

**NARRATIVE  
OF  
SURPRISING CONVERSIONS**

**By Jonathan Edwards**

(1736)

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*Formatted, corrected, modernized, and annotated  
by William H. Gross [www.onthewing.org](http://www.onthewing.org) Feb 2022*

**TO THE REV. DR. COLMAN.**

Rev and Honored Sir:

Having seen your letter to my honored uncle Williams, of Hatfield, of July 20, in which you inform him of the notice that has been taken of the late wonderful work of God in this, and some other towns in this county, by the Rev. Dr. Watts<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Guyse of London,<sup>2</sup> and the congregation to which the last of these preached on a monthly day of solemn prayer; and you also inform him of your desire to be more perfectly acquainted with it by some of us who are on the spot. Having been since informed by my uncle Williams, that you desire me to undertake this, I would now do it in as just and faithful a manner as it lies in me.

I suppose the people of the county in general, are as sober, and orderly, and grand a sort of people as in any part of New England. And I believe they have been preserved the freest by far, of any part of the country, from error and a variety of sects and opinions. Our being so far within the land, at a distance from seaports, and in a corner of the country, has doubtless been one reason why we have not been so corrupted with vice as most other parts. But without question, the religion and good order of the country, and their purity in doctrine, under God, is very much owed to the great abilities and eminent piety of my venerable and honored grandfather, Rev. Solomon Stoddard. I suppose we have also been the freest of any part of the land, from unhappy divisions and quarrels in our ecclesiastical and religious affairs — till the late lamentable Springfield contention.<sup>3</sup>

Being greatly separated from other parts of the province, and having comparatively little intercourse with them, we have from the beginning till now, managed our ecclesiastical affairs within ourselves. It is the way in which the country, from its infancy, has gone on by the

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Watts (1674–1748): English Congregational minister, hymn writer, theologian, and logician. – WHG

<sup>2</sup> John Guyse (1680-1761) was an English independent minister, and co-editor of Edwards *Works*. – WHG

<sup>3</sup> The Springfield contention relates to the settlement of a Minister there, which occasioned overly heated debates between some, both pastors and people who were for it, and others who were against it, on account of their different apprehensions about his principles, and about some steps that were taken to procure his ordination. – *Edwards*

practical agreement of all, and the way in which our peace and good order has been maintained up to now.

The town of Northampton has been standing about eighty-two years, and now has about two hundred families. They mostly dwell more compactly together than any town of such a size in these parts of the country. This probably has been an occasion that both our corruptions and reformations have been more swiftly propagated from time to time, from one to another throughout the town. Take the town in general, and so far as I can judge, they are as rational and understanding a people as most I have been acquainted with. Many of them have been noted for religion, and have been particularly remarkable for their distinct knowledge in things that relate to heart-religion, and Christian experience, and their great regards for it.

I am the third minister that has been settled in the town. The Rev. Mr. Eleazar Mather, who was the first, was ordained in July, 1669. He was one whose heart was much in his work, abundant in labors for the good of precious souls. He had the high esteem and great love of his people, and was blessed with no small success. The Rev. Mr. Stoddard, who succeeded him, came first to the town the November after Mather's death, but was not ordained till September 11, 1672, and died February 11, 1728-9. So that he continued in the work of the ministry here from his first coming to town, near sixty years. And even as he was eminent and renowned for his gifts and grace; so he was blessed from the beginning with extraordinary success in his ministry, in the conversion of many souls. He had five "harvests" as he called them. The first was about fifty-seven years ago; the second about fifty-three years; the third about forty; the fourth about twenty-four; the fifth and last about eighteen years ago. Some of these times were much more remarkable than others, and the ingathering of souls more plentiful. Those that were about fifty-three, and forty, and twenty-four years ago, were much greater than either the first or the last. But in each of them, I heard my grandfather say, most of the young people in the town seemed to be mainly concerned for their eternal salvation.

After the last of these, came a far more degenerate time (at least among young people) — I suppose more than ever before. Mr. Stoddard, indeed, had the comfort before he died, of seeing a time when there was no small appearance of a divine work among some, and a considerable ingathering of souls, even after I was settled with him in the ministry, which was about two years before his death. And I have reason to bless God for the great advantage I had by it. In these two years, there were nearly twenty people whom Mr. Stoddard hoped to be savingly convened; but there was nothing of any *general* awakening. Most of them at that time seemed to be very insensible to the things of religion, and engaged in other cares and pursuits. Just after my grandfather's death, it seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion. For some years, licentiousness greatly prevailed among the youth of the town. Many of them very much addicted to night-walking,<sup>4</sup> and frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices, in which some exceedingly corrupted others by their example. It was frequently their manner to get together in conventions of both sexes, for mirth and jollity, which they called *frolics*. And they would often spend the greater part of the night in them, without any regard to order in the families they belonged to. And indeed, family government too much failed in the town. It had become customary with many of our young people to be indecent in

