for a long while made things most unpleasant for the minister. Because the church gave him a salary of only fifteen pounds a year, Hall, in order to support his family of fourteen, was compelled to turn to a small farm for additional resources.

Very little is known of his wife, the mother of Robert Hall, other than the testimony generally bestowed upon her that she "was a woman of sterling sense and distinguished piety." Soon after her death, her husband wrote of her, that she was a "precious tried christian, who had generally been highly favoured of the Lord since she knew him of a truth." Adding to the burdens of the Rev. Robert Hall of Arnesby, was the illness of his wife during the last four years of her life. Prior to this affliction, she had been of an active and cheerful disposition and a constant support and comfort to her husband in all his troubles. During her illness, however, Mrs. Hall suffered not only physically but from great mental depression as well. When her youngest son, Robert, was twelve years old, she died in December of 1776.

Some four years later Hall married again, and his second wife proved to be a helpful companion through the

5 Morris, Works of Robert Hall, (Elder) p. 26
6 Ibid., p. 24
remainder of his life. As if prophetic of his son's sufferings, the elder Hall spent the last six years of his life in very poor health. Throughout this period he was subject to frequent and alarming spasms of the stomach, and when these spells came they caused him untold agony. Toward the end they came upon him with increasing frequency; so that "this eminent servant of God" died in March, 1791. Dr. John Ryland was called upon to preach the funeral sermon, and Andrew Fuller delivered the oration at the grave. Both of these men bore witness to the life and work of the departed minister. They spoke of his absence of false pride and of his deep humility. They recalled his great abilities, his prudence, his gentleness, his fortitude and courage. They told about his pulpit habits--how he would timorously ascend the pulpit, how that as he spoke he frequently forgot himself and appeared completely absorbed in his subject. Then further, Ryland and Fuller remembered the son, young Robert, and prayed that the paternal spirit would descend upon the young minister. Fuller composed a lengthy poem for the occasion and concluded:

Yes, here's Elijah's mantle: may there too
A double portion of his spirit rest
Upon us all; and, might I be indulged
In one more special wish, that wish should be,
That he who fills his father's sacred trust
Might share the blessings of his father's God,
And tread his steps; that all may see and say,

7 Morris, Works of Robert Hall, p. 36
'Elijah's spirit on Elisha rests.'

The father of Robert Hall ministered in Arnesby during a thirty-eight year period, and for a man of limited educational advantages exerted a marked influence not only upon the local community, but upon his fellow Baptists far and near. In the year, 1779, he was appointed to preach a sermon before the ministers and messengers of the Northamptonshire Association. Fifteen years earlier, it was he who had been chiefly instrumental in forming this organization of Baptist churches and ministers. The sermon which Hall preached to that group was so well received that his hearers encouraged him to expand the message and have it published. The result was a small book called, Help to Zion's Travellers, in which the author endeavored to remove the various stumbling-blocks of God's children in their doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion.

Joseph Ivimey, in his four volume, History of the English Baptists, testifies to the value of this book, by claiming that it marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the Baptist denomination.

Certainly that book was the turning-point for one of the denomination's greatest missionaries. William Carey, a member of the Church of England, was an apprentice to a

9 J. Ivimey, A History of the English Baptists, IV, p. 41
shoemaker at Hackleton. Eager for all the information he could acquire, Carey read every book that came to his hand. It was during his apprenticeship that he underwent a change of mind concerning Dissenters, and ultimately allied himself with them. In the process of this change, his mind was much confused; he could not reconcile the "hyper-Calvinism" then maintained by most Baptists with his idea that God wanted him to go out and convert the heathen. During that confusion a copy of Hall's little book came to his hand, and it immediately supplied Carey with a system of belief most satisfying to his spiritual and mental needs. In praise of Help to Zion's Travellers, Carey stated that he could not recall having read any book "with such raptures." His biographer tells how Carey carried the book to India with him, and treasured it to the very end of his life.

It was largely through this book, that the elder Hall had such a profound influence upon Baptist thought. He, along with Andrew Fuller, did more than any other to remove the stigma of ultra-Calvinism from the theology of Dissenters and especially Baptists. Without going all the way to Arminianism, they remained in the Calvinist tradition, but by eliminating the "excrescences of Calvinism," as the younger Hall declared, they paved the way for marked strides in the denomination.

10 George Smith, The Life of William Carey, p. 16
11 Hall, Help to Zion's Travellers, p. xxvi
Eleven years after the elder Hall had come to Arnesby, his fourteenth child, Robert Hall was born "on the 2nd of May, 1764." From the very beginning, Robert was a weakly child, and recurring illness proved a serious handicap throughout all his days. The first two years of his life were spent under the constant care of a nurse, and at every opportunity she would take the frail child out into the fresh air. Most often she carried him to the cemetery which adjoined his father's chapel. Oddly enough, it was from the gravestones that Robert, with the assistance of his nurse, learned the alphabet and began to utter his first syllables. Theretofore, his inability to walk and talk had caused his parents considerable anxiety, but after that initial beginning, his powers of speech developed at a most rapid rate.

As a young boy, Robert speedily became interested in books and reading. According to the custom of the villages, he received his earliest instructions at a dame's school, first under Dame Scotton and then under a Mrs. Lyley. At the age of six, the lad was placed in a school four miles from Arnesby, under the care of Mr. Simmons of Wigston. Quite soon it became evident that the long walk from his home to Wigston was proving too strenuous for the frail

12 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 1
youth; therefore the elder Hall arranged lodgings for him
and his brother, John, in a Wigston home.

By the age of seven, Robert in childish fashion began
to imitate his father by preaching to his playmates and some
of the servants. Those who heard him testified that "religi-
gious principles had at that early period a decided influence
upon his mind." Furthermore, this is seen in the books
which he selected for his reading. Before he was nine years
of age, he had read with interest and understanding Butler's
famous, *Analogy* and Jonathan Edwards' books on *The Affections*
and *The Freedom of the Will*. By another year the youth was
composing essays of his own.

It is not surprising that in 1775, Simmons informed
Robert's father that he was no longer able to keep pace with
his pupil. Therefore, to the relief of the teacher, young
Hall left this school in Wigston and then went to Kettering.
There his father had a good friend in the person of Beeby
Wallis, in whose home the Baptist Missionary Society was to
be begun in 1792. Wallis, moved with deep sympathy for
the pale-cheeked lad, suggested that his father leave him in
his home for awhile in the hope that the "change of air
would improve his health." While staying there, Wallis

13 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 2-3
14 J.W. Morris, Biographical Recollections of the Rev.
Robert Hall, A.M., p. 27
15 Geo. Smith, Life of Carey, p. 53
16 Gregory, op. cit., p. 4
frequently had his young visitor exhibit his precocity by speaking before various groups who gathered in his home.

Following his brief stay in Kettering, Robert's father placed him in the school of the Rev. John Ryland of Northampton. Though a most eccentric individual, Ryland was a born teacher. Early in his life he had recorded in his diary:

'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...,'

and this was signed, John Collett Ryland. Impetuous or not, Ryland felt that if England was to be saved the children must be educated; therefore he gave himself to this task. That he in a large measure succeeded is revealed by a tribute which his pupil, Robert Hall was to pay him some years later:

'As a teacher of youth, he had a constellation of excellencies... He had walked in all the fields of human knowledge; and it seemed to me, an inexperienced youth, that he knew everything that was fit to be known, and could do everything that was fit to be done.'

At the beginning of his work in Northampton, young Hall did not appear very promising either to his teacher or his fellow students. Rather than join his young friends, Robert spent much time by himself. He was meditative and contemplative; so much so that it caused him to be most forgetful and absent-minded. In running errands he frequently made glaring

17 J. Culross, The Three Rylands, p. 17
18 Ibid., p. 37
mistakes, such as going to the grocer's shop instead of the butcher's. Consequently, Robert was an object of curiosity and amusement to his companions. It is to the credit of his teacher, John Ryland, that he was able to awaken the dormant talents in his unusual pupil. The students were assigned compositions with the promise of a prize for the one who wrote best, and it was this direct competition which brought out the latent qualities of Robert Hall. He produced an essay which was not only better than any other, but was a delight to his tutor. Ryland was so highly pleased with Robert's first efforts at writing that he sent some of them to be published in current periodicals of the day.

During his school days at Northampton, Robert had the privilege of hearing Thomas Robins, a tutor at the Daventry Academy, preach while on a visit to Ryland's school. The style of this sermon and the diction of the preacher made such an impression upon Hall that he sought early to be an imitator of Robins. Years later in recalling that sermon, Hall testified concerning Thomas Robins:

> Among many other mental endowments, he was remarkable for delicacy of taste and elegance of diction; and, perhaps my reader will excuse my observing, that the first perception of these qualities which the writer of these lines remembers to have possessed, arose from hearing him preach at Northampton on a public occasion.

After eighteen months under the tutorship of the Rev. Morris, Recollections of Robert Hall, pp. 32-33

Hall, "Memoir of Thomas Toller," Works, IV, p. 306
John Ryland, Robert was compelled to leave Northampton because of the poor state of his health. However during that period, he had made rapid advancement in mathematical and classical subjects, and it was with reluctance that at the age of twelve, the youthful scholar had to return to his home in Arnesby. That by no means meant for him the end of his educational pursuits, for under the able and wise tutelage of his excellent father, young Hall continued to prepare his mind for future usefulness.

Staying at home, working under his father, and in his library proved to be an enjoyable stage in Robert's life. "His sprightly wit and obliging manners rendered him a great favourite at home, and among the neighbours...." Frequently the youth would go out on his father's small farm and converse with the laborers. In this manner he highly entertained them by sharing with them witty stories and shrewd observations. Life was not all seriousness with the lad; for often he played practical jokes on his friends, and joined them in their games and sports. About the time Robert was fourteen years of age, he was seized with an attack of measles and it is thought that this was responsible for the weak voice which handicapped him throughout all his life.

21 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 34
22 Ibid., p. 34
In the year 1778, the church book at Arnesby records a notable incident in Robert Hall's life. On the 23rd of August, it is written that the youth gave to the church a definite account of his reception of God's grace, and on the 6th of September, that he was baptized and added to the church membership.

As his father was in no position to send his son to a seminary, young Hall was fortunate when he qualified for the Dr. Ward fellowship. Dr. John Ward of Gresham College had left money for the education of young men who should be chosen preferably from the Baptists and who would study to be either tutors or ministers. A further stipulation of this foundation was that the students after first going to an English seminary, were to complete their training in a Northern university. Thus after qualifying for this foundation, Robert Hall, in October of 1778, went to Bristol in order to enter the Baptist Academy. At the time of his entrance the Rev. Hugh Evans was head of the academy as well as pastor of the Broadmead Baptist Chapel; for according to the church constitution it was understood that the pastor would also serve as head tutor of the academy. Assisting Evans was his son, Dr. Caleb Evans, who later took over the work upon the death of his father in the spring of 1781. A third member of the staff was the Rev. James

24 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 36
25 S.A. Swain, Faithful Men, pp. 101-102
26 E. Terrill, The Records of a Church of Christ Meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, (N. Haycroft, ed.) pp. 312-313
Newton, who was serving as the classical tutor. Although this institution had already had a long history prior to Hall's appearance, it was not until 1770, that it began its greatest usefulness under the name of the "Bristol Education Society."

That the youthful scholar highly profited by his studies in Bristol, there can be little doubt. Besides receiving instruction in the classical languages and the rudiments of science, the students there were given specific help in preparation for the ministerial office. Sermons and essays were assigned to be delivered and written, and to assist in this work there was placed in the hands of Robert Hall, Gibbons', Rhetoric, a book which he read with utmost eagerness and often referred to in his later life.

Not only was young Hall satisfied with his studies at Bristol, but that he approved of his tutors is evidenced by a letter which he wrote to his father in Arnesby. Alluding to Dr. Caleb Evans, Hall asserted that in all respects he was a most amiable person: "as a man, generous and open hearted; as a christian, lively and spiritual; as a preacher, pathetic and fervent; and, as a tutor, gentle, meek and condescending." In the letter, the son went on to tell his father how particularly interested he was in his study of divinity. It was his wish that at some time he could be near his father to consult often with him on this important

28 Ibid., p. 6
subject.

So absorbed did Hall become in the merely intellectual side of his studies, that his associates began to question his orthodoxy. Despite the high principles which he possessed and the regularity of his devotional habits they felt that he was emphasizing one side of his studies to the exclusion of the other. In one of Robert's essays written about that time, support is given to his friends' suspicions. In this essay entitled, "Ambition," the young student claimed for intellectual superiority a place far above all moral and spiritual qualities. Along this line of thought, the young minister continued for a decade, but after that, he experienced a considerable change in his outlook and his approach to theology.

One occasion which he never forgot occurred during his student days at Bristol, and because of it he was a different man ever afterwards. From time to time each student in the academy was assigned a text from which to preach in the vestry of Broadmead Chapel, before his classmates and tutors. When Robert's time came, he felt quite confident in himself; for he had prepared a scholarly and masterly dissertation. When he arose and began to speak, his hearers were greatly impressed with his efforts, but he had not proceeded far before he suddenly stopped. His mind had gone completely blank, and he was forced to sit down in

deep humiliation. His tutors must have understood his embarrass­ment; nevertheless, they assigned him the same task one week later.

This second attempt was accompanied by a second failure, still more painful to witness, and still more grievous to bear. He hastened from the vestry, and on retiring to his room, exclaimed, 'If this does not humble me, the devil must have me!' 30

Apparently it did humble him; for in his later life, humility was one of the outstanding marks of his character.

Completing his first year at the academy in Bristol, Robert returned home in 1779, to spend his summer vacation with his father. One day during the summer the elder Hall, accompanied by his son, went to Clipston in order to take part in the ordination service of the church's first pastor. Present also at that occasion was the Reverend Benjamin Beddome, the celebrated hymn writer. Being introduced to young Robert, Beddome was so interested in his appearance and conversation that he insisted upon him preaching at the evening hour. Because there were so many ministers present at the ordination, Robert was most hesitant about accepting the invitation. However, after considerable persuasion, he agreed to preach. Selecting a rather philosophical subject and one which required much argumentation, the young minister made a good impression upon his hearers. "Later on, when he had become famous, Robert Hall was often in Clipston,

30 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 8
but no visit can have been as much talked of as his first public appearance."  

When the summer holidays were over, the student from Arnesby took up again his work in the "Bristol Education Society." He continued to do good work, but at times his habits were quite eccentric. Absent-mindedness caused him to pick up books or papers which belonged to other students; so that finally it became necessary for Dr. Evans to provide a place for him to study in his own private office.

One day during his student days there, two young men who belonged to Robert Robinson's congregation in Cambridge visited the city and asked Dr. Evans to allow one of his students to show them about Bristol. Robert Hall was appointed to this task, "and he so delighted his companions with the liveliness of his spirit and the charms of his conversation, as to produce a very strong impression in his favour, which was communicated to their friends on their return." It was this incident which later paved the way for Hall's call to the Baptist Church in Cambridge.

During the year between his first public appearance at Clipston and the summer of 1780, the young scholar had preached on numerous occasions, but he had not formally been called to the ministry. Therefore when his son returned

31 Payne and Allan, Clipston Baptist Church, p. 7
32 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, pp. 39-40
33 Unsigned article on Hall in The Baptist Magazine, Vol. VII, March 1832, p. 91
from Bristol to Arnesby, the elder Hall was eager for his namesake to be set apart for the ministry. According to the custom of the Baptists, "The youth had to pass through some examinations respecting his inclination, and motives, and the end he had in view in reference to the ministry, and to make some declaration of his religious sentiments." Having done that to the satisfaction of the church, Robert Hall was officially called to the work of the ministry by the church at Arnesby, on the 13th of August, 1780.

Walton, in a discussion of the Baptist view of the ministry, cites the case of Hall's call as evidence for a wider conception of the ministry. Theretofore it was understood that each local church would call and ordain its own minister. In the case of Robert Hall, however, there was no thought of his becoming the minister of Arnesby Church. He was only a member there, and never the pastor; thus he was set apart for the work of the ministry in any Baptist church which would choose him as pastor.

34 E.P. Hood, Robert Hall, p. 16
35 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 44
36 R.C. Walton, The Gathered Community, p. 97
3. At the University of Aberdeen

One more year was to pass before the young minister completed his studies in the Baptist Academy at Bristol. If he was to receive further training he would have to look to a university in Scotland or Ireland, because it was impossible for a Dissenter to enroll as a regular student in the English universities. Continuing under the Dr. Ward foundation, Robert Hall made his way to King's College, Aberdeen, in the autumn of 1781. On his journey northward, he was accompanied by another student, named Joseph Stennett. Bearing with them letters of introduction to Dr. Erskine of Edinburgh, the two students interrupted their trip by a visit in his home. After they left him, Dr. Erskine wrote a letter to the Rev. John Ryland of Northampton in which he referred to the visit of Hall and Stennett. He was most pleased with the students, but he wrote about the city to which they were going:

'Though there are many excellent teachers at Aberdeen, and both they and the ministers are remarkable for purity of morals, I have some fears, from different accounts, that the general strain of preaching there is less evangelical than in several pulpits in Glasgow or Edinburgh.' 37

Obviously Hall did not find the same atmosphere in the University that he had experienced at the Baptist school in Bristol. He deplored the lack of religious advantages which he found in that seat of learning. He objected to the

37 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 11
flagrant use of profanity by his fellow students. Nevertheless, he was able to find "some congenial religious society," and among others, he became acquainted with the aged sister of Alexander Cruden, the compiler of the Concordance. But by far, Hell's most cherished friendship at Aberdeen was with James Mackintosh, a native son of Scotland.

Although one student was studying for the ministry and the other for quite a different profession there was something about the mental make-up of each which threw them together as bosom friends. They delighted in reading Xenophon, Herodotus, and Plato; whenever possible they sat together in the lecture halls; they walked together along the banks of the Don, discussing what they had read and studied. Their favorite pastime was disputing over the moral and philosophic ideas of Berkeley, Butler, and Edwards. In later life both testified that they had learned more from those friendly discussions than they had from their reading. For his part, Sir James Mackintosh, in his Memoirs, wrote about Robert Hall:

'His society and conversation had a great influence on my mind. Our controversies were almost unceasing. We lived in the same house, and we were both very disputatious... During one winter we met at five o'clock in the morning to read Greek, in the apartment of Mr. Wynne, a nephew of Lord Newburgh, who had the good nature to rise at that unusual hour for the mere purpose of regaling us with coffee.' 39

38 Hood, Robert Hall, p. 19
And again in a letter from Bombay, in 1805, Sir James wrote to Hall:

It happened to me a few days ago, in drawing up (merely for my own use) a short sketch of my life, that I had occasion to give a statement of my recollection of the circumstances of my first acquaintance with you. On the most impartial survey of my early life, I could see nothing which tended so much to excite and invigorate my understanding, and to direct it towards high, though perhaps, scarcely accessible objects, as my intimacy with you. Five-and-twenty years are now past since we first met; yet hardly anything has occurred since, which has left a deeper or more agreeable impression on my mind. 40

Another student who was in the University at the same time, the Rev. W. Jack, said about James Mackintosh:

'His chief associate at King's College was my class-fellow, the late Rev. Robert Hall. Like Castor and Pollux, they were assimilated in the minds of all who knew them, by reason of the equal splendour of their talents; although in other respects they were very unlike. General courtesy, tasteful manners, a playful fancy, and an easy flow of elocution, pointed out James Mackintosh among his companions. Plainness, sincerity, an ardent piety, and undeviating love of truth, were the characteristics of Robert Hall....' 41

Thus in the University began a friendship which was to endure throughout their lives; although they were to move in quite different circles--Hall mostly among the humbler people, and Mackintosh among men of affairs and government.

Additional information about Hall's student activities at Aberdeen comes from the pen of Professor Paul, who entered

41 Ibid., pp. 15-16
the University a year before Robert Hall left. He recalls that during Hall's first year, he principally studied the Greek language under the tutelage of Professor John Leslie, while he spent the last three years with Professor Roderick Macleod, under whom he studied mathematics, natural and moral philosophy. In addition he did work in Latin and natural history under Professor W. Ogilvie. In all these classes the student from Arnesby stood out as the leading scholar.

"But, it was not as a scholar alone that Mr. Hall's reputation was great at college. He was considered by all the students as a model of correct and regular deportment, of religious and moral habits, of friendly and benevolent affections." 42

It should be pointed out that amidst all his successes, there were times when the young minister labored under grave handicaps. His poor health often caused him to lose hours of study, and there were moments when his body was so racked with pain that he fell to the floor and rolled about on the carpet.

A signal honor came to Hall in the autumn of 1783. When he was just beginning his third year at Aberdeen, he received a letter in which he was offered the position as assistant minister of Broadmead Church at Bristol. "The invitation had the names of 193 members attached to it." 43

42 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 13-14
43 Terrill, The Broadmead Records, p. 313
This gives an indication of the size of the church of which Dr. Caleb Evans was at the time serving as pastor. Hall, who had not yet reached his twentieth birthday was reluctant to accept the offer; notwithstanding, he replied to the church on the 4th of December:

I duly received your affectionate letter, in which you expressed your desire of engaging my labours as an assistant minister. Your request does me honour, and confers upon me an obligation which no efforts of mine can fully discharge. Yet, young and inexperienced as I am, I tremble to think of engaging in so arduous a work, especially in a situation where all my incapacity will be doubly felt. I cannot but think a few years would be necessary to enable me to gratify the lowest expectations. To plunge into the midst of life at so tender an age, with so little experience and so small a stock of knowledge, almost terrifies me. Your candid judgment of my past services I acknowledge with a mixture of pleasure and surprise,—pleased to attain the approbation of the wise and good, and surprised I in any measure have attained it; which I can attribute to nothing but the tenderness and forbearance which have ever strongly marked your conduct.

A retired and private sphere would indeed be more upon a level with my abilities, and congenial to my temper; yet I would willingly sacrifice my private inclinations to more important views, and lose sight of myself, if I could benefit others. My reluctance, therefore, to obey your call, arises merely from a feeling of my weakness, and my secret fear lest you should hereafter have occasion to repent it. If you could have dispensed with my labours till the final close of my studies, I might then have hoped to have been more able to serve you; but if not, I submit. Let me but crave your prayers, that as my day, so my strength may be. 44

In compliance with Hall's suggestions, the church agreed that he could come to them during his summer vacation of 1784,

44 Hall, "Letter to Baptist Church, Broadmead," Works, V, pp. 405-406
return to Aberdeen for his final year, and after that settle permanently with them.

Sir James Mackintosh was not at Aberdeen University during Hall's last year, and to assuage his loneliness, he buried himself more completely in his studies of Greek, moral and intellectual philosophy. "During the session, too, he attended Dr. Campbell's lectures at Marischal college, and frequently profited by the Doctor's expository discourses, delivered once each fortnight...." Thus, by the time his university work was completed and he had received the degree of M. A., his intellectual powers had grown to such a degree that he was fitted for a life of greatest service. According to his agreement with the Broadmead Church, Robert Hall left Aberdeen in May, 1785, and made his way to Bristol, to assume his responsibilities as assistant minister there in that famous old church.

45 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 15-16
CHAPTER II

FIRST MINISTRY AT BRISTOL, 1785-1791, THOUGHT AND PROBLEMS

1. Historical Background of the Period

The scene of Robert Hall's first five years of public ministry was laid in Bristol, a densely populated city with dark, narrow streets. A few years earlier, it had ranked as the second city in the country, but by 1785, it had begun to lose some of its trade and shipping. Although it had been the center of the Methodist revival under Whitefield and Wesley during that century, it was a place still noted for violence and mob riots. In such a center, Hall launched out in his chosen profession as assistant minister of the Broadmead Church.

At that particular time, England was enjoying a brief period of peace. The American Revolution had ended, and the personal rule of King George III had come to a close with Burke's Economic Reform Bill of 1782. The decade following 1783 was a period of peace and reconstruction under the ministry of the younger Pitt. Pitt, himself was eager for Parliamentary reform, but when his efforts were rebuffed in 1785, he lost interest, and later even opposed attempts at reform. One such effort at reform was instigated by the Dissenters who sought to have the Test and Corporation Acts

1 The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed. Vol.4, p.156
2 G.M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century, p. 62
repealed in 1787. Henry Beaufoy, a member of the Established Church, brought this particular bill before Parliament, but it made no headway because of the opposition of William Pitt and Lord North. However, repeated efforts were made to secure the passage of the bill, and it is noteworthy that the church in which Robert Hall was ministering appointed three men,

'as representatives of this congregation, to act in accordance with such gentlemen as may be deputed from the other congregations of Dissenters in this city, in the superintendence of the liberties and privileges of Protestant Dissenters; and particularly in taking such measures as may be judged most advisable in order to obtain a repeal of that iniquitous and reproachful law, the Test Act.'

Three attempts were made to pass the bill, but all met with failure; thus Dissenters and Roman Catholics continued to be debarred from their civil rights and liberties.

As for the social conditions of England prior to the French Revolution, there were many evils which must have been discouraging to a young minister just beginning his work. Gambling was carried to great heights. Excessive drinking was common; crime was rampant and criminal law was most severe. "A theft of more than the value of twelve pence by picking a pocket was punishable by death." As a consequence it is not surprising that ninety-six people were hanged at the Old Bailey in ten months of 1785. Exe-

3 A. Lincoln, *English Dissent*, p. 245
4. Terrill, *The Broadmead Records*, p. 313
cutions were so popular that great crowds of persons flocked to them. Prisons were horrible dens in which felons and debtors, men and women, young and old, were crowded together. Through the efforts of John Howard, however, some measures for improvement had been made by 1780. Three years later agitation was begun, largely by the Quakers, for the abolition of the slave trade. Bristol being one of the main centers of this trade, it was not unnatural that such an evil would be felt most acutely by one who believed in civil and religious liberties as strongly as did Robert Hall. By 1788, many of his fellow Baptist ministers, such as Abraham Booth, James Dore, and Robert Robinson, were preaching and publishing sermons against the slave trade. Hall, himself was destined to lend his voice and influence to the eradication of this evil.

Just as there had been social improvements, so also were there new developments in the field of religion. Not far from Bristol, Robert Raikes was chiefly instrumental in starting the first Sunday school. This Gloucester printer and journalist was so "appalled at the ignorance and vice he saw among the local boys and girls, who were already at work from the tenderest years," that in 1780, he gathered them together on a Sunday to teach them "reading and writing and the rudiments of religion." Thus was initiated a movement

6 Ivimey, History of the English Baptists, IV, p. 49
which in six years time had reached some 200,000 children. In many cases the Sunday schools offered the only education that numbers of young people obtained.

While Hall was at Bristol, significant developments were taking place in the vicinity of his old home at Arnesby. There was begun in 1784, a Baptist Society for Prayer, which was to result in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society at Kettering eight years later. Such men as William Carey, Andrew Fuller, John Ryland, and John Sutcliff paved the way for one of the most forward-looking movements ever to occur in the Baptist denomination, namely, the foreign mission enterprise. Though the assistant minister at Broadmead was hardly old enough to participate in the movement, he was in his time to play an important role in the development of this program.

The fact that the foreign missionary enterprise could begin indicates a change in the theological position of the Baptists during that period. The Particular Baptists, arising out of the Puritan and Separatist traditions, were since their origin, Calvinistic in theology. But this Calvinism had grown so stern and fatalistic that it developed into Antinomianism.

The terms believer, disciple, saint, and other more ordinary appellations, which the Scriptures give to Christians, were abandoned for the less common name of the elect,...and the elect taught to insult over others as reprobates, in whose damnation they delighted... the very word duty was abhorred; the law of God vilified; and, while the most ridiculously allegorical interpretations...
of Scripture were applauded as proofs of inspiration, all addresses to sinners were anathematised as rank arminianism. 8

Such 'hyper-Calvinism' proved to be a most difficult hurdle in the way of Carey and the few about him who were interested in carrying the gospel to the heathen. When appeals were made to London for aid in beginning the mission movement only one out of twenty-six Baptist ministers responded to the call. But through the perseverance of William Carey and especially as a result of Andrew Fuller's, Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation and Hall's, Help to Zion's Travellers, a new light began to dawn and the 'hyper-Calvinism' gave way to a more moderate form of Calvinism.

Aside from this spark of missionary interest, the general picture of the Baptists during the 1780's was not too encouraging. The Wesleyan revival had not the same influence on Baptists as it had on other denominations. In explaining why this was so, Whitley suggests two answers. One reason is that the Baptists seem to have been hypnotized by certain theological problems, notably Christological and ethical. And the second explanation is that there was a growth of a censorious spirit. Arrogance and criticism were substituted for evangelistic zeal. A few Baptists, the outstanding example of whom was the Rev. Robert Robinson of Cambridge, left the orthodox Baptist position altogether.

8 Bogue and Bennett, History of Dissenters, Vol. IV, p. 393
9 W.T. Whitley, History of British Baptists, pp. 213-214
and became out and out Socinians.

It was at this time that Socinianism or Unitarianism was making its greatest inroads among the Nonconformist ranks. Under various names this anti-Trinitarian doctrine had been occurring in England among a wide variety of individuals and denominations, at least, since 1650. By the early part of the eighteenth century, Socinianism had become dominant in the English Presbyterian groups and among the General Baptists.

It will be remembered that the Presbyterians, in part probably as a result of the general vagueness in which their whole position was wrapped, had lowered the temperature of their Calvinism: the General Baptists had of course been from the beginning of their denominational existence Arminian in their views; so that one is driven to take as something more than a casual coincidence the connection between Arminianism and Socinianism which in these cases is thus seemingly shown to exist. 10

It was not until the latter half of the eighteenth century, just the time when Robert Hall was receiving his education and beginning his first work, that Socinianism achieved its most rapid growth and produced its most illustrious protagonists. The beginning of open and organized Unitarianism is dated from the time of Theophilus Lindsey.

"Mr. Lindsey,...was a heterodox clergyman who, finding it hopeless to strive for a theological reform in the Church, resigned the living of Catterick in 1773, and in 1774 opened

the first Unitarian chapel in the kingdom at Essex Street, London." Although the law still forbade the preaching of anti-Trinitarian opinions, there was little likelihood of its being enforced. In addition to Lindsey, the other leading Unitarians of that period were Thomas Belsham and Joseph Priestley. Because of his scientific discoveries, his controversies with Bishop Horsley and Edmund Burke, and his voluminous works, Dr. Priestley brought Unitarianism to the forefront in a way that it had never been before. Coming out of a Calvinistic background, Priestley became an Arminian before entering the Daventry Academy; when he left the academy he called himself an Arian; and after reading Dr. Lardner's, Letter on the Logos, he became a Socinian. Each new step was made because he was convinced that it was the way to truth. Joseph Priestley was not a republican, but by every means he could employ, he worked for toleration and liberty. His piety was unquestioned, his earnestness deep and genuine, and his love of freedom unsurpassable. Such a man though his doctrine was considered most unorthodox by the Baptists, had an influence upon them, and consciously or unconsciously his thought had especial bearing upon the mind of Robert Hall during his early years in Bristol.

11 W.Lloyd, Protestant Dissent and English Unitarianism, p. 175
12 Memoirs of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Priestley, (Autobiography, completed by his son) pp. 5, 11, 18, 52
13 Lloyd, op. cit., p. 180
2. Assistant Pastor in Broadmead and Tutor at Bristol Academy

The Reverend Robert Hall was twenty-one years of age when he resumed his labors as assistant pastor at Broadmead Church. There he found himself in one of the denomination's most historic churches. In the year, 1640, five persons had assembled in the home of Mrs. Hazzard at the upper end of Broad Street in Bristol "to Separate from ye Worship of ye World and times they lived in," and it is this event which marks the beginning of Broadmead Church.

In the ensuing years the members of this church and especially its pastors suffered much from trials and ordeals inflicted upon them. Of most assistance during those difficult days, was a deacon by the name of Edward Terrill. Soon after being appointed a ruling elder in the church, Terrill married into a wealthy family; so that he was able to execute a deed in 1679, "by which he devoted a large portion of his property to the education of pious young men for the ministry." This act of generosity marked the beginning of the Bristol Baptist College, which was run in conjunction with the church. According to Terrill's desires the trustees were directed to employ the proceeds of his estate for the support of a minister who was holy and learned, who knew both Greek and Hebrew, who held to the practice of believer's baptism, and who could act both as a

14 Terrill, The Broadmead Records, p. 15
15 Ibid., p. 298
pastor and teacher. Further, this minister was expected to devote three half days in the week to the instruction of not more than twelve students, who resided in or near Bristol.

The congregation is, according to the deed, expected to support an assistant minister who shall aid the pastor in his other work, particularly village preaching. Mr. Terrill's munificence, followed afterwards by bequests from other friends, especially Mr. Robert Bodenham, rendered it necessary that there should be two ministers at Broadmead. It appears that it was very early found convenient that the assistant minister should be also assistant tutor; and chiefly in consequence of Terrill's deed, it has happened that, during 180 years, one or other minister of Broadmead has always been engaged in the education of young ministers, and for a long period both were thus occupied. 16

From its beginning, Broadmead had been a liberal church, in that it had permitted individuals to communicate with those who had not been baptized according to the Baptist practice. After the unhappy ministry of the Rev. Edward Harrison in 1733, this policy was changed. The church records are silent on just what happened and why the change occurred, but for several years non-Baptists were unable to communicate in the church. In the year 1757, a group of Paedobaptists who had been regularly attending the chapel formed themselves into a separate church which was later known as "the little church." From this date and on beyond the time of Hall's ministry, there existed in Broadmead two distinct churches, with their respective officers, records, church meetings, and communions. The Rev. Hugh Evans who was assistant min-

16 Terrill, The Broadmead Records, p. 299
ister at the time of the formation of "the little church" agreed to administer communion to the Paedobaptists, and all the pastors since him followed the same practice.

In 1759, Dr. Caleb Evans became assistant minister of Broadmead, and twenty-two years later, as has been suggested, he took over the work as pastor of the church, succeeding his father. During Dr. Evans' ministry the church building was greatly enlarged; so that its dimensions were fifty-six feet by fifty feet, and it would hold about eight hundred people. Ivimey, the Baptist historian, reports that shortly before the new assistant minister from Aberdeen University came to Broadmead, the total number of members in the church was two hundred and fifty.

