

Calendar of Letters, 1742-1831, collected by Isaac Mann.

ISAAC MANN was born in 1785. He joined the Church at Bridlington, then under Robert Harness from Hull. When the Northern Education Society was established, he was the first student admitted, in April 1805, to the Academy at Horton. After short pastorates at Steep Lane, Burslem, Shipley, he returned to Horton as classical tutor in 1816, and became joint secretary to the Society in 1822. Four years later he went south to Maze Pond, retaining a close connection with the Society till his death in 1831. Most of the letters he collected had to do with one or other of these places.

The transmission of the collection is obscure for fifty years. In 1885 the letters were owned by W. Thomas Lewis of Aberdare. He sorted them into two groups, relating to Ministers and to Missionaries, arranging each group alphabetically, evidently valuing them as Autographs, and not concerned with the facts. One of his kindred was ennobled as Lord Merthyr, who during the war sold them for the benefit of the Red Cross. They were bought by the National Library of Wales. Here they are marked N.L.W, M.S., 1207. E.

Recently they attracted the attention of the Rev. F. G. Hastings, B.A., pastor of the Alfred Place Baptist Church. He has calendared by order of date the 201 documents, which apart from one of 1711 already printed, range from 1742 to 1831. Great thanks are due to him for the pains he has taken, recording every name mentioned in every letter. We propose to publish his calendar, with a few occasional notes. He himself will weave together the information as to Richard Thomas, &c. while Mr. Maurice Hewett of Olney is rejoicing in twenty letters dealing with Sutcliff.

1. 1711, July 27, also at head, 30.

From JOHN WARD, of Calffall, to the BITCHBURN Church.

A letter apparently to his old pastorate, e.g., "being disabled to come among you as formerly," and, "when I was with you I often prayed &c." Exhorts them especially "to communicate with one another" and "not to neglect due use of orderly

means when God affords it." Is pleased at the news of the two brothers Blenkinsop and bro. Whorton re preaching. Appeals for the appointment of at least one elder. Previously the Church had three elders and three deacons, but now only one of each.

A later note in the letter, by Isaac Mann, says this Church "now meets at Hamsterley, Durham, where John Ward was in 1711 the pastor."

[John Ward signed a letter as Elder of the Church at Hexham, to the Church at Newcastle, on 3 August, 1654. It is printed in Douglas' History of the Northern Baptist Churches at page 62. He had pastoral care of the members on "the Derwentwater side." He was born 1630, and at this time was apparently agent in the lead mines near his home at Muggleswick Park. A member of his church acted as a common informer in 1663, charging many members with plotting an insurrection at Ward's house: all accused were acquitted. In 1674 Ward and a new colleague held a general visitation and revived the church after long persecution. In 1678 he formed a new church at Torver on Coniston Water, where also he had mining interests. In 1688 he attended the Convention of 101 Particular Baptist churches in London as pastor of Muggleswick and again in 1692. Acting on suggestions as to support of the ministry, in 1697-8 he headed a subscription list for his church with £100. The same year he went to embody a new church at Bridlington, and in 1708 on the death of the pastor there, wrote a letter of sympathy, still treasured in 1846. He died on 15 August 1717. Douglas printed this letter, with another, at pages 127-131.]

2. 1742-3 Feb.

Addressed "For RICHARD THOMAS, under-Bank-in-Harlewood" and headed "Dear and honoured brethren A. Jackson, Hen. Heaton and Hen. Lord." From DAVID CROSLY, "Baccop."

Crosley is unable to visit them because of sickness, fearing "the time of my departure is at hand." He refers to the Church as "our Ephrata," "our little Israel" and "where I drew my first breath"—apparently his home church. Pleads strongly for peace, particularly that "my friend John Greenwood and his family treat Richard Thomas with more tenderness and freedom" and to be more generous, cheerful and humble. And likewise "My dear friend Richard Thomas I entreat to set aside his too great forwardness in resenting matters. There is a sinful taking as well as giving of offence, and I would not have him hot or peevish."

3. 1744, Jan. 28.

FAC-SIMILE of a letter from JOHN GILL, D.D. to MR. YEOMANS, Northampton.

Dr. Gill proposes publication of his exposition of the N.T. but "needs the assistance of friends." Sends to Mr. Y. because he does not know the name of the minister at Northampton. Asks that it be brought to Dr. Doddridge's notice, and he will also be glad to receive subscriptions.

4. 1746, Jul. 20.

JOHN COLLETT RYLAND.

"Sermones Selecti 1746" or "A collection of particular occasional lectures. Began at Bristol July 20, 1746." The notes here are "Evening lecture at Broadmead—Mr. Philip Doddridge of Northampton" with text John i. 11, 12.