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<sup>4</sup> Wandering the streets at night. — WHG

their carriage at meeting, which doubtless would not have prevailed to such a degree, if it had not been that my grandfather, through his great age (though he retained his powers surprisingly to the last), was not so able to observe them. There had also long prevailed in the town, a spirit of contention between the two parties into which they had been divided for many years, and by which they maintained a jealousy of one another. They were prepared to oppose one another in all public affairs.

But in two or three years after Mr. Stoddard's death, there began a tangible amendment of these evils. The young people showed more of a disposition to hearken to counsel. By degrees, they left their frolicking, grew observably more decent in their attendance of public worship, and there were more who manifested a religious concern than there used to be.

At the latter end of the year 1733, there appeared in our young people a very unusual flexibleness and yielding to advice. It had been too long their way to make the evening after the Sabbath,<sup>5</sup> and after our public lecture, to especially be the times of their mirth and company-keeping.<sup>6</sup> But a sermon was now preached on the Sabbath before the lecture, to show the evil tendency of the practice, and to persuade them to reform it. And it was urged on heads of families, that it should be something agreed upon among them, to govern their families, and to keep their children at home at these times. And along with this, it was more privately moved that they should meet together the next day, in their several neighborhoods, to know each other's mind. Accordingly, this was done, and the motion was complied with throughout the town. But parents found little or no occasion to exercise their government in the case, because the young people declared they were convinced by what they had heard from the pulpit. They were willing, of themselves, to comply with the counsel that had been given. And it was immediately, and I suppose almost universally complied with. There was a thorough reformation of these disorders from then forward, which has continued ever since.

Immediately after this, there began to appear a remarkable religious concern at a little village belonging to the congregation, called Pascommuck, where a few families were settled; it was about three miles distance from the main body of the town. At this place, a number of people seemed to be savingly worked upon. In the April following, in 1734, there happened a very sudden and awful death of a young man in the bloom of his youth. Being violently seized with a pleurisy, and taken immediately with delirium, he died in about two days. This (together with what was preached publicly on that occasion) greatly affected many young people. This was followed with another death of a young married woman, who had been considerably exercised about the salvation of her soul before she was ill. She was in great distress in the beginning of her illness; but seemed to have satisfying evidences of God's saving mercy to her, before her death. So that she died very full of comfort, in a most earnest and moving manner, warning and counselling others. This seemed to contribute much to the solemnizing of the spirits of many young people; and there began to visibly appear more of a religious concern on people's minds.

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<sup>5</sup> It must be noted, that it has never been our manner to observe the evening that *follows* the Sabbath, but that which *precedes* it, as part of the holy time.

<sup>6</sup> Today we might say, *gang activities*, or *hanging out with a bad crowd*. – WHG

In the fall of the year, I proposed it to the young people, that they should agree among themselves to spend the evenings after lectures, in social religion. And to that end, they should divide themselves into several companies to meet in various parts of the town. This was done accordingly. Those meetings have since continued, and the example imitated by older people. This was followed with the death of an elderly person, which was attended with many unusual circumstances, by which many were greatly moved and affected.

About this time began the great noise that was in this part of the country, about Arminianism, which seemed to appear with a very threatening aspect upon the interest of religion here. The friends of vital piety trembled for fear of the outcome; but contrary to their fear, it seemed to be strongly overruled for the promoting of religion. Many who looked at themselves as being in a Christless condition, seemed to be awakened by it. They feared that God was about to withdraw from the land, and that we would be given up to heterodoxy, and corrupt principles, and that their opportunity for obtaining salvation would then be past. And many who were brought to doubt a little about the truth of the doctrines they had been taught up till then, seemed to have a kind of a trembling fear with their doubts, lest they be led into bypaths, to their eternal undoing. They seemed to inquire with much concern and engaged minds, what was indeed the way in which they must come to be accepted with God. Some things were then said publicly on that occasion, concerning JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.

Great fault was found with meddling with the controversy in the pulpit by such a person at that time. And though it was ridiculed by many elsewhere, it proved to be a word spoken in season here. It was most evidently attended with a very remarkable blessing of heaven to the souls of the people in this town. They received from it a general satisfaction with respect to the main thing in question, which they had trembling doubts and concern about. And their minds were engaged more earnestly to seek that they might come to be accepted by God, and saved in the way of the gospel, which had been made evident to them to be the true and only way. And then, in the latter part of December, the Spirit of God began to extraordinarily set in, and to wonderfully work among us. Very suddenly, one after another, there were five or six people who were, to all appearance, savingly converted, and some of them we worked upon in a very remarkable manner.