None of the sermons which Robert Hall preached during his first stay at Bristol have been preserved; yet the compiler of his works had before him the notes of many of those sermons. These notes, taken down by an individual in the Broadmead congregation, reveal the intellectual quality of his preaching. And Gregory records that:

his preaching excited an unusual attention, the place of worship was often crowded to excess, and many of the most distinguished men in Bristol, including several clergymen, were among his occasional auditors. 19

From the beginning of his labors at Broadmead, Hall also assisted in the classical department of the academy.

17 Terrill, The Broadmead Records, pp. 305-06, 308
18 Ivimey, History of English Baptists, IV, p. 280
19 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 16
James Newton, who headed this department, was forced to retire because of poor health, shortly after Hall's arrival in Bristol, and at the annual meeting of the Educational Society in August of 1785, the assistant minister was invited to assume full responsibility as classical tutor. "This appointment," declares Swaine, "he held for a period of five years, discharging the duties of it with much ability, zeal, and success." Samuel Pearce was one of the pupils during the time that Hall tutored in the academy, and his biographer wrote that it was a rare fortune that Pearce could be associated with Robert Hall while he was at Broadmead as junior pastor and tutor in the college. The students, according to that writer, gloried in Hall's transcendent genius as a teacher; while crowds went to hear him preach because of his force and brilliance. Further, the biographer wrote of Hall's teaching, that it was as yeast. "He provoked inquiry. He taught men to think." He preached and taught "a freer man, a juster God."

It was early evident, not so much from his preaching and teaching, but from his conversations with friends, that Hall could hardly be called orthodox. A reviewer wrote of him during that time:

The free and daring speculations which he advanced in private, grieved and alarmed his judicious friends, although he never promulgated direct and positive error from the pulpit, and his conver-

20 S.A. Swaine, *Faithful Men*, p. 103
21 S.P. Carey, *Samuel Pearce*, p. 78
sational sallies were occasionally marked by a vehemence and extravagance of expression, a bitterness of sarcasm, and a characteristic imprudence, which made him many enemies. 22

Furthermore, Gregory testifies that Hall's knowledge of Christianity, "as a system of restoration and reconciliation, was comparatively defective and obscure...." 23

And indeed even in his preaching, it was most noticeable that Hall neglected the major themes of the Christian faith, such as the atonement, the divinity of Christ, the incarnation, and the crucifixion. For this omission, he excused himself, by saying that the pastor, Dr. Evans, so frequently preached on these doctrines that it left him room "to explore other regions of instruction and interest." 23 His "exploring" of these "other regions" however, did not satisfy his senior brethren in the ministry. The Rev. Andrew Fuller recorded in his diary on three separate occasions:

1784, May 7.--Heard Mr. Robert Hall, jun., from, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' Felt very solemn in hearing some parts! The Lord keep that young man!

1784, May 8.--Conversation with Robert Hall on various subjects. Some tenderness and earnestness in prayer after his departure.

1785, June 14.--Taken up with the company of Mr. Robert Hall, jun.: feel much pain for him. The Lord, in mercy to him and his churches in this country, keep him in the path of truth and

22 Unsigned article on "The Life of Robert Hall,
23 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 16-17
There was a danger that the young minister and tutor would become a Socinian. He was greatly interested in the writings of Dr. Joseph Priestley, who was at the time living in Birmingham and minister of what was reputed to be the most liberal congregation in England. In 1782, Priestley published his, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, and it was his contention that the doctrine of the Trinity was the greatest of all the corruptions. As a result of this work, there began a most heated controversy between Priestley and Dr. Samuel Horsley, Archdeacon of St. Albans. Though Hall took no part in the controversy, he was keenly interested in it and watched the proceedings on both sides.

From a letter which Hall received in Bristol from his friend, Dr. John Ryland, it is evident that this minister, who was eleven years older than Hall, was concerned about his inclination toward Socinianism. Dr. Ryland began his letter tactfully by telling his younger friend that he hoped he would understand the spirit in which he was offering his criticism. Then he went on to write:

> It gave me extreme uneasiness to hear, this week, of the general disgust you had given to your former friends at Birmingham, on your last visit. Verily I wish that neither you, nor I, nor others, may fight for the truth with infernal weapons. I would wish to feel in my inmost soul the tenderest pity for the most erroneous men in the world, and to shew all proper respect to men of science, and

men who are regular in their outward conduct. Nor should I at all approve of violent or harsh language, or like to speak my opinion of the state of individuals... And I must get a good way toward Socinianism myself before I have any strong hope that a Socinian, living and dying such, will see the kingdom of God. When the merciful Jesus declared, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' &c. I cannot believe that he meant simply, that he shall be saved who believes that Jesus was not an impostor, and who believes the Doctrine of the Resurrection. But these two articles, are I believe, the whole of Dr. Priestley's Christianity, and if once I were to think this Christianity enough to carry a man to heaven, I should not, I fear, be very strenuous in my endeavours to convince men of the danger of self-righteousness, and the necessity of a reliance on the Atonement. Oh, my dear friend, can I conceive that your mind was deeply impressed with a sense of the divine purity and the justice of God's law, when you could utter so vain and vile a speech as this? 25

Ryland continued his letter by suggesting that Hall should read again the epistle to the Galatians, and further he added:

Study to enter into the very spirit of Paul's discourse, I Cor. i. 18-31, or Gal. ii.15-21; and if this is consistent with supposing it would be unfair for God to punish any man for rejecting the Gospel, who understood chemistry and philosophy, why, then retain your favourable opinion of the safety of the Socinians. 25

Immediately upon the receipt of this letter, Robert Hall sent Dr. Ryland a reply. He was not disturbed at the criticism levelled against him by his older friend. Indeed, he thanked Ryland for his "friendly expostulation." He admitted that he had been hasty and unwise in some of the words he had spoken at Birmingham, but as for the charge of

leaning toward Socinianism, he replied:

You seem to suspect I am far gone in Socinianism; but in this, my dear friend, give me leave to say, you are utterly mistaken. Since I first began to reflect, I do not recollect a time when I was less inclined to Socinianism than at present. I can truly say, it would remove from me all my salvation and all my desire. 26

Though denying Socinianism, himself, Hall did not go so far as Dr. Ryland did in holding that he who fails to believe in the atonement can have no expectation of salvation. Indeed, Hall's opinion of Dr. Priestley was most tolerant. At a later date, he declared: "The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius." 27

Holding as he did such a charitable attitude to Dr. Priestley, it is easy to see how his contemporaries would suspect him of Socinian tendencies, a suspicion aggravated by his doctrine of the Trinity. In truth, during his first years at Bristol, Hall was more of a "Dualist" than a Trinitarian. There are two references which lend support to this view. First, in a letter dated the 21st of July, 1821, he wrote to his friend, Richard Foster concerning a recent sermon which he had preached on the Trinity. After explaining his position on the Trinity and telling his

26 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 20-21
27 This was in 1791. Hall, Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom, Works, III, p. 28
correspondent how he developed the sermon, Hall went on to write: "The time was when I maintained the dual system, supposing the Holy Spirit to be an energy; but I have long found abundant reason to renounce that doctrine, and now find much complacency in the ancient doctrine of the Trinity."  

From the second reference it is clear that the time Hall referred to in this letter was during his first years in Bristol. A contemporary at that period sheds light on the subject in his autobiography. The Reverend William Jay, who frequently visited Hall in his home and who met him on various occasions, wrote of him that he "denied the common notion of the Trinity, by contending for a duality of Persons in the Divine Essence." Continuing, Jay declared that:

many have questioned whether he was in earnest in his belief of so strange a doctrine; but I have heard him avow it with firmness; and I remember spending an evening with him in Bath, in a company that included a Sabellian, two Trinitarians, and himself as a Dualist; and when the Reminiscent, afraid to enter into the metaphysical part of the discussion, ventured to mention the baptismal form of words as a difficulty, and to ask whether it was not very strange that--'in the name of the Father and of the Son,' should intend personality, and, 'in the name of the Holy Ghost'--only a mere power or influence; and also, whether it was not strange to baptize the one 'in the name' of an abstraction; he acknowledged that it presented a difficulty. 30

28 Hall, "Letter to Richard Foster," Works, V, p. 530
30 Ibid., pp. 380-81
From such evidence, it is natural to conclude that Hall's conception of the Trinity was different from the orthodox position.

There was still a further sense in which he was inclined to lean toward Socinianism or more specifically toward the teachings of Joseph Priestley. For some time prior to 1790, Hall considered himself a materialist. In a public communication to the Broadmead Church, he explained concerning his materialism: "I have never drawn your attention to this subject in my preaching: because I have always considered it myself, and wished you to consider it, as a mere metaphysical speculation." Here then is another of his early beliefs which he maintained privately rather than brought out in his preaching and teaching. This again shows, however, the influence which the writings of Priestly had upon him. In his, Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit, 1777, Priestly maintained, "that the powers of sensation or perception, and thought, as belonging to man, have never been found but in conjunction with a certain organized system of matter; and therefore, that those powers necessarily exist in, and depend upon, such a system." In the same letter to the Broadmead Church, Hall explained that his opinion concerning materialism is, "that the nature of man is simple and uniform; that the thinking powers and faculties

32 Joseph Priestley, Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit, p. 26
are the result of a certain organization of matter; and that after death he ceases to be conscious until the resurrection."

In connection with Hall's idea of life after death, again the influence of Priestley is seen in his thought. Though he was a materialist, Priestly held to a belief in immortality. In a literal sense, he contended for the resurrection of the dead. Death, he insisted, was only a decomposition, "And whatever is decomposed, may be recomposed by the being who first composed it; and I doubt not but that, in the proper sense of the word, the same body that dies shall rise again."; for Priestley, then there was nothing miraculous about the resurrection. It would come about by some unknown law of nature.

To the extent that his ideas on materialism were connected with Socinianism, Hall was a Socinian. But as his biographer allows, Hall "entertained" materialism "as a matter of speculation and dispute," rather than a matter of "sober and serious belief...." Whatever the case it did not make great enough impression upon his theology, for him to feel that he should incorporate it into his preaching and teaching.

33 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 27
34 Priestley, Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit, pp. 161-63
35 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 55
3. His First Publications

From the pen of Robert Hall, only four extant publications have come from the period of his first Bristol ministry. Of these four, three are general essays, and only one deals with a strictly religious theme. In addition to these four pieces, he also wrote other articles in connection with the slave trade, but unfortunately these have not been preserved. In a letter which he wrote to his father on the 10th of February, 1788, he mentioned these pamphlets, but more important, he gave an indication of the attitude which he took concerning that issue.

'We have a great deal of talk here about the slave-trade; as I understand from your letter, you have had too. A petition has been sent from hence to Parliament for the abolishing (sic) it; and a committee is formed to co-operate with that in London, in any measures that may be taken to promote their purpose. At Bristol much opposition is made by the merchants and their dependents, who are many, perhaps most of them, engaged in it. Our petition was signed by eight hundred, or upwards; which, considering that no application has been made to any, we think a great number. Many things have been written in the papers on both sides: some pieces I have written myself, under the signature Britannicus, which I purpose to get printed in a few pamphlets, and shall send one of them to you. The injustice and inhumanity of the trade are glaring, and upon this ground I mainly proceed: upon the policy of abolishing it I treat lightly, because I am dubious about it; nor can it be of great consequence to the question in hand; for, if it proved cruel and unjust, it is impious to defend it... I am afraid the abolition will not take place speedily, if at all. The trading and mercantile interest will make great outcry; the scheme will be thought chimerical, and after producing a few warm speeches, will, I fear die
"At this period of his life," Robert Hall, "was celebrated as a satirist, and would overwhelm such of his associates as tempted him to the use of those formidable weapons, with wit and raillery, not always playful." In connection with his satirical attitude, he wrote a short essay entitled, "Character of Cleander," in which he pictured the sad plight of one whose "ridicule was turned on the imperfections of his friends and his enemies, with indiscriminate severity." Whether the author intended by this essay to stigmatize himself or some other critic is uncertain. Nevertheless, there is nothing doubtful in the article concerning the end which comes to such an individual. Hall wrote:

Wherever he turned himself, he found his path was strewed with thorns; and that even they who admired his wit secretly vilified his character, and shrank from his acquaintance. His peace began to bleed on every side; his reputation was tarnished; his fairest prospects blasted; and Cleander, at length, awakened from his delusions, was convinced, when it was too late, of a lesson he had often been taught in vain, that the attachments of friendship, and the tranquility of life, are too valuable to be sacrificed to a blaze of momentary admiration.

If Hall intended the sting of the article to be directed toward himself, it produced its results; for after his early years he began to grow less severe in his use of satire and

36 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 23
37 Ibid., p. 17
38 Hall, "Character of Cleander," Works, III, p. 461
39 Ibid., p. 463
Disappointment in love which befell Hall at that period of his life, was largely influential in causing him to write a little piece on the miseries of love entitled, "A Reverie." In this composition, his reflections transported him back into the realm of Roman mythology. "I imagined," wrote Hall, "that the power of Love had occasioned general discontent, and that the different orders of men had entered into an agreement to petition Jupiter for her removal." The philosophers and astronomers, the men of business, and all disappointed lovers united in the effort to remove the goddess of love from the earth. Thereupon declared the writer, "Providence never chastises the folly of men more justly than by granting the indulgence of their requests." Upon an appointed day, the goddess of love took her flight, amid great rejoicing by all those who thought themselves free from her thraldom. But hardly had love left the earth before a great change took place. Conversation became tiresome and insipid, manners became coarse, the fine arts began to languish, and even "profound learning" was less attended to than ever. As a consequence, all men were just as eager to bring the goddess back as they were to get rid of her. Whereupon Hall ended his "Reverie" on a happy note--the great day which marked the return of love.

40 Hall, "A Reverie," Works, III, p. 465
41 Ibid., p. 471
"An Essay on Poetry and Philosophy," is a third work of Hall, which he produced at the time of his first stay in Bristol. In his contrast of these two terms, he began with the statement that all productions of the human mind fall under one of two heads: works of imagination and works of reason. The poet's purpose is to delight the reader by addressing his fancy. The philosopher purposes merely to instruct. Poetry combines and associates; philosophy separates and distinguishes. Poetry is the offspring of a mind heated to a great degree; but calmness and composure are necessary for philosophy. Poetry is of an earlier date than any other production of the human mind, for just as the individual in his youth is more imaginative, so in his old age thought and reflection take the place of fancy. Hall concluded his essay with a discussion of Homer and Milton, whom he characterized as writers of vast thought and sensitive spirits. Yet he claimed that Milton is more sublime, while Homer is more picturesque.

Because of his connection with Broadmead Church, Hall was requested in 1787, to write the Circular Letter for the Baptist churches of the Somersetshire and Wiltshire Association. As a subject for this message, he decided to write, "On the Excellency of the Christian Dispensation." Because it is his only religious publication of that period, it affords some idea of his early thought. By way of intro-

duction, he began with the Jewish background, and discussed it in relation to the present dispensation. When Christ appeared, he lived on earth in humility and died in agony and disgrace, yet during his sojourn here he had every evidence of divinity. Following his ascension, an even greater knowledge and power were given his disciples. They were endowed with miraculous abilities for the purpose of spreading the gospel to the ends of the world. When mankind realizes what Christ has done and the limit to which he has gone in coming to this earth, one can not but inquire into the reason and purpose of his coming. Whereupon, Hall declared that Christ came chiefly to remove the ignorance and error in which mankind, by nature, is involved, and to supply man with a knowledge of God. Continuing, Hall wrote that it is impossible for man to foretell the dispensations of God, especially in regard to his Providence with respect to any one part of creation. "Confined to a point in our existence, and limited in our ideas, we cannot tell," he declared, "what relation we bear to other beings, or how it may seem to fit to Divine Providence to dispose of us, in relation to those higher and more ultimate designs which are continually carrying on." Illustrating his point, he asserted, that God, to the greatest degree, is compassionate and good, but when a number of his creatures bring unhappiness upon themselves by a wilful rebellion against him,

an unusual instance would arise. In such a case one could not know whether compassion would be in accord with the general administration of Providence or not. In any event, Hall declared that the case is entirely to the point; for sin and disorder have come into the world. "It is evident," he said, "things are turned out of their natural and original channel—that they are not what they have been, nor what they ought to be."

Following his description of the age of darkness and confusion, Hall asserted that at this point the excellence of the Christian dispensation appears. This dispensation dispels all the darkness and, "no longer leaves us to the conjectures of reason, which has always erred, nor to the fluctuating opinions of men; but all it declares, it confirms by the authority of God." Further, he explained:

The truths it discovers were proclaimed by the Son of God himself, who lay in the bosom of his Father from eternity, who was acquainted with all his counsels, and created all his works...In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who was God as well as man, in the humiliation of his life, and in his death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion.... In this dispensation of his grace, he has reached so far beyond our highest hopes, that, if we love him, we may be assured that he will with it freely give us all things. 45

Therefore, any one who will sincerely ask it, has access to God at all times and from all places. Moreover, God promises his Spirit to teach man how to pray and to help him in

44 Hall, "Christian Dispensation," Works, I, p. 420
45 Ibid., p. 422
his infirmities.

Hall pointed out that Christianity is, as it were, in its infancy. It has not yet reached the limits of its growth and advancement. "The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age, or of one nation. It is," he stated, "a train of light first put in motion by God, and which will continue to move and to spread, till it has filled the whole earth with its glory." At the end the Redeemer will appear on earth again, as Judge and Ruler. He will gather all his elect, he will abolish sin and death, and he will place the righteous in the presence of God the Father.

Following his presentation of the Christian dispensation, the preacher proceeded to the hortatory section of his message. Among other things, he insisted that one should 'feel' the gospel as well as believe it. And he continued to exhort:

Perhaps one of the chief reasons why Christianity does not more purify our hearts is, that we are apt to confine it to seasons of worship, and to shut it out from the ordinary concerns of life. It is a great and fatal mistake to imagine them so separate that we can innocently and usefully engage in the one, without any regard had to the other. Our temporal affairs should never, indeed, be suffered to mingle with the exercises of religion; but religion should always regulate the conduct of our temporal affairs. 47

In emphasizing the practice of relating religion to life, Hall struck a note which was to characterize the remainder of his ministry.

47 Ibid., p. 427
4. Clash with Caleb Evans and Theological Position

Toward the close of his assistantship in the Broadmead Church, Hall began to experience trouble with the pastor and certain of the members. This difficulty arose largely because some of the theological views maintained by the younger minister were not compatible with those held by Dr. Evans and his followers. But in addition, there existed in the minds of some in the congregation a dissatisfaction with the way that Hall presented the truths of religion. This misunderstanding between him and his colleague, Dr. Evans continued, "not only to disturb the minds of both, but, as might be expected, to create partisans among their respective friends, and indeed to endanger the peace of the church at Broadmead, for more than two years."

Happily for Hall, there was a vacancy in the Baptist Church at Cambridge in June, 1790, and he was approached on the subject of accepting the pastorate there. After a visit to Cambridge and an invitation to return for a longer period of preaching, he went back to Bristol and consulted with his friends as to what course he should take. When he approached Dr. Evans on the matter, the older minister was quite frank in expressing his feelings. Obviously it was his hope "that the proposed removal would restore tranquillity to his own congregation," therefore he confessed to Hall, "that 'Caleb

Evans' was anxious for his continuance, but that neither the 'Pastor' of Broadmead nor the 'President' of the academy concurred in that opinion."

Robert Hall was quick to realize that it was time for him to sever his relations with Broadmead Church. Whereupon he wrote a letter to the church on the 11th of November, 1790, in which he expressed his feelings to all the congregation:

I take this opportunity of informing you, that I am come to a determination of leaving you. The reasons of this resolution I do not think it necessary to detail, farther than in general to remark, that my opinions on some points of religious and moral speculation are different from those professed by this society, and that I wish to be connected with a congregation in which I shall meet with sentiments more congenial with my own, and where I shall not be in danger of falling into the arts of collision, or of incurring the vexations of honesty.

I have always endeavoured to avoid the mixing of private passions with religious conduct. I rest no blame upon any, for I know of none that exists. Our sentiments do not depend upon our will, and there are many ill satisfied with my public ministry whom I highly esteem. Your personal attachment I have always valued, but I have never been elated with your applause; and now that I see a propriety in a separation, I do not feel myself at all dejected, degraded, or displeased, by the disapprobation of many of you. For my conduct in the ministry I make no apology. I have adopted that strain of preaching, and selected those topics, which I thought most conducive to your good, forming my own opinions without fear or controul, and commending myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

It is to the credit of both Hall and Evans, that they

49 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 69
50 Ibid., pp. 70-71
did not allow their personal feelings to enter into their misunderstanding. In the letter in which Hall offered his resignation to the church, he expressed sentiments of cordial friendship with his fellow minister:

I hope none of you will suspect that your worthy pastor has influenced my determination by any improper interference of his, when I assure you that his friendship for me has continued through every vicissitude unshaken; and that his conduct, particularly in this business, through every part of it, not only meets my approbation, but merits my applause. 51

On the part of Dr. Evans, it is certain that he too held his assistant minister in highest regard. A friend of both these men testifies in his autobiography that Dr. Evans was never jealous of Hall, because he loved him and esteemed him most highly. In the same account, William Jay tells of a certain Sunday which he spent at Bristol. On this particular day, Dr. Evans preached in the morning, Jay in the afternoon, and Hall in the evening. As the two went on their way to hear Hall preach at his service, Dr. Evans spoke much to Jay about the splendid man they were going to hear. He said of him:

'His eloquence is unequalled, and his powers of mind seem bordering on infinite. If some are not so satisfied with regard to his piety, I have had better opportunities of knowing him, and whoever shall live long enough will see the excellence of his character. I find him distinguished, not only by his talents, but by his grace also.' 52

51 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 71
52 Autobiography of William Jay, p. 381
Even if the two men were able to keep their personal feelings in the background, there is no question about the theological gulf which developed between them. Reference has already been made to Hall's conception of the doctrine of the Trinity. He held that the Holy Spirit was a force, an energy, or an influence and not a person. Such an idea was entirely foreign to Dr. Evans' mind and thought. In a sermon preached on the deity of the Holy Spirit, Evans emphasized the great importance of this subject by declaring:

if there be no such person as the Holy Ghost, or if that person who is distinguished by this appellation, instead of being one with God be only a creature and 'no God at all' as hath been affirmed; then the greatest part of the christian church, in former ages as well as the present, hath been guilty of the most flagrant idolatry; giving that glory to a creature or to a mere influence, which is due only to the Creator. 53

On the other hand, Dr. Evans insisted that if the Holy Ghost is truly God and the same as the Father and Son in essence and in nature, then those who deny his deity or consider him a mere creature or influence, are in effect making God to be a liar. In the sermon, he proceeded to give his reasons for holding to such a view. He pointed out how illogical it is to conceive of the Holy Spirit as a power or an influence in such Scripture references as the apostolic benediction and the form of words Jesus suggested for use in the baptism of new disciples. Thus the difference of opinion between Hall and Evans on this subject is self

53 Caleb Evans, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost*, (3rd ed.) pp. 48-49
Moreover, the two ministers did not have the same attitude toward Calvinism. In a letter that Hall addressed to Dr. Evans, he wrote: "You profess yourself a Calvinist. I do not." By this the younger minister did not mean that he was an Arminian. He never considered himself as such, though he did accept some of the principles of Arminianism. He was not an advocate of universal grace; yet he did maintain that the influence of the Holy Spirit was promised to the unregenerate and might be obtained by them if they offered up fervent and sincere prayer. Further, Hall held that the universality of the atonement fully justified indefinite invitations to sinners. In this thought he was following in the train of John Bunyan, but more especially that of his contemporary, Andrew Fuller. In his, Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation, Fuller stated that,

\[ \text{it is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal auditors to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; but it is at our peril to exhort them to any thing short of it, or which does not involve or imply it.} \]

Thus the cleavage between Robert Hall and Caleb Evans became wider and more involved. Two church meetings were held to consider Hall's letter of resignation, and confusion and dissension arose in both. There were those who wanted

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54 Letter dated, Bristol, 4th Dec. 1790. Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 79
55 Ibid., p. 56
56 Fuller, Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation, Works, II, p. 84
him to remain and others who wanted him to leave. On this matter the records of the church reveal that:

At this distance of time it is impossible to ascertain the exact truth; but, as far as can be gathered from the documents, as well as from the church records, it is highly improbable that Dr. Evans descended to any clandestine procedure against Mr. Hall; and equally doubtful that Mr. Hall meant seriously to impeach Dr. Evans’s integrity. It is possible that a few hasty expressions on the part of Mr. Hall were misunderstood and exaggerated by injudicious friends, who were themselves prejudiced against their pastor on Mr. Hall’s account. Dr. Evans read to the church a long and elaborate defence of his conduct, in which he betrayed a highly nervous and sensitive condition of mind; trifles received undue importance, and there was too little regard for his own dignity, as well as needless impatience of vague reports, and too much attention to talebearers. 57

After the two meetings of the church, Hall wrote Dr. Evans and expressed general dissatisfaction with the proceedings which he had taken. Notwithstanding, he concluded the letter in this manner: “You have done nothing inconsistent with personal friendship, but you have done too much ever to permit us to act together as colleagues with unanimity and confidence.”

In the hope of a reconciliation between the two men, a meeting was arranged in which both could present their respective views of the matter. Two friends of each minister were also invited to take part in the discussions. The atmosphere became quite heated with charges and counter-charges. One side cast all the blame for the misunderstand-

57 Terrill, The Broadmead Records, p. 314
58 Morris, Recollections of H. Hall, p. 80
ing on Hall; the other party openly censured Dr. Evans for his conduct. Thus no beneficial results came out of the meeting. The final break was inevitable. Hall determined to carry through his resolution to resign his first ministerial office. It is worthy of note, that when he left Bristol,

not a single hand was held up in favour of the acceptance of his resignation; all opposition was silenced, and efforts were made now to re-invite him, and to retain his services; and all seemed to be aware, too late, that they were permitting a treasure to pass from their possession. 59

On the eve of his departure, he deemed it wise to leave some statement of his theological position. In the course of his dispute with Dr. Evans many false accusations were made against him. So in order to clarify the situation as much as possible, Hall prepared a letter in which he expressed his sentiments on certain subjects. An outline of this letter not only furnishes a review of the young minister's thought during his first stay at Bristol, but introduces additional elements of his thought which otherwise would not be available.

On the matter of Christology and soteriology, Hall held:

1. That Jesus Christ is divine.

2. That Christ's atonement is the only ground for

59 E.P. Hood, Robert Hall, p. 29
60 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 26-27
61 This does not mean that Hall held only to the divinity of Christ. He just as firmly contended for his humanity.
sinner's acceptance before God.

3. That works have no "share in the great business of Justification."

4. That it is necessary for "Divine influence" to regenerate and sanctify the mind of all men in order to become "real" Christians.

Concerning Calvinism, Hall said that he rejected it in the strict sense.

1. He rejected the federal headship of Adam, or the idea that Adam's sin is imputed to posterity.

2. He rejected the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation, as it was explained by the Calvinists.

On the positive side, he stated the following principles:

1. That a corrupt and irregular bias of mind only is inherited from our first parents.

2. Man is liable to condemnation only for his own actions.

3. Guilt is a personal and individual thing.

Furthermore, Hall:

1. Held to a belief in Divine Decrees.

2. Believed in the predestination of all events and that all who are finally saved are predestined to eternal life.
On the charge of being a materialist, Hall admitted:

1. That the nature of man is simple and uniform.
2. That mind is a result of certain organization of matter.
3. That at death man is unconscious until the resurrection.

On the position of baptism, he maintained the following ideas:

1. The Baptist position in respect to subject and mode is correct.
2. It is a perversion of the ordinance if it is applied to infants.
3. The correct mode is immersion.
4. Sprinkling if done in adult age, does not invalidate baptism, though it is an innovation.
5. That he personally would baptize only by immersion.
6. He would not re-baptize one who had been sprinkled in adult age.

In the closing lines of his letter to the Broadmead Church, he wrote:

'I have thus, in compliance with your wishes, and with all the perspicuity in my power, in a few words explained to you my religious opinions, with a more particular view to the subjects on which I may be supposed most to err: and this avowal I have made, partly as a testimony of the respect I bear you, and partly to vindicate my character from any suspicion of ambiguity or reserve; but not at all with the remotest wish to win popu-
larity or to court your suffrages.... 62

The final episode of the clash between Dr. Evans and Hall came after the young minister had left Bristol. A short time after Hall had accepted his new work, the news came to him that Dr. Caleb Evans died on the 9th of August, 1791. Immediately he wrote to Isaac James, the brother-in-law of the late minister. In the letter he revealed how deeply affected he was upon learning the sad news. More especially was he moved because the friendship which had existed for so long between the two ended in a breach which was irreparable. Yet he testified that in it all his conscience was free from guilt. Continuing, he wrote:

Were the circumstances to occur again, a breach would, as before, be inevitable. But though, in justice to myself, I say thus much, there is no one more disposed to lament the deceased than myself, or who has a truer sensibility of the real virtues of his character. 63

In closing, the former assistant at Broadmead asserted that it was his ardent wish and prayer for all errors and mistakes of the past to be forgotten. He hoped for the church a new era of harmony and peace.

63 Ibid., p. 25
CHAPTER III

MINISTRY AT CAMBRIDGE, 1791-1806, POLITICAL WORKS
AND THEOLOGY

1. Political and Historical Background

When Robert Hall began his ministry at the Baptist Church of Cambridge in July, 1791, the entire country was exceedingly perturbed because of what was occurring across the Channel in France. Two years prior to that date, events took place which paved the way for the French Revolution. The fall of the Bastille, in July, 1789, signalized for France the dawn of a new era. In England the news first met with general approval. The Whig leader, Charles Fox, considered it one of the greatest events of history. But William Pitt thought of it with greater coolness. As the Revolution became progressively more serious, as the riots and massacres became more inhuman, many Englishmen began to change their attitude toward it. Their love of law and order, their distaste for violent changes and their respect for past traditions caused their sympathies with the French revolutionists gradually to grow cool.

Edmund Burke was the Englishman who became the most outspoken critic of the Revolution. While Pitt pleaded for friendship between Britain and France, Burke stood alone in

Parliament on the issue. He saw in the Revolution the embodiment of all that he despised—a scorn of the past, the rejection of a good constitution for a bad one, the ordered structure of classes breaking down before a doctrine of social equality, and the sweeping away of the Church and Nobility. When Parliament no longer listened to his voice, Burke turned to his pen, and in November, 1790, he published his *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

As a point of departure, Burke seized upon a sermon preached by the Unitarian Preacher, Dr. Richard Price. In that sermon, Price expressed his intense gratification that he had lived long enough to witness such an event as the Revolution. "I have lived," declared the preacher, "to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error.—I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it." The key words of his sermon, delivered on the anniversary of the 1688 Revolution in England, were truth, virtue, and liberty, and all three, he maintained, are essential in the life of a nation. Price declared, "An enlightened and virtuous country must be a free country." He emphasized the fact that civil rulers are properly the servants of the public, and that the king is no

more than the first servant of the public, "created by it, 5 maintained by it, and responsible to it...." Alluding to the 1688 Revolution, Price called to mind the principles of that event:

First; The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.
Secondly; The right to resist power when abused.
And, Thirdly; The right to chuse (sic) our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves. 6

Burke's Reflections stood in direct opposition to the opinions which Price had expressed in his anniversary sermon at the Old Jewry. He bitterly accused Price of using the pulpit for political purposes. He rejected his ideas of liberty, and flatly denied that the three principles Price laid down were the ones of the 1688 Revolution. Whereupon, Burke proceeded to explain his own opinion of liberty. He held that liberty was as dear to him as to any man; yet he did not mean liberty as license or sentiment. The kind he believed in was a true and manly type based on morality and order. Burke would not congratulate the new liberty of France until he knew how it was combined with government, with discipline and obedience of the armies, with morality and religion, and with peace and order.

In a long section Burke undertook to show the contrast between the English and French methods, and this difference

5 R.Price, Discourse, p. 23
6 Ibid., p. 34
7 Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, (4th ed.) p. 21
8 Ibid., pp. 7-9
revealed itself mainly in the attitude which each country took towards its traditions. He said to the French: "You had all these advantages in your antient (sic) states; but you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society, and had everything to begin anew." So he criticized the French because they had little respect for their heritage or their ancestors.

In his next chapter, Burke showed his ultra-conservatism, especially in regard to the matter of representation. His concern was how to get the best members of Parliament and the most competent ministers. He did not believe that vast numbers of people had a right to rule. He held that property should be hereditary, and that it and ability were the things to be represented. Step by step, Burke continued his consideration of the Revolution in France and undertook to show what was the correct method of bringing about political change. Concerning some points he was badly informed, for example, on the economic condition of France and the actual condition of the government. On the other hand, he was correct in foretelling that the Revolution would fail to give stability to France and that power would gradually pass into the hands of violent radicals. Moreover, he wanted his fellow countrymen to realize that the occurrences in France concerned them practically as much as they did France itself.

9 Burke, Reflections, p. 51
10 Ibid., pp. 74-75
On the whole Burke's views were quite a shock to the English public, and though in more recent years his opinions are better appreciated, at the time of publication, his Reflections ran counter to the majority opinion. Parliament was little affected by it, but soon its influence made itself felt among the people. Almost at once replies were made to Burke's position. The one which most adequately provided an answer was produced by Sir James Mackintosh, a former classmate of Robert Hall at Aberdeen. In 1791, he published, Vindiciae Gallicae, in which he expressed his warm sympathies for the Revolution by declaring: "Whatever be the ultimate fate of the French Revolutionists, the friends of freedom must ever consider them as the authors of the greatest attempt that has hitherto been made in the cause of man."

Concerning Burke's attitude, Mackintosh asserted that the English sympathizers considered his language "contemptuous, illiberal, and scurrilous."

Burke had argued that the military, the sacredotal, and the judicial institutions of France might have improved by gradual reformation. Mackintosh countered, "To this argument I confidently answer, that these institutions would have destroyed Liberty, before Liberty had corrected their Spirit."