[John Collett Ryland was in 1746 aged 23, ending his studies under Foskett at Bristol, and called to the ministry by his church at Bourton. He seems to have begun noting these select sermons within two months: in September he was asked to supply the pulpit at Warwick for a year, and after four years' trial, he was ordained pastor there. See letter 9.]

4a. —

Also brief notes on "Inspiration," by JOHN RYLAND, M.A.

5. 1748. Mar. 22.

From ALVEREY JACKSON, of Barnoldswick, to RICHARD THOMAS, at Hey-head, near Cross-stone.

Asks Rich. Thomas to preach for John Tommas, of Gildersom. Letter mentions John Mitchell (just about to leave Bridlington); and at Barnoldswick, the death of John, the son of Abraham Greenwood; and also the illness of James, John's younger brother, who is not expected to live.

6. 1749. Jul. 15.

From JAMES WINTERBOTTOM, of Manchester. No receiver given, but from its similarity to the next letter (i.e. No. 7 in this list), it is almost certainly RICHARD THOMAS.

Advice re work of the ministry. It is briefly:—

1. Doctrine conformable to Scripture.
2. Beware of Controversy, "Great talkers in religion," and "wolves in sheep's clothing."
3. Have much converse with God but "as little with the creature as possible."

4. Drop habit of smacking lips at the end of sentence; and "neither preach nor pray above half as long as usual"; "neither must you preach in prayer."

[James Winterbottom was the (sixth?) pastor of the church at Manchester, 1724-1759.]

7. 1750. Aug. 25.

From JAMES WINTERBOTTOM, of Manchester, to RICHARD THOMAS, "with 5 books."

More advice. Briefly:—

1. For hearers sake take less time in preaching and prayer, lest they say "the man loves to hear himself talk."

2. If ever preaching at Manchester, for modesty's sake, avoid Canticles.

3. "Many are remiss in showing the necessity of repentance towards God as antecedent to Faith." Also "Read searching authors and study to be a 'search' preacher."

8. 1752. Mar. 16.

From JOHN TOMMAS (no address given) to RICHARD THOMAS, near East-wood—"by Rev. Mr. Clayton."

Asking R.T. to preach for him on May 3, as he is going to Bristol and London. Mentions Mr. Clayton as preaching for him in April.

[Tommas was at Gildersome, about to go to Bristol.]

9. 1755. Apr. 15.

From JOHN BRINE, of London, to Rev. Mr. RYLAND, Warwick.

Answers a request to define the word "Faith." As against "the assurance of an interest in Xt." he defines faith as a Apprehension (on conviction of guilt) and Acquiescence in God's appointed way of salvation, and an entire dependence on Xt. as "all and in all" for "pardon, peace, repentance, grace, and eternal life." There is, however, proper *ground* for persuasion of interest in Xt.

[John Brine was at this time 52 years old, pastor of the church at Cripplegate. Ryland was now aged 32, and had taken a private census of the Baptist churches, whereby it appeared that this once important church had shrunk to 30 members, the smallest in London. He was now apparently trying to understand the reason, and as Brine was going "into all the unintelligible depths of the supra-lapsarian scheme," Ryland was asking him to defend his hyper-calvinism.]

10. 1755. Jun. 14.

From JAMES TURNER, of Birmingham, to Rev. RICHARD SMITH at Crinsworth Dean, near Hepton Bridge—via Mr. Wm. Suttliet, nr. Cross-stone.

A long letter. Opens with a deprecation of the times—“where shall we find the man or the woman in this Degenerate Day that we dare venter to open our hearts unto?” Particularly does he sternly charge “professors” and especially ministers—“if lives and hearts was searched I am affraid we should find rotten work, and that the Lord may justly complain of ministers now as of old”—and he draws a lurid picture of their place in the Judgment—“Depart from me ye workers of iniquity.” He reviles himself exceedingly for his own sinfulness, often finds preaching hard but hopes God is using him—and the evidences of increased congregations and membership at his church (Cannon St.) seem to show it. He speaks strongly against those who want preaching “moderate a little, and not too hot,” not “too dogmatical and positive.” Yet, there are still a few who “know their Shepherd’s voice.” Mentions for remembrance—Bros. Hartley and Crabtree (Crinsworth Green), and Wm. Suttliet; and churches at Wainsgate, Haworth and Bradford.

[James Turner was this year called to the ministry by Henry Lord’s church at Bacup, and was about to become pastor at Birmingham. Richard Smith had been pastor at Wainsgate for five years. William Suttliet was probably the uncle of John Sutcliffe, best known at Olney.]

11. 1756. Dec. 9.

From RICHARD SMITH, of Wainsgate, to WM. CRABTREE, Minister of the Baptist Church, Bradford.

Regrets Crabtree’s departure to “Emanuel Country Hoose,” but wishes him well. Regretfully declines to come to ordain new deacons, not “for want of love,” but because “I determine not to go abroad during the Popish (supposed) holidays.”

(To be continued.)