Particularly, I was surprised with what was related by a young woman who had been one of the greatest company-keepers in the whole town. When she came to me, I had never heard that she had become in any way serious. But by the conversation I then had with her, it appeared to me that what she gave an account of, was a glorious work of God's infinite power and sovereign grace; and that God had given her a new heart, truly broken and sanctified. I could not then doubt it, and have seen much in my acquaintance with her since to confirm it.

Though the work was glorious, I was still filled with concern about the effect it might have on others. I was ready to conclude (though too rashly) that some would be hardened by it, in carelessness and looseness of life; and would take occasion from it to open their mouths in reproaches of religion. But it was the reverse, to a wonderful degree. God made it, I suppose, the greatest occasion of awakening to others, of anything that ever came to pass in the town. I have had abundant opportunity to know the effect it had, by my private conversation with many. The news of it seemed to be almost like a flash of lightning on the hearts of young people all over the town, and on many others. Those people among us, who used to be furthest

from seriousness, and I most feared would make an ill-use of it, seemed to be greatly awakened by it. Many went to talk with her concerning what she had encountered; and what appeared in her, seemed to be to the satisfaction of all who did so.

Immediately upon this, a great and earnest concern about the great things of religion, and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town, and among people of all degrees, and all ages. The noise among the dry bones grew louder and louder. All other talk except about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown aside. All the conversation in all the gatherings, and on all occasions, was on these things only, except what as was necessary for people to carry on their ordinary secular business. Other discourse than about the things of religion, would scarcely be tolerated in any group. The minds of people were wonderfully taken off the world; that was treated among us as a thing of very little consequence. They seemed to follow their worldly business more as a part of their duty, than from any disposition they had to it. The temptation now seemed to lie on that hand, to neglect worldly affairs too much, and to spend too much time in the immediate exercise of religion. This was exceedingly misrepresented by reports that were spread in distant parts of the land, as though the people here had wholly thrown aside all worldly business. and turned entirely to reading and praying, and similar religious exercises.

But though the people did not ordinarily neglect their worldly business, there was then the reverse of what is common. Religion was the great concern with all sorts of people, and the world was only a by the by thing. The only thing in their view was to get the kingdom of heaven, and everyone appeared to be pressing into it. The earnestness of their hearts in this great concern could not be hidden; it appeared in their very countenances. It was then a dreadful thing among us to be outside of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell; and what people's minds were intent upon, was to escape for their lives, and to *flee from the wrath to come*. (Luk 3.7) All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls; they were often inclined to meet together in private houses for religious purposes. And such meetings, when appointed, were usually greatly thronged

There was scarcely a single person in the town, either old or young, who was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those who were usually the most vain and loose, and those who had been most disposed to think and speak negatively about vital and experiential religion,<sup>7</sup> were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was earned on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more. Souls, as it were, came by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, there might be seen evident instances of sinners brought *out of darkness into marvellous light, and delivered out of a horrible pit, and from the miry day, and set upon a rock, with a new song of praise to God in their mouths*. (Psa 40.2)

This work of God, as it was carried on, and the number of true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious alteration in the town. So that in the spring and summer following, in 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never so full of love, nor so full of joy; and yet so full of distress as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought to

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<sup>7</sup> Originally, "experimental religion" – it refers to a tangible experience of God, evidenced in godly living. – WHG

them; parents rejoicing over their children as new-born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. *The goings of God were then seen in his sanctuary. God's day was a delight, and his tabernacles were amiable.* (Psa 84.1) Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship; every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general was in tears from time to time, while the word was preached. Some were weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.

Our public praises were then greatly enlivened. God was then served in our psalmody, in some measure, in the beauty of holiness. It has been observable that there has been scarcely any part of divine worship in which good men among us have had grace so drawn forth, and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing His praises. Our congregation excelled all that I ever knew before, in the external part of the duty. The men generally carried regularly, and well, three parts of music, and the women a part by themselves. But *now* they were evidently inclined to sing with unusual elevation of heart and voice, which made the duty pleasant indeed.