It was his contention that no political improvement had ever taken place during a period of tranquility. Mackintosh was

11 James Mackintosh, Vindiciae Gallicae, (2nd ed.) p. 125
12 Ibid., p. vi
13 Ibid., p. 106
ready to admit that "popular excesses" were bound to accompany such revolutionary changes. When the people are led by a faction, order can be re-established relatively soon, "But when a general movement of the popular mind levels a despotism with the ground," Mackintosh wrote, "it is far less easy to restrain excess." Nevertheless, he reasoned that the benefit which would result from the Revolution was worth all the evils that accompanied it.

This reference to the Revolution as a popular movement revealed the point at which Mackintosh essentially differed with Burke. In his *Reflections*, Burke's chief error was his failure to see that the Revolution was the revolt of the nation. Mackintosh declared forthwith that it was a Revolution without leaders: "It was the effect of general causes operating on the people. It was the revolt of a nation enlightened from a common source."

The second outstanding reply to Edmund Burke came from Thomas Paine. Besides carrying his criticism even further than did Mackintosh, Paine reached more people, particularly the working classes. In opposition to Burke, it was Paine's contention that the people could establish any government they thought fit and alter the existing government at will. "That which a whole nation chooses to do," he maintained,

14 Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae*, pp. 162-63
15 Ibid., p. 128
"it has a right to do." He could not tolerate the thought advanced by Burke, that the English constitution was forever bound up with the pact of 1688. Paine held that authority should be vested in the living and not in the dead. He asked, "On what ground of right, then, could the parliament of 1688, or any other parliament, bind all posterity for ever?" He thought it absurd that a law made over a hundred years ago could not be altered by the people of the present. Thus he contended for democracy in its full sense.

It was the second part of his, *Rights of Man*, that went to the opposite pole from Burke's position. Paine advanced the idea that all hereditary elements in the constitution should be abolished, including the monarchy and the House of Lords. In his opinion the monarchy was a useless and unnecessary thing; therefore it should be done away with, because it imposed such a financial burden upon the people. Such a radical suggestion produced a greater effect upon the government than did Burke's *Reflections*. Paine's republicanism might have passed unnoticed during a calmer time, but appearing when it did, it caused so much alarm that the government prosecuted him and suppressed his *Rights of Man*.

Following in the same line of thought, a shoemaker, named Thomas Hardy, began his Corresponding Society, which

17 Ibid., p. 13
18 Ibid., pp. 139-40
was the first political and educational club for working men. Because most of the members of this club were republicans, they were active in the circulation of Paine's writings. The chief issues in their political program were universal suffrage and annual Parliaments. Governmental authorities considered these principles too seditious to pass unchecked; therefore Hardy and others associated with him were brought to trial on the charge of treason.

Because so much was being written and debated on the subject of the Revolution, the lines were sharply drawn. Few there were who were neutral on the issue. Just as there were societies which favored the Revolution, so there were associations which endeavored to preserve liberty and property against the republicans. Practically all the bishops and clergy of the Church of England, along with the upper classes in the Church, were antagonists of the Revolution. Bishop Porteus and Bishop Horsley were the outstanding opponents in the Church. The tracts of Hannah More were distributed because she was the only writer on the conservative side who reached the ear of the common people. Yet such Churchmen as Bishop Watson and Dr. Samuel Parr, a warm friend of Robert Hall, favored the events in France. But by far the greater number of sympathizers were outside the Church. According to Gooch, nine out of ten Englishmen who

19 G.M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century, p. 67
favored the Revolution were in that category.

In England, under the Test and Corporation Acts, the Dissenters were deprived of their full rights of citizenship; so it is natural that among them were to be found the warmest supporters of the French Revolution. After Dr. Price had set rolling the ball of controversy, his fellow Unitarian, Joseph Priestley joined those who undertook to answer Burke. By July, 1791, feeling between Churchmen and Dissenters began to run high, and especially was this true in Birmingham, the home of Priestley. The occasion of the celebration of Bastille Day by the friends of the Revolution in Birmingham brought to a climax the spirited feeling between the two parties. On the evening of July fourteenth, a mob gathered in the town and after burning both the Old and New Meeting houses of the Unitarians, proceeded to destroy the library, the laboratory, and the home of Dr. Priestley. Thus began the Birmingham riots which resulted in the destruction of numerous houses of Dissenters.

Before the war broke out between England and France in 1793, the country was in a near state of panic, and as a result many legislative measures were passed which encroached upon the rights of the individual. For example, the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended;

...a bill against seditious assemblies restricted


21 Anne Holt, A Life of Joseph Priestley, p. 170
the liberty of public meeting, and a wider scope was given to the Statue of Treasons. Prosecution after prosecution was directed against the Press; the sermons of some dissenting ministers were indicted as seditious; and conventions of sympathizers with France were roughly broken up. 22

In connection with this legislation and the controversies related to the French Revolution, Robert Hall produced his most significant political work, *Apology for the Freedom of the Press.*

Another effect of the Revolution on England was to cause a majority of the people to oppose any change or reform. Any effort to bring about more liberal legislation was quickly branded as republicanism. Therefore, the movement to abolish the slave trade, the fight to repeal the Test Act, and the effort to bring about Parliamentary reform had to wait until the confusion created by the Revolution had subsided.

Soon after the war with France actually began the public terror passed away. The fortunes of war went badly for France the first years, but in 1794, the outlook was more encouraging. Pitt, who was never eager for the conflict, sought to bring a halt to the struggle in 1796, but with the rise of Napoleon, the French rejected all terms. By that time the attitude of those who had first looked with sympathy upon the Revolution had altered considerably. Especially was there noted a change in the minds of the

Dissenters. As a result of the Peace of Lunéville, in 1801, France was in a position to concentrate all her efforts upon England, but the English rose to the occasion and staved off disaster. At the beginning of 1802, both countries were desirous of peace; as a consequence hostilities ceased with the Peace of Amiens in March of that year. Fears ran high among the English again, however, in 1803. Napoleon threatened an invasion, but was unable to accomplish it. With the victory of Nelson in 1805, England's immediate danger was removed, largely because of her supremacy at sea.

The social and economic conditions of England during Hell's ministry at Cambridge obviously were affected by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic War. During the period a complete change took place in English attire. Men and women began to dress themselves more simply. When Pitt imposed a tax upon hair-powder in 1795, in an effort to secure much needed revenue, people, for the most part, merely gave up the use of the powder. There was a decline of hard drinking, but an increase of smoking. The typical sports and amusements at the close of the century were horse-races, cock-fights, fox-hunting, and the theater which had reached a high point of refinement. There was a marked development in the arts, literature, and science. Circulating libraries had increased rapidly, and the number of provincial news-

24 Ibid., p. 216
papers had jumped to seventy.

Economically, it was a period of great stress. The population of England and Wales had increased by over three million between 1750 and 1801. Because there were relatively few English troops on the Continent during the first twelve years of the French war, no great drain upon the manhood was necessary. Conditions were aggravated by large displacements of people, by numerous changes in industry, by commercial crises and depressions, and by a succession of extremely bad harvests. Grain was so scarce that the price of bread was forced beyond reason. Taxation proved a severe burden, especially upon the poorer classes. "The upper class thrrove on enhanced rents, and paid too small a proportion of the war taxes; for revenue was raised largely by duties on articles of consumption, of which the effect was felt by the poor in the rise of prices." The lot of the laboring classes was most oppressive. Pitt's Combination Acts rendered trade unionism illegal and penalized all combinations of wage-earners. As a result nothing was done to enforce a fair wage; so the employee was simply at the mercy of his master. Notwithstanding, during the period of England's deepest need it was her manufactured products which turned the tide. For this reason, Lecky concludes that the invention and development of the cotton-mill and the steam engine proved to be

26 Ibid., p. 567
the first and most obvious cause of England's triumph in the French war.

On the religious scene, the Evangelical movement, which arose partly out of Methodism and at the same time was simultaneous with and independent of it, was still, in the last decade of the century, a helpful influence in the Church. Among the clergy there were such Evangelicals as Bishop Porteus, Bishop Horne, and two Cambridge men, Charles Simeon, the great preacher, and Dean Milner, who was largely responsible for making Cambridge a center of Evangelicals. But even more influential were the laymen within the movement, such as Cowper, Wilberforce, and Hannah More. Failure to secure the abolition of the slave trade for a number of years did not daunt the spirit of Wilberforce. He persisted until early in the new century success came to him and to those who labored with him.

Within the Church of England, Bishop Samuel Horsley had the highest reputation for learning and ability of any clergyman of his day. Not only because of his connection with Hall, but because of his pre-eminence in the pulpit and in controversy, he can well be selected as the representative Churchman during the period of Hall's stay at Cambridge. It was his controversy with Priestley on the Trinitarian question that did so much to raise Horsley's reputation. It was his sermon, preached in Westminster Abbey on the anniversary of

the execution of Charles I, and nine days after the execution of Louis XVI, which established him as the most powerful preacher of his day. Concerning his feelings toward the French Revolution, he regarded it "as a conspiracy of darkness against light," but much as he was influenced by fears of Jacobinism, "such fears made no difference whatever in his attitude towards the Slave Trade." He stood for its abolition; yet his conservatism led him, in 1789, to make a vigorous protest against the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. He shared the feeling with his fellow-Churchmen that greater toleration for the Dissenters would be detrimental to the Established Church. Nevertheless, some ten years later, Horsley stood in the House of Lords and advocated that greater liberties be granted the Roman Catholics. Thus in most respects Horsley and Hall differed, but as for their preaching, Stoughton asserts that, "Horsley the Churchman, and Hall the Nonconformist were men of erudition and eloquence, formed by nature to excel in any kind of oratory they might choose to adopt."

During the time of the Revolution, an extensive revival of attachment to the Church of England arose. Sunday observance was revived and enforced. Family prayers became more common among the upper classes. The Annual Register for

29 H. H. Jebb, A Great Bishop of One Hundred Years Ago, p. 137
30 Ibid., p. 147
31 Ibid., p. 81
32 Ibid., pp. 154, 157
33 J. Stoughton, History of Religion in England, VI, p. 428
1798, reported that the avenues to the Churches were filled with carriages. So that in the time of crisis there was a turning to the Church. But the Revolution had other important bearings upon English religion in general. For a while numerous tracts appeared on the Apocalypse; for it was the opinion of many that the final judgment was approaching. Attention has already been called to the fact of the bitterness which arose between the Churchmen and Dissenters. Moreover, during the Revolution atheistic and anti-Christian propaganda became widely diffused. Benn declares that at the close of the eighteenth century it was uncertain which way public opinion would go in the matter of Christian faith. He quotes Wilberforce as feeling that unbelief or at least reasoned belief was on the increase. "But," writes Benn, "Robert Hall, the great Baptist preacher, who probably had better means of observing than the amiable statesman, took a more gloomy view." Hall's opinion was that:

Infidelity has lately grown condescending; bred in the speculations of a daring philosophy, immured at first in the cloisters of the learned, and afterwards nursed in the lap of voluptuousness and of courts; having at length reached its full maturity, it boldly ventures to challenge the suffrages of the people, solicits the acquaintance of peasants and mechanics, and seeks to draw whole nations to its standard.

34 G.M. Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 52
In spite of the wave of infidelity spreading over the nation this evil was equally if not more than balanced by counter energies for good. Epoch-making among those events was the foreign mission program which began at the close of the century. In various other capacities also, churches and denominations undertook joint action. Rural preaching, for one thing, was promoted by members of different churches under a society which bore the name of Village Itinerancy. A second example of united action was the Religious Tract Society which sprang up under the shadow of the London Missionary Society in 1799. Only three years later another movement issued in the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The purpose of this group was to circulate the Scriptures to all parts of the world. Thus in the darkest hours of the war the forces of religion were at work seeking to combat the evils at home and abroad.

The picture of the Baptists at the turn of the century was more promising than it had been in former decades. The founding of their Missionary Society by the Particular group in 1792, marked the beginning of a new phase in Baptist life and work. From the old General Baptist group, the leading churches pulled out and gathered around the New Connexion, which sprang up from the Leicester and Yorkshire movements. These churches pursued a vigorous policy of extension at home.

38 Stoughton, History of Religion in England, VI, p. 416
39 Ibid., p. 420
40 Ibid., p. 421
and abroad, while the old historic General Baptist Assembly became relatively insignificant. Dr. John Rippon rendered a valuable service to the Baptists by projecting and editing the Baptist Register. When he published his first number in 1790, he dedicated it not only to all British Baptists, but to all those of similar faith and practice all over the world. Dr. Underwood observes that, "Here we have in germ the notion of a Baptist World Alliance."

41 W.T. Whitley, *History of the British Baptists*, p. 245
2. At Cambridge and Political Thought

When Robert Hall moved to Cambridge, the town, the University, and his church had many advantages to offer him. From the earliest history of English Baptists, Cambridge had been an important center. Here it was that such notable leaders as John Smith, Henry Jessey, Hansard Knollys, and Henry Denne had received their training. But the Baptist cause of Cambridge and in particular Stone Yard Church, which had its origin in 1721, had their greatest stimulus under the ministry of Robert Robinson. The biographer of Charles Simeon, minister of Trinity Church during Hall's stay in Cambridge, writes concerning Nonconformity there: "Of the older dissenting bodies, the Baptists were the most influential. Their chapel in St Andrew's Street, when Simeon first knew Cambridge, was a centre, if not of spiritual, certainly of some intellectual life, under the brilliant and original preaching of Robert Robinson." In the same connection, Moule went on to add that an even greater man and one of the greatest Christian orators, Robert Hall, succeeded Robinson in 1791. But it was upon Robinson's achievements as well as his failures that Hall laid the foundation for his ministry in Cambridge. Robinson's outstanding contribution to the church was his defense of religious liberty. However, toward the close of his ministry he went beyond Socinianism to the

43 B. Nutter, The Story of Cambridge Baptists, p. 83
44 H. C. G. Moule, Charles Simeon (New ed.) p. 11
very brink of infidelity. This extreme liberalism almost divided the church, but his sudden death in Birmingham just after he had preached to Joseph Priestley's congregation, saved the situation.

Under these circumstances the church at Cambridge could hardly have made a wiser choice in its new minister. In a communication to the assistant minister at Broadmead, who was reputed to be "moderately orthodox," the members at Cambridge declared:

'The Church has no doctrinal covenant or any other bond of union than Christian love and virtue, and having been well-instructed by the late excellent pastor in the true principles of Christian liberty, they mean not to be brought under the yoke of bondage to any man. The liberty which they claim for themselves they cheerfully allow to others, and especially their pastor.' 45

Because of his theological disputes at Bristol, Hall was glad to move to such a church as Cambridge, though he realized the many serious problems which Robinson had left. The congregation consisted mainly of intelligent and well-informed individuals and this provided a stimulus for Hall to make fullest use of his own mental faculties. Consequently, he wrote to a friend concerning his new situation:

I am at present at Cambridge, in the element of peace at least, if not of happiness; and indeed, after the tumults of strife and din of parties, quiet itself seems happiness... The people seem very harmonious, and much united to me. I could wish their sentiments were more orthodox, though the far greater part of them are sufficiently so. 46

45 Nutter, The Story of Cambridge Baptists, p. 132
46 Hall, "Letter to Isaiah Birt," Works, V, p. 408
Also, the University was an attraction for the new minister. The library facilities especially offered him an inducement to move to Cambridge; for soon after his arrival he wrote: "I have free access to all the libraries gratis, by means of acquaintance in the University." But more than that, the friends he was able to make in a town of culture and learning proved most valuable. For instance, he had never studied Hebrew, but at his new location, he began work on this language under the supervision of Mr. Lyons, one of the University teachers.

To balance the advantages which Cambridge offered Hall, it can be shown that he, in turn, brought much to his new pastorate. In The Baptist Magazine, a reviewer wrote of him:

He brought with him a cultivated mind, stored with all the learning and science he had been previously enabled to accumulate, a correct taste, and literary habits, with a love of his employment and a desire to be useful in promoting the best interests of his fellow creatures and the glory of God. Moreover, the same writer explained quite precisely how Hall was the man for the Cambridge Church: If the new minister had been a Socinian, the evangelical part of the congregation would have sought spiritual food in another place. If he had been "orthodox in sentiment, and fervent in spirit, but defective in talent and general information," the intellectual and "speculative" part of his congregation would have chosen

47 Hall, "Letter to Isaiah Birt," Works, V, p. 409
48 Gregory, "Memoir," Works, VI, p. 44
49 Unsigned article on Robert Hall, The Baptist Magazine, VIII, Mar. 1832, p. 92
50 Ibid., April, 1832, p. 133
to call some other man. And if Hall had been a "narrow-minded bigot," he would have been unable to withstand the dangers of the situation at Cambridge. Therefore, for all groups, as well as for himself, the relationship proved beneficial.

The first major issue which confronted Robert Hall in Cambridge was the heated political situation of the day. As a young man under thirty years of age, he had to decide what attitude a Christian minister should take toward the subject of politics. When a sermon appeared by the Rev. John Clayton, a fellow Dissenter, it did not take Hall long to make up his mind. Clayton, following the attitude of Edmund Burke, insisted that it was entirely out of the province of a Christian minister to interfere with the affairs of government. It was this contention that brought forth Hall's first political pamphlet, *Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom*. In this he declared that a preacher should give his prime attention to sacred things, but there were leisure moments, when he might with profit acquire some "acquaintance with the principle of government." He held, for instance, that a minister was justified in defending the French Revolution upon its "principles" but when he defended it upon its "expedients" that required too much of a diversion from the minister's prime interests. Two years later, in 1793,

51 Hall, *Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom*, Works, III, pp. 20-21
52 Ibid., p. 22
he went further as he asserted:

In a political contest, relating to particular men or measures, a well-wisher to his country may be permitted to remain silent; but when the great interests of a nation are at stake, it becomes every man to act with firmness and vigour. 53

Thus he justified his active interest in the preparation and publication of a series of political tracts. As far as possible Hall intended to exclude his political ideas from the pulpit, and yet even so there were occasions when he stepped over the line. In his sermon, Modern Infidelity Considered, he confessed that a minister's chief function was to explain the doctrines and enforce the duties of Christianity, but on occasions he is entitled as well as compelled to make "excursions into other topics." Such occasions arose when in 1802, a day of fasting and thanksgiving was ordered as a result of the Peace of Amiens, and again in 1803, when Napoleon threatened to invade the British Isles. Later in his life Hall questioned whether he had been wise in giving so much attention to political issues; nevertheless, he was still convinced of the main principles which he had earlier advocated.

Foremost among these principles was his strong advocacy of civil and religious liberties. In this he was but following in the steps of his Baptist forebears. For since the

53 Hall, An Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty, Works, III, p. 83
54 For further discussion of these tracts see Appendix A
55 Hall, Modern Infidelity Considered, Works, I, pp. 3-4
56 Hall, Apology, Works, (1821 ed.) III, p. 81
time of Thomas Helwys, when, in 1612, he made what is recognized as the first plea in England for universal liberty. Baptists had been firm believers in the freedom of conscience for all. Robert Hall, in his age, became one of the denomination's staunchest champions of liberty and freedom. The main purpose of his first political tract was to show that a love of freedom is not inconsistent with Christianity. Indeed he insisted, "The principles of freedom ought, in a more peculiar manner, to be cherished by christians, because they alone can secure that liberty of conscience, and freedom of inquiry, which is essential to the proper discharge of the duties of their profession." Moreover, this freedom for the Christian can be fully enjoyed only if it occurs under a free government; because not every form of government can furnish "security for liberty of conscience." It is not enough for the princes, the ministers, or the bishops to possess unlimited freedom, but this liberty must be extended to every individual. So Hall continued:

Christianity, we see then, instead of weakening our attachment to the principles of freedom, or withdrawing them from our attention, renders them doubly dear to us, by giving us an interest in them, proportioned to the value of those religious privileges they secure and protect.

Hall endeavored to show that advocates of liberty are no less pious than anyone else. To substantiate his con-

57 A.C. Underwood, History of English Baptists, p. 47
58 Hall, Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom, Works, III, p. 12
59 Ibid., p. 14
60 Ibid., p. 15
viction, he cited the case of the Puritans during the reigns of Charles the First and Second. "It is to the distinguished exertions of this party," he said, that "we are in a great measure indebted for the preservation of our free and happy constitution." And no one questions the piety of the Puritans during that period. On the basis of this precedent, Hall strongly felt that every Christian must do all he can toward the preservation of a free government;... He who breaks the fetters of slavery, and delivers a nation from thraldom, (sic) forms, in my opinion, the noblest comment on the great law of love," for in doing this he is transferring the greatest blessing which man can bestow upon posterity.

Holding so resolutely to the principle of universal liberty, which he had derived not only from his Baptist background, but from his study of Locke, Hume, Bentham, and Adam Smith as well, it is natural that Hall should take the attitude he did toward the political issues of his day. There was first of all the matter of the French Revolution. In 1791, he considered that the events which were occurring on the Continent constituted one of the most interesting periods "in the whole flight of time." Europe presented a spectacle which demanded the most serious attention and contemplation, because something had happened to that "empire

61 Hall, Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom, Works, III, p. 16
62 Ibid., p. 17
of darkness and despotism" which affected the whole world. "When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones," Hall asked, "who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eye towards a theatre so august and extraordinary!"

Unlike Edmund Burke, the Cambridge minister entertained no regret at seeing the old foundations in France breaking up and new edifices taking their place. As he witnessed the disintegration and decay of all those institutions which had formerly been held in high esteem, he could see in this process the manifestation of new prospects on every hand. So like Price and Mackintosh, he confidently expected great benefits to come from the Revolution; in fact at that date, he believed he could already see "beneficial effects."

Two years later, in 1793, Hall was distressed because of the situation in France. The country presented to him a picture "of desolation, misery, and crimes." His hopes for liberty and peace were blasted and gone. He was most eager for more freedom in England as well as in France, but surely he did not want to see the excesses in his own land which were so common on the Continent. "When we look at the dis-

63 Hall, Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom, Works, III, pp. 57-58
64 Ibid., p. 58
65 Hall, Apology for the Freedom of the Press, Works, III, p. 66
traction and misery of a neighbouring country," Hall allowed, "we behold a scene that is enough to make the most hardy republican tremble at the idea of a revolution." He agreed that most Dissenters had indeed favored the French Revolution, but vigorously denied that they wanted a "similar event in England." Conscious of all the attendant evils of the Revolution, Hall well knew that to speak of it in terms of "decency and respect" was a public disgrace. To rejoice "at the emancipation of a great people from thraldom," was to run the risk of extreme slander; nevertheless he declared, "I am free to confess, the French revolution has always appeared to me, and does still appear, the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history." However, sorely as he regretted all the disorders and crimes rampant in France, Hall's love of liberty drove him to feel that the evils would be more than compensated if the people could secure their freedom.

In order to stave off the bitter consequences of a revolution in England, Hall worked and pleaded for governmental reform. The only way, he claimed, to avoid the two extremes of anarchy on the one hand and despotism on the other was to bring about "effectual reform." Therefore, his principle of civil and religious liberty manifests it-

66 Hall, Apology for the Freedom of the Press, Works, III, p. 78
67 Ibid., p. 154
68 Ibid., p. 172
69 Ibid., p. 173
self again in his labors for reform. Chiefly this centered itself around the issue of Parliamentary reform; for he realized that therein was the practical means of approach. Only through the House of Commons did England have a share in forming the laws of the land; therefore, Hall insisted that this body must be a complete representation of the people. Dr. Richard Price had earlier written: "When the representation is fair and equal,...a kingdom may be said to govern itself, and consequently to possess true liberty." Hall appropriated this idea, and also followed in the steps of Thomas Paine when he suggested that the ten prevailing mode of representation was woefully out of date. The Baptist minister proffered two general principles as a remedy for the situation. Firstly, there should be a change in the mode of election, and secondly, those elected should be unhamppered and independent. He further stipulated that the basis of representation should be enlarged, so that every householder in town and country could be permitted to vote. "Theory tells us," he wrote that, "the parliament is free and independent; experience will correct the mistake by shewing its subservience to the crown." Though the legislature is supposed to be elected by the voice of all those who have a will of their own, in practice only a handful of

70 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 105
71 R. Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 40
72 Cf. Paine, Rights of Men, p. 61, and Hall, Apology works, III, p. 106
73 Hall, Apology, works, III, p. 107
74 Ibid., pp. 164-65
people are the real electors.

Taking up one of the cries of Hardy's Corresponding Society, Hall believed that a return to annual Parliaments would be a step in the right direction. He considered that a term of seven years was an inducement for bribery and corruption. It did not permit of frequent enough change. "The union between a representative and his constituents, ought to be strict and entire; but the septennial act has rendered it little more than nominal." So Hall contended that the longer period for Parliament set the members at too great a distance from the people. With all the urgency he could command, he sought for Parliamentary reform because he felt that only "speedy and effectual reform" could save the country from ruin.

As for the individual rights and liberties of man, Robert Hall was quite pronounced in his utterances. He regretted that the title of Paine's book had evoked a spirit of contempt for the doctrine of the rights of man, and tried to show that this doctrine was not peculiar to Paine, but that it was the basis of all lawful government. In a discussion of these rights, Hall pointed out that as government implies restraint, it is clear that a portion of a man's freedom is surrendered when he enters into such a

75 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 110
76 Ibid., p. 155
77 Ibid., pp. 121-22
society. He reasoned that, "Civil restraints imply nothing more than a surrender of our liberty in some points, in order to maintain it undisturbed in others of more importance." These more important rights cannot on any account be surrendered to human authority. Examples of such rights are: the free use of one's faculties in distinguishing truth from error, the exercise of "corporeal powers without injury to others," and the unfettered choice of one's religion and worship.

Hall had much to say about the individual's right of discussion. In truth, he acclaimed this as the "most capital advantage an enlightened people can enjoy," for so long as man possesses the liberty of discussing any subject which presents itself to his mind, "freedom will flourish...." This certainly holds true in the realm of religion; though free inquiry has often been looked upon as most dangerous to religion. To substantiate this point, he cited the case of Martin Luther and his part in the Reformation, and also the writings of the English deists. Many people who thought they were guarding the faith wanted to suppress all unorthodox teachings, but Hall reasoned that, "Whatever alarm then may have been taken at the liberty of discussion, religion, it is plain, hath been a gainer by it: its abuses corrected and its divine authority settled on a

78 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 125
79 Ibid., p. 126
80 Ibid., p. 84
For the same reason, the minister stressed the need of free discussion in relation to government. He was greatly alarmed because the liberty of the press was about to be lost, for fear that someone should express derogatory statements against the government. It was not at all his intention to set up a defense of republican principles, because he fully appreciated the merits of the British constitution. Nevertheless, he would not go so far as to consider it a crime to be a republican. So long as he obeys the laws, every republican, Hall contended, has a right to criticize the government and discuss it. In support of his argument, the minister listed the following reasons:

1. "Everything that is really excellent will bear examination," it will welcome it; for the more closely it is examined, the more excellent it will appear.

2. "Government is the creature of the people." and what they have created they have a right to examine.

3. "Free inquiry will never endanger the existence of a good government; scarcely will it be able to work the overthrow of a bad one."

In time of duress, it is revealing to note that Hall was forced to qualify his thought on the matter of censuring the government. When Napoleon was threatening to invade the

81 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 88
82 Ibid., pp. 89-93
British Isles, in 1803, the preacher in a famous sermon asserted:

Their conduct is not to be approved, who, in the present crisis, indulge in wanton and indiscriminate censure of the measures of our rulers. I say wanton and indiscriminate, because the privilege of censuring, with moderation and decency, the measures of government, is essential to a free constitution; a privilege which can never lose its value in the eyes of the public, till it is licentiously abused. 83

Significant as was the right of discussion for Hall, there was one other right which surpassed it. This was the "liberty of worshipping God in that manner which the conscience of every individual dictates...." Defining worship as "no other than the outward expression of the love and fear of God," Hall said, "we must perceive, that to become acceptable, it is above all things necessary that it be such as approves itself to the mind of the worshipper...." Further he added that one cannot please God without a sincere intention of so doing. Consequently, one's privilege of worship must be completely untrammeled. As illustrative of what occurs when such freedom of worship is not given, Hall cited the case of France. When that country ended her toleration of the Protestants, corruptions of the clergy commenced, abuses of the Church occurred, "The impiety of the people, met with no check, till infidelity of the worst

83 Hall, "Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,
Works, I, p. 141
84 Hall, "On Toleration," Works, III, p. 364
85 Ibid., p. 365
sort pervaded and ruined the nation." Likewise, he recalled that in his own country one thing which contributed greatly to the ruin of King Charles was the lack of religious toleration; whereas in the case of Cromwell, nothing contributed as much to his support as the offer of a general liberty of conscience.

The reason for Hall's great emphasis upon the freedom of worship is that he considered, "The dominion of God over his creatures" to be "original, inalienable, and supreme," therefore men must be considered as subjects of God before they are thought of as members of a civil community. Since men are originally creatures of God, they are always primarily accountable to him; thus no human power can make laws which interfere "with those duties which are previously due to God."

In the matter of the relation between religion and government or Church and State, Robert Hall found no conflict. "Between institutions so different in their nature and their object," he definitely held that "no real opposition" could exist. In this connection he explained that Christianity is an institution for man's improvement; it occupies itself with the interests of a future world; and it is primarily

86 Hall, "On Toleration," Works, III, p. 372
87 Ibid., p. 378
88 Hall, "On the Right of Worship," Works, III, p. 386
89 Ibid., p. 387
90 Hall, Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom, Works, III, p. 9
concerned with preparing man for this other world. On the other hand,

...civil government is altogether an affair of the present state, and is no more than a provision of human skill, designed to ensure freedom and tranquility during our continuance of this temporary stage of existence... so that in reality there is no kind of contrariety between them, but each may continue without interference in its full operation. 91

Although Hall recognized no right of interference of the State with organized Christianity, he realized that there was a service which each could render the other. In fact, only under certain governments can the Christian exercise his full rights; so to this extent religion is definitely dependent upon a tolerant civil power. The fundamental advantages which a good government offers an individual are, according to Hall, five in number:

1. Primarily, **security** and a sense of security should come from every "well-constituted human government."

2. The second benefit to be derived from government is **liberty**, and so far as this is consistent with security, the more liberty one can have the better it will be.

3. The next advantage to come from a good government is **plenty**. So far as possible each individual should be left free to pursue his own prosperity.

91 Hall, *Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom*, Works, III, pp. 9-10
92 Hall, "The Advantages of Civil Government, Contrasted with the Blessings of the Spiritual Kingdom of Jesus Christ," Works, VI, pp. 311-326
4. "A tendency to improvement in its social institutions," is a fourth benefit.

5. The last advantage which civil government should offer the individual is stability.

As for the aid and support which Christianity can render the State, Hall held that, "It teaches us to check every selfish passion, to consider ourselves as parts of a great community, and to abound in all the fruits of an active benevolence." Furthermore,

Religion must infallibly promote obedience to the laws, by subduing those violent passions which give birth to crimes... In addition to this, Christianity enforces obedience to civil rulers with the utmost clearness and under the most solemn sanction, adopting the duties of a citizen into the family of religion, and commanding its disciples to revere civil government as the ordinance of God;... Who are so likely to be loyal subjects as those who consider lawful princes, in the exercise of their functions, as the representatives of the Supreme Ruler, and judges as the dispensers of the portion confided to them of eternal justice?  

Even though the New Testament does not expressly teach patriotism, Hall declared that, "the duties which result from the relation in which christians stand to their rulers, are prescribed with great perspicuity, and enforced by very solemn sanctions...."

In time of war, Hall very nearly took the position

93 Hall, Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom, Works, III, p. 17
94 Hall, "Fragment on Village Preaching," Works, III, pp. 336-37
95 Hall, A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Ryland, Works, I, p. 371
which earlier he had so bitterly criticized in Bishop Horsley. In 1793, Horsley had said:

This divine right of the first magistrate in every polity to the citizen's obedience is not of that sort which it were high treason to claim for the sovereigns of this country: ...it is a right which in no country can be denied, without the highest of all treasons;—the denial of it were treason against the paramount authority of God. 96

In refutation, Hall declared, "To invest any human power with these high epithets, is ridiculous at least, if not impious." He allowed that the "right of a prince to the obedience of his subjects," may be called divine, because "the Divine Being is the patron of justice and order; but in this sense, the authority of a petty constable is equally divine...." As a natural consequence to Horsley's divine right theory, Hall accused him of inculcating "the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, in the most unqualified terms." Hall could not tolerate such a passive submission to the authorities of the State. Nevertheless, when war was impending in 1803, he said, "let the great general duty of submission to civil authority be engraven on our hearts, wrought into the very habit of the mind, and made a part of our elementary morality." The

96 S. Horsley, "Sermon: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,'" Theological Works of Samuel Horsley, II, p. 236
97 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 71
98 Loc. cit.
99 Ibid., p. 72
100 Hall, Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis, Works, I, p. 144
reason Hall could advocate such submission to the government is that at the moment, he had a particular government in mind. He would not lay this down as a principle to be followed blindly under all circumstances. Though he felt that submission to lawful government was a duty, he was no believer in unconditional submission to any government which happened to be in power. For him, the limit to which submission shall extend is purely a human question and must be "adjusted by mere human reason and contrivance."

In connection with the Christian's relation to the State, the problem of war enters the picture. Hall's contention was that war had been glorified too much. Because there had been no recent military conflicts on the English soil, people had forgotten the horrors of war and thought only of its "gaiety and pomp." For this reason, the preacher sought to show how war "is the most awful scourge that Providence employs for the chastisement of man." In a most graphic fashion he pointed out all the miseries associated with war and its aftermath. Yet, cruel and evil as war is, he did not hold that in all cases it is unlawful. "The injustice of mankind, hitherto incurable, renders it in some instances necessary, and therefore lawful..." No doubt, Hall was prompted to make such a statement as he considered especially the anticipated invasion of his country by

101 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 72
102 Hall, Reflections on War, Works, I, p. 86
103 Ibid., pp. 97-98
In that direful hour, the Cambridge minister preached a sermon in which he called upon the people to defend their country with all their strength, because religion was so interested in their success that it would lend all its aid.