In all gatherings on other days, on whatever occasions people met together, Christ was to be heard of and seen in their midst. Our young people, when they met, usually spent the time talking about the excellency and dying love of Jesus Christ, the gloriousness of the way of salvation, the wonderful, free, and sovereign grace of God, His glorious work in the conversion of a soul, the truth and certainty of the great things of God's word, the sweetness of the views of his perfections, etc. And even at weddings, which formerly were merely occasions of mirth and jollity, there was now no discourse of anything but the things of religion, and no appearance of anything but spiritual mirth.

Those among us who had been formerly converted, were greatly enlivened and renewed with fresh and extraordinary incomings of the Spirit of God; though some much more than others, *according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* (Eph 4.7) Many who before had labored under difficulties about their own state, now had their doubts removed by a more satisfying experience, and by clearer discoveries of God's love.

When this work of God first appeared, and was so extraordinarily carried on among us in the winter, others round about us didn't seem to know what to make of it. There were many who scoffed at and ridiculed it; some compared what we called *conversion* to certain distempers. But it was observable by many who occasionally came among us from abroad, those with disregarding hearts, that what they saw here cured them of such a temper of mind. Strangers were generally surprised to find things so much beyond what they had heard, and were eager to tell others that the state of the town could not be conceived of by those who had not seen it. The notice that was taken of it by the people who came to town on the occasion of the court, who sat here in the beginning of March, was very observable. And those who came from the neighborhood to our public lectures, were for the most part remarkably affected. Many who came to town, on one occasion or other, had their consciences struck and awakened, and went home with wounded hearts, and with those impressions that never wore off, till they had hopefully a saving result. And those who before had serious thoughts, had their awakenings and convictions greatly increased. There were many instances of people who came from

abroad on visits, or on business, who had not been long here before. To all appearance, they were savingly worked upon, and partook of that shower of divine blessing that God rained down here, and they went home rejoicing — till at length, the same work began evidently to appear and prevail in several other towns in the county.

In the month of March, the people in South Hadley began to be seized with deep concern about the things of religion. Very soon this became universal, and the work of God has been very wonderful there — not much, if anything, short of what it has been here, in proportion to the bigness of the place. About the same time, it began to break forth in the west part of Suffield (where it has also been very great), and it soon spread into all parts of the town. It next appeared at Sunderland, and soon overspread the town. I believe it was, for a season, not less remarkable than it was here. About the same time it began to appear in a part of Deerfield, called Green River. And afterwards, it filled the town; and there has been a glorious work there. It also began to be manifest in the south part of Hatfield, in a place called *the Hill*; and after that, in the second week in April, the whole town seemed to be seized, as it were at once, with concern about the things of religion. And the work of God has been great there. There has also been a very general awakening at West Springfield, and Long Meadow. And in Enfield there was, for a time, a pretty general concern among some who before had been very loose people. About the same time that this appeared at Enfield, the Rev. Mr. Bull of Westfield informed me, that there had been a great alteration there, and that more had been done in one week there than in the seven years before.

Something of this work likewise appeared in the first precinct in Springfield, principally in the north and south extremes of the parish. And in Hadley old town, there gradually appeared so much of a work of God on souls, that in another time it would have been thought worthy of much notice. For a short time there was also a very great and general concern of like nature at Northfield. And wherever this concern appeared, it did not seem to be in vain. In every place, God brought saving blessings with him, and his word attended with his Spirit (as we have every reason to think) did not return void. It might well be said at that time, in all parts of the country: *Who are these who fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?* (Isa 60.8)

What other towns heard of and found in this, was a great means of awakening them. So too, our hearing about such a swift and extraordinary propagation, and the extent of this work, doubtless served to uphold the work among us for a time. The continual news kept alive the talk of religion. It greatly quickened and rejoiced the hearts of God's people, and greatly awakened those who looked at themselves as still left behind. It made them more earnest that they also might share in the great blessing that others had obtained.

This remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God, which thus extended from one end to the other of this country, was not confined to it, but many places in Connecticut have partaken in the same mercy: for instance, the first parish in Windsor, under the pastoral care of the Reverend Mr. Marsh, was thus blessed about the same time as we in Northampton, while we had no knowledge of each other's circumstances. There has been a very great ingathering of souls to Christ in that place, and something considerable of the same work began afterwards in East Windsor, my honored father's parish. In times past, it had been a place favored with mercies of this nature, above any on this western side of New England, except Northampton.

There were four or five seasons of the outpouring of the Spirit to the general awakening of the people there, since my father's settlement among them.