When times were not so tense, Hall felt that the Christian attitude toward war should be quite different. Alluding to the awfulness of war, he declared that Christian statesmen should fully appreciate what they are doing before they lead their country into military conflict. They ought to try every expedient "consistent with national honour, before they ventured on this desperate remedy." Moreover, the Christian minister should make every attempt possible "to take off the colours from false greatness," of war, "and to shew the deformity which its delusive splendour too often conceals. This is perhaps one of the best services religion can do to society." Idealistically, he looked for and expected that in the not too distant future there would be, through the efforts of Christian people, a cessation of all wars.

Free Churchman that he was, Robert Hall could not sanction an alliance or union between the Church and State. "The only pretence for uniting christianity with civil govern-

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104 Hall, Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis, Works, I, p. 191
105 Hall, Reflections on War, Works, I, p. 94
106 Ibid., p. 98
107 Hall, "Civil Government Contrasted with the Spiritual Kingdom," Works, VI, p. 325
ment," he affirmed, "is the support it yields to the peace and good order of society." He was certain, however that the benefit to be derived from this alliance would be just as great without an Established Church as with one, because religion operates primarily upon man's conscience. He paid tribute to the "Splendour and emoulument" attached to the national Church. He recognized the great educational advantages which the Church afforded through its universities. He could see how a reverence for the Church was "imbibed with the first elements of knowledge." He spoke highly of the Church's

...splendid literary establishments, its magnificent libraries the accumulation of ages, and above all, the great and illustrious names it has produced in every department of genius and of learning, the glory of the world; who have conferred dignity, not so much on their profession as on their species; gives it, in a literary view, a decided superiority, and in popular opinion an exclusive esteem. 109

The Nonconformist minister was able to detect still other favorable aspects of the Church of England. He acknowledged that the large amount of property which the Church owned augmented its national influence and significance. He realized that the hierarchial organization enabled the Church to act with "promptitude and unanimity." He saw how its ministers were venerated because they were invested with legal authority. And he knew that the Church was attractive

108 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 143
109 Hall, "Fragment on Village Preaching," Works, III, p. 350
to mankind because of its antiquity and its authority. Moreover within the membership of the Church, Hall found many close friends. At Cambridge he spent many hours with his "smoking companion," Dr. Samuel Parr; he frequently rode from his home to his church accompanied by the Rev. Thomas Thomason, a curate at Trinity Church; and when he was not engaged in his own ministry, he went to this Church to hear Charles Simeon preach.

However, it is hardly to be expected that so strong a Dissenter as Robert Hall could overlook all the shortcomings of the Established Church. He saw the virtues of the Church, but in bolder relief he saw its vices. The very "Splendour and emolument" of the Church which he had praised, could likewise work to its detriment. These qualities often proved an inducement for its ministers to defend it even though it might be far from the truth. "Thus," said Hall, "error becomes permanent, and that set of opinions which happens to prevail when the establishment is formed, continues, in spite of superior light and improvement, to be handed down without alteration from age to age." As a result there develops a gulf between the "public creed" of the Church and the "private sentiments" of its ministers.

An even worse result is a wave of infidelity, which is a "natural and neverfailing consequence of the corrupt

110 Hall, "Fragment on Village Preaching," Works, III, p. 349
111 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 144
Hall was convinced that on every hand "the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy." And in substantiation of his opinion, he made the following observations:

1. "In France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendour, piety had utterly decayed."

2. In England, the hierarchy is not as splendid, and thus more piety is found.

3. In Scotland where the "national church is one of the poorest in the world," there is more religion to be found than in either France or England.

4. Among Dissenters more "piety flourishes...than among the members of any establishment whatever."

Continuing his broadside against the Church, Hall averred:

> Turn a Christian society into an established church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments, and passions, as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. 114

Another evil attending the alliance of Church and State, according to the Baptist minister, is that it encourages the notion that the interests of the two are in some mysterious way connected and inseparable; so that those who are dis-

112 Hall, *Apology, Works*, III, pp. 144-45
113 Ibid., p. 145
114 Loc. cit.
satisfied with one must be dissatisfied with the other. And again such an alliance from a "political point of view" is most suspicious in that it is a support to an arbitrary government, but most dangerous to a free government. As a case in point, Hall referred to the time when the Dissenters "applied for the repeal" of the Test and Corporation Acts. When this application was made great alarm spread throughout the land that the Church was in danger, and consequently the claims of the Dissenters were defeated. Receding from his bold attack, Hall came to admit that in spite of all the evils associated with the English Church, there are among its clergy and members "as splendid examples of virtue and talents" as might be found anywhere.

If Hall could not accept an alliance of the Church with the State, what then were his principles of Dissent? He was fully aware that Dissenters maintained many and various religious opinions, but the one principle common to them all was the assertion of their rights of conscience "against all human control and authority." In this he was but echoing the opinion of Joseph Priestley when the Unitarian, in a discussion of Dissenters, said, "we agree in nothing but this, that we equally reject all human authority in matters of religion." By which, of course, Priestley

115 The thought of this paragraph comes from, Hall, Apology, Works, III, pp. 146-148
116 Ibid., p. 142
117 Priestley, Familiar Letters Addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, (2nd ed.) p. 19
did not mean to exclude the authority of the Scriptures.

In order to explain his position on Dissent, Hall presented a brief historical background of the subject. It was during the days of Queen Elizabeth that Nonconformists made their first appearance by expressing their disapproval of certain rites and ceremonies. But it was not until a century later that they completely broke with the Church because they despaired "of seeing it erected on a comprehensive plan...." Proceeding from this point, the Dissenters pushed their principles to their legitimate ends by discerning "the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever, a sentiment in which they are now nearly united." Less than most men do they desire to disturb the peace of society; for the liberty they claim for themselves, they wish all men to possess. "It is sufferance they plead for, not establishment; protection, not splendour." Basing their opinion concerning establishments on early Christian centuries, Dissenters hold that during the first three hundred years of the Christian era, the Church was far removed from any alliance with temporal powers. In fact, Christianity flourished most when these powers sought to suppress it. Thus Hall contended that even under the "protection of Constantine," well intended though it was, the Church suffered in loss of purity more than it gained in added splendor.

It was his conception of the purity of the Church,

118 The quotations in this paragraph are found in Hall, Apology, Works, III, pp. 142-43
based upon the teachings of the New Testament, that furnished Hall with another motive for Dissent. Quite succinctly he posited his conviction:

That Christianity is a simple institution, unallied to worldly power; that a church is a voluntary society, invested with a right to choose its own officers, and acknowledging no head but Jesus Christ; that ministers are brethren whose emolument should be confined to the voluntary contributions of the people, are maxims drawn from so high an authority, that it may well be apprehended that the church is doomed to vanish before them. 119

Thereby, Hall not only stated his attitude toward Dissent, but by his conception of the Church and the ministry, he revealed his orthodox Baptist position. It is the contention of Baptists that, "the Church is a spiritual fellowship composed of an innumerable number of small, compact groups, held together by a peculiar intensity of spiritual communion which binds in one both Jesus and the believer, and also each member to all the others." 120 Concerning the ministry, Baptists of the seventeenth century with few exceptions held to "an unpaid and unprofessional ministry." 121 But by the close of the eighteenth century, most of the Baptist ministers were paid by the voluntary contributions of their local churches. In these two conceptions, then, Hall followed the accepted Baptist standard.

Throwing additional light on Hall's Dissent in regard

119 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 150
120 Walton, The Gathered Community, p. 122
121 Ibid., p. 93
to the Anglican Church was the disturbance which arose, while he was at Cambridge, with reference to village or itinerant preaching. About 1801, Bishop Horsley advanced the idea through various channels that the Dissenters and Methodists in their village preaching were actuated by political motives and by a desire to overthrow the Established Church. Upon learning of these charges, Hall took it upon himself to meet the bishop's objections. Forthwith, he denied that itinerant preaching was a new channel into which the old stream of political intrigue was still flowing. Instead it was motivated by a sense of mission and need. Those who promoted such preaching did so because they saw in it a means of extending the gospel to all creatures. Moreover, Hall argued that Parliament would not dare rule out village preaching lest it be guilty of hindering "the diffusion of pure and undefiled religion..." Further, he assured the doubters that nothing was more remote from such preaching than the intention of promoting political discontent. Admittedly there may be a few exceptions, but when they are discovered, Hall declared that they are seriously frowned upon by both Methodists and Dissenters. The only allusions which village preachers make to politics is that they preach the liberty which Jesus Christ proclaimed; they propose a revolution whereby man is "translated from the kingdom of Satan" to the Kingdom of God. Acknowledging that Dissenters are more

122 Hall, "Fragment on Village Preaching," Works, III, pp. 334-35
123 Ibid., pp. 337-38
pious than most people of England, and defining piety as humility and the confession of one's sinfulness and fallibility, Hall asked, how is it to be expected that such people are conspiring to disrupt the national government? "There is nothing," he insisted, "more opposite than the spirit of piety and the spirit of faction."

As for the charge that Dissenters were openly hostile to the English Church, Hall, with equal vigor, repudiated it. He argued that only in rare instances would there be found Dissenters or Methodists who spoke disparagingly of the "established clergy." Much more likely the reverse charge would be true. He pointed out that John Wesley had always cautioned those "in his connexion" against such a practice. And furthermore, Hall claimed that if the clergy with all their advantages would be as diligent in their duties as were the village preachers, then they need not fear any encroachment. Howbeit, before concluding his defense, the Non-conformist minister laid down some practical advice for the village preachers. He assured them that it was not necessary for him to warn them against dealing with political subjects or casting any aspersions upon the Church and clergy. Also, he insisted that in their efforts to evangelize people they should not fail to inculcate the moral obligations of Christianity. Belief should come first, but Christian action

124 Hall, "Fragment on Village Preaching," Works, III, p. 341
125 Ibid., p. 346
should follow in close succession; so that there should be "no durable separation" between the doctrines and the duties of Christianity.

There were other occasions during his ministry at Cambridge, when Hall championed the cause of Dissent. Having in mind especially the Birmingham riots, he catalogued in his *Apology for the Freedom of the Press*, the many abuses heaped upon Dissenters. He reasoned that if Dissent be such a crime that it cannot be tolerated then, "let there be at least a punishment prescribed by law, that they may know what they have to expect, and not lie at the mercy of an enraged and deluded populace." He denied that Dissenters were republicans, though there were some among them, but not out of proportion to the number found in other groups. He objected to the charge that they were responsible for the American war. Also, he maintained that in the practice of moral virtues, Dissenters were "at least as exemplary as their neighbours;" while in actual "duties of religion" they carried to greater heights their sentiments of devotion.

Because of his efforts in the cause of Nonconformity, Hall merits the words of Stoughton when in describing the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, he says that Hall made "a deep impression upon the reading public, including distinguished literary circles,

126 Hall, "Fragment on Village Preaching," *Works*, III, pp. 380-81
127 Hall, *Apology*, *Works*, III, p. 139
128 *Loc. cit.*
and thus he did more than any one else, since Watts and Doddridge, to raise the educational, and literary reputation of Dissent;11 though he did not greatly extend the bounds of theological thought. His biographers, Gregory and Greene, who were intimately associated with him at Cambridge, both speak of the large number of students from the University who came to hear Hall preach, and of the many inducements which certain bishops made to bring him into the Church of England. It remained for his friend, Mackintosh to challenge him to even greater efforts in these words:

But you will never do all the good which is in your power to do, unless you assert your importance, and call to mind that, as the Dissenters have no man comparable to you, it is your province to guide them, and not be guided by their ignorance and bigotry. 131

129 Stoughton, History of Religion in England, VI, p. 434
130 Greene, Reminiscences of R. Hall, pp. 24, 27-28
3. His Theology

With the beginning of Robert Hall's ministry at Cambridge, a definite milestone in his theological ideas was reached. It was not by any means a complete reversal of his former opinions; it was more the development of a theology which would be characteristically his own during the remainder of his public ministry. Primarily responsible for the minister's new trend of thought or changed point of emphasis were two closely coinciding circumstances. First of all, there was the actual condition of the church of which he had just become the pastor. When his immediate predecessor at Stone Yard Church left the orthodox fold, he influenced many in the congregation to follow him into the Socinian camp. Upon the realization of this fact, the new pastor soon discovered that he would have to adjust his own preaching to meet a special need. No longer was it wise for him to consider merely the intellectual approach to Christian truth; therefore, "In trying to change the spiritual condition of the church, Hall himself was led to perceive that at the heart of the Gospel was the Cross and Redemption in Christ Jesus." Because the congregation lacked "devotional seriousness" the young minister felt all the more need for increasing his own "true piety." At first this did not please the people in the church, but what they tolerated, they later learned to admire.

132 G.W. Hughes, Robert Hall, p. 41
"Thus," writes Gregory, "by the operation of an incessant action and re-action, continued for years, each party exerted a salutary influence on the other;" so that at length both church and pastor were distinguished for their "piety, harmony, and affection."

The second factor which contributed toward Hall's new theological outlook was the death of his father which occurred in 1791. Reflecting upon the "deep devotion" and the "unaffected humility" of his departed parent caused the son to consider seriously his own spiritual welfare. He recalled the time when he went from Bristol to visit his father, and discussed at length with him the problem of the "materiality of the soul." The young preacher with his decided educational advantages definitely outstripped his father in argumentation, but upon leaving the room the elder Hall prayed for his son, "that the Lord would lead him into the truth as it is in Jesus, and preserve him from every approach to the vortex of socinianism." On frequent occasions his father had reminded him to be careful about "the vague and dangerous speculations to which he was prone." Thus it proved that the impact of his death brought home to the son all those fatherly remonstrances, and henceforth he declared his complete renunciation of materialism. Later in speaking of that disavowal, the Cambridge minister testified

133 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 30
134 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 55
that his belief in materialism had been buried in his father's grave.

A visit which Hall made to Arnesby in the latter part of his life reveals just how deeply the preacher son was influenced by his father. Upon reaching his old family home, he went immediately into the "parlour," a small room to which his father time and again had resorted for prayer and meditation, and there he himself fell on his knees and poured forth his own supplications. Again, when the son went to the cemetery he dropped to his knees beside his father's grave and lifted up a most fervent prayer. Such devotion to his noble parent makes clear how the loss of that father could produce a new trend of thought and a deeper consecration to his task.

Supplying an appropriate label for the system of theology which Robert Hall developed during his stay at Cambridge cannot be done in hard and fast terms. In truth, it was not as a theologian that he was recognized as an influential minister of his day. He did not produce anything like an original or significant system of religious thought; howbeit his friends as well as his opponents labelled his theology with one name or another, and although these terms are by no means decisive, they do afford stimulating suggestions. One of the most damaging appraisals comes from

135 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 30
136 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 94
Thomas Armitage. He accuses Hall not only of unorthodoxy, but says that consciously or unconsciously he was affected by Socinianism all his life. He grants that in his later life, Hall was not as biased towards Socinianism, and even denied any connections with it. Yet this did not cause Armitage to retract his accusation. Another opinion of Hall's theology, found in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is only partially correct because it mainly describes his thought prior to his Cambridge ministry. "His theological views," writes the Rev. Alexander Gordon, "were somewhat influenced by his admiration...of Priestley, to whose system of materialism he then inclined. From Calvinism he advanced to Arminianism, and was rather a dualist than a trinitarian, never losing faith in the divinity and atonement of our Lord." A better statement of Hall's theology is found in A. S. Patterson's *Poets and Preachers*. In a series of four lectures delivered at Glasgow on Wordsworth, Montgomery, Hall, and Chalmers, Patterson says of Hall's theology: "The vague and doubtful doctrinal creed towards which he tended at the outset of his ministerial life, he exchanged, on leaving Cambridge, if not before, for the systematic form of what is called, moderate Calvinism..." which, he adds, almost corresponds to the Westminster Confession.

139 Patterson, *Poets and Preachers*, pp. 132-33
None of these labels does full justice to Hall; for on an occasion when someone asked him whether he was a Calvinist or an Arminian, he replied:

"Neither, Sir, but I believe I recede farther from Arminianism than from Calvinism. If a man profess himself a decided Arminian, I infer from it that he is not a good logician; but Sir, it does not interfere with his personal piety: look at good Mr. Benson, for example. I regard the question more as metaphysical than religious." 140

In a preface which he wrote for his father's little book, *Help to Zion's Travellers*, Hall expressed a similar sentiment. He explained that his father was a decided Calvinist, but his intention in preparing the book was not so much to recommend that system of theology, "as to disengage it from certain excrescences, which he considered as weakening its evidence and impairing its beauty." 141 Expressing his own view on the matter, Hall declared:

If there be any impression, in the following treatise, which implies that the questions at issue betwixt the calvinists and arminians are of the nature of fundamentals, (of which, however, I am not aware,) I beg leave, as far as they are concerned, to express my explicit dissent; being fully satisfied that upon either system the foundations of human hope remain unshaken, and that there is nothing, in the contrariety of views entertained on these subjects, which ought to obstruct the most cordial affection and harmony among christians. 142

If a "moderate Calvinist" is one who appreciates the logical system of Calvinism and yet does not subscribe to

140 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 51
141 Hall, Preface to *Help to Zion's Travellers*, Works, IV, p. 424
142 *Loc. cit.*
all the views of Calvin, then such a term may be applied to Robert Hall. In his funeral sermon for Dr. Ryland, Hall spoke of the deceased as one whose system of divinity was that of "moderate Calvinism, as modelled and explained by that prodigy of metaphysical acumen, the celebrated Jonathan Edwards." Although Hall could not follow Edwards in every respect, he was much like Dr. Ryland in his desire to "guard the religious public" against the two extremes of "Pelagian pride" and "Antinomian licentiousness." But in a letter to a friend, Hall shed even more light on his own viewpoint. He expressed his appreciation to the author of a work which he had recently read by writing to him:

I do think you have steered a happy medium, between the rigidity of Calvinism and the laxness of Arminianism, and have succeeded in the solution of the grand difficulty—the consistency between general offers and invitations, and the speciality of divine grace... I am particularly delighted with your explicit statement, and vindication of the established connexion between the use of instituted means and the attainment of divine blessings, and the consequent hypothetical possibility of the salvation of all men, where the gospel comes. On this point, the representatives of Calvinists have long appeared to me very defective; and that, fettered by their system, they have by no means gone so far in encouraging and urging sinners to the use of prayer, reading the Scriptures, self-examination, &c., as the Scriptures justify. They have contented themselves too much with enjoining and inculcating the duty of faith, which however important and indispensable, is not, I apprehend, usually imparted till men have been earnestly led to seek and strive. Here the Arminians, such of them as are evangelical, have had greatly the

143 Hall, _Funeral Sermon for Dr. Ryland_, Works, I, pp. 404-05
advantage of the calvinists in pleading with sinners. 144

Illustrative of his modified Calvinism may be mentioned Hall's idea of the extent of the Fall and his opinion of the doctrine of election. Though firmly convinced of the depravity of human nature, he was unable, at Cambridge as he had been unable at Bristol, to accept the federal theory of imputation. He could not see how all of Adam's descendants were accounted as sinners and condemned by God because of Adam's transgression. But as for suggesting another theory of imputation, Hall was rather reticent. He merely came forth with the statement that original sin "attaches itself to all the posterity of Adam." Therefore, he felt that all men, with the exception of Jesus Christ who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, are "tainted" with that sin. Hall's idea of sin itself is alienation from God. It is that which disturbs the harmony between man and God; it is to the mind what disease is to the body.

On the question of the doctrine of election, Hall expressed his belief in it, but did not consider that it involved a particular redemption. He criticized the Calvinists for being too reserved in the issuing of "unlimited invitations." Their refusal to declare that Christ died for...
all men, Hall maintained, "tends to confirm the prejudices of methodists and others, against election and special grace." As for his own viewpoint, he declared:

I would state it in scripture terms, and obviate the antinomian interpretation, by remarking that man, as man, is said to be chosen to obedience, to be conformed to the image of his Son, &c., and not on a foresight of his faith or obedience....

Hall, however, did not consider that the doctrine of election should take a very prominent place in the Christian ministry because it "occupies but a small part of the New Testament revelation." He felt that it was well enough to reserve it for the consideration of Christians, "as a matter of humiliation and of awful joy;" but when one was addressing an audience on the general topics of religion, he should speak only in a "general strain." Further, the minister added, "The gospel affords ample encouragement to all: its generous spirit and large invitations should not be cramped and fettered by the scrupulosity of system."

Robert Hall accepted the doctrine of election up to a certain point, but beyond that he saw it leading into Antinomianism. Many passages of Scripture revealed to him that a certain number of the human race are ordained by God to eternal life, "but," he said, "if any person infers from these general premises, that he is of that number, he advances a proposition without the slightest colour of

148 Hall, "Letter to W. Bennett," Works, IV, p. 458
149 Hall, "Letter to the Rev. Dr. Cox," Works, V, p. 454
Too strong an emphasis on the assurance of salvation, a condition which often leads to Antinomianism, was something that Hall could not tolerate. He maintained that a believer should be delivered from the law "as a covenant of works," but he should be subject to it as a "rule of life." To his notion, it was absurd for a believer to deny all obligations to obey the precepts of Christ on the grounds that his interest in the "merits" of the Redeemer released him from all subjection to his authority. Hall considered it impossible that a system of thought should be called a religion which "prescribes no duties whatever, and is enforced by no sanctions," therefore, he thought it incorrect to speak of Antinomianism as a "religious" error. It is more to be considered "as an attempt to substitute a system of subtle and specious impiety in the room of christianity." As for its Scriptural basis only a number of "detached and insulated" passages can be summoned to lend support to the system. Whereas, according to Hall, the New Testament insists that doctrinal statements should be subservient to the "formation of the principles and habits of practical piety...." Also it maintains that obedience is the end of all knowledge and that keeping the commandments of God is always primary. Therefore, Hall recommended that,

150 Samuel Chase, Antinomianism Unmasked, (Preface by Hall) p. xxi
151 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 119
152 Chase, op. cit., pp. iv-v
"The most effectual antidote to the leaven of antinomianism will probably be found in the frequent and earnest inculcation of the practical precepts of the gospel...."

Ever prominent in Hall's theology, but taking on a deeper significance at Cambridge and his later pastorates, was his belief in the atonement of Christ. Soon after going to Stone Yard Church, he wrote to a fellow minister: "On the first sabbath after my arrival, I preached... an entirely controversial sermon in defence of the atonement." After telling of the response he received, which was for the most part favorable, he continued:

I intend very soon to preach a sermon professedly on the divinity of Jesus Christ. This and the atonement, I am more and more convinced, lie at the foundation of the true system of vital religion; nor will sinners ever be converted to God by a ministry that excludes them.

Further, in one of his famous sermons, he deplored the fact that the "doctrines of the fall and of redemption" had been too greatly neglected. These, he insisted, are the "two grand points on which the Christian dispensation hinges," and are the truths which throughout the ages have "inspired the devotion of the church, and the rapture of the redeemed."

As for his theory of the Fall, the Baptist minister did...
not go to great lengths in his discussion of it. In explain-
ing it, he used such phrases as: "Men have corrupted their
way." Sin and disorder have entered the world. Things are
turned out of their "natural and original channel." A
"great revolution" has befallen "the species," and in con-
sequence of the entrance of sin into the world man has for-
feited his divine favor and divine image. Hall inter-
preted the New Testament as presupposing a charge of guilt
and assuming "as an indubitable fact, the universal apos-
tasy of our race." He accepted the Genesis account
whereby Satan, in the form of a serpent, beguiled the woman,
and thereupon inflicted upon man a "corrupt and mortal
nature." The same spirit of evil continues to seduce men to
sin, to efface the knowledge of God, and to establish idol-
alogy throughout the world. Over against Christ's empire of
light and holiness is the empire of Satan with its darkness
and sin. Moreover, Hall thought of Satan as a "real per-
sonality," that is, personal in the same sense as is the
Holy Spirit. Yet to the person of Satan, he did not attrib-
ute omnipresence or ubiquity. He reasoned that just as
there are innumerable angels of light fighting under the
banners of the Redeemer, so there are numerous angels who
assist the devil in his work. So that on every hand Satan

156 Hall, "The Excellency of the Christian Dispen-
sation," Works, I, p. 420
157 Hall, On the Death of Princess Charlotte, Works,
I, p. 349
158 Hall, Discouragements and Supports of the Chris-
tian Minister, Works, I, p. 232
appears as the enemy of God and man; he was responsible for the Fall, and he ever continues to be responsible for the sinful nature of man.

In consequence of man's fallen nature and his apostate condition, Hall claimed that the world needs an "atoning sacrifice" and a "sanctifying Spirit." "Both these objects are accomplished in the advent of the Saviour, who by presenting himself as a sin-offering, has made ample satisfaction to offend justice, and purchased by his merits the renovating Spirit...." Nothing to Hall's mind was clearer than the teaching of Holy Scripture concerning Christ's atonement. To exclude it from revelation, he said, is like trying to separate color from the rainbow or extension from matter. And anyone who thinks of Christ as a "mere example, teacher, or martyr" obviously misunderstands his vicarious sufferings and his substitutionary atonement.

Hall did not offer proofs of the "substitution of Christ in the place of sinners" but he did go into detail to explain his conception of the atonement:

1. For the atonement to be valid it must first of all have the sanction of the supreme authority. Such a condition was completely satisfied in the mystery of Christ's substi-

159 Hall, "On the Personality of Satan," Works, V, pp. 64-65, 70-71
160 Hall, On the death of Princess Charlotte, Works, I, p. 349
162 Ibid., pp. 493-524 (All the following discussion is taken from this section of Hall's sermon.)
tion; for Scripture reveals that he did nothing of himself.

2. The suffering on Christ's part should be completely voluntary, or else it would be a grave injustice. Even in the Old Testament it was understood that no sacrifice should go unwillingly to the altar, and none ever went so willingly as did Christ.

3. The substitute must not only go voluntarily to the altar, but he must "be perfectly free from the offence which renders punishment necessary." Because of Christ's purity and sinlessness he became "an immaculate sacrifice."

4. The innocent person who is substituted for the guilty must stand in some relation to him. In other words, the one who redeems must be related to those who need redemption. Christ fills that requirement because he became like man. Through his incarnation he became a "kinsman" of man, subject to the same passions and temptations, and yet he remained without sin. Consequently, Christ is suited in "every way to become a substitute for our guilty race."

5. Christ reached the decision to become a substitute in cool deliberation. It was not a hurried and impetuous act, but something that had its origin in the "recesses of a past eternity."

6. When there is a substitution of the innocent for the guilty it should be understood of the substitute that he "justify the law by which he suffers." He should be convinced of the "equity and goodness of the legal enactment
to which he falls a sacrifice." In Christ's case all that was fully satisfied.

7. Further, it is necessary that the substitute should be of equal or greater value than the party in whose behalf he interposes. Scripture reveals that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin. Therefore, in Christ alone is there an adequate substitute for the whole race of man, because he possesses "contradictory attributes" not to be found in man, while at the same time he is frail and mortal, thus enabling him to "die a sacrifice."

8. Christ's redemption is "replete with moral congruity," because his cross was succeeded by a crown, otherwise it would not satisfy every demand of the human mind and heart.

9. The substitution of Christ in the place of a guilty race is all the more impressive because it stands alone as an event for all ages. The name of Jesus will remain eternally distinguished from every other.

10. The cross is God's great plan for reconciling the world unto himself. To create the world God had only to speak a word, but to recover man from his ruin it was necessary for the "Eternal Son to become incarnate" and "expire upon a cross." Therefore, the doctrine of the remission of sins, Hall stated, "forms the grand peculiarity of the gospel, and was the principle theme of the apostolic ministry, and is still preeminently the power of God to salvation."
It is the "sun and centre of the whole system."

In further explanation of the doctrine as he had stated it, Hall could see in it no encouragement for sin. If one so interprets it, one misunderstands Scripture and the whole purpose of Christ's death. When the substitution of the Redeemer in the stead of a guilty race is admitted then it becomes the only foundation of human hope.

The price of redemption (to use a scriptural metaphor) has been paid; the justice of God is satisfied; a full and complete atonement has been made. Nothing remains on the part of the penitent sinner, but to receive the reconciliation, and, with the emotions of humble gratitude, to open his heart to that inspiration of love, which naturally results from the reception of so great a benefit.

Consequently, the doctrine of Christ's dying for none but the elect was ruled out of Hall's theology. The atonement of Christ is intended for all mankind. Redemption is universal on the condition that man accepts it; "it is placed within the grasp of every hand." And the "only prerequisite, is a child-like docility...."

In connection with his idea of universal redemption, Hall reasoned that, "There is a general call in the gospel, addressed to all men indiscriminately. Gracious invitations are given, without exception, far as the sound of the gospel

164 Ibid., p. 523
165 Ibid., pp. 523-24
166 Hall, On the Death of Princess Charlotte, Works, I, p. 351
extends;" this, however of itself is not effectual. As if influenced by Calvin's idea of a universal call to all people which has no reference to salvation, and the special call given by God to the elect only, Hall said there is in every instance of real conversion an "inward call" in addition to the general call. By this "interior call," which unlike Calvin's special call, Christ, according to Hall, "apprehends, lays hold on the soul, stops it in its impenitent progress, and causes it to 'hear his voice.'" God through his grace operates in various ways "in this inward and effectual calling." Scenes of judgment and death are brought before the eyes of the recipient; so that he becomes aware of his guilt and cries out: "What must I do to be saved?" Things which are obstructions to this "inward call" are unbelief, inattention, love of the world and sin, and hardness of heart. "Let these be removed," said Hall, and salvation will come.

Not only does the atonement restore to man his divine favor and divine image, but by the imputation of Christ's righteousness man receives an instant acquittal from punishment. Still further, Hall added:

It was not merely to relieve from misery that Christ died; it was not only justification that was the fruit of his sufferings; but adoption into the family of heaven, the privileges of

168 Ibid., p. 130
169 Loc. cit.
170 Ibid., p. 133
sons and daughters for all his believing people. In consequence of being united to Christ by faith and the Spirit, we partake of his peculiar prerogatives.... 171

Thus man is no longer a servant, but a child of God and the Spirit of Christ cries out in him, "Abba, Father."

Moreover the one who has experienced salvation is a regenerate or "renovated" creature. In his explanation of regeneration, Hall pointed out the cause, the instrument, and the end. On the part of man, he insisted, there is nothing of worth which merits God's grace, but the cause of regeneration springs from "the will of God." "His grace imparted in regeneration must be acknowledged to be grace the most free and unmixed, the fruit of his sovereign will...."

And God interposes only because of "his own good pleasure."

As for the instrument or agent of regeneration, Hall declared that it is "the word of truth." God employs the gospel to infuse the principle of divine life into the soul. Wherever the truth of the gospel is unknown, "no such beneficial alteration in character is perceived, no features of a renewed and sanctified mind are to be traced." The purpose or the end of regeneration is that man should be dedicated to God as a holy person separated from all uncleanness. "Christians are not their own, and the method by which God claims and appropriates them to himself is that of

171 Hall, "Christ's Mission for the Adoption of Sons in the Fulness of Time," Works, VI, p. 432
172 Hall, "On the Cause, Agent, and Purpose of Regeneration," Works, V, p. 110
173 Ibid., p. 112
To grasp Robert Hall's doctrine of God one must understand the source from whence he derived his knowledge of the Supreme Being. Unquestionably the knowledge of God was for him the paramount issue of life. To know God's moral disposition, to know in what relation man stands before him, to know the principles by which he administers the world are matters of highest consequence. "Compared to this," Hall asserted, "all other speculations or inquiries sink into insignificance...."

Familiar as he was with the writings of the eighteenth century deists and especially the writings of Bishop Butler, Hall could not but see the place of reason in acquiring a knowledge of God. But for him, reason alone would never lead to a satisfactory conception of God, although God himself is the author of reason. From reason, it is necessary to advance to revelation, and the revelation Hall always had in mind consisted of the "supernatural facts" as disclosed in the sacred Scripture.

In the Bible alone, (he said) we learn the real character of the Supreme Being; his holiness, justice, mercy, and truth; the moral condition of man, considered in his relation to Him is clearly pointed out; the doom of impenitent transgressors denounced; and the method of obtaining mercy, through the interposition of a divine mediator, plainly revealed. 

174 Hall, "On the Cause, Agent, and Purpose of Regeneration," Works, V, p. 114
175 Hall, Advantage of Knowledge to the Lower Classes, Works, I, p. 207
177 Hall, Advantage of Knowledge, Works, I, p. 208
As for the Bible itself, Hall understood that it is a collection of many books, composed at different periods and by different writers, all holy men of God, and thus it is "a common property, over which there is no human control." Because of the infallible truth and certainty of its declarations and because of its high dignity and excellence as a revelation from God, the Bible is indeed "the truth; to which whatever is contrary is imposture, and whatever is compared to it insignificant." Nevertheless, it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction." Because errors have often been deduced from the Scriptures, Hall encouraged a "diligent and serious perusal of the whole;" so as to correct what is ambiguous, to make clear what is obscure, and to explain what is figurative and metaphorical.

Apart from supplying an adequate knowledge of God, the Scriptures "contain an authentic discovery of the way of salvation." They furnish a positive answer to the question: "What must we do to be saved?" Moreover, the Bible supplies an "infallible" rule of life and a standard of faith and practice. "To the most untutored mind, the information it affords on this subject is far more full and precise than the highest efforts of reason could attain."

178 Hall, "Speech to Leicester Bible Soc.," Works, IV, p. 390
179 Hall, "Regeneration," Works, V, p. 112
180 Hall, "Leicester Bible Soc.," Works, IV, p. 401
181 Hall, Advantage of Knowledge, Works, I, p. 208
Hall was convinced that the Bible is "but an instrument, which, like every other, requires a hand to wield it;" and important as it is, only the "Spirit of Christ" can make it effectual.

Even though the Bible affords no proofs of God's existence, Hall felt the necessity of formulating all the evidence he could in verification of the reality of the Divine Being. Showing the strong influence that Plato had upon him, he insisted, first of all, that the existence of motion furnishes the clearest proof of Deity. Motion is not essential to matter; it is an effect upon matter. Lacking intelligence, however, matter is unable to be the cause of its own motion, and every atom must have some cause behind it before it is moved. Thus the only way to account for the beginning, the continuance, and the extension of motion is to trace it back to the previous existence of mind. No matter how many bodies have been successively impelled by each other, the motion "must necessarily have originated in something immaterial, that is mind or spirit." And so Hall reasoned, "It is as a Spirit that Deity is the original author of all those successive changes and revolutions which take place in the visible universe...." "Nothing can be accounted for," he contended, "unless we admit the existence

183 Hall, Advantage of Knowledge to the Lower Classes, Works, I, p. 215
of a causeless Cause—a presiding Governor of the universe."

From the cosmological argument, Hall proceeded to the teleological argument for God's existence. Using the illustration of a watch, he pointed out that upon examination of it, one instantly perceives "marks of design." The arrangement and adaptation of all its intricate parts which produce one result show that some agent outside the watch is responsible for its "contrivance." Likewise, the human ear and eye with their skill for hearing and sight evince a designing agent outside of man. That agent is indicated "by the appellation of Deity." Hall conceded that such reasoning admits of one "reply." It might be argued that the world has always continued as it is, and that there has been nothing except a continual succession of finite things appearing and disappearing from all eternity. Yet he countered, "whatever is supposed to have occasioned this constant succession, exclusive of an intelligent cause, will never account for the undeniable marks of design visible in all finite beings." It is certain, he continued, that he who formed the finite beings with their marks of wisdom and design is obviously a wise and intelligent agent. Further, the Being who created all things is in essence a unity and not a "plurality of god," otherwise there would be no consistency

185 Hall, "The Glory of God in Concealing," Works, VI, p. 37 (2) (The numeral (2) will henceforth refer to the second section in Volume VI)
186 Hall, Modern Infidelity Considered, Works, I, p.
187 Loc. cit.
in nature nor harmony of design.

As for the ontological argument of God's existence, Hall stated that, "Something always must have existed, or nothing could have had an existence." He reasoned that it would be absurd and impossible to suppose, for example, that matter has arisen out of nothing, without any cause whatsoever. Continuing, he expressed the opinion that:

Whatever exists of itself, and consequently from all eternity, can never cease to exist, and must be perfectly independent of every other being, with respect to existence, and the manner of its existence. Since it exists of itself, the cause and reason of its existence must, by the supposition, be in itself, not in another; it must have, so to speak, a perpetual spring of existence, independent of the operation or will of all other beings. It exists by absolute necessity. It exists because it cannot be otherwise than it is; for whatever can be so is contingent, not necessary. 190

In ascribing the attributes to the Divine Being, Hall followed a systematic plan. God is an infinite being. He is a being of profound mystery. "His essence is altogether hidden from the most profound investigation, the most laborious research, the most subtile penetration, of his creatures." And yet not all of God's nature is concealed; enough knowledge is always revealed for Man's welfare and happiness. "God himself is immutable;" continued Hall,

188 Hall, Modern Infidelity Considered. Works, I, p.19
189 Hall, The Being and Name of Jehovah, Works, V, p. 2
190 Loc. cit.
192 Ibid., pp. 35-36 (2)
193 Ibid., p. 71 (2)
"but our conception of his character is continually receiving
fresh accessions, is continually growing more extended and    194
refulgent...." God changes all things, but he himself is
unchanged. "In duration, absolute greatness belongs only    195
to eternity." So Hall was convinced that, "The Supreme
Mind, and that alone, grasps eternity, possesses it every    196
moment." As God is infinite with regard to time, similarly Hall felt that he is infinite with regard to space. "What­    197
ever is the object of sight," he said, "must be perceived
under some determinate shape or figure;" it must occupy a
certain portion of space. Consequently, Hall laid great
stress upon the invisibility of God. He did not approve of
pictures or images of the Godhead, and criticized the Roman
Church for its attempts to exhibit "the Deity" before the
human eye. "The picturing of the Deity tends to produce de­    198
grading conceptions of the divine nature," so the only
visible representation of God which "revelation sanctions,
is found in his Son incarnate...."

As for God's omnipresence, Hall reasoned that the Divine
Being is a spirit and not flesh, and therefore, he has the
capacity of being present in all parts of his creation.

194 Hall, Modern Infidelity Considered, Works, I, p.29
195 Hall, Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis,
Works, I, p.156
196 Hall, "God's Eternity," Works, V, p. 374
197 Ibid., p. 377
198 Hall, "Spirituality of the Divine Nature," Works,
V, p. 10
199 Loc. cit.
Scripture and reason both lend support to the conception of his omnipresence. "The Infinite Spirit is present with every part of his creation, as intimately as the soul of man is present throughout all the parts of that corporal substance which it animates and sustains." God is intimately present with all his creatures and his "essence is diffused over all space." God not only dwells in the world, but the world also dwells in God. Not for a moment is he separated from the universe.

The Being who has existed independent of all else and from all time is also an intelligent being. "Reason and understanding could no more have been caused by what had none, than matter could have arisen out of nothing." Therefore, Hall ascribed to God omniscience. He held that it is impossible for anything to escape the light of God's countenance nor can darkness hide anything which he has created. Hence God has perfect knowledge of the thoughts of all his rational creatures. Man can judge others only by their actions; while God judges both by actions and motives. The Infinite Spirit is "all eye, all ear, all intelligence, (and all) perception."

God is also an omnipotent being. He is all powerful,
claimed Hall, because the original seat of power is found in mind and spirit and not in body and flesh. He illustrated his point by saying that whatever changes are produced through the instrumentality of the body are always previously put in motion by the mind. Pointing out that within certain limits the will is absolute, he suggested that once a motion is willed in the body, at the same instant the motion takes place. And even though he was far from supposing that God is the soul of the world, the power exerted by the mind over certain motions of the body furnishes an "apt illustration of the control which the Supreme Spirit possesses over the universe."

Of all God's perfect qualities, Hall laid special emphasis upon his goodness. The devout man, he said, regards God as the highest good and the supplier of all things good. God can confer happiness upon his creatures because he is superior to them, and in God alone can the soul of man find satisfaction. As for the union between God and man, it is a very close relationship. Man is absolutely dependent upon God and stands in constant subjection to him, yet God is as his father in a more intimate relation than exists between an earthly father and child.

Hall defined the providence of God as the means whereby the Divine Being governs the world which he has made. It

206 Ibid., VI, pp. 18-19, 21, 24
207 Hall, "The Glory of God in Concealing," Works, VI, p. 40 (2)
is his nature, he said, for God to govern with righteousness because that is the "essential perfection" of Deity. Even if there were no creatures for him to govern, God would have had "an unchanging and invincible love of rectitude." In two respects, however, God perpetually conceals the ways of his providence: in events and circumstances which he permits and in the veil which he throws over the future. Yet Scripture and reason serve to make clear the dealings of Providence, but more especially, Scripture; for as Hall declared, "the obscurities of providence are elucidated by scripture; the declarations of scripture are verified by providence." The type of providence which the minister advocated is particular providence, the denial of which, he asserted, is "to all practical purposes, equivalent to the denial of a providence altogether." And more than that, it is the "best possible expedient for keeping God at a distance...."

Trust in God is the act of an individual...so that if the providence of God embraces not the concerns of individuals, no rational foundation can be conceived for expecting protection from danger, or relief under distress, in answer to prayer. 211

Hall's conception of the Trinity, though unorthodox during his early ministry, became well rounded and quite Scriptural before the end of his pastorate at Cambridge.

208 Hall, "The Inscrutability of God's Ways," Works, VI, p. 148 (2)
209 Hall, "On the Death of Princess Charlotte, Works, I, p. 321
211 Loc. cit.
After a thorough study of the Bible concerning the doctrine, he reached the conclusion that the "Godhead subsists in three persons; distinct acts of personal agency being ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while worship and adoration are claimed for all of them...." He firmly believed that a union "subsisted" between the personages of the Godhead which constitutes them "one living and true God." The chief advantage resulting from the doctrine of the Trinity is that it "facilitates our conception of the plan of redemption, in which each of these glorious persons is represented as assuming distinct, though harmonious offices and functions...." In the work of redemption the Father originates, the Son executes, and the Spirit applies the several parts of that "stupendous scheme." If is understood that the Father sent the Son, the Son assumed the office of mediator, and the Spirit imparted by both, enlightens and sanctifies the elect people of God.

Readily acknowledging the mystery that shrouds the doctrine of the Trinity, Hall admitted that the "theory" of Triune God is "utterly beyond our comprehension." He was aware of a "mysterious and inconceivable union" between the divine nature of the Son of God and the man Christ Jesus, but any attempt to dissolve the mystery and understand how

212 Hall, "The Glory of God in Concealing," Works, VI, p. 47 (2)
213 Hall, Christian Baptism and that of John, Works, II, p. 193
214 Loc. cit.
the union was effected and maintained "without the two natures being identified, or their respective properties being confounded," was completely futile. In short, Hall was critical of any who sought an explanation of the Trinity beyond what is revealed in the Bible; for he "considered the doctrine continually as a doctrine of pure revelation, to which reasoning can add nothing but darkness and uncertainty."

More specifically on the work of the Holy Spirit, Hall testified to its primacy in the Christian religion. He maintained that the Spirit is a free agent, and he will be repelled or invited into one's life according as one believes and acts. The first requisite for a possession of the Spirit is that one set a high value upon it. Instances from the Bible, according to Hall, explain the "magnitude" of the Holy Spirit. First, the promise of the Spirit to the Christian dispensation has approximately the same relation to Christians as the coming of the Messiah did to the pious Jews. And second, in Jesus' mind the Holy Spirit was to be more than a compensation to his disciples for the loss of his bodily presence. Another way whereby the individual is able to enjoy the light and influence of the Spirit is for it to be sought by fervent prayer. And the third way of inviting the

215 Hall, "The Glory of God in Concealing," Works, VI, p. 48 (2)
216 Hall, "Letter to R. Foster," Works, V, p. 530
218 Ibid., pp. 435-36
Holy Spirit, according to Hall, is by habitual dependence upon "divine influence." This opposes dependence on self and a tendency to "despondency and distrust." Whatever is contrary to love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, and faith involves an opposition to God's Spirit, and is "directly calculated to quench his sacred influence."

The salient features of Robert Hall's eschatology may be classified under four heads, namely, his attitude toward death, toward the millennium, toward the final judgment, and toward the final state of the righteous and the wicked. His ideas on physical death were most foreboding, and unquestionably his own wretched health had its effect on the subject. He was convinced that men do not give enough concern for the day of their departure. Every funeral bell, every open grave, every symptom of decay within and change without should serve to remind all of their approaching end. Were a man planning a trip to a far land, he would make much preparation to go, claimed Hall. "How strange it is then," he went on, "that with the certainty we all possess of shortly entering another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect...." "We cannot, therefore, without the greatest presumption, call a single moment our own." The

220 Ibid., pp. 448-49
221 Hall, On the Death of Princess Charlotte, Works, I, pp. 346-47
222 Hall, "The Glory of God in Concealing," Works, VI, p. 65(2)
only expedient is for all to be ready when that final day shall come.

The references which Hall made to the millennium and the Second Coming of Christ are so few that obviously he did not concern himself very greatly with these doctrines. In one of his sermons, he criticized the believers who had neglected their "temporal affairs" because they presumed that the Redeemer's Second Advent was near at hand. The preacher was in accord with the belief of a Second Coming, but he did not believe in using it as an excuse for the neglect of good works. As for the millennium, Hall confidently expected it. He thought of it not as a period of inactivity, but a time when men would consecrate every power to the service of the "Most High." Also it would be an era of "remarkable illumination." "At what period this glory of the latter day will commence," Hall acknowledged, "is not for us to determine...how long it will last is, again, not easy to tell." But he was satisfied that it would be something like a second paradise—love, harmony, and plenty would abound. And man would be restored to the position he maintained before the Fall.

On the issue of the final judgment Hall's thought is best introduced by the statement in which he maintained that,

223 Thomas Grinfield, *Fifty Sermons by Robert Hall*, (2nd ed.) p. 378
224 Hall, *Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes*, Works, I, p. 206
225 Hall, "The Inscrutability of God's Ways," *Works*, VI, p. 158 (2)
"Judgment is the application of the principle of righteousness," in God's government of his creatures and their actions. It implies "measure and equity;" "it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed to some vast and important end." Hall conceived that the chief evidence of the last judgment apart from that which is revealed in Scripture is that the justice of God requires it. Because there is so little justice in the present universe, there is a demand for some occasion in which wrongs shall be rectified and imperfections shall be carried to their completion. Whereas, from the teaching of Scripture, Hall derived the following ideas relative to the judgment:

1. Jesus himself is to be the Judge. Because it is he who came to save, it is only just that he should do the judging.

2. The judgment will be carried out upon man in his "incarnate" state. There will be some form of bodily resurrection of the dead and man shall give an account of his deeds "in the body."

3. It will be a public judgment in which all shall be judged simultaneously. God has his reasons for this; he desires it to be known that he is exercising justice.

4. According to the gospel, men will be judged as be-

226 Hall, "The Inscrutability of God's Ways," Works, VI, pp. 148-49 (2)
227 Grinfield, Fifty Sermons by Robert Hall, p. 123
228 Ibid., pp. 129-135 (All the following points are found in this section)
lievers or unbelievers and not as innocent or guilty. The heathen will be judged without the law.

5. The judgment is final, and from it there can be no appeal. It is universal both in respect to persons and duration.

6. Lastly, the judgment is represented in Scripture as a "sudden event." It will come when it is least expected.

Robert Hall's attitude toward the affairs of the after life was quite different from that of his contemporary, John Foster. Foster was ever eager to know what was beyond the present world; while Hall was always willing to wait. He was content to leave the matter as an unsolved mystery. That does not mean, however, that he entertained no ideas concerning the final state of the righteous and the wicked. Although he had little to say about the state of the unbelievers in the after life, he was of the opinion that the person who dies in a condition of disobedience, impenitence, and alienation from God will incur the doom which Jesus threatened upon those who failed to believe in him and who rejected his mission and authority. By way of a warning, Hall said:

The consequence will be, that the Being whom you have neglected and forgotten will be the constant source of your misery. You will sink under his frown; separation from him will be the great cause of your anguish; you will be vessels of his wrath; you will have fitted yourselves, by contempt of the supreme authority, and alienation from the supreme good, to be for ever in a state of wretched-

229 W.R.Nicoll, The Preaching of Hall and Foster, p. 15
ness, because of separation from Him who is 'the fountain of living water.' 230

In painting his dark picture of the impenitent sinner in the after life, Hall intensified the awful plight with the threat that in eternity there will be no second chance or opportunity for repentance.

Turning to the thought of heaven, which he considered as a reward of those who steadfastly adhered to Christ, Hall dealt at greater length. It is not a reward which is due man, that he had in mind, but it is a reward of grace. Moreover, he thought of the recompenses of heaven as certain, as satisfying, and as eternal. Because of his unrestful life with all its hours of pain, Hall pictured heaven as a place of rest and repose. But he also imagined it as a state of absolute joy and complete satisfaction. Other ideas he associated with heaven were: perfect harmony among all the members, mutual recognition of loved ones and friends, and a feast of understanding, of the affections, of memory, and of anticipation. Even so, Hall was content to feel that if a person could not believe in a future heaven, he could still enjoy a heaven here on earth.

231 Hall, "The Glory of God in Concealing," Works, VI, p. 64 (2)
232 Hall, "Reward in Heaven," Works, V, pp. 319-20
233 Grinfield, Fifty Sermons by R. Hall, pp. 41-42
234 Ibid., pp. 453-66
235 Ibid., p. 272
4. Effects of His Mental and Physical Illness

One event which occurred in the life of Robert Hall toward the close of his Cambridge ministry merits consideration because of the extensive effect it had upon his thought and work. By the year 1803, the pain in his back had grown so intense that it brought about a mental depression which reached its climax in the autumn of the next year, when the minister suffered a total loss of mind. As early as 1802, however, Hall was aware of foreboding symptoms. At that time he complained about the flatness of the surroundings, the "sleepiness" of the Cam, and the general unattractiveness of Cambridge. In a letter to a friend, he wrote: "I feel the impossibility, humanly speaking, of being happy in this part of the country...I am persuaded, a change of situation is desirable." And in another letter written in 1803, he continued, "The face of the country is so extremely flat and disgusting as habitually to make an uncomfortable impression on my spirits."

In addition to his dissatisfaction with the locality, there is another factor which undoubtedly hastened the day of his mental collapse. It was the undue strain placed upon his mind by his long and arduous study habits. Expressing appreciation to a visitor who interrupted his study, he

236 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 73-74
237 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 158
238 Ibid., p. 166
explained that he needed the recreation, because during the past five or six weeks he had read from five o'clock in the morning until seven or eight at night. The greater portion of that time he spent in study of the Greek and Roman classics, the early Church Fathers, Christian history, and theology. In company with Dr. Gregory, he undertook a course of study in mathematics and philosophy. His favorite authors were Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Adam Smith, Locke, Bentham, Berkeley, Baxter, and Milton. In fact, Milton was practically the only English poet whom he read. Lord Macaulay, a warm admirer of Hall, was impressed when he discovered "how the great preacher," (who because of his painful back) "was discovered lying on the floor, employed in learning by aid of grammar and dictionary enough Italian to enable him to verify the parallel between Milton and Dante."

For two intervals of approximately three months each, between 1804 and 1806, Hall had to be confined to institutions, first in Leicester and then in Bristol. The admiration which people had had for him was then turned to sympathy. His friends rallied to him, however, and showed their appreciation by subscribing to a fund which furnished him with a comfortable life annuity. To that fund William Wilberforce contributed; for in a letter to Z. Macaulay, he wrote: "...mere feelings, and feelings less legitimate than

239 Greene, Reminiscences of R. Hall, p. 41
240 G.O. Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, p. 86
Christian sympathy, prompt one to desire to contribute liberally toward his aid... I beg you deal unreservedly with me, and if even 20 l. be less than you think I ought to give, tell me freely." At length, Hall fully regained his mental equilibrium, but he was never rid of the pain in his back and chest. As a consequence he was forced to take increasing amounts of laudanum for the rest of his life, and even before his mental breakdown, he had acquired the habit of smoking a pipe in the hope that it would act as a sedative.

After the recovery of Hall's mental faculties his life and his ministry took on a different hue. One of his contemporaries complained that his preaching did not have an "evangelical cast," but after Cambridge, he testified that a change had taken place for the better. Hall's biographer points out additional effects of his affliction:

...a deeper tone of piety was diffused into his devotional exercise, encreasing (sic) zeal and fervour marked his pulpit addresses, while a growing attachment to the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, and a more vivid sense of their importance, were becoming more and more evident. 243

Writing to Mr. Phillips of Clapham, Hall expressed his own feelings concerning the events which had befallen him. He could not look back upon them without "admiration and gratitude." "I am a monument of the goodness and of the severity

241 R.I. & Samuel Wilberforce, The Correspondence of William Wilberforce, I, p. 348
242 T. Steadman, Memoir of William Steadman, pp. 422-423
243 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 180
of God," wrote Hall, and he continued, "My sufferings have been extreme, and the kindness of God, in interposing in my behalf; unspeakable." Not long after his removal from Cambridge, the minister composed, "An Act of solemn Dedication of myself to God," in which among other things, he stated: "I disclaim all right to myself from henceforth, to my soul, my body, my time, my health, my reputation, my talents, or any thing that belongs to me. I confess myself to be the property of the glorious Redeemer...." That he lived up to his avowal is borne out by the testimony: "His religion seemed to run parallel with the increase of his personal sufferings, which were progressively severe...."

Another effect, not so much of his mental disorder as of his poor health in general, was his comparative reluctance to take an active part in public movements and in engagements outside those of his own church. One notable example was his refusal to accept an invitation to deliver an annual series of lectures in London. "It was hoped that this would be the means of promoting the interests of religion, especially among the higher classes, and persons of literary taste;" but in spite of all inducements for his convenience, he was compelled to decline the proposal because of the bad state of his health. Again, in a letter to Dr. Ryland,

244 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 78-79
245 Ibid., p. 80
246 Unsigned article on Robert Hall, in North British Review, Nov. 1845, p. 61
247 William Landels, Baptist Worthies, p. 227
248 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 265
Hall explained, with reference to an invitation to appear in Scotland on behalf of "the baptist mission," that he must "absolutely decline it." He wrote:

I have been already five weeks absent from my pulpit, on account of illness; and it would be extremely injurious to my congregation, to incur so long an additional absence. In truth, I am little fitted for distant excursions, on account of my liability to be attacked with such violent pain, which renders me a burden to myself and to all about me. 249

Just as Hall declined so often to engage in public activities, so he was ever hesitant about taking up his pen. His unwillingness to write was likewise due largely, though not completely, to his physical disability. Friends of Hall constantly urged him to do more writing, but all their insistence went for little avail. Sir James Mackintosh wrote, for instance, addressing Hall: "...I exhort you to literary activity. It is not as the road of ambition, but of duty, and as the means of usefulness, and the resource against disease." And further in speaking of the high admiration he had for John Foster's Essays, he asked Hall, "Why do you not give me an object of greater admiration in a work of yours?" That question is answered in part by the physician who ministered to Hall during his final illness. A postmortem examination revealed that his disease began in the bones of his spine and the lower part of his back, most likely when he

249 Hall, "Letter to Dr. Ryland," Works, V, pp. 505-06
was a child, and the recumbent position he had to assume so frequently as a result of his illness deprived the public of what otherwise might have come from his pen.

That, however, was not the only reason for the paucity of his writings. Hall invariably set such a high standard for his work, that he was seldom content with any of the results of his own pen. In conversation with a fellow minister, he confessed, "'I have in my mind, sir, an ideal standard, a standard which I can't approach; it always evades me; I can feel therefore little satisfaction in anything I write.'" Illustrative of that attitude is an instance in which Hall was urged by Andrew Fuller to reply to a strong article against missions, which had appeared in the Edinburgh Review. A reviewer who read about twelve pages which Hall produced said, "the brilliancy of the wit, and the elegance of the diction equalled, if not surpassed, any of his compositions." Yet Hall, feeling that Fuller could have done better, became dissatisfied with what he had written, and decided not to finish it. The same reviewer reports that since no record of the work is preserved, Hall must have done with it as he did with so much of his writing—used it for lighting his pipe. "The truth is," as Hall expressed it, "I am tormented with the desire of writing

251 J.M.Chandler, An Authentic Account of the Last Illness and Death of the late Rev. Robert Hall, pp. 11-12
252 J.P.Mursell, Robert Hall: His Genius and His Writing, p. 21
253 Unsigned article on Robert Hall in North British Review, Nov. 1845, p. 60
better than I can; and, as this is an obstacle not easily overcome, I am afraid it will never be in my power to write much."

Moreover, it must be said that Hall had the idea that too many publications was evidence of an author's vanity. Writing to his publisher concerning the reprinting of certain tracts, he replied, "...I am afraid it will have an ostentatious appearance. I hate the appearance of vanity...."

But especially obnoxious to Hall was the writing of reviews. When Joseph Ivimey sent him his two volume History of the English Baptists, and requested a review of it, Hall told him how much he appreciated the work, but that he had "the utmost aversion" to the whole business of reviewing, and therefore could not comply. He considered it a "nefarious and unprincipled proceeding, and one of the greatest plagues of modern times."

Whatever the reasons for his hesitation to write and publish, it was a source of regret to those about him that he did not produce more. One friend remarked, that if his pen had been as busy as his mind was "capacious, ardent, and sublime," it "would have commanded the admiration of distant ages." While another observed that had Hall written with less anxiety and refinement, had he devoted himself to the

256 Hall, "Letter to J. Ivimey," Works, V, p. 522
257 John Leifchild, Memoir of Joseph Hughes, p. 37
prosecution of some great national topic, "touching the interests of morals and religion; had he disregarded more his own feelings," there is nothing which he might not have been capable of effecting."

Reverting once again to Hall's mental disorder, the final effect it had upon him was a determination to conclude his ministry at Stone Yard Church. For three years it had been his intention to leave Cambridge, but it was not until March, 1806, that he drew up his letter of resignation. In setting forth the reasons for his decision, he wrote: "They are partly local in the strictest sense of the word, and in part arise from my recent illness, which suggests the propriety of suspending the ministerial functions for the present." In reply, William Hollick wrote for the church: "Be assured, you will ever hold a distinguished place in our most affectionate remembrances... In the loss of such a pastor, we have sustained a deprivation of no common magnitude...."

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258 Unsigned article on Robert Hall in The Christian Observer, Mar. 1831, XXXI, p. 134
259 Hall, "To the Church of Christ, of the Baptist Persuasion, in Cambridge," Works, V, p. 443
CHAPTER IV

MINISTRY AT LEICESTER, 1807-1826, WIDENING FIELD OF THOUGHT AND ACTIVITIES

1. Historical Background

Returning to his native Midlands, the Reverend Robert Hall began in 1807, a nineteen-year ministry at Harvey Lane Church, Leicester. Not only did it prove to be his longest pastorate, but in many respects it was the most fruitful and rewarding of his career. At the time, England was still embroiled in the struggle on the Continent; for Napoleon was at the height of his power in Europe, although he was never able to subdue the British Isles. The next year, however, the surrender of one of the French armies in Spain marked the beginning of Napoleon’s downfall. Finally, after the victory at Waterloo in 1815, England was able to experience peace again, and thanks to Wellington and Castlereagh, the Islands were to enjoy reasonable security for the next hundred years.

The Napoleonic War proved to have relatively little direct effect upon Hall's Leicester ministry; nevertheless, the social, political, and economic repercussions and reverberations of the war did very definitely influence his thought and work. The year 1807 saw an end to one of the outstanding problems of society, namely, the slave trade; yet the evils
of slavery persisted and men like Hall and others, who believed so strongly in the dignity and worth of man, continued the struggle to eradicate the last vestiges of that blight upon mankind. Other problems brought about as a result of Napoleon's Decrees, greatly affected the commerce and industry of Britain. World markets which were continually opening and closing according to the vagaries of diplomacy and war caused untold sufferings among the working classes. There were few or no organizations for their protection; so the employees, completely at the mercy of their employers, could do nothing more than express their resentments by machine-breaking and rick-burning.

The plight of the lower classes was made worse by the fact that so many women and children were forced to work on the farms and in the factories. Those who were cotton weavers, for instance, experienced a reduction of wages from nearly fourteen shillings a week in 1802, to barely over four shillings in 1815. The workmen could hardly be called citizens, for they had no say in the government of England, and no civic position in the local communities. Radical as were many of the suggestions of William Cobbett, he served a purpose in that he called attention to the disheartening conditions of the working classes. Along with Robert Owen and

1 G.M. Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 128
2 W.L. Mathieson, *England in Transition, 1789-1832*, p. 146
Francis Place, men of entirely different temperament, Cobbett, soon after 1815, was able to effect reforms which brought some measure of relief for those who needed it so badly.

Rapid increases in population took place largely as a result of enclosures, a new method of farming, and the Speenhamland Act, a scheme of supplementing the wages of workers and their families out of the parish rates. Malthus, who deplored the rise in population, felt strongly that the Poor Laws should be abolished; for the poor could not claim relief as a right, but only as a favor. All such relief, he insisted, merely elevates one man at the expense of another.

In addition to the need for social reform, there was a corresponding need for legislative reform. Prominent in that movement was Jeremy Bentham, a man whom Robert Hall carefully followed because he considered him a most "original, profound, and accurate thinker." All Bentham's efforts were motivated by the utilitarian formula he had borrowed from Priestley, "the greatest happiness for the greatest number." It remained for Sir James Mackintosh, working on the principles of Bentham, to lead the agitation for reform of the Criminal Code which saw its Parliamentary triumph in 1820.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, England

3 R.H. Murray, English Social and Political Thinkers of the Nineteenth Century, p. 31
5 Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century, p. 199
and Wales were considered "the least and worst educated countries in Protestant Europe." No doubt the movement for popular education was hindered by the fear that an enlightened populace would desire even greater reforms. But by 1807, some day schools for the poor were begun, and by 1816, an even greater impetus was given to the movement by the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the means of providing more general instruction for the poorer classes. Still later, adult education received its first stimulus from the desire of mechanics to acquire some scientific knowledge, and the willingness on the part of the middle class to supply their demand. Meanwhile, in spite of the lack of general education the work of poets and painters did not suffer from the Napoleonic War, for in point of literary achievement England reached a peak that had not been equalled since the age of Shakespeare.

The Church of England, which had been at a low ebb at the beginning of the century showed signs of revival by 1815. Certainly, if in no other way, there was a marked revival in church building after the close of the war. In general, the three groups or parties in the Church, the High Church group, the Evangelicals, and the Broad Church or liberal group, persisted throughout the first third of the new century. The

6 Mathieson, *England In Transition*, p. 157
7 Trevelyan, *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 181
8 J.H. Overton, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 3, 8, 150
Evangelicals, who made up in moral and spiritual qualities what they lacked in intellectual attainments, were by far the most prominent and active party. The period was not noted for any great theological questions, neither did it produce any outstanding writers; yet added emphasis was given to the foreign mission movement and the various societies which promoted knowledge and distribution of the Scriptures.

The Church by no means made the appeal to the working class people that the Baptists and Wesleyans did. In the chapels working-men found an opportunity which they were unable to discover elsewhere for the development of their talents and the enlargement of their interests. Nonconformists rose up as a body and saw to it that Lord Sidmouth's bill against unlicensed preachers was defeated in 1811. But even as the Dissenters were making progress toward the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, they discovered through the various religious societies a means of more practical co-operation with the Anglicans.

The missionary passion of the Baptists continued to be, during the Napoleonic War and afterwards, one of the outstanding features of the denomination. Not only was the work carried on in India, but a new field of endeavor was begun in Jamaica in 1814. The chief feature of the new mission field was its association with the problem of slavery, and

in connection with that problem William Knibb came forth as a leading spokesman. For the Baptists it was also a time of intellectual and cultural advance, in that schools for the training of ministers were begun in the north and in the south—the Northern Education Society (now Rawdon College) in 1804, and Stepney (now Regent's Park) in 1810. In all the movements of his denomination, Hall not only joined in active participation, but was often one of the outstanding leaders.

The church in which Robert Hall made his notable contribution to the Baptists and indeed to the whole nation was quite unlike that church which he had served at Cambridge. The first regular pastor of Harvey Lane, which was formed in 1769, was an uncle of Hall, the Rev. Christopher Hall. He ministered there barely over a year, and after five other pastorates the church called William Carey, but before Carey came Antinomianism had practically pervaded the entire church membership. Carey's first move was to face the issue squarely, and as a consequence he found it necessary to form a new church before the problem was solved to his satisfaction. The church records for the 24th of March, 1793, report that Carey resigned the church "to take and propagate the Gospel among those idolatrous and superstitious heathens" in India. After Carey left, Mr. Cave became the

pastor, and he was succeeded "by the Rev. Robert Hall, who 11
had already gained a distinction as a preacher."

Concerning the church at Harvey Lane, Hall wrote Dr. Ryland soon after moving to Leicester, that he found the situation very agreeable. "The people," he added, "are a simple-hearted, affectionate, praying people, to whom I preach with more pleasure than to the more refined audience 12 at Cambridge." In the same letter he wrote about the good attendance which they were having at all the "meetings," but from another source one gathers just how rapidly the church did grow under Hall's ministry. When he went there, he found only seventy-six members, though the church would seat between three and four hundred people. Two years later it was increased to almost twice the size, and in 1817, the building was enlarged again, this time so that it would seat a thousand worshippers. By the time Hall left, there were 13 two hundred and sixty-two members at Harvey Lane.

11 The information in this paragraph comes from a Brief History of the Baptist Churches in Leicestershire Association, p. 16
12 Hall, "Letter to Dr. Ryland," Works, V, p. 456
13 Unsigned article on Robert Hall in The Baptist Magazine, May 1832, VII, p. 181
2. His Relations with Other Communions

"Christian catholicity and liberality," writes A. S. Patterson, "eminently characterized the mind and conduct of Hall during his ministry at Leicester." Soon after settling there Hall became a warm friend of the vicar of St. Mary's Church, the Rev. Thomas Robinson, who having been instituted vicar in 1776, had known Robert Hall from his youth. During his stay there he had welcomed back many church members who earlier had been drawn into the Dissenting chapels. When Hall began preaching at Harvey Lane, he in turn frequently attracted some of Robinson's members; nevertheless there existed no jealousy between the two ministers, for they both possessed a genuine spirit of Christian brotherhood and fellowship.

As has already been implied, Hall, even at Cambridge, exhibited a fraternal attitude toward members of other denominations. In 1797, he wrote to Thomas Langdon:

I was much delighted a few weeks since by my attendance at the Bedford Union, of which you have undoubtedly heard. It appears to me an admirable institution: I wish it were imitated in every part of the kingdom. It would delight a heart like yours, to behold Dissenters, and Methodists, and Church people, and Moravians, blending together their endeavours to promote the great and common cause of Christianity. 16

14 Patterson, Poets and Preachers, p. 125
16 A Brief Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Langdon, by his daughter, pp. 145-46
According to the purpose and object of the Bedford Union, it was formed in order to embrace all serious believers in Christ regardless of denomination, and it undertook "to promote their mutual acquaintance, affection, and edification; and their general co-operation in extending the knowledge of the Gospel." In the letter setting forth the principles of the Bedford Union, there were still other observations, such as a number of reasons "for hoping the union will be practical," and a list of the benefits which had already resulted therefrom. There was a further statement, and in this Hall would most heartily concur: "If we would effectually prevent discord in labouring together for the Service of Christ, we must not pretend to uniformity of sentiment; but love and help one another, as brethren in Christ who agree to differ."

Bringing with him to Leicester such high ideals of Christian fellowship, it is understandable how Hall so frequently took part in inter-church activities. Generally he hesitated to participate in the formal opening of new places of worship, yet when he was solicited by the Independents, the General Baptists, or the Methodists he frequently complied. "...and to give a triumph to christian liberality," he preached at the opening of three new churches in Leicester,

17 A Letter - "To all who believe with the Heart on The Lord Jesus Christ, And who have formed themselves into Associated Bodies, To Promote His Cause; The Union of Christians Formed at Bedford, p. 4
18 Ibid., p. 10
all of a different denomination from his own—"a proof...of the value he put upon christian concord and communion." Also, in his writing, Hall readily crossed denominational lines; his memoir of Thomas Toller, his preface to the memoir of Joseph Freeston, and his article on the character of Thomas Robinson all reveal the high esteem in which he held ministers of other faiths.