There was also, during the last spring and summer, a wonderful work of God carried on at Coventry, under the ministry of the Reverend Mr. Meacham. I had an opportunity to converse with some of the Coventry people, who gave me a very remarkable account of the surprising change that appeared in the rudest and most vicious people there. The same thing was also very great at the same time in a part of Lebanon, called the Crank, where the Reverend Mr. Wheelock, a young gentleman, has recently settled. And there has been much of the same at Durham, under the ministry of the Reverend Mr. Chauncey; to all appearances, it is no small ingathering of souls there. And likewise among many of the young people in the first precinct in Stratford, under the ministry of the Reverend Mr. Gould; where the work was much promoted there as it was here, by the remarkable conversion of a young woman who had been a great company-keeper.

Something of this work appeared in several other towns in those parts, as I was informed when I was there the last fall. And we have since been acquainted with something very remarkable of this nature at another parish in Stratford, called Ripton, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Mills. And there was a considerable revival of religion last summer at New Haven old town, as I was once and again informed by the Rev. Mr. Noyes, the minister there, and by others — and by a letter which I very recently received from Mr. Noyes, and also by information we have had otherwise. This flourishing of religion still continues, and has lately much increased. Mr. Noyes writes that many this summer have been added to the church, and particularly mentions several young people who belonged to the principal families of that town.

There has been a degree of the same work at a part of Guilford; and very considerable at Mansfield, under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Eleazar Williams; and an unusual religious concern at Tolland; and something of it at Hebron and Bolton. There was also no small effusion of the Spirit of God in the north parish in Preston in the eastern part of Connecticut, which I was informed of, and saw something of it when I was at the house last autumn, and in the congregation of the Rev. Mr. Lord, the minister there. He came up here with the Rev. Mr. Owen of Groton, in May of last year, to see the work of God here. Having heard various and contradictory accounts of it, they were careful when they were here, to inform and satisfy themselves. And to that end, they particularly conversed with many of our people, which they declared to be entirely to their satisfaction, and that what had been told to them wasn't even half of it. Mr. Lord told me that when he got home, he informed his congregation of what he had seen, and they were greatly affected by it. That proved to be the beginning of the same work among them, which prevailed till there was a general awakening, and many instances of people who seemed to be remarkably converted. I have also recently heard that there has been something of the same work at Woodbury.

But this shower of Divine blessing has been still more extensive. There was no small degree of it in some parts of the Jerseys, as I was informed when I was at New York (in a long journey that I took at that time of the year for my health). I was told by some people from the Jerseys, whom I saw — especially the Rev. Mr. William Tennent, a minister. He seemed to have such things much at heart, and told me of a very great awakening of many people in a place called



*the Mountains*, under the ministry of one Mr. Cross; and of a very considerable revival of religion in another place under the ministry of his brother the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Tennent; and also at another place, under the ministry of a very pious young gentleman, a Dutch minister, whose name as I remember, was Freelinghausen.

This seems to have been a very extraordinary dispensation of Providence. God has in many respects, gone out of and much *beyond* his usual and ordinary way. The work in this town, and some others around us, has been extraordinary on account of the universality of it, affecting all sorts, sober and vicious, high and low, rich and poor, wise and unwise. It reached the most respectable families and people, to all appearances, as much as others. In former stirrings of this nature, the bulk of the young people have been greatly affected; but old men and little children have been so now. Many of the last work have, of their own accord, formed themselves into religious societies, in different parts of the town. A loose and careless person could scarcely find a companion in the whole neighborhood. And if there was anyone who seemed to remain senseless or unconcerned, it would be spoken of as a strange thing.

This dispensation has also appeared extraordinary in the numbers of those on whom we have reason to hope it had a saving effect. We have about six hundred and twenty communicants, which includes almost all our adult people. The church was very large before; but people never thronged into it as they did in the recent extraordinary time. Our sacraments were eight weeks apart, and I received into our communion about a hundred before one sacrament, and eighty of them at one time whose appearance, when they presented themselves together to make an open, explicit profession of Christianity, was very affecting to the congregation. I took in nearly sixty before the next sacrament day. And I had very sufficient evidence of the conversion of their souls through divine grace — though it is not the custom here, as it is in many other churches in this country, to make a credible relation of their inward experiences, the ground of admission to the Lord's Supper.

I am far from pretending to be able to determine how many have lately been the subjects of such mercy. But if I may be allowed to declare anything that appears to me probable in a thing of this nature, I hope that more than three hundred souls were savingly brought home to Christ in this town, in the space of half a year (how many more I don't guess), and about the same number of males as females. By what I heard Mr. Stoddard say, this was far from what has been usual in years past, for he observed that in his time, many more women were converted than men. Those of our young people who are on other accounts most likely and respectable, are I hope, mostly truly pious and leading people in the way of religion. Those who were formerly looser young people, have generally, to all appearance, become true lovers of God and Christ, and spiritual in their dispositions. And I hope that by far the greater part of people in this town above sixteen years of age, are those who have the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And by what I heard, I suppose it is so in some other places, particularly at Sunderland and South Hadley.