But it was in the work of the Auxiliary Bible Society at Leicester, that Hall found the greatest opportunity for the manifestation of his interdenominational spirit. In reference to one of the recent meetings of the society, he wrote to a friend in Cambridge: "It was...delightful to see clergymen and dissenting ministers sit on the same seat, and ardently engaged in promoting the same object, with perfect unanimity." The "comprehensive catholicism of its constitution," explains why the Bible Society made such an appeal to the Leicester minister, for he saw in it not only a means of distributing the Scriptures, but also a means of promoting Christian unity. He said in one of the several addresses he made before the society:

Notwithstanding the diversity of sentiment which unhappily prevails among christians, we may fairly presume on the concurrence of all parties and denominations in promoting a design so disinterested as that of diffusing the light of revelation. 21

19 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 210
21 Hall, "An Address at the Formation of the Leicester Bible Society," Works, IV, p. 363
Because of the understanding and harmonious spirit engendered by the society, Hall looked upon it as undeniably a work of God.

"Party names" were most objectionable to him, yet he insisted that if they must exist, "let us carefully watch against a party spirit...." Disputes and factions were to Hall completely out of place; for he felt that in order to be effective, organized Christianity must concentrate its forces "against the common adversary." "What can be more repugnant," he asked, "to the beautiful idea which our Saviour gives us of his church...than the present aspect of Christendom, split into separate and hostile communions...?"

Though deeply desirous of bringing about better relations among the several denominations, Hall did not advocate any practical policy of union. He did, however, offer certain suggestions for "union among christians" which he felt was "so desirable to recover." The spirit of division, he said, will never be healed "by troubling the waters," rather a more "extensive diffusion of piety, among all sects and parties, will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union." "Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other," he continued, "...we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of

22 Hall, "On the Origin and Import of the Name, Christians," Works, V, p. 352
23 Hall, Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister, Works, I, p. 224
24 Hall, "Review of Zeal Without Innovation," Works, IV, p. 72
dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles, in which they concur."

Moreover, Hall felt that if the principles and teachings of the New Testament were properly emphasized they would make for Christian unity, because the ideas which tend to divide Christians are "mere human fabrications." And further, he recommended that the promotion of "vital religion" and a larger "measure of the spirit of Christ" would do more than anything else towards "cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing, with a firm and steady hand, the heats and eruptions of party spirit."

Meanwhile, as has been observed, there were many things about the Church of England, which made it impossible for Hall to feel that there could be anything like an organic union between the Established Church and the Free Churches. His uncompromising principle of the separation of Church and State and his idea that a church consists of the "called, and chosen, and faithful," represented an impassable gulf between Free and State Churches. The extent to which he held this principle is testified by Hall's letter to Tres- trail declaring his hesitancy about sending his son to the University at Cambridge, should it be possible for him to attend. In spite of the high respect he had for Cambridge,

25 Hall, "Review of Zeal Without Innovation," Works, IV, p. 73
26 Ibid., p. 75
he did not feel that a Dissenter should attend a university
which was maintained by the Church of England.

Despite his "conscientious objections" to some things
in the Establishment, Hall could say: "We do not differ...
in essentials; we are not of two distinct religions...we
profess the same doctrines which they profess; we worship
the same God...." And in reference to the Anglican
liturgy, the Nonconformist spoke highly of its merits, be-
lieving that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the
"chastised fervour" of its devotion, and the majestic sim-
plicity of its language, "have combined to place it in the
very first rank of uninspired compositions." Happily
for Hall, his relations with Churchmen both at Cambridge
and Leicester were with Evangelicals, who, according to
Overton, were much more in sympathy with Dissenters than the
High Church party. For this reason The Christian Observer,
an organ of the Evangelical group, often carried sermons of
the Baptist minister and spoke of him as one who possessed
"far higher objects than to promote the views of a party."

It is somewhat difficult to reconcile Hall's attitude

28 F. Trestrail, College Life in Bristol, (Letter from
Hall to Trestrail) p. 45
29 Hall, "The Candour and Liberality of the Centurion
Recommended," Works, V, p. 317
30 Hall, "Speech to the Leicester Bible Society,
Works, IV, 372
31 Overton, The English Church in the Nineteenth
Century, p. 98
32 Unsigned article on Robert Hall in The Christian
Observer, XIII, Aug. 1814
toward the Roman Catholics with his otherwise extensive catholicity and liberality. He deeply lamented their rapid rate of growth and progress, but more than that he was worried because Protestants seemed to be so unconcerned about that advance. "Popery," he claimed is a "heap of unmeaning ceremonies," it utterly neglects divine teaching, and excludes all "biblical knowledge." He considered it the worst form of corrupt Christianity because it so widely diverges from the simple teaching of the gospel; "and just in proportion as it gains ground," said he, "the religion of Christ must decline."

When Hall was asked about the apparent inconsistency shown in his attitude toward the Catholics, he replied in effect, "that Romanism was not simply a religion, but a vast politico-religious system, aiming at supremacy over all law, education, science, and morals; that whilst loudly demanding freedom for itself, it would not give it to others...." Notwithstanding, the Baptist minister was ready to admit that as for many Roman Catholics, they were "better than their system." Never would he believe that salvation was unobtainable in the Roman Church--this he conceded was possible even for orthodox Jews--but the idea of an infallible Church, which he considered the fundamental principle of

34 Trestrail, College Life in Bristol, p. 98
35 Hall, "The Spiritual Condition and Prospects of the Jews," Works, IV, p. 468
Catholicism, was so foreign to his way of thinking that he could not but radically disagree with the whole papal system.

Nevertheless, it might be said, in an age which was by no means distinguished for its charity of spirit, Robert Hall, like his earlier fellow Baptist, John Bunyan, "displayed the catholicity of mind and breadth of tolerance that befit a man of character and culture."

36 Hall, "Fragment on Popery," Works, IV, p. 251
37 Hughes, Robert Hall, p. 107 (Many other tributes could be quoted which reveal Hall's great spirit of liberality, not the least is that of Lord Lytton in his novel, The Caxtons. The author has one of his characters say: "Never mind what your theological opinion is...whatever...thou art, orthodox or heterodox, send for the Life of Robert Hall. It is the life of a man that does good to manhood itself to contemplate." p, 197)
3. His Missionary Endeavors

Robert Hall would have hardly been a worthy successor to William Carey at Leicester had he not possessed something of the same missionary passion which characterized his predecessor. That he did have a vital interest in foreign mission work is borne out by the testimony of Carey's biographer when he writes concerning his interest, that it inspired some of the "most eloquent orations in English Literature." Certainly Hall did most frequently lend his support to the cause of missions by speaking in its behalf, by raising funds, and by appealing to the government for greater liberty in the propagation of the gospel. He definitely felt that his time was an "era of missions" and that all denominations were "as with one great simultaneous impulse," arising from a slumber of inaction and awakening to the "magnitude and obligation of this neglected enterprise."

In July, 1815, Morris reports that Hall made an "excursion" into Wales for the purpose of preaching and collecting funds for the "baptist mission." At a meeting in Swansea, where approximately fifty other ministers from all parts of the "principality" had gathered, he preached to large crowds on both evenings of the two day assemblage.

38 George Smith, Life of William Carey, p. 342
39 Hall, "The Signs of the Times," Works, VI, p. 259
and although the interest and enthusiasm was at a high pitch
the contributions in aid of the mission were relatively
40
small. A year later, in correspondence with Dr. Ryland,
Hall in declining an invitation to preach for a similar pur-
pose at Bristol and Wales, expressed himself as being strongly
opposed to such ostentatious methods of securing financial
support for foreign mission work. According to the letter,
he favored the quieter and more unobtrusive method whereby
every Baptist minister should make an annual collection in
his own congregation; further he should "apply to his more
opulent members and hearers" for their yearly subscription,
and the result, he contended, would be amply sufficient to
meet all the needs of the denomination. There was an
occasion some fifteen months later when the minister again
wrote Dr. Ryland, strongly insisting on the "annual col-
lection" plan, and advocating the elimination of great
gatherings which not only involved added expenditure, but
created a wrong attitude toward missions.

In effect Hall was endeavoring to identify foreign
mission work more closely with the local church organi-
ization, and thus get away from the idea of leaving all
responsibility in the hands of a central committee. "The
best auxiliary societies, in my humble opinion," Hall main-

40 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, pp. 303-04
41 Hall, "Letter to Dr. Ryland," Works, V, pp. 503-
504
42 Ibid., p. 513-14
tained, "are already prepared to our hands in regular, organ-
ized churches, and in the certainty of meeting some hundreds
of professing Christians every sabbath-day." Though he by
no means limited his preaching on missions to one message a
year, it is known that he endeavored to carry out the method
of an annual sermon and offering, and in the year 1816, for
instance, the said offering reached almost one hundred
pounds.

It is hardly necessary to mention Hall's participation
in the Serampore controversy, for he wrote only one letter
in criticism of Carey, Marshman, and Ward. According to
John Foster, the Leicester minister had been misinformed
concerning the financial status of the Serampore mission-
aries. Believing them to be in possession of ample funds,
Hall opposed the idea of having the local society send the
Serampore group additional sums of money, since he visualized
other mission fields crying "aloud for more labourers."
Had he been cognizant of the true circumstances of the pi-
oneer missionaries in India, there is no question but that
he would have strongly supported their cause, forasmuch as
he well knew that it was because of the "celebrity attached
to the names of Carey, Marshman, and Ward" that the home

43 Hall, "Letter to Dr. Ryland," Works, V, P. 504
44 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 304
45 John Foster, "Letter to Dr. Gregory," Hall's
Works, VI, pp. 189-91
46 Hall, "Letter to the Committee of the Baptist
Missionary Society," Works, IV, p. 417
More important is Hall's address on "The Renewal of the Charter of the East India Company," which was widely circulated among influential men in affairs of state. Adding his voice to that of Andrew Fuller, he came forth with the plea that Parliament grant the authorization of "peaceable dissemination of Christian principles in India." He considered it extraordinary that a government which professed to be Christian, should so greatly disfavor that religion in India. Opposing the extension of Christianity and the propagation of one's own faith was to him the same as "fighting against God," and it clearly implied that the ruling powers either had no religion or were ashamed of the one they held. Calling attention to the fact that Christianity was no new experiment in India and pointing out the benefits which had already resulted, Hall declared that the only question to be decided was "whether its further propagation shall be left solely in hands of natives, or whether intelligent and respectable Europeans...shall be allowed to superintend its movements." He went the length of arousing patriotic fears in order to carry his point, when he said that Britain's enemies looked with "eager desire" upon the bright jewel of India, but if more Christians were there, they

47 Hall, "Letter to the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society," Works, IV, p. 418
49 Ibid., pp. 210-11
would to a man be the nation's zealous partisans. Quite
definitely he interpreted the limitations imposed upon the
missionaries as a form of persecution, and his conclusion
was a plea for religious toleration, and for the opportunity
of communicating those truths which Christians feel constrained
to impart.

The next year, in a valedictory address on the occasion
of Eustace Carey's designation as a Christian missionary to
India, Hall was able to report that Parliament had granted
the privilege of the propagation of Christianity in that
country. Whereupon, the minister proceeded to set forth
a list of qualifications of a missionary. For the benefit
of young Carey, he described the ideal representative of
Christ to a foreign land as one who possesses a decided
predilection for the office, a singular "self-devotement,"
and a "spirit of faith." Following a number of practical
recommendations which seem almost too obvious to mention,
the speaker explained to Carey that if upon arrival in
India he were asked what there was in Christianity which he
considered paramount, he should answer without hesitation:
"it is the power of God to salvation...." For although
Christianity will do much to civilize, to break down "that
detestable institution, the caste," and to eliminate super-

50 Hall, "Address to the Rev. Eustace Carey," Works,
I, p. 311
51 Ibid., p. 321 312
stition, its prime function, he insisted, it to prepare the inhabitants of this world for a better one.

Hall was ever convinced that there was no aspect of the Christian religion which was more dependent upon prayer and the spirit of God than missionary endeavor; so in all his treatment of the subject which he considered so vital, he emphasized that no success whatsoever could come until God "communicates" and pours out his spirit upon those engaged in the work."

In view of the emphasis which he gave to the task of missions, it is not surprising that his contribution to the cause should have been recognized by his fellow Baptists. When Dr. Joshua Marshman, one of the pioneer missionaries to India, returned to England in 1826, in order to enlist support for a college on his mission field, his first move, after presenting the matter to the committee in London, was to visit Hall, knowing well that if he gained his support and influence, his own task of securing aid would be greatly simplified.

52 Hall, "The Success of Missions Depends upon the Spirit," Works, VI, pp. 218-19
53 John Marshman, Carey, Marshman, and Ward, p. 334
4. His Social Consciousness

(1) The Slavery Issue

Although the slave trade had been abolished within the British dominions by Acts of 1807 and 1811, as a result of the movement initiated by Clarkson and Wilberforce, slavery still continued, and was particularly oppressive in Jamaica at the time Baptists began sending missionaries there. "The white planters," writes Underwood, "fiercely resented the presence of the missionaries, who were known to support the movement of the abolition of slavery." In an effort to bring an end to the system which enslaved more than eight hundred thousand persons throughout the British colonies, a society was formed in 1823, at Leicester, which included Robert Hall among its members. Nowhere can the attitude which he took toward the dignity and worth of man be more clearly discovered than in an address which he made before the society.

Severely denouncing slavery, he claimed that it degrades human beings from the position of persons to that of things; "it annihilates the most essential prerogative of a reasonable being"; it takes from man his power to determine his own actions. Yet evil as slavery is in general, the

54 A.C. Underwood, History of the English Baptists, p. 199
55 Hall, "Address on West India Slavery," Works, III, p. 305
speaker went on to show how it existed in the most deplorable form imaginable in "West India." Citing the many injustices, the long hours of toil, and the brutal punishment often given the Negro slaves, Hall let it be known that he could not understand how people who called themselves Christians could treat "these children of nature" in such a manner. Those who endeavored to justify the treatment of slaves by saying that their lot was little different from that of the common laborer in England were entirely wrong, claimed the minister, as he called attention to the fact that in one week there were over a hundred run-away slaves in the islands. Still another grievance which he lamented was the total lack of religious instruction given the slaves, as well as their inability to observe the Sabbath. Not only is the system of slavery harmful for the Negro, he maintained, but it is equally detrimental to the master, because he becomes prejudiced, proud, and violent, and all the finer sensibilities of his soul are destroyed.

Positive as he was that "negro slavery is most iniquitous in its origin, most mischievous in its effects, and diametrically opposite to the genius of Christianity, and of the British Constitution," Hall, nevertheless, took the more cautious attitude of recommending a gradual rather than radical change. He would immediately "produce such an

56 Hall, "Address on West India Slavery," Works, III, p. 319
amelioration" of the treatment of slaves as would soften "the rigour of their bondage"; he would provide moral and religious instruction; he would allow them the privilege of marriage, and he would forbid their being sold in payment of their master's debts. Then later he would establish facilities whereby the slave could purchase his freedom, inasmuch as he fully believed that free labor is always more effective than the labor of slaves.

Meanwhile, he exhorted his hearers not to be discouraged if attempts to relieve the situation did not meet with immediate success. Recounting the many difficulties which had to be overcome before the slave trade was abolished, he prophesied a similar gradual struggle before slavery would be ended. Whereupon, he did as is still done to this day, called upon the people to voice their sentiments so loudly that the government would be forced to take some action. In his estimation there was no crime of society more atrocious than the sale of "human flesh" and those who refused to demand the government's intervention were partakers in the guilt of the nation. And continuing, he said, "woe to that nation which extends its power to those from whom it withholds its justice."

57 Hall, "Address on West India Slavery," Works, III, p. 324
(2) Efforts for the Laboring Class

There were few places in England where the effects of the Industrial Revolution were more noticeably felt than at Leicester, during the early nineteenth century. The knitting of stockings, one of the principal industries, had been taken out of the homes and had become completely industrialized. Frame-work knitters, who labored sixteen to eighteen hours a day in most unhealthy factories could make at best only four to seven shillings a week. It might be said of those workers, writes Hammond, "that the wolf was always at their doors, and that when he pressed his way actually in, a strike ensued."

Sensitive as was the heart of Robert Hall, he could not but be appalled at conditions he saw about him; consequently he wrote to a friend: "Our town and neighbourhood is a scene of misery on account of the severe depression of our local manufacture." And expressive of the effect it had upon him, are the words: "Such is the mass of hopeless misery everywhere presenting itself to view, that it is next to impossible for a mind of any sensibility to be cheerful."

Unlike many ministers, who would have done little else than perhaps preach a few sermons on the injustices of the social system, Hall did something more. He it was who in

58 Hammond and Hammond, The Skilled Labourer, p. 249
59 Greene, Reminiscences of R. Hall, (Letter of Hall to Greene) p. 88
disregard of the Combination Acts, was largely responsible for the formation of a union, called the Friendly Relief Society. Most appropriately has it been asserted that as a result of that action, he was among the precursors of the modern Trade Union movement, and Emil Brunner could well have been thinking of efforts similar to those which Hall undertook when, in his discussion of the development of the movement, he wrote: "This trade union movement is, more or less unconsciously, sustained by Christian motives...."

Indeed it was his Christlike passion, his strong desire to see justice carried out, and his deep concern for the underprivileged which prompted the Leicester minister to pioneer in a plan for the benefit and protection of the laboring classes.

The general policy of the Friendly Society was established upon a mutual basis, whereby a public subscription would be made by the gentry, and a weekly contribution by the workers, consisting of sixpence from men and threepence from women and children, would be paid into the fund. By way of compensation, relief amounting to six shillings for men and three shillings for women and boys per week was to be paid out to those who could not obtain the standard wage, or to those who were unemployed. At the end of the first year of operation no less a sum than six thousand pounds had

60 Hammond and Hammond, The Skilled Labourer, p. 251
been disbursed, of which forty-four hundred pounds had been contributed by the workers.

It can be seen, when the amount expended is compared with the payments of the workers, that the plan hardly rested upon a sound financial basis, and for this reason, Hall felt called upon to issue a general appeal for a more wholehearted support of the scheme. Writing anonymously, for fear that his name might "create prejudice in some quarters," and would add no weight in others, he expressed surprise and concern that the plan had not received the contributions which were required. Whereupon, he proceeded to show that the laborer, who has "no other article to dispose of besides his personal industry and skill" urgently needs protection because the only "commodity he has to part with is of such a nature, that it will not permit him to adjust the supply to the demand." While agricultural, manufacturing, and mercantile interests are shielded by a multitude of legal provisions, laborers are left the most helpless and unprotected class in society. If one is thrown out of employment, continued the writer, he is tempted to offer his services for whatever wage may be offered him, and as a consequence, the wages of all workers are soon reduced. Therefore the only expedient, he claimed, is either legislative

62 Hammond and Hammond, The Skilled Labourer, pp. 251-252
63 Hall, Appeal on the Subject of the Frame-Work Knitters' Fund, Works, III, p. 236
action or the creation of a fund adequate to meet the dire situation.

There were, however some of the frame-work knitters themselves who refused to contribute to the fund, a fact deeply regretted by Hall, so he made it clear to them that they should take the first step to help themselves. Yet he was even more censorious of those manufacturers who had prohibited their workmen from contributing their quota to the fund, therefore, he suggested that a list of contributors and non-contributors be published periodically in order that the "blame" might be imputed where it was due. Moreover, he appealed for voluntary gifts from people far and near, regardless of their occupation, because, as he pointed out, all classes and all groups would benefit when the knitters had a greater purchasing power. Assuring the masses that the ties of society are too close to leave any class untouched by conditions of depression, he declared: "In the moral system, it is a part of the wise arrangements of Providence, that no member shall suffer alone...." Therefore, he added, "if the lower classes are involved in wretchedness and beggary, the more elevated shall not enjoy their prosperity unimpaired."

Shortly after the Appeal was issued strong objections to it and the whole procedure of the Relief Society were

64 Hall, Appeal on the Subject of the Frame-Work Knitters' Fund, Works, III, p. 248
voiced by William Cobbett and others of like mind. Though at first sight it might appear strange that Cobbett should oppose any effort to benefit the poorer classes, it is not so surprising when one realizes that "probably no English agitator for whom so much can be said has ever equalled him in inconsistency...." His abuse of his friends as well as his opponents was generally more lavish than his praise. So virulent was his attack upon the frame-work knitters' scheme, however, that Hall felt compelled to issue a Reply.

The antagonists expressed themselves as being convinced that the Relief Society would not long endure, a prediction which proved correct, since the plan did cease to operate after five years, because the drain upon the resources proved to be too great, but at the time Hall asked Cobbett and the others why they were so disturbed about it if they were sure it would soon die a natural death? Reading between the lines of their objection, he perceived that what the opponents really feared was a "combination" to effect a general increase in the laborers' wages. Flatly denying that this was the purpose of the Society, he reiterated that it was purely for protection and to ward off the serious consequences of a depression. Since the plan

65 Mathieson, England in Transition, p. 149
66 Hall, Reply to Cobbett and Others on the Frame-Work Knitters' Fund, Works, III, p. 257
was voluntarily entered upon by the workers as the most ef-
ificent expedient for maintaining an adequate rate of wages,
and as the fund was to be supplemented by the voluntary con-
tributions of the parishes, the whole proceeding, Hall as-
serted, "is perfectly consonant to the principles of polit-
ical economy, correctly interpreted...." He endeavored to
correct Cobbett's false idea that the fund was solicited
solely from the public, leaving no need for the workers to
make a contribution, and insisted that such a policy was
only provisional until the time came when the money from the
knitters would be sufficient to meet all the requirements.
When Cobbett undertook to attribute the distress of the
frame-work knitters to excessive taxation, Hall admitting
that taxes were most burdensome, would not accept such a
contention. He cited, as evidence against Cobbett, the sit-
uation of the Staffordshire pottery workers, who though
they had the same tax burden enjoyed a much higher standard
of living.

To the argument that the scheme encouraged idleness,
Hall replied that though it might have that tendency at
first, there was no reason to think that it would contin-
ually cause what is now known as absenteeism. Carefully
pointing out that the relief of six shillings a week was
hardly enough to induce idleness, he asserted that it would

67 Hall, Reply to Cobbett and Others on the Frame-
Work Knitters' Fund, Works, III, p. 266
68 Ibid., pp. 273-74
at least prevent the workers "from lying utterly at the mercy of their masters." Even so, in corroboration of his opinion, he referred to the fact that at the time when wages were most depressed, there were just as many people "out of work" as there were when wages were higher. Cobbett's advocacy of recourse to the parishes as an alternative to the plan of the Relief Society was greatly ridiculed by Hall, as he pointed out that the parish rates were already an unbearable burden, leading thousands of people to the brink of pauperism. So in reality he considered all objections to his scheme of relief completely out of place, since no adequate counter plan was submitted.

As he continued to study the condition of the Leicestershire laborers, Hall became convinced that the sin of oppression, by which he meant the unfair advantage taken by one group over another, was not only a violation of justice, but one of the worst evils imaginable. And by his definition of an "oppressor" as one who "is not restrained by the dictates of humanity from pushing, to its utmost extent, the natural superiority which riches everywhere possess over poverty...", one gathers an insight into the social sensitiveness of his soul and understands why he gave his time, lent his voice, and used his pen in advocating the cause of the underprivileged.

69 Hall, Reply to Cobbett and Others on the Frame-Work Knitters' Fund, Works, III, p. 291
70 Ibid., p. 296
(3) Interest in Education

Not content that the laborer should have merely a living wage, Robert Hall also sought to give him the benefit of an education which would at least enable him to read, and thus delve into the vast storehouse of knowledge. Possessed of the nineteenth century idea of knowledge, he thought of it as that which "expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment." Moreover, he believed that a moral good comes from knowledge, and thus the more one's mental resources are increased the more one's character is exalted and one's taste for gross sensuality is subdued. Teaching the poor man to read and giving him a desire to read, not only enables him to use his mind while his body is at rest, but supplies him with a source of entertainment in his own home rather than in a public house, reasoned Hall. Indeed, he considered that it was more profitable to confer upon the poor a "habit of thinking" than it was to offer them a gift of money.

Holding to such a conception of knowledge and realizing what education would mean for the poorer classes, the Leicester minister could not but exert his influence toward its advance among those from whom it had been withheld. He

71 Hall, Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes, Works, I, p. 198
was persuaded that the lack of education among the laborers was the cause of "extreme profligacy, improvidence, and misery." And as evidence of his contention, he referred to the "beggary, wretchedness and sloth" in Ireland where there was little or no training for the peasants, and by way of contrast, to the "degree of decency and comfort, the fruit of sobriety and industry" in Scotland where there were free schools in every parish. Hall well knew that the reluctance to provide the poor with an education arose from an apprehension that it would lift them above their sphere, make them dissatisfied with their station, and thus endanger the peace of the state, but such an objection, he said, was devoid of all "force and validity," because in reality there was nothing which "renders legitimate governments so insecure as extreme ignorance in the people." Whereas, on the other hand, tyrannical and unlawful governments thrive most upon fear and the absence of education.

On numerous occasions Hall spoke before various groups for the purpose of setting forth his educational theories. In the summer of 1815, for instance, he was in Bristol and in an address to the Auxiliary British and Foreign School Society, he deplored the state of ignorance existing among the populace, and claimed that a nation which possesses

72 Hall, Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes, Works, I, p. 201
73 Ibid., p. 203
"an inspired revelation" must of necessity teach its subjects to read the book containing that revelation. A greater diffusion of knowledge would, he declared, enable the poor to live more noble and virtuous lives, it would elevate their minds above the "pressure of poverty" and the "pain of disease," it would improve their morals, and it would "regulate their passions and increase their enjoyments."  

As a fitting conclusion, he terminated his message by strongly urging support for a system of national education.

Significant as he considered the inculcation of general knowledge, Hall placed far greater emphasis upon the dissemination of religious, or more specifically biblical knowledge. Speaking to a group of Sunday school teachers, he stressed the value and purpose of the Scriptures and encouraged them to make the knowledge of the Bible "practical and experimental." But more than all else, he sought to impress upon the teachers the significance of their task -- to lead their pupils to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. With this end in view, he told them to fix their attention upon the "individual importance of man, as the creature of God, and a candidate for immortality." So clearly did Hall see the dependence of Christianity upon education, that he ascribed every step of its progress "to instruction," and

75 Hall, *Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes*, Works, I, p. 216
asserted that extreme ignorance is always most unfavorable to the cause of Christ. The possession of such an idea explains his expenditure of so much time and energy for the advancement of knowledge—for that in turn meant for him the advancement of Christianity.

Aside from his interest in providing education for the poor, Hall likewise rendered valuable assistance to the cause of ministerial training. As one who himself had enjoyed the advantages of a seminary and university education, it is only natural that he should be desirous of seeing similar opportunities given to the young men of his day who aspired to the high calling of a minister of the gospel. When he had an invitation to preach at the Northern Education Society (later Rawdon College) soon after its beginning, he accepted with great reluctance because of his physical disability. It was a strenuous trip for him to Yorkshire, but his interest in the cause constrained him to go, and after his address there, one of his fellow ministers wrote: "'This week I have had a high gratification, in attending a meeting of the Northern Education Society at Rochdale... The Rev. Robert Hall delivered a discourse, which, of all that I have ever heard, was in my opinion one of the best and greatest.'"

76 Hall, Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes, Works, I, p. 205
77 Memoir of T. Langdon, (by his daughter) p. 45
78 An Account of the Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett, p. 309
In 1810, when Stepney College (now Regent's Park) had its beginning in London, Hall played an even more prominent role, in that he was invited to write the prospectus or address which was issued in celebration of the founding of the college. Emphasizing in his prospectus the centrality of the Bible and revealed religion, he averred that there should be a union of revelation and reason, and though education could not take the place of "native talent" and "real piety," there was ample need for both. In a day when the "general level of mental improvement" was being raised, he stressed the need for teachers of religion to possess their full share of educational advantages. And so he recommended the new undertaking to the "patronage of the public," and expressed the hope that through the influence of the Divine Spirit, the seminary though small would grow to become "respectable for learning and piety," and prove to be a "nursery of faithful and able ministers, and a blessing to the church of Christ."

79 Hall, "Address in Behalf of the Baptist Academical Institution," Works, IV, p. 411
80 Ibid., p. 414
5. His Doctrinal Controversies

(1) Socinianism

Strictly speaking, Hall's involvement with Socinianism is not in the nature of a controversy, yet it can be classified under such a heading, inasmuch as his sermons and his writings on the subject were called forth by those who held Socinian or Unitarian principles. The appearance of Thomas Belsham's, Memoirs of the Late Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, and the delivery of a series of lectures by the minister of a Unitarian congregation at Leicester in defence of his own opinions were chiefly responsible for drawing the Baptist minister, who himself had earlier been accused of Socinian tendencies, into the field of verbal combat.

Although, as will be shown, not all those who were the object of Hall's invective chose to be designated as Socinians, it is the label which he generally preferred. Nevertheless, in practice he used it interchangeably with Unitarian. The term, Unitarian was ambiguous to him because Trinitarians also assert, though in their own sense, the unity of God. Far better that they should be styled Socinians, Hall said, "when it is undeniable that they agree with Socinus in his fundamental position," namely, the simple humanity of Christ. Such an appellation would

eliminate any chance of chicanery and imposture.

Referring to the learning and moderation of Lardner and the fame and science of Priestley, Hall recognized the "transitory splendour" which they had given the Socinian system, but that luster was no longer evident. In his opinion, Socinianism was definitely losing ground, and one of the main reasons for Belsham's publication of Lindsey's Memoirs was to enlist more recruits for the cause. Yet in spite of the efforts of Lindsey and others, the Socinians were able to win converts only from the Arian ranks of Dissenters, while hardly any came from the Anglican Church. But at that, he accused them of converting people to their "opinion" rather than to God. And as even greater evidence of the changed attitude which had come to him since his Bristol days, Hall expressed himself, at Leicester, as doubting the possibility of salvation for Socinians. Since they reject the Saviourhood of Jesus, in his opinion, they are in the same state as "professed infidels."

A study of the distinguishing characteristics which Hall ascribed to Socinianism not only reveals his decided opposition to the system, but affords insight as well into his mind on matters heretofore not discussed. In answer to the discourses of a Unitarian minister, he prepared and

82 Hall, "Review of Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey," Works, IV, pp. 199, 200, 203, 206
83 Hall, "Letter to Thomas Grinfield," Works, V, pp. 501-02
delivered a series of twelve lectures, but unhappily did not deem them worthy of publication, and as a result only his outlines and some manuscript notes of three of the lectures, taken down in shorthand by a listener, are extant. Fundamentally he considered Unitarianism as a system of negations, denying practically all the doctrines regarded as most vital by orthodox Christians. Under the pretence of making Christianity more simple, in reality it robs it of the truths which mean so much to the heart and mind of man. "By stripping religion of its mysteries," Hall illustratively added, "it deprives it of more than half its power."

Among the several things which, he said, Socinianism denies is the plenary inspiration of the New Testament writers. Not only is the system inconsistent with Scripture, but it "militates against every page of revelation." Beginning by denying some of the clearest teachings of the New Testament, it proceeds "to dispute the authority of the Old, till the whole Bible be virtually set aside as the umpire of controversy." It was to be expected that such an accusation would call forth a rebuttal, for in the main, Unitarians at that time held to the genuineness of the New Testament books, and accepted the facts and doctrines

84 Hall, "On the Spirit and Tendency of Socinianism," Works, V, p. 33
85 Hall, "Review of Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey," Works, IV, p. 208
86 Ibid., p. 216
contained therein as authentic. Consequently, a refutation was not long delayed, and it came from one who called himself, a "Unitarian Christian." Right at the outset, he demurred to being termed a Socinian as Hall would call him, and then he proceeded to show that his group did not deny the inspiration of the New Testament writers. Indeed, he emphasized that Unitarians had no creed or manual of faith except the Holy Scriptures, and could be understood only by people accepting the same manual.

In his second characterization of Unitarianism, Hall insisted that there was a close affinity between it and deism. Both profess to believe in a future state of rewards and punishments, he said, and the only difference is that the deist derives his convictions on the subject from the principles of natural religion, whereas the Unitarian obtains his from the fact of Christ's resurrection. Points of similarity were most numerous, and he suggested by way of illustration, their opposition to the doctrine of the Fall, their rejection of the Trinity and all supernatural mysteries, their idea of the redundancy of the atonement, and their notion of the person of Christ. By purging Christianity of those doctrines which are likely to give offence, deists and Unitarians boast that their system

gives them more advantage in winning over infidels to the Christian cause, but Hall, although he agreed that such a claim had an appearance of truth, went so far as to accuse them of causing more infidelity than they prevented. As tangible evidence, he alluded to Hackney College, a Unitarian seminary in which, according to one of the professors, a great proportion of the students became skeptics and unbelievers. And the minister added: "Had that institution continued, it bid fair to become the most prolific hot-bed of infidelity this country ever knew." Since "Unitarianism runs along the whole line from the borders of orthodoxy to the bourne of non-belief," as Hunt suggests, Hall, in pronouncing his accusation unquestionably had his mind focused mainly upon the latter end of that line.

In the third place, Hall found fault with Unitarianism because of the "unfavourable influence it exerts on the spirit of devotion. It appears to have little or no connexion with the religion of the heart." Primarily, he objected to the consideration of Jesus as no more than the most perfect example. Christ, in his view, deserved a far more exalted position, and for this reason he could not place too much stress upon the importance of Christ's divinity and his pre-existent state. Explaining that the denial

89 Hall, "On the Spirit and Tendency of Socinianism," Works, V, p. 38
90 John Hunt, Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 91
91 Hall, "On the Spirit and Tendency of Socinianism," Works, V, p. 39
of Christ's existence before his birth of the Virgin Mary is the cornerstone of Unitarianism, he reasoned that such a conclusion was reached only by selecting Scripture passages which emphasize his humanity, and leaving out or lightly regarding the others.