This has also appeared to be a very extraordinary dispensation, in that the Spirit of God has so much extended not only His awakening, but His regenerating influences, both to elderly people, and also those who are very young. It has been a thing rarely heard of before, that any were converted past middle age. But now we have the same ground to think that many such people have been savingly changed in *this* time, as that others have been saved in their early

years. I suppose there were upwards of fifty people in this town over forty years of age; and more than twenty of them over fifty; and about ten of them over sixty; and two of them over seventy years of age.

It has previously been looked at as a strange thing, when any seem to be savingly worked on, and remarkably changed in their childhood. But now, I suppose nearly thirty were thus apparently worked on between ten and fourteen years of age, two between nine and ten, and one of them about four years of age. And because, I suppose, this last one will prove most difficult to believe, I will afterward give a particular account of it. The influences of God's Spirit have also been very remarkable on children in some other places, particularly at Sunderland and South Hadley, and the west part of Suffield. There are several families in this town that are all hopefully pious. Indeed, there are several numerous families in which, I think, we have reason to hope that all the children are truly godly, and most of them have recently become so. And there are very few houses in the whole town, into which salvation has not recently come, in one or more instances. There are several negroes <sup>8</sup> who, from what was seen in them *then*, and what is discernible in them *since*, appear to have been truly born again in the recent remarkable season.

God also seems to have gone out of his usual way in the *quickness* of his work, and the swift progress his Spirit has made in his operation on the hearts of many. It's wonderful that people should be so suddenly, and yet so greatly changed. Many have been taken from a loose and careless way of living, seized with strong convictions of their guilt and misery, and in a very little time, *old things have passed away, and all things have become new* with them.

God's work has also appeared very extraordinary in the degrees of the influences of his Spirit, both in the degree of awakening and conviction, and in the degree of saving light, love, and joy that many have experienced. It has also been very extraordinary in the extent of it, and its being so swiftly propagated from town to town. In former times of the outpouring of the Spirit of God on this town, even though it was very remarkable in some of them, it reached no further than this town. The neighboring towns all around continued unmoved.

The work of God's Spirit seemed to be at its greatest height in this town, in the former part of the spring — in March and April — at which time God's work in the conversion of souls was carried on among us in a wonderful a manner. In looking back, so far as I can judge from the particular acquaintance I have had with souls in this work, it appears to me probable that it was at the rate of at least four people a day, or near thirty a week, taking one with another, for five or six weeks together. When God in so remarkable a manner took the work into his own hands, there was as much done in a day or two, as is done in a year at ordinary times, with all the endeavors that men can use, and with such a blessing as we commonly have.

I am very sensible how apt many would be, if they should see the account I have given here, to quickly think to themselves that I am very fond of making a great many converts, and of magnifying and aggrandizing the matter. They may think that for lack of judgment, I take

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<sup>8</sup> This was not a pejorative or condescending term in Edwards' day. We're *all* Adam's race, from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (Rev 14.6). Edwards has already spoken of how widespread this awakening was among young and old, rich and poor, common and cultured, male and female. This is simply one more example of God's unbiased grace towards all, and how all are made one in Christ Jesus. — WHG

every religious pang and enthusiastic conceit as a saving conversion. I don't wonder much if they are apt to think so. And that is for this reason: I have forborne publishing an account of this great work of God, though I have often been put upon to do it. But having now as I thought a special call to give at least an account of it, upon mature consideration, I thought it might not be beside my duty to declare this amazing work (as it appeared to me) to indeed be divine, and to conceal no part of its glory. I am leaving it with God to take care of the credit of His own work, and running the risk of any censorious thoughts that I might entertain to my disadvantage. But that distant people may have as great an advantage as possible to judge for themselves about this matter, I want to be a little larger, and more particular.

I therefore proceed to give an account of the manner of people being worked upon. And here there is a vast variety, perhaps as manifold as the subjects of the operation; yet in many things there is a great analogy in all.