For him Christ was a human being capable of suffering but he was also divine in "order to make his sufferings meritorious." As for proving the divinity and pre-existence of Christ, Hall did nothing more than offer selected Scripture texts, making great use of Philippians ii.5-9, but these were sufficient to lead him to the conclusion that all the attributes of the divine nature could also be ascribed in different forms to Jesus Christ. Therefore, he is worthy of man's worship and devotion; even though the Unitarians did not believe him to be their proper object of worship.

Hall criticized the Unitarians, also, because their attitude toward public prayer and the Sabbath Day was unfavorable to a spirit of devotion. Instead of holding meetings for the express purpose of prayer, as was customary among all the other Nonconformists, they held debating clubs, which frequently met on the Sabbath. And otherwise their observance of the day was not at all in keeping with

92 Hall, "On the Pre-existence of Christ," (Manuscript notes by John Riley) pp. 17-18
93 Hall, in The Pulpit, VII, No. 223, p. 344
94 "Unitarian Christian," Refutation of the Mis-statements of Robert Hall, p. 4
Hall's puritanical conception. So strictly did he regard the Sabbath that he would not even allow the pupils of his Sunday school to write on that day. It was permissible for them to read, but exercises in writing had to be conducted throughout the week.

One further characteristic of Unitarianism that Hall could not approve was the fatalistic and materialistic spirit which had developed in its midst since the time of Priestley. Thus he called attention to the serious consequences of such a spirit. By extending the foreknowledge of God to include all events and connecting the whole series of events in an "indissoluble chain of necessity," the Unitarians make God the creator of evil as well as good, and one who holds to such a belief feels no sense of accountability for either good or evil actions. Accordingly, the human mind is a "machine governed by principles to whose operations it is perfectly passive." This theory, Hall could see, wiped out all distinctions between virtue and vice, innocence and guilt, and if generally accepted it would eventuate in the moral ruin of society.

Moreover, in discussing the materialistic aspect of Socinianism, he had a right to know whereof he spoke, for in his earlier days he too had considered the nature of

95 Hall, *Essays, Prefaces, and Letters*, p. 25
96 Hall, "On the Spirit and Tendency of Socinianism," *Works*, V, p. 44
man to be "single and homogeneous," not consisting of body and soul, matter and spirit, but of matter only. On the basis of such reasoning, he was prepared at this later period of his life to argue that if at the moment of death all the thinking powers of man are extinguished and he ceases to be conscious until the resurrection, then all hope for a future state of existence is delusive. For if the whole man perishes at death and all his being becomes "dissipated and scattered" all personal identity is lost forever and cannot be restored. Thus he concluded that on the Unitarian hypothesis, the very thing of which it is supposed to be certain, namely, the belief in a future life, perishes, "and a future state can be predicated of any man only in a lax and figurative sense." Assuredly, the toleration and subdued regard which Hall had for Socinianism in his Bristol days had, in the period of his more mature thought, turned to positive denial and aggressive opposition.

97 Hall, "On the Spirit and Tendency of Socinianism," Works, V, p. 45
If it is impossible to attribute originality to the thought and theology of Robert Hall, as we have hitherto investigated them, there is an area in which he can be considered as maintaining a distinctive position, namely, in his controversy on the issue of free or strict communion. Indeed one of his assailants charged him with adopting an attitude toward the terms of communion entirely different from all Christendom, and yet in almost the same breath, as if contradicting himself, he accused Hall of being at "one with Socinus through and through, in that he confounds Church organization with personal Christian life...." As a matter of fact, the Leiceste minister was not even the first in his own denomination to take the position which he did on the subject of the terms of communion. In the seventeenth century a controversy arose between William Kiffin, who took the strict view and John Bunyan, who argued for open communion, while in the eighteenth century, the dispute continued between Robert Robinson on one side and Abraham Booth on the other. Hall's distinction lies in the fact that in the following century his voice superseded all others in contending for the more liberal position, and as a consequence of his extensive works on the subject, he

98 Thomas Armitage, A History of the Baptists, pp. 595-96
crystalized that opinion and practice which has for the most part predominated among the Baptist people until the present time.

By way of introduction to the controversy, it is interesting to note that a reviewer of Hall's, On Terms of Communion in The Christian Observer reports that the topic deserves no more than a pamphlet because of its limited appeal, and that it is only the name of the author which lends its importance. Yet on the other hand, and in more accurate terms, Stoughton claims that although most people look upon the controversy as sectarian and ephemeral, it is hardly so; for even if the form of the issue was limited to the Baptist body, the discussion applies to all Churches of Christendom, since practically all make baptism a term of communion. So far as can be learned, among the Baptist pioneers in England, there was divergence on this point, and Whitley explains that according to a London meeting in which delegates from ninety-four Baptist churches assembled in 1689, "it was expressly agreed that every church might have its own practice as to admittance at the Lord's Table. Equally so in the nineteenth century, each Baptist church had the right of deciding whether it should

100 Unsigned article in The Christian Observer, XIV, Oct. 1815, p. 664
102 Whitley, History of British Baptists, p. 177
maintain strict or open communion.

The man who proved to be Hall's chief opponent in the controversy, Joseph Kinghorn, for forty years minister at Norwich, had previously been one of the pupils under his tutorship at Bristol. In correspondence with his father and mother while a student, Kinghorn mentioned more than once the high regard he had for his tutor, but even more revealing is his discussion of the problem which then confronted him on the question of open or strict communion. He could not make up his mind that it was right to refuse a man the privilege of communicating in a Baptist church simply because he had not been baptized according to the denomination's customary practice. "Have we," he wrote, "any right to judge the consciences of those who think they have attended to baptism?" And in another letter explaining his position on baptism, he wrote, "However, notwithstanding all this, I have not entirely a decided mind. I do not yet appear as the advocate for mixed communion, 103 nor am I likely to be called to it."

Twenty-five years later, there remained no doubt in his mind, and as will be shown, he undertook to answer every argument which Hall put forth in favor of open or mixed communion.

Each man had deep respect for the other's abilities, and sought in so far as possible to keep personal feelings

103 M.H.Wilkins, Joseph Kinghorn, p. 165
out of the debate. Soon after the appearance of Hall's first contribution on the subject, a letter was sent to Kinghorn by a common friend in which he wrote of the warning he had given Hall concerning an impending "attack" from Norwich. Whereupon Hall told the correspondent, "that he could not be replied to by a more respectable man than Mr. Kinghorn...." And if he "did not overpower him with argument, he should certainly give him an answer."

The debate between the two Baptist ministers, however, did not begin with a direct clash. The contender for open communion initiated the controversy by replying to an eighteenth century work of Abraham Booth, largely because those of the strict view considered the venerable London minister's, Apology for the Baptists, the most able defense of their position. Considering controversy as an evil, though often a necessary one, Hall felt so acutely the "painful" effects of a divided Christendom, that his desire for closer unity compelled him to take up his pen in presentation of his opinions.

The main issue of the controversy centered on the question of who should be admitted to the Lord's Table in a Baptist church. Those who held the strict view maintained that only church members who had been baptized upon a profession of faith in Christ and by immersion were eligible.

104 Wilkins, Joseph Kinghorn, pp. 355-56
105 Hall, On Terms of Communion, Works, II, p. 3
for participation in the Lord's Supper. Those who pleaded for open, free, or mixed communion reasoned that those who had been baptized in infancy were indeed baptized, in their own estimation, and therefore were eligible to communicate in a Baptist church. Hall, however, in order to justify the position he assumed, went a step further in that the only condition, or as he preferred to say, the only term of communion which men are entitled to prescribe is that which the New Testament enjoins as a condition of salvation. Baptism, he reasoned, not being essential to salvation, should not be used as a condition for granting or refusing communion to anyone.

In order to establish his viewpoint, Hall began the debate by a perusal and criticism of the arguments favoring strict communion, and first of all this involved the matter of the connection between baptism and the Lord's Supper. Booth had insisted that baptism is indispensably necessary for communion, and with an overpowering array of historical evidence showed how the belief had been generally and universally accepted by all denominations. Moreover, he insisted that there is a peculiar connection between the two ordinances, and as baptism was instituted first, it has a "prior claim" on the Christian's obedience. Andrew

106 Hall, On Terms of Communion, Works, II, pp. 4, 12
107 Abraham Booth, An Apology for the Baptists, Works, II, pp. 341, 347
108 Ibid., p. 370
Fuller agreed with Booth on the point of the connection, but Kinghorn, contending for the same view of strict communion, affirmed that "there is no instituted" connection between baptism and the Lord's Supper, any more than there is a close relation between baptism and any other part of the Christian teaching. Notwithstanding, he definitely understood that Jesus had commanded and the Apostles had required baptism and though it was not expressly a "preparative" for communion, it was the first act of Christian obedience, and consequently required before one could communicate. The contenders for strict communion argued further that baptism takes precedence because it is an emblem of the Christian's initiation, whereas the Lord's Supper is a symbol of growth or a "sacrament of nutrition." Also, by using the analogy of the relation which circumcision holds to observance of the passover in the Old Testament, they sought to show the priority of baptism.

In refutation Hall endeavored to reveal the fallacy of laying undue stress upon the priority of baptism by interjecting the notion that Christian baptism was instituted even after the Lord's Supper. Reaching such a conclusion

109 Joseph Kinghorn, *Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 30. See also William Giles, *Letter to the Rev. Robert Hall*, p. 34, in which he endeavors with little success to reconcile the inconsistency between Booth and Fuller on the one hand, and Kinghorn on the other. Hall considered this discrepancy a serious weakness for the champions of strict communion, inasmuch as he considered the lack of connection between baptism and the Lord's Supper most vital to his whole argument.
by differentiating the baptism of John from the true baptism of Christ, which did not come until after the resurrection, he showed how John's was merely a baptism of water and repentance. Being baptized in Jesus' name included the idea of being baptized into his death, and this, he suggested, could not have occurred before Christ instituted his Memorial Supper.

Relative to the connection of the two ordinances, Hall contended that there was no peculiar association between them, "either in the nature of things, or by divine appointment, so as to render it improper to administer the one without the other." Since they were instituted at different times and for different purposes, one as an act whereby the individual professes his faith in the Trinity, and the other as a social act whereby the dying love of the Redeemer is commemorated, there is obviously no natural connection more than the fact that they were both appointed by God. In the Scriptures the two are hardly ever mentioned together, he added, "and on no occasion is it asserted, or insinuated, that the validity of the sacrament depends on the previous observation of the baptismal ceremony."

Far from seeking to invert the usual order of baptism

110 Hall, Christian Baptism and That of John, Works, II, pp. 183, 189
111 Hall, Christian in Opposition to Party Communion, Works, III, p. 430
112 Ibid., p. 430
and communion, Hall informed his opponents that he pleaded for nothing of the kind. He would always insist that a convert, who saw baptism in the same light as he did, should be baptized "previous to his reception of the sacrament." Yet the first observance was in no sense a "preparative" for the second; neither did one so depend upon the other that the "conscientious omission" of baptism should forfeit the privilege or cancel the duty of observing the Lord's Supper.

Hall casually brushed aside his opponent's contention that the sacrament of regeneration or initiation should precede the sacrament of nutrition, as arguing from a metaphor, and therefore altogether inconclusive. Similarly, the discussion of the relation between circumcision and the passover, he said, was reasoning from a false analogy because one was expressly stated as necessary for the other. In the same connection, he elucidated his idea of the Lord's Supper by claiming that it is more than an event of commemoration; "it is also a federal rite in which, in token of our reconciliation with God, we eat and drink in his presence; it is a feast upon a sacrifice...." Consequently, he declared that he had no right to exclude any who are under the same covenant with God and are entitled to the

113 Hall, Terms of Communion, Works, II, pp. 46-47
114 Ibid., p. 56
115 Ibid., p. 64
same federal rite.

There were still other charges which the believers in strict communion levelled at their opponents, and these too were duly considered by the champion of open communion. It is needless to call attention to the various Scripture precedents which both sides used in their arguments; for all contenders maintained that their interpretations were fundamentally true to the Bible. But when Booth argued that the admission of those esteemed as "unbaptized" to the Lord's Table is a departure from the sentiments of all denominations throughout the Christian world, and when Kinghorn asserted that Hall's principle would change the constitution of all churches and would soon cause the ordinance of baptism to be neglected and disregarded, the reply which he made needs to be considered, for among other things it includes Hall's attitude to baptism and its relation to salvation.

Willingly admitting that the general practice of insisting upon baptism as an indispensable prerequisite to the Lord's Table has prevailed throughout Christendom, Hall nevertheless, did not consider this sufficient reason for him to follow the same procedure. He reasoned that such a practice began because practically everyone during the first three centuries of the Christian era believed that baptism

117 Kinghorn, Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 9
118 Hall, Terms of Communion, Works, II, p. 16
was absolutely necessary to salvation. According to the leading Church Fathers, baptism then, he submitted, was always accompanied with a supernatural effect which totally changed the state and character of the candidate by the remission of all his sins. Thus, he explained, that as a natural consequence, it is easy to see how the practice of infant baptism began, and also why Churchmen such as the Anglicans and Lutherans who insist on baptismal regeneration would still consider baptism as essential for communion.

In turn Kinghorn came forth with the assertion that he, no more than Hall, deemed baptism essential to salvation; "but it is essential," he averred, "to correct obedience, and to the testimony of a good conscience...." Nothing more than repentance and belief in the gospel is necessary for salvation, he continued, but to become a member of a church, which is expected of all believers provided there is an opportunity to do so, baptism is required; for it is specifically laid down as one of Christ's ordinances. Booth had the feeling also, that it was not a question of whether baptism was essential to salvation but whether baptism was something which God had commanded. Definitely he held that it is a believer's duty to be baptized,

119 Hall, *Terms of Communion*, Works, II, pp 74-78
120 Kinghorn, *Defence of Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 71
121 Kinghorn, *Baptism a Term of Communion*, pp. 162-63
and if so, surely before he is admitted to the Lord's Table.

John Bunyan, who like Hall, felt that the absence of baptism should not bar a "visible saint" from communion, did not think baptism was even necessary for church membership, and on this score Hall could not follow him. In spite of the accusations of his opponents that his policy of open communion would disparage the ordinance of baptism and ultimately do away with it, Hall gave to it more significance than did Bunyan. Indeed, he considered baptism far more important than his arguments might reveal. Speaking for himself and for his colleagues in the controversy, he declared, "We are far...from insinuating a doubt on the obligation of believers to submit to the ordinance of baptism...." Moreover he felt that a person "would be guilty of a criminal irregularity who neglected to attend to it, previous to his entering into Christian fellowship."

And in the same vein he admitted, "that baptism is, under all circumstances, a necessary condition of church fellowship...." It is significant too that none of his opponents ever accused Hall of having in his own church, members who had not first been baptized.

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122 Booth, Apology for the Baptists, Works, II, p. 448
124 Hall, Terms of Communion, Works, II, p. 49
125 Ibid., p. 55
126 Hall, Christian in Opposition to Party Communion, Works, III, p. 417
Like the contenders for strict communion, Hall did not sanction infant baptism; he held tenaciously to immersion and adult baptism, but explained that "it is one thing to tolerate, and another to sanction." Time and again he referred to the "nullity of infant baptism," and he agreed with his opponents that those who had been baptized in infancy were according to the Baptist view "unbaptized."

There was only one condition he laid down which should exclude unbaptized persons from communion. The absence of baptism disqualifies one, he said, "wherever its neglect is accompanied with a conviction of its divine authority." But when the omission proceeds from "involuntary prejudice, or mistake," or when a person "evinces his conscientious adherence to known duty, by the general tenour of his conduct; we do not consider the mere absence of baptism as a sufficient bar to communion."

Accordingly, Hall would welcome to the Lord's Table those baptized in infancy as well as those like Quakers who conscientiously abstained from the ordinance, provided they fulfilled the New Testament qualifications for salvation, that is, "explicit belief" in the doctrine of the atonement and profession for faith in Jesus Christ.

By way of summary, Hall conceded that the main argument
for the restricted form of communion is derived from Apostolic precedent and that the continued practice of strict communion rest "almost entirely on authority," by which he meant the influence of outstanding men in the denomination. As for the former, he labored to show that there is no precedent for barring from communion those who have fallen into "an error on the subject of baptism," because the Apostles did not have any such situation with which to cope. Adverting to the leaders whose influence had worked for the continuance of the strict view, he made especial reference to Andrew Fuller, whose posthumous work on the issue had been interpreted as a "dying testimony" in favor of close communion. In reality, Hall asserted that Fuller himself felt some hesitation about the matter, and proceeded to give evidence for his contention. In support of Hall's judgment, a correspondent in the Evangelical Magazine, wrote a letter in which he mentioned two instances when Fuller recommended that former members of his church should partake of communion in non-Baptist churches, as they had no opportunity of attending the church of their choice. "All I wish," stated Hall in explaining the reason for making the previous point, "is, that without regard to human names or authorities, the matter in debate may be entirely determined

132 Hall, Christian in Opposition to Party Communion, Works, III, pp. 409-10
133 Ibid., p. 429
134 Ibid., p. 410
135 W. Robinson, in The Evangelical Magazine, XII, April, 1834, pp. 140-41
by an unprejudiced appeal to reason and scripture."

Turning from Hall's rebuttal to the positive statements which he made in justification of his position, it will not be necessary to discuss at length each item, since most of his argument has already been noted. As he considered the Eucharist a federal rite, he began by strongly insisting that the obligation of brotherly love definitely encourages mixed communion. The principle of unity and harmony so positively set forth in the Scriptures, is violated, he contended, whenever barriers are established at the communion table. In the second place, he wrote, "We are expressly commanded in the Scriptures to tolerate in the church those diversities of opinion which are not inconsistent with salvation." Inasmuch as the advocates of the strict view believe those baptized in infancy can be saved, they ought to admit them to the sacrament of communion.

For his third point, acknowledging that Paedobaptists are part of the true Church, he could see no reason for excluding them from communion in a Baptist church; in fact to do so "is the very essence of schism." And there ought to be no division among Christians, he maintained, except in cases where conscience is violated. When his opponents argued that on the basis of such a contention, he was untrue

136 Hall, Christian in Opposition to Party Communion, Works, III, p. 411
137 Hall, Terms of Communion, Works, II, p. 89
138 Ibid., p. 109
to the real principle of Nonconformity, he retorted, "It is not true," because mixed communion does not stand on the same ground with rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. Furthermore, strict communion itself, he averred, is not an assertion of Christian liberty, but an encroachment upon the freedom of others; it is not an effort to preserve the purity of one's own worship, but an endeavor to enforce a conformity to one's own views, and such a point is not essential to salvation.

Moving to his next argument, Hall let it be known that he considered those who excluded Paedobaptists from the Eucharist were in effect punishing them, and a professing Christian should not receive such treatment unless he possessed heretical sentiments or was guilty of "vicious" living. Answering this argument, Kinghorn affirmed that the non-admission of those who were "never united with us," is strictly speaking not an exclusion; so the punishment is at least not an intended one. Whereupon Hall came back with the assertion that excommunication, which is synonymous with exclusion, is a punishment in proportion to the value of the privilege it withholds, and to say that exclusion is not a punishment "is equivalent to the assertion that the fellowship of the church is not a benefit." "By refusing

139 Hall, Reply to Kinghorn, Works, II, p. 350
140 Hall, Terms of Communion, Works, II, p. 113
141 Kinghorn, Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 60
142 Hall, Reply to Kinghorn, Works, II, p. 425
to admit a paedobaptist to the privilege of communion with us," he continued, "we, in fact, affirm his incompetence to commute any where...."

Finally, Hall argued that it was impossible to reduce the practice of strict communion to any general principle, and that those who followed such a practice were inconsistent with themselves. They enjoyed fraternal relations with members of every other denomination; they exchanged pulpits; they assisted each other in all types of services, even the preparatory meetings for the Eucharist, but they would "turn round to inform" the Paedobaptists that they were not worthy to participate in the communion itself. As if completely baffled, Hall asked, "Why select an ordinance designed for the commemoration of the dying love of the Redeemer as the signal for displaying the banners of party...?"

However, throughout the course of the controversy which extended over a period of eleven years and gathered additional voices as it progressed, Hall felt the need of a decisive and climactic argument he always came forth with his conviction that no church has a right to establish terms of communion which are not terms of salvation.

It is evident that Hall entertained no high hopes of having his position rapidly and extensively accepted by his

143 Hall, Reply to Kinghorn, Works, II, pp. 425-26
144 Hall, Christian In Opposition to Party Communion, Works, III, p. 445
fellow Baptists. Anticipating no sudden change in the sentiments of his brethren, he expressed himself as willing "to await the slow operation of time," for he was satisfied that another generation would rise up "before the rust of prejudice is sufficiently worn off to leave room for the operation of reason...." It is almost ironic to record that even in his own church at Leicester, the practice of strict communion was observed. Though a majority of the members at Harvey Lane preferred to follow their pastor's inclinations, Hall was not willing to change the policy until the decision should become practically unanimous; therefore he recommended, and it was decided, that a distinct church be formed on the mixed communion principle to exist alongside the regular church organization. The full fruits of his efforts were soon realized, however when his successor, J. P. Mursell, became pastor of the church. At the beginning of 1827, it was decided by a vote of the church to agree on the policy of mixed communion, and when Hall paid his first visit to Leicester after Mursell became the pastor there, he congratulated him and exclaimed, "you've done in a month what I could not do in eighteen years."

Another indication of the direction in which events were moving is seen in the developments that took place at Norwich after Kinghorn was no longer pastor of the Baptist church--

145 Hall, Reply to Kinghorn, Works, II, p. 487
146 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 94
147 A. Mursell, J. P. Mursell, His Life and Work, p. 33
his successors won the day for the more liberal view. Consequently, Skeats could say that though for eleven years Kinghorn sought to blunt the force of Hall’s argument, he "lived to see all his endeavours frustrated." And a contemporary of Hall was able to write that his influence was "truly surprising" in that the more influential members of the denomination were "imbued with his sentiments" and were prepared to effect a change in the constitution of their churches when the proper occasion presented itself.

Hopefully, Hall had remarked at the beginning of the controversy, "Strict communion is the general practice of our churches, though the abettors of the opposite opinion are rapidly increasing both in numbers and in respectability." At the beginning of the twentieth century, C. H. Spurgeon, following closely Hall’s viewpoint, lent the weight of his great influence to those who favored open communion, by admitting to the Lord’s Table any who professed repentance towards God, and faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ, although such a person may not have been baptized by immersion, "and in this," F. T. Lord ventures to say, "he represented what has become the more general

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148 Underwood, History of the English Baptists, p.172
149 H.S.Skeats, History of Free Churches in England, p. 539
150 See New Baptist Miscellany, V, Nov. 1831, p. 457
151 Hall, Terms of Communion, Works, II, pp. 16-17
290-91
attitude in British Baptist churches." But it remains for G. W. Hughes to call attention to the actual present-day value of the nineteenth century controversy. The arguments put forward by Hall and Kinghorn, he suggests, "repay examination to this day, since they are among the few places where the Baptist doctrine of the Sacraments is discussed and explained at length." Thus although Hall's policy of open communion has not been carried out to the letter, indeed, it has been followed according to the spirit, and in this he has established for himself a memorable position among the people of the Baptist faith.

154 Hughes, Robert Hall, p. 64
155 According to the minority report of the group who contributed toward the publishing of The Gathered Community, Hall's practice persists even closer than in a "spiritual" sense. This group would invite to the Lord's Table "those who love the Lord Jesus, but are not members of the Church." See footnote on page 169. (R.C. Walton, editor and author)
1. Final Years

The historical background of Robert Hall's second ministry at Bristol requires no lengthy discussion for an understanding and evaluation of his accomplishments during that period; for by the time he returned to Broadmead Church, at the age of sixty-two, the major portion of his work had been virtually completed, and his contribution to religious thought had already been made. In the intervening years since he as a young man had resigned his assistantship, Dr. John Ryland, beginning in 1793, had labored faithfully as pastor of the church and head of the academy. So much was Ryland a part of the religious life of Bristol, that when he was at the point of death, Hall, in a letter to the minister's son, asked, "What, in the event of your dear father's removal, will become of the academy and the church? I tremble to think of the consequences...."

The consequences were that Hall, with great reluctance, submitted his resignation to the people at Harvey Lane and accepted the offer to become pastor of Broadmead Church; while the academy, becoming more independent of the church called upon Dr. T. S. Crisp to serve as president, thus

1 Hall, "Letter to J.E. Ryland," 1825, Works, V, p. 544
relieving Hall of a responsibility which his increasingly poor health forbade his accepting. But earlier he had been asked to preach the funeral sermon of his immediate predecessor at Bristol, and in that message he paid noble tribute to the departed minister—a man of piety, humility, gentleness, truthfulness, as well as a scholar and a person of literary attainments. By the removal of "so able, so disinterested, so devoted" a minister, Hall, in his address, told the congregation, "you have sustained a loss, the magnitude of which it is difficult to appreciate, much more to repair." He spoke of the loss of him who had ministered for over thirty years as an "epoch in the history" of the church, a blow to the entire city, and a tragedy to the denomination of which he was for so long a "distinguished ornament."

What then were the reasons which induced Hall to take up a new charge at that late period in his life, especially as he afterwards attributed part of his increased physical sufferings to the anxiety caused him by leaving Leicester? There was for one thing, an unpleasantness which had arisen in the church at Harvey Lane. Though not a serious trouble it offered just enough irritation to cause a strain in the relationship of pastor and congregation. Then there was

2 Hall, *Funeral Sermon for Dr. Ryland*, Works, I, pp. 406-07
3 Greene, *Reminiscences of R. Hall*, p. 162
the attraction which Bristol offered him, in that it was the place of his early labors and the residence of many of his old friends, as well as that of some of his family connections. There also he would have the advantage of good books and libraries, the lack of which he seriously felt at Leicester. And lastly, he said himself that the "change might give a new spring to my energies, and improve the condition of my mind..." Consequently, the decision, though slow in coming, finally actualized and at the close of March, 1826, he moved to Bristol, for what was intended to be a trial year, but proved to be five years—the final ones of his life.

During those years the major event, so far as Nonconformity was concerned, was the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. On the 26th of February, 1828, Lord John Russell brought forward the measure for repeal, and as a result of the countless number of Nonconformist petitions which had poured in from all over Britain, and the smallness of the opposition on the part of the Established Church, the measure received Royal Assent on the 9th of May. There was cause for rejoicing among the Dissenters, but as Payne suggests, "There remained a number of important specific grievances as well as a continuing and embittering sense of social inferiority." And furthermore, "Relations between Noncon-

5 Hall "Letter to Arthur Tozer," Works, V, p. 550
6 Greene, Reminiscences of R. Hall, p. 144
7 Skeats and Miall, History of Free Churches of England, pp. 461, 468
formists and Church people became worse, not better, in the 8 decades following 1828." Though taking no part in the actual efforts for repeal, Hall, whose days of "political debate" were over by the time he went to Bristol, had earlier in the decade made some contribution toward the cause. He consented, it is thought at the insistence of his friends, to a new edition of his Apology for the Freedom of the Press, which sounded forth again the cry for more liberty for Free Churchmen.

When Hall let it be known that he would become the minister of Broadmead Church, there was much rejoicing on the part of the Baptists of Bristol. Typical of the feeling which existed is the expression of a minister of the city, who in speaking of the event said: "Then came Mr. Hall, and threw the splendour of his great mind over our whole dissenting interest... Strangers from all parts flocked to hear him on Sabbath mornings." And John Foster, a close friend and frequent auditor, wrote of the Churchmen, the Methodists, the Quakers, the Independents, the clergymen, and members of Parliament who made up Hall's crowded congregation.

If he was handicapped in his work by his ever present

8 E. A. Payne, The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England, pp. 105-06
9 J.R. Leifchild, A Memoir of John Leifchild, p. 136
10 J.E. Ryland, Life and Correspondence of John Foster, II, p. 78. For similar testimonies see: J. G. Fuller, Dissent in Bristol, p. 204; J. Swiash, Chronicles of Broadmead Church, Bristol, p. 43; Terrill, Broadmead Records, p. 320
malady, he at least was able to retain a clear and continually developing mind. Much of the time which he was no longer able to devote to pastoral visitation, (a disability he sorely lamented) he employed in a study of the classics, Matthew Henry's commentary, and the Hebrew Scriptures. Although he was unable to undertake many of the activities which he had in his previous pastorate, his interest in the causes he had represented did not subside. The condition and needs of the poorer classes still weighed heavily upon his mind, and he arranged with a friend to keep him informed on any persons who were in trouble or affliction. As evidence of his continued concern for missions, Morris records that Hall, on the 20th of June, 1827, preached at the annual meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society in London, "but unfortunately not one third of the large audience could hear him, though he exerted himself to the utmost."

Officially Hall held no connection with the Bristol Education Society during his second ministry in the city; nevertheless, he took part in as many of the activities of the academy as his strength would allow. Not the least of these was his custom of inviting one or two students to visit his home on Sunday nights after the day's services were over. But of more value to the students were the week-night meetings in which they "regularly preached in his

11 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 510
12 Ibid., p. 467
13 F. Trestrail, College Life in Bristol, p. 48
presence, and received his help and advice...." One of the students who attended those week-night services writes that on occasions Hall himself delivered an address, "while sitting in his chair," or "leaning on the top of his staff," and thus he appeared as a "patriarch instructing his family and servants." In commenting on what the young preachers had said in their sermons, the same student writes that Hall's remarks were "invariably kind." As further evidence of his interest in the college, he on various occasions, delivered messages in which he laid before his listeners the financial needs of the institution. And during the last two months of his career, he preached twice in Bristol for the purpose of promoting a collection which would be used to liquidate a standing debt on a small mission chapel in a poor section of the city which was being supplied by the student preachers of the academy.

Predominantly his final years may be characterized as the period of a preaching ministry. It was not the strongest preaching which he had done, but owing to the circumstances, it was the chief work of his second stay at Broadmead Church. While there he wrote practically nothing, and the sermons preached by him which were published, were taken down in shorthand by interested listeners.

14 Information contained in, Bristol Baptist College, 250 Years, 1669-1929, pp. 45-47
15 Trestrail, College Life in Bristol, p. 42
16 Morris, Recollections of B. Hall, pp. 507-08
Supplying a note of pleasantness to his closing years was the association he had with influential leaders of the day. Besides his intimacy with John Foster, William Anderson, T. S. Crisp, John Leifchild, and William Jay, he enjoyed visits from such men as Thomas Chalmers and William Wilberforce. In a letter to Jay, Wilberforce wrote on the 26th of May, 1826: "We may probably be able to get to Mr. Hall's chapel on Sunday. Can you inform me where it is situated, and at what hour service begins?" And in writing of the visit which she and her father made to Bristol in 1830, Anne Chalmers describes her impressions of Hall and Foster. Though she could not catch all his words, because he spoke so low, and could not understand why he had to recline "on some chairs," because of his infirmity, she did recognize Hall as having an appearance which "denotes talent." And she recorded of another day, having reference to Foster and Hall: "It was extraordinary, that in the same morning, we should call on the two greatest men in England." In Chalmers' presence, however, Hall experienced a feeling of uneasiness, and upon learning that the Scotsman was to be in his congregation one Sunday, suddenly became "too ill" to preach. Notwithstanding, the two were glad to become personally acquainted, and enjoyed the time in which they

17 Autobiography of William Jay, p. 307
18 Mrs. A.W.Brackie, (ed.) Letters and Journals of Anne Chalmers, pp. 138, 140, 142
19 Leifchild, A Memoir of J. Leifchild, pp. 133-34
were able to be together.

In the face of his sufferings, Hall managed to continue his preaching ministry almost until the time of his death. It is true that toward the end, the effort he had to expend in delivering sermons proved most exhausting, and he resorted to one expedient after another in the hope of finding some relief. But there was no succor to be found, and by obdurate determination, he persevered until the 9th of February, when he appeared in his church for the last public occasion. Twelve days later the end came on the 21st of February, 1831, and Trestrail, who attended the funeral, relates that as the mourners passed through the city most of the shops were closed and the streets were "thronged with sorrowing spectators." Of the scores of tributes which were paid the Baptist minister, the one from a man outside the denomination seems most fitting. When J. E. Ryland informed Thomas Chalmers of the death, Chalmers replied in a letter: "I received your melancholy intimation of Mr. Hall's death with the greatest emotion, and consider it as a severe blow to the Church universal—as an event to be deplored not by his own flock and family alone, but by all the friends of our common Christianity."

20 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 509
21 Trestrail, College Life in Bristol, p. 181
22 William Hanna (ed.) Correspondence of Thomas Chalmers, p. 322
2. His Work as a Pastor

The success of Robert Hall as a minister was due in no small measure to the stress he placed upon his work as a shepherd of the flock. For him the office of pastor went hand in hand with the office of preacher, and in so far as was possible, he did not neglect one to the detriment of the other. Believing so firmly in the dignity and importance of the ministerial profession, he felt constrained to attend to all phases of work associated with it.

The phase of activity which he encouraged so emphatically in a sermon preached at the ordination of James Robertson, is one which he could recommend most heartily because he himself knew its value from personal experience. Hall explained to the candidate for ordination that the more frequently a minister converses with his people in their homes, "provided his conversation be properly conducted, the more will his person be endeared, and his ministry acceptable." Considering visitation among the church members as a most beneficial "auxiliary," Hall said, "it is impossible to overvalue it." And in a charge which he gave to another young minister, he insisted upon much exhortation "from house to house," for he continued, some ministers "by

23 Hall, Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister, Works, I, p. 260
24 Ibid., pp. 244-45
an exhibition of 'the mind of Christ,' and a recommendation of the truth, in private, have advanced religion even more than by their public ministry...."

As attested by his own practice, the advice he gave to others was based upon firsthand knowledge. When he was at Cambridge, Hall made it his rule to pay a pastoral visit to every member of his church once each quarter. Not confining himself to members alone, he did the same for all who formed a part of his congregation, if he felt that they would appreciate a visit from him as a minister of the Gospel.

"These," Gregory says, "were not calls, but visits, and usually paid on evenings, that he might meet the whole assembled family."