People are first awakened with a sense of their miserable condition by nature, the danger they are in of perishing eternally, and that it is of great importance to them that they speedily escape and get into a better state. Those who before were secure and senseless, are made sensible of how much they were on the way to ruin in their former courses. Some are more suddenly seized with convictions. It may be by the news of others' conversion, or something they hear in public or private conference; their consciences are suddenly struck, as if their hearts were pierced through with a dart. Others have awakenings that come upon them more gradually. They begin at first to be somewhat more thoughtful and considerate, so as to come to a conclusion in their minds, that it is their best and wisest way to delay no longer, but to make use of the present opportunity. And accordingly they have set themselves to seriously meditate on those things that have the most awakening tendency, with a purpose to obtain convictions. And so their awakenings have increased till a sense of their misery has a fast hold of them, by God's Spirit setting in with it. Others who, before this wonderful time, had been somewhat religious and concerned for their salvation, have been awakened in a new manner, and made sensible that their slack and dull way of seeking was never likely to attain their purpose. And so they have been roused to a greater forcefulness for the kingdom of heaven.

These awakenings, when they have first seized on people, have had two effects:

One was that they have brought them immediately to quit their sinful practices, and the looser sort have been brought to forsake and dread their former vices and extravagances. Once the Spirit of God began to be so wonderfully poured out in a general way through the town, people were soon done with their old quarrels, backbitings, and intermeddling with other men's matters; the tavern was soon left empty, and people kept very much at home; none went abroad unless on necessary business or some religious account; and every day seemed in many respects like a Sabbath day.

The other effect was that it put them on earnest application to the means of salvation: reading, prayer, meditation, the ordinances of God's house, and private conference. Their cry was, *What shall we do to be saved?* The place of resort was now altered: it was no longer the tavern, but the minister's house. That was thronged far more than the tavern had ever been.

There is a very great variety as to the degree of fear and trouble that people are exercised with, before they obtain any comfortable evidences of pardon and acceptance with God. Some, from

the beginning, are carried on with abundantly more encouragement and hope than others. Some have had ten times less trouble of mind than others, in whom the issue yet seems to be the same. Some have had such a sense of the displeasure of God, and of the great danger of damnation, that they couldn't sleep at nights. Many have said that when they laid down, the very thought of sleeping in such a condition had frightened them. They have scarcely been free from terror while asleep, and they have awakened with fear, heaviness, and distress still abiding on their spirits. It has been very common that the deep and fixed concern that has been on people's *minds*, has had a painful influence on their *bodies*, and disturbed their animal nature.

The awful apprehensions that people have had of their misery, have for the most part been increasing the nearer they approached deliverance. Though they often pass through many changes and alterations in the frame and circumstances of their minds, they sometimes think they are wholly senseless. They fear that the Spirit of God has left them, and that they've been given over to judicial hardness. Yet they appear very deeply exercised about that fear, and are in great earnest to obtain their conviction of salvation again.

Together with those fears, and that exercise of mind which is rational, and which they have just ground for, they often suffer many *needless* distresses of thought (in which Satan probably has a great hand) to entangle them, and block their way. Sometimes a distemper<sup>9</sup> of melancholy has been evidently mixed in. When that happens, the tempter seems to take great advantage of it, and he puts an unhappy bar in the way of any good effect. One doesn't know how to deal with such people.<sup>10</sup> They turn everything that is said to them the wrong way, and most to their own disadvantage. And there is nothing that the devil seems to lay hold of so much, as a melancholy temperament, unless it is the real corruption of the heart.

But it has been very remarkable that there has been far less of this mixture of melancholy in this time of extraordinary blessing, than there usually was in people under awakenings at other times. For it is evident that many who before had been exceedingly involved in such difficulties, now seemed to be strangely set at liberty. Some people who for a long time before, had been exceedingly entangled with peculiar temptations of one sort or another, and unprofitable and hurtful distresses, were soon helped over those former stumbling-blocks that hindered any progress towards saving good. Convictions have worked more kindly; and these people have been successfully carried on in the way to life. Thus Satan seemed to be restrained till the latter end of this wonderful time, when God's Spirit was about to withdraw.

Many times, people under great awakenings were concerned because they thought they were *not* awakened, but still miserable, hard-hearted, senseless, sottish creatures, and sleeping on the brink of hell. The sense of the need they have to be awakened, and of their comparative hardness, grows on them with their awakenings; so that they seem to themselves to be very *senseless*, when indeed they were most *sensible*. There have been some instances of people who have had as great a sense of their danger and misery as their natures could well subsist under, so that a little more would probably have destroyed them. Yet they expressed that they

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<sup>9</sup> *Distemper*: a disturbance of temperament, whether of rational thought, emotional stability, or bodily health. – WHG

<sup>10</sup> Today we call it *clinical depression*. For an insight into how it was perceived at the time, see Timothy Rogers' classic, "Trouble of Mind – The Disease of Melancholy" (1691), written not too long before the Great Awakening. – WHG

were much amazed at their own insensibility and sottishness <sup>11</sup> in such an extraordinary time as it then was.