In connection with his pastoral visitation, two features are worthy of note, and the first of these is the devotional nature of his conversations on such occasions. Following the rule that a minister's conversation should always strengthen rather than impair his public utterances, he sought carefully to guide the subjects to be discussed when on his visits. "Though it is not necessary, nor expedient," Hall affirmed, for a minister "to be always conversing on the subject of religion, his conversation should invariably have a religious tendency." Therefore, when calling upon his

26 Hall, "Charge to J. K. Hall," Works, IV, p. 488
27 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 40
28 Hall, Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister, Works, I, p. 245
parishioners he directed his remarks to the end that all his visits could be terminated with Scripture reading and prayer.

As a conversationalist in general, the minister's ability was recognized by those who knew him and had been in his presence. One friend in speaking of his conversational habits, said that Hall appeared to be capable of talking clearly, forcibly, and beautifully on all subjects no matter how commonplace nor how abstruse they might be. The same friend added that, although Hall did not usurp the conversation, almost everyone in his company regarded it as a privilege to listen rather than talk. His ability to bring forth facts and principles stored up in his mind and instantly relate them to any given subject was a source of amazement to those in his midst. And in spite of his fluency in conversation, he did not appear obtrusive nor ostentatious, though at times his "passion for sarcasm" was apt to come forth in his remarks.

Reverting to his pastoral visitation, the second feature to be noted is the generous share of time which he gave to calling upon the poor members of his congregation. Whenever he went into their homes, he sought to make them at ease, and in certain cases he took sugar and tea along with him so that the people would not have to use their own. Because of his ministrations to the poor, he was greatly beloved by

them, a fact readily understandable when it is known that he
did so much for them. "He made himself acquainted with their
history," writes Morris, and entered into all their sorrows
and complaints not in any superficial manner, but in such a
way as to fix the circumstances clearly in his mind. In
his sermon on the death of Princess Charlotte, Hall reflect-
ed his own concern for the poor by calling attention to the
hours which the deceased had spent in visiting the cottages
of the poor. And during his own final years at Bristol,
as has been inferred, one of his deepest regrets was his in-
ability to visit the "poorer part of his flock."

In addition to the pastoral calls he made upon the
poorer members of his church, he persuaded this class to
organize small groups which would assemble "from house to
house," for the purpose of reading, "religious conversations,"
and prayer. These meetings he would attend as frequently as
possible; for it afforded him another opportunity of getting
a better insight into the needs of his congregation.

Moreover, it is of interest to point out the genuine
concern which Hall had for those who were not Christians.
As is testified by various experiences in his life, he was
willing to go out of his way in order to present the truths

30 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, p. 419
31 Hall, On the Death of Princess Charlotte, Works,
I, p. 336
32 Chandler, An Authentic Account of Hall's Last Ill-
ness and Death, p. 19
33 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 40
of Christianity to those who were unsaved. On one such occasion, according to J. J. Smith, Hall was on his way to London, and when the coach stopped at one of the stations, he went into the kitchen of the hotel to get a light for his pipe. Because he was slow in returning, a companion went to see what was the difficulty, and discovered that the minister was speaking to a group of "rough" men about their "sin and danger, and the love and grace of Jesus Christ." Smith adds that Hall was as serious as he would have been had he been addressing a large congregation.

Not to be overlooked in Hall's work as a pastor is his ministry of comfort and condolence to those in sorrow and distress. The many letters written by him to bereaved or troubled friends fully attest the warmth and sympathy of his heart. Unquestionably the experience of his own life, so fraught with pain and suffering, increased the compassion he had for others who were enduring similar burdens and trials. So while his infirmities handicapped his ministry in some ways, in others they tempered and disciplined his soul, thus making him, in the fullest sense of the word, a pastor of his people.

34 Related in James Stuart's, Beechen Grove Baptist Church, p. 176
3. His Pulpit Ministry

Capable as he was in so many respects, it was his ability as a pulpit orator that gained for Hall his greatest distinction. By common consent, he was considered among the foremost preachers of his age. It is not easy for anyone who is accustomed only to twentieth century preaching to explain the secret of Hall's success; indeed, even those who lived during his time and sat in his congregations experienced the same difficulty. Olinthus Gregory, who was privileged to hear him so frequently during his Cambridge ministry, in attempting to give an idea of the general character and style of his public services said, "I feel that I shall neither adequately describe what his preaching really was, nor even do justice to my own conceptions of it." And the Rev. Edward Hull, who heard Hall preach at Leicester remarked that no one who did not "habitually hear" him could form an "adequate idea of his power of impression—of his capability of infusing his soul into the minds of his hearers...."

With profit then, one can notice Hall's own conception of preaching and the preacher's function. In his view, preaching was an ordinance of God, which originated soon after the Babylonian captivity and with the appearance of

35 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI. p. 52
36 Mrs. Eustace Carey, Eustace Carey: A Missionary in India, p. 106
the synagogues in Jewish religious life. Upon the formation of the Christian churches, Hall understood that an "order of men was appointed in each society for the express purpose of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments...." Therefore, all men chosen for this function continue to have upon them the same stamp of divine approval.

Fundamentally, Hall conceived of the minister as a steward of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, whose duty it is to dispense faithfully the truths he learns through God's revelation. He does not have to discover topics and arguments for preaching purposes, but can find them ready at hand in the Scriptures. "A doctrine, full, pure, perfect, to which nothing can be added without debasing its spirit, nothing taken away without impairing its proportions," Hall affirmed, is committed to the minister's trust, "to be retained and preserved," just as he has received it and delivered to the people in all its "primitive simplicity." Since the Bible offers the way of salvation, he recommended it as the preacher's source book and chief authority.

Valuable as the Bible is, Hall never deemed it sufficient within itself to take the place of preaching. Passages of Scripture which are difficult of understanding need the

37 Hall, "On Hearing the Word," Works, I, p. 460
38 Hall, Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister, Works, I, p. 250
explanation of a minister. Moreover, it is the living voice of the preacher that awakens attention, creates an interest, and makes the proper application of the truths of revelation. And further he added, "the combined effect of countenance, gesture, and voice, accompanying a powerful appeal to the understanding and the heart, on subjects of everlasting moment, can scarcely fail of being great."

Considering most services of worship too mechanical and formal, Hall realized that, as necessary as method and order are to the service, no preacher should become their slave. Specifically, in reference to the delivery of the sermon, he advocated an element of surprise and variety. And in the presentation of every message, he suggested two essential qualities, namely, "seriousness and affection." Even when a minister has to express his displeasure because of some prevalent sin, he should do so with great "tenderness." And on all occasions he should keep "jesting, buffoonery, and undisguised levity of every sort," out of his manner and content of preaching. The minister will be wise, Hall laid down by way of summation, to imitate the "sober dignity both of language and of sentiment," which is characteristic of the inspired writers of Scripture.

Before examining how well Hall put into practice his own theories of preaching, there are other points which must

40 Hall, *Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister*, *Works*, I, pp. 242-44
be noted. In reality his sermons fall into two major divisions—those he prepared for publication and those which were not prepared with that intent. Preparation for the press was ever a slow and tedious task for him, and in practically every case he had previously preached a sermon before he undertook to have it printed. Because his thought naturally ran so rapidly, his published sermons tended to lack something of the real spirit of the preacher. With the exception of his messages which were taken down in shorthand and later published without the author's perusal, the only extant sermons are his longer and more elaborate ones, and consequently there is no opportunity for a satisfactory judgment of his pulpit ministry. Much reliance has to be placed upon those who heard him when he preached his customary type of sermon.

Obviously, as has been implied, Hall's preaching varied from one period of his life to another. When he was at Bristol in his early years, he received considerable criticism because his messages were tinged with heterodoxy; at Cambridge he began to stress the essential biblical doctrines in a form that would be appealing to his better educated congregation; while at Leicester he preached with more simplicity; then finally, at Bristol again, he definitely became more "evangelical and spiritual." There too he discontinued the use of notes and manuscripts, for it had

41 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 60
formerly been his custom to use a page or two of outline notes as an aid to his preaching. Moreover, as John Foster testifies, "There seems to be a perfect agreement of opinion that a considerable decline of the power of his imagination was evident in the latter part of his life."

It was Foster too who criticized Hall's manner of public prayer. Brilliant essayist that he was, it is only natural that he should object to what he considered a discrepancy in Hall's conduct of public worship. "...considered as an exercise of thought," Foster wrote concerning Hall's custom of prayer, it "was not exactly what would have been expected from a mind constituted like his." While not for a moment disparaging the devotional spirit of the minister's prayers, he did object to the loosely arranged order of thought. On the other hand there were those of a different turn of mind who said, "Our conception is, that if his prayers had possessed that character of consecutiveness and intellectuality for which Foster pleads, they would have lost much of their charm and real power."

As for his manner of reading the Scriptures at the beginning of the service, Gregory explains that it was not "generally interesting" nor did the selection read always

42 Grinfield, Fifty Sermons by R. Hall, pp. ix, xxi
43 John Foster, Hall's Character as a Preacher, Hall's Works, VI, p. 144
44 Ibid., p. 146
45 Unsigned article on Hall in the North British Review, IV, Nov. 1845, p. 64
have specific reference to the text or subject which he used for his sermon. Hall recognized the value of hymn singing in his services of worship, and though he did not encourage the use of instrumental music, he did believe in congregational singing, and recommended especially the use of "old tunes in which all could unite." On occasions he expressed his admiration of chanting and responsive singing, and wished for something similar to be introduced into Nonconformist worship.

It was the sermon which was definitely the central point of Hall's order of worship, and this afforded him his greatest opportunity to excel. Strictly speaking, he may be called an extemporary preacher, though this by no means ruled out diligent preparation. It is true the effort he expended in getting ready for the pulpit was on the whole more general than it was specific, yet he always had definitely in mind the scope and the outline of each sermon before its delivery. Generally, it was his plan to have five or six subjects under consideration at the same time, and as he felt inclined, he could give his attention first to one and then another; so that more frequently he resorted to mental rather than written composition.

As he had recommended to others, so he tried himself to

46 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 52
47 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, pp. 150-51
48 Gregory, op. cit. pp. 57-58. See also The Christian Observer, XXXI, June, 1831, p. 328
make the Bible the supreme and final authority in all his preaching. At Cambridge, for instance, he made it his practice to do expository preaching on Sunday mornings and textual preaching in the afternoons. It was his custom to take one book of the Bible and go through it before proceeding to another. Of his expositions, however, very few are still extant, and none at all from his own pen. But it is generally agreed that Hall's strength did not lie in his exegetical or expository sermons.

The sermons which he prepared for publication, and consequently the ones which gained for him the most extensive renown, were for the most part topical addresses. In the preface of his discourse on *Modern Infidelity Considered*, he went to the length of apologizing "for having blended so little theology with it." But this does not mean that it was unscriptural. All his sermons were based upon Scripture and strongly enforced by biblical quotations. And Thomas Chalmers, after reading Hall's sermon, *On the Death of Princess Charlotte*, wrote, "It is, indeed a very rich and wonderful composition, and I think more impregnated with theology than any of his former works."

49 Greene, *Reminiscences of R. Hall*, p. 17
50 John Greene preserved Hall's leading ideas in his exposition of Philippians, but the one copy catalogued in the British Museum is no longer available as it was destroyed by enemy action during World War II
51 Hall, *Modern Infidelity Considered*, Works, I, p. 3
52 "Letter to J. E. Ryland," 1818, *Selections From the Correspondence of the Late Thomas Chalmers*, p. 321
Yet none of Hall's widely circulated sermons contained as strong emphasis upon scriptural doctrine as did the ones which he customarily preached from his pulpit. So biblical were these sermons that Foster with propriety, could write, "No preacher,...was ever more faithful to the principle that all doctrines professing to be Christian must, both in their statement and proof, be founded on the Scriptures...."  

For the most part Hall used the New Testament as his main source of preaching material, but he did not overlook the Old Testament. Frequently it was his habit to use it analogously in order to emphasize some Christian doctrine. In one sermon, for instance, after describing the Jewish passover, he showed how that ceremony was "replete with the doctrine of Christ crucified." In another, he showed how various details of David's kingdom were analogous to the Kingdom of Christ. Moreover, it was his custom to use Scripture to 'prove' definite points which he sought to make, and in most instances, he would quote one verse after another to strengthen his case. Wilberforce, who heard Hall at Cambridge was impressed with his use of Scripture, and wrote in his diary one day after he and Charles Simeon had heard the Baptist preacher: "Excellent indeed--language simple--thoughts just, deep, and often elevated--excelling in experimental applications of Scripture, often with immense

53 Foster, Hall's Character as a Preacher, Hall's Works, VI, p. 164  
54 Hall, "The Lamb of God," Works, VI, p. 287
At the same time, Hall's sermons did not, as might be expected from the advice he had given to younger ministers, usually contain the element of surprise. In his introductions, brief as they were, he generally laid before his congregation the three or four main points of his sermon. In this way he prepared his listeners for the thoughts which he wished to impart. Hence, he did not deem it necessary to resort to an extensive use of illustrations. What illustrative material he did use was brief and pointed, and for the most part lifted from his study of the Bible and the classics.

Although the style of Hall's preaching, as Robinson suggests, "is that of a bygone day," it was this factor which established for him his high reputation as a pulpit orator. "He is the one man in our annals," says President Dakin of Bristol College," who demonstrated that preaching can become a fine art and still be powerful." The basis of his style was without a doubt a thorough knowledge of the classics, and his vocabulary was greatly influenced by his study of Latin. His sentences, though long and involved, were carefully wrought, and his reasoning was clear and accurate. Dakin further testifies, "...he is the Milton of

56 Robinson, The Life and Faith of the Baptists, p. 74
57 A. Dakin, "Baptist Preaching," in Annual Report for the Year 1932, Bristol and District Association, p. 9
our pulpit, and there is no doubt that the secret of his 58
success was the art and power of the orator."

Concerning Hall's delivery, all who heard him, report
that he always began his sermons in a calm and low tone.
Sometimes he paused and appeared perplexed, as if dissatis-
fied with what he had to say, but as he proceeded he in-
creased in animation and strength of expression. There
were times when, carried along by the flight of his thought,
he appeared to lose himself in his message and become ob-
livious of his congregation, but there were other occasions
when he spoke directly to his listeners as if conversing with
them. His gestures were never outstanding and his move-
ments in the pulpit were only slight. As has been intimated,
his voice was always weak, but somehow it caused his listen-
ers to be all the more eager to hear what he had to say, and
besides it created a stillness and silence over the congre-
gation which in turn produced its effect upon the worshippers.
So astonishing was this effect, that in numerous cases it has
been reliably reported that during the course of some of his
stirring messages people rose to their feet and remained
standing until the sermon was concluded.

As might be expected, the great preacher attracted

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59 N. Bosworth, Discourse on the Decease of R. Hall,
p. 31
60 Poster, Hall's Character as a Preacher, Hall's
Works, VI, p. 159
61 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 55
admirers on every hand. People were known to change their places of residence that they might live in the city where Robert Hall preached. Nevertheless, he had his critics as well, and one of the most severe of them was his friend and loyal supporter, John Foster. Excellent as he considered Hall's sermons to be, Foster was conscious of their defects. He thought, for one thing, that they were too general and theoretical; he felt that in cases Hall was inclined to exaggerate. But chiefly he gathered the impression that Hall, in his preaching, did not individualize his listeners, and consequently did not supply their deepest and most practical needs. In a word, he felt that the members of Hall's congregation were presented with a beautiful picture rather than confronted by a faithful mirror, and therefore, they went away "equally pleased with a preacher that was so admirable, and with themselves for having the intelligence and taste to admire him."

Was Foster's criticism just? In answering this question it should be understood that his experience of Hall's preaching was limited mainly to the last few years of the latter's life, and, of course, he had available all of the minister's published sermons. If one reads today only Hall's most famous addresses, one would be inclined to agree with Foster. On the other hand, a study of the sermons which were taken down in shorthand and are still extant, definitely reveal

62 Foster, Hall's Character as a Preacher, Hall's Works, VI, p. 176
that Hall did very much consider the needs of his individual listeners and that his applications were most personal and pertinent. In most of these sermons he waited until the very close of his message before he sought to drive home the particular point he wanted to leave with his hearers, but his sermon on "Marks of Love to God," furnishes a case in which throughout the development of his thought, he kept pressing the application upon the consciences and hearts of the congregation. So that in reality, Foster's judgment can, at best, be said to be only partially correct.

He himself did not desire to leave the impression that Hall's preaching ministry was not "eminently useful." "Its beneficial effect is testified," Foster wrote, "by the experience of a multitude of persons, of various orders of character." Of the groups who particularly benefited and profited by Hall's preaching, Foster made mention of the following: Intelligent and cultured young people, some of whom were inclined to the church but were repelled by trite and "uncouth phraseology," some of whom were skeptical, and some of whom rejected the essential truths of Christianity, were all attracted by Hall's "lucid and convincing exhibition of truth." Men of literature, men of ability, and men of the business world "beheld religion set forth with a vigour and a lustre." Men of "sectarian spirit" under Hall's

63 Hall, "Marks of Love to God," Works, VI, p. 341ff.  
64 Foster, "Hall's Character as a Preacher," Hall's Works, VI, p. 186
ministry "were cheated of a portion of their bigotry, or forced into a consciousness that they ought to be ashamed of it." People of the "common order were held under a habitual impression of the importance of religion." And innumerable individuals were indebted to Hall's pulpit ministry "for those effectual convictions which have resulted in their devotion to God, and their happiness in life and death." After such a worthy tribute one wonders how Foster could have accused Hall of preaching admirable sermons whose chief, if not sole virtue was that people esteemed them for their beauty of expression and their excellence of form.

Nor was he the only one to bear witness to the beneficial results of Hall's preaching. Newton Bosworth, who heard hundreds of his sermons, declared that his hearers would be most ready to acknowledge their indebtedness to him "for the elevation of their piety, for the increase of their religious knowledge and for the firmer establishment in the peculiarities of Christian truth." Hall's preaching, he added, not only enlarged the mind, but affected the heart as well, and this dual appeal to mind and heart, was indeed an essential part of the ideal which Hall set for himself as a preacher. If he could thus affect those in the

65 Foster, Hall's Character as a Preacher, Hall's Works, VI, pp. 186-87
66 Bosworth, Discourse on the Decease of Robert Hall, p. 24
faith, and win to Christ those who were unsaved, he would consider himself amply rewarded for all his efforts.

What then, by way of summary and conclusion, were the chief characteristics of Hall's preaching? First and foremost, there was the earnestness and seriousness of his spirit and manner. This was the impression he gave his listeners, and it is the impression one still gathers upon reading his sermons today. Second, he always presented his thought in a logical order. His divisions, his classifications, and his conclusions did not appear strained, but natural and normal. In the third place, variety was another of the marks of his preaching. His themes were not confined to any narrow range of thought, but diligently covered the gamut of all Christian truth. Closely related was a fourth characteristic, that of originality. Foster best explained this trait of Hall as the ability he had to draw from some commonly accepted principle a "hitherto unthought-of inference, which affects the whole argument of a question, and leads to a conclusion either new or by a new road." Moreover, Hall's originality is evinced by the great numbers who sought in later years to follow his style and manner of preaching. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, his sermons "formed the standard of pulpit excellence to which students looked with keen desire."

67 Foster, Hall's Character as a Preacher, Hall's Works, VI, p. 164
68 J.C.Carlile, The Story of English Baptists, p. 198
A fifth trait of Hall's preaching was the emphasis he placed upon evangelical or scriptural doctrines. The central themes of the New Testament were the themes which he most often selected for his pulpit ministry.

Then in reference to his delivery, there is one word, a word of his own time, which best characterizes the presentation of his sermons. His preaching was eloquent. There was a grandeur and sublimity about it which gave him the reputation as a Christian orator, par excellence, ranking among the immortals of pulpit fame. So impressed were historians, that one in Britain wrote: "Robert Hall, the Chrysostom of the English pulpit, stands among the greatest of Christian orators." In Scotland one, who was thinking of Hall in comparison with Thomas Chalmers, wrote: "As a preacher, he enjoys the traditional fame of having outstripped all his contemporaries." While across the Atlantic, an American declared: "Robert Hall has been pronounced the greatest preacher that ever used the English tongue." Exaggeration, no doubt, but it still remains that by the eloquence of his pulpit ministry, Hall won recognition far beyond the bounds of his own denomination and even beyond the limits of his own native land.

69 J.C. Carlile, The Story of English Baptists, p. 197
70 George Gilfillan, First Gallery of Literary Portraits, (2nd ed.) p. 40
71 J.T. Christian, A History of the Baptists, p. 358
There is no dubiety regarding the widespread reputation which accrued to Robert Hall during and closely following the years of his life. Hence it affords a fitting conclusion to the study of his thought and work to note, by way of review, the causes which contributed to his renown as well as those which brought about in subsequent years a diminution of that fame.

Primarily, it was his power as a pulpit orator, which established Hall in the eyes of his contemporaries as a notable figure. Through him the Baptists of Britain gained in the public mind a position that they had not previously enjoyed. No longer was it possible to look with contempt upon the sect with which such a man had deliberately chosen to identify himself. Indeed, one of his admirers expressed the conviction that Hall had been sent to "take away the reproach of Nonconformity by that wealth of literary acquirement which he had gathered...." Surely this was one of his greatest contributions to Free Churchmen and through them, in turn, to the whole of religious life in Britain. The other abilities which he possessed contributed greatly to welfare of his fellowmen, but pre-eminently it was his

1 J.P.Mursell, *Inaugural Address* (At the Unveiling of Hall's statue in Leicester) p. iii
preaching which attracted the most attention. And Hall himself would have had it this way, for he considered preaching his chief task.

A second factor which gained for him considerable public acclaim was his championship of civil and religious liberties. Not that he was more original in these causes than some of his contemporaries, but his advocacy of civil and religious freedom caused statesmen and politicians, that is, the men who could bring about effectual action, to regard seriously whatever utterances he made. As a result, Nonconformists of like mind rallied to his banner in appreciation of his efforts. So unequivocal was he in the stand he took regarding the Establishment, that Churchmen admired him though they disagreed with him; while Free Churchmen considered him as a worthy spokesman for their cause.

In Hall's efforts to win civil rights for all groups and all classes he was doing something which many ministers of his time neglected, that is, endeavoring to relate religion to life. He earnestly desired and strove for better social conditions and educational opportunities for the underprivileged, and just how highly the people appraised him, is clearly shown in the attitude they assumed when he announced his intention of leaving Leicester. It was there, it will be recalled, that Hall did the major portion of his work for the less fortunate, and it took his
resignation to bring about a realization of the greatness of his stature. A steady stream of his people called upon him, begging him to remain at Harvey Lane; professional and business men, as well as other prominent citizens of the town and neighboring communities, implored him to stay; even the newspapers lamented the fact that Leicester was about to lose its leading townsmen. Unquestionably his efforts were genuinely appreciated, so much so that Skeats could record of Hall: "...he made Leicester the heart of English Dissent."

Another thing which made Hall so famous during his age was the prominent place he assumed in the controversy pertaining to strict and open communion. Anyone who took part in such a debate, on whatever side, would find his name much before the public, and people vitally interested in the subject, as well as casual observers, would eagerly look forward to each new publication by the champion of either side. Actually, the name of Joseph Kinghorn, the chief contender for strict communion, was raised to prominence mainly because he was in the controversy with his better known opponent, Robert Hall. Although, he did not take the more popular side, Hall took the position which in later years was to become more widely accepted, and to this end he con-

2 Morris, Recollections of R. Hall, pp. 446-47
3 Skeats, History of Free Churches of England, p. 541
A fourth factor, not emphasized in this study, but one which added exceedingly to his celebrity was his life itself, and especially his humility and his dauntless courage and persistence. No doubt he was not as ambitious as he should have been. Had he been willing to take advantage of the many opportunities which came his way, he could have risen to greater heights. Nevertheless, his humility was so genuine that people could not but admire such a quality. When a friend discovered that Marischal College had granted Hall the degree of Doctor of Divinity, the Baptist minister was much disturbed and wrote him: "You will greatly oblige me by keeping the fact of my diploma as secret as possible." 

But it was his miraculous courage and uncomplaining spirit in the face of almost continuous illness and pain that brought to him admiration on every hand. Typical of this feeling is the worthy tribute paid him by Lord Lytton in his novel, The Caxtons, which in turn increased the renown of Robert Hall, until his name was known far and wide, apart from any other reason, as a man of Christian courage, and a minister whose life was worthy of careful study and emulation.

How is it that the reputation of such a minister could in the span of a hundred years gradually decline, until to-

day in many circles his name is barely known? In answering this question at least four reasons may be given which explain why Hall's fame has suffered a decadence. Primarily, it is because his manner and style of preaching has become outmoded. Though thoroughly acceptable in his own day, his sermons would fall upon unappreciative ears today. Few ministers of the present age would think of turning to Hall in search of material for their own preaching purposes; for even if they could discover suggestive outlines, a thing not at all impossible, they could hardly produce the same effect with them as did the celebrated orator. Such a flow of language, such grace and beauty of expression were traits of Hall's which are not easily imitated, but even if they were, one would hardly use the long sentences and classic idiom so common in his delivery. Change of fashion and taste then, rather than anything lacking in Hall, is largely responsible for his waning reputation.

In the second place, the Baptist minister no longer holds a prominent place in the eyes of the public, because he did not concentrate his efforts upon leaving some one or more works which would have immortalized his name. There is no question of his ability and competency to have done so. His friends were ever urging him to do more writing, and some of them offered to become his amanuenses. He was urged on by most lucrative promises from publishers, but his extreme fastidiousness in addition to his physical condition
always greatly impeded his efforts. He possessed the im-
agination to have written another Pilgrim's Progress. He
had a logical and metaphysical bent of mind which would have
enabled him to write a work comparable to Butler's Analogy.
His knowledge of politics, economics, and sociology would
well have enabled him to produce works comparable to
Rauschenbusch's books on the social gospel. Yet it was his
choice to endeavor to make his impact upon the people of
his own day and generation, without great concern for his
future influence.

In the third place, Hall's name is relatively unknown
in modern circles because he was no extensive organizer. He
was not one to launch out and move forward in the creation
of new religious societies and associations. He worked
faithfully and diligently in movements which other Christians
had begun, but he was no pioneer like William Carey; he was
no organizer like Charles H. Spurgeon. He could have filled
a Tabernacle by his preaching, but he would not build one.
He could have begun institutions for the care of the poor
and underprivileged, or he could have founded a school for
the training of ministers, so interested was he in all these
activities, but he did not. With the exception of his
Friendly Relief Society, which was not strictly religious,
and which existed for only a short while, he took part in
no organizational work, and hence there is no institution
or society which bears his name, thus keeping it before the
eyes of succeeding generations.

Finally, Hall's renown has been allowed to diminish because in some respects he is still ahead of the thought and practice of certain present-day Baptists. There are those among his own denomination both in Britain and America who would frown upon him because of the attitude he took toward church union and the reception of communicants at the Lord's Table. His views were in advance of his own times, and as a consequence, the majority of later Baptists have accepted them, without being conscious of the contribution which Hall has made to their way of work and worship. On the other hand, those who are more conservative would conveniently forget him because some of the principles he advocated are still too advanced for them.

Fortunately, not all have forgotten the name and the significance of Robert Hall. Within the present decade one of his admirers has produced an excellent little biographical study of the noble preacher, for the express purpose of bridging the gap between Hall's "greatness and the obscurity into which his memory has been allowed to recede...." It is not at all unusual to find some quotation from Hall appearing in America on weekly church bulletins. And whenever one hears a great preacher, one is wont to say by way of comparison, that he has the fluency of Robert Hall.

5 G.W.Hughes, Robert Hall, p. 9
To have achieved greater fame was neither his ambition nor his desire. If he could lift the burden from another's shoulder, if he could share with his fellowmen the spirit which enabled him to bear up under his own heavy load, if he could help to make the spirit of Christ permeate every area of life and every corner of the world, if he could bring Christians together in closer harmony and love, if he could win the lost to Christ, he would have fulfilled his highest ambition.
Robert Hall's quick ascent to popularity in Cambridge was largely due to the political tracts which he produced. Closely coinciding with his settlement there, he wrote his first pamphlet, *Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom*. It was so severe and sarcastic that the author never gave his consent for its re-publication. Just one quotation from the article reveals its sarcasm. In addressing his opponent, Hall wrote:

> We thank him heartily for informing us that the Birmingham riots were a judgment, and, as we would wish to be grateful for such an important communication, we would whisper in his ear in return, that he should be particularly careful not to suffer this itch of prophesying to grow upon him, men being extremely apt in this degenerate age to mistake a prophet for a madman, and to lodge them in the same place of confinement.  

Although the author would not reprint the tract, it did not mean that he had repudiated the principles which he laid down therein.

It was a different story with his next political publication, *An Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty*. After a meeting of his club, Hall related:

>'I went home to my lodgings, and began to write immediately; sat up all night; and, wonderful for me, kept up the intellectual ferment for almost a month; and then the thing was done. I revised it

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1 Hall, *Christianity Consistent With a Love of Freedom*, Works, III, pp. 31-32
a little as it went through the press; but I have ever since regretted that I wrote so hastily and superficially upon some subjects brought forward, which required touching with a master-hand, and exploring to their very foundations. So far as I understand the purely political principles which are advanced in that pamphlet, they are, I believe correct: at all events they are mine still."

Its reception was most widespread, and three editions were called for within six months. It was even widely circulated in America. Hall experienced such "inconveniences" from his political celebrity, that he receded from advocating such principles in public.

It was not until 1821, that the real conflict over this work began. When the Nonconformists were making a renewed effort to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, his friends prevailed upon Hall to bring out a new edition of the Apology. Reluctantly, he agreed because he understood that the old copyright had expired, and unless he gave his consent, the tract could be re-published without it. Believing that it would be safer to come from his own hand, he agreed to the publication of a new edition, this one being the sixth.

By actual comparison there are only minor changes in the 1793 and the 1821 editions. Most noteworthy is the omission in the latest edition of the gross libel which he had made upon the character of Bishop Horsley. In his first edition, Hall had said concerning the bishop:

When we reflect on the qualities which distinguish

2 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, pp. 33-34
3 Ibid., p. 34
this prelate, that venom that hisses, and that meanness that creeps, the malice that attends him to the sanctuary, and pollutes the altar, we feel a similar perplexity with that which springs from the origin of evil. But if we recollect on the other hand that instruction may be conveyed by negative, and that the union in one character of nearly all the dispositions human nature ought not to profess, (sic) may be a useful warning, at least, we shall cease to wonder at the existence and elevation of Dr. Horsley. Characters of his stamp, like a plague or a tempest, may have their use in the general system if they recur not too often. 4

In setting forth the 1821 edition, Hall explained that in many parts of the work there was "an acrimony and vehemence" in the language which he hoped the reader would "put to the account of juvenile ardour...." And particularly with reference to his rebuke of Horsley, he said, "On mature reflection, it appeared to the writer, not quite consistent either with the spirit of Christianity, or with the reverence due to departed genius." 5

Upon the publication of the new edition a most stinging criticism appeared by an anonymous reviewer in The Christian Guardian. The writer expressed his deep sorrow at the republication; for he hoped that it had long since been forgotten or remembered only as "one of the sins of its author's youth." Since its first appearance the reviewer testified that Hall had "so much better employed his time and his great talents, that he may now be considered as standing in

4 Hall, Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty, (1st ed.) p. xvi
5 Hall, Apology, Works, III, p. 82
the very first rank among the Nonconformists of the present day." This reviewer held that the *Apology* was not consistent with Scripture; it was a personal attack upon Bishop Horsley, Burke, and Pitt; it was the writing of a "radical reformer"; it was a work in which the author clearly overstepped his grounds and plunged into a war of party politics.

Largely because the reviewer was anonymous, Hall felt called upon to answer such a rebuke. He sought to justify his re-publication because of the copyright expiration, by saying that it was not natural for a writer to suppress his own work unless he had renounced his former position or unless he was afraid to avow his opinions. In his case, Hall made it clear that he had not changed any of his principles. Whereupon he denied all the charges levelled upon him by the reviewer.

This, however, was not the end of the controversy. A pamphlet published by the *Leiceste Journal* includes the second attempt by the original reviewer to bring discredit upon Hall's work. In thirteen specific points, he refutes the claims made by Hall in his reply. After these charges Hall remained silent, but two of his friends known as "E. E." and "W. W." both wrote in his behalf. Finally, the pamphlet contains a third endeavor by the original reviewer in the *Christian Guardian*. Throughout the controversy the

6 "Review of Apology in the *Christian Guardian*," Hall's Works, III, p. 179
7 Hall, "Reply to Review," Works, III, p. 184
identity of all the writers except Hall was never made known, though they frequently threatened to "expose" each other.

A third work of Hall's, which also caused considerable controversy, but which brought forth even more in the way of praise, was his sermon, Modern Infidelity Considered. This was not a sermon hastily thought out, but it came as the result of a deep conviction that the greatest efforts needed to be made in order to repel the wave of atheism so rampant at the close of the century. One reviewer said of this work, which went to thirteen editions, "Independent of its intrinsic excellence," there were other factors which made it popular. "It was remarkably well timed, and answered a pressing necessity." Sir James Mackintosh was so pleased with the sermon that he frequently used excerpts from it in a series of lectures he gave in Lincoln's-Inn. As a consequence, several of his auditors were induced to spend their Sundays at Cambridge in order to hear Hall preach.

The greatest tribute, however, came from Samuel Parr:

In common with all men of letters, I read with exquisite delight Mr. Hall's Sermon lately published. As compositions, his former works are replete with excellence; but his last approaches to perfection... ...I will give my general opinion of him in

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8 See Correspondence Between the Rev. Robert Hall, M.A., His Friends and the Writer of the Review. Reprinted from The Leicester Journal
9 Unsigned article on Robert Hall in the North British Review, Nov. 1845, p. 58
10 Gregory, "Memoir," Hall's Works, VI, p. 66
the words that were employed to describe a prelate whose writings, I believe, are familiar to him, and whom he strongly resembles, not perhaps in variety of learning, but in fertility of imagination, in vigour of thinking, in rectitude of intention, and holiness of life. Yes, Mr. Hall, like Bishop Taylor, 'has the excellence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint.'

11 J. Johnson, ed. The Works of Samuel Parr, II, p. 471
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