People are sometimes brought to the border of despair; it looks as black as midnight to them a little before the day dawns in their souls. There have been a few instances of people who have had such a sense of God's wrath for sin, that they have been overborne, and made to cry out under an astonishing sense of their guilt. They wonder that God suffers such guilty wretches to live upon the earth, and doesn't immediately send them to hell. And sometimes their guilt so stares them in the face, that they are in exceeding terror for fear that God will instantly do that. But more commonly, the distresses under legal awakenings <sup>12</sup> have not been to such a degree. In some, these terrors don't seem to be as sharp as before, when they were near comfort; their convictions haven't seemed to work so much that way. Rather, they seem to be led further down into their own hearts, to a further sense of their own universal depravity and deadness in sin.

The corruption of the heart reveals itself in various exercises in times of legal conviction. Sometimes it appears in a great struggle, like something roused by an enemy — Satan, the old inhabitant of the heart, seems to exert himself like a serpent disturbed and enraged. Many in such circumstances have felt a great spirit of envy towards the godly, especially towards those who are thought to have been recently converted — and most of all toward acquaintances and companions when they are thought to be converted. Indeed, some have felt many heart-risings against God, and murmurings at his ways of dealing with mankind, and his dealings with themselves in particular. It has been much insisted on, both in public and private, that people should have the utmost dread of such envious thoughts which, if allowed, exceedingly tend to quench the Spirit of God, if not to provoke Him to finally forsake them. And when such a spirit has largely prevailed, and people have not so earnestly strived against it as they should have done, it seems to exceedingly hinder the good of their souls. But in some other instances where people have been very terrified at the sight of such wickedness in their own hearts, God has brought good to them out of evil; and has made it a means to convince them of their own desperate sinfulness, and to bring them away from all self-confidence.

The drift of the Spirit of God in his legal strivings with people, has seemed most evidently to be to make way for, and to bring to, a conviction of their absolute dependence on his sovereign power and grace, and on the universal necessity of a Mediator. He does this by leading them more and more to a sense of their exceeding wickedness and guiltiness in His sight — the pollution and insufficiency of their own righteousness; that they cannot in any way help themselves; that God would be wholly just and righteous in rejecting them, rejecting all that they do, and in casting them away forever — though there is a vast variety as to the manner and distinctness of people's convictions of these things.

As they are gradually, more and more convinced of the corruption and wickedness of their hearts, they seem to themselves to grow worse and worse, harder and blinder, and more desperately wicked — instead of growing better. They are ready to be discouraged by this, and

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<sup>11</sup> *Sottishness*: here it means acting as though in stupor; oblivious (rather than actually being drunk). – WHG

<sup>12</sup> *Legal awakening*: a person's conviction of sin for violating God's Law, as distinct from violating man's morality, or from a mere "religious experience." – WHG

oftentimes never think they are so far from good, as when they are nearest to it. Under the sense which the Spirit of God gives them of their sinfulness, they often think they differ from all others. Their hearts are ready to sink with the thought that they are the worst of all, and that no one ever obtained mercy who was as wicked as they.

When the first awakenings begin, people's consciences are commonly most exercised about their outward vicious <sup>13</sup> course, or other acts of sin. But afterwards, they are much more burdened with a sense of heart-sins: the dreadful corruption of their nature, their enmity against God, the pride of their hearts, their unbelief, their rejection of Christ, the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills, and the like. In many, God makes much use of their own experience in the course of their awakenings, and their endeavors after saving good, to convince them of their own vile emptiness and universal depravity.

Very often under their first awakenings, when they are brought to reflect upon the sin of their past lives, and they have something of a terrifying sense of God's anger, they set themselves to walk more strictly, and to confess their sins, and perform many religious duties, all with a secret hope of appeasing God's anger, and making up for the sins they committed. Oftentimes, on first setting out, their affections are moved, and they are full of tears in their confessions and prayers, which they are ready to make much of — as though they were some sort of atonement, and had the power to move corresponding affections in God too. Hence, they have big expectations for a while, of what God will do for them; and they conceive that they are growing better rapidly, and will soon be thoroughly converted. But these affections are only short-lived, as they quickly find that they fail. And then they think to themselves that they have grown worse again. They don't find the prospect of being converted will be as soon as they thought. Instead of being nearer, they seem to be farther off; they think their hearts have grown harder. And by this means, their fears of perishing greatly increase.

But though they are disappointed, they renew their attempts again and again. But still, as their attempts are multiplied, so are their disappointments; all fail. They see no token of having inclined God's heart to them; they don't see that He hears their prayer at all, as they expected He would. And sometimes there have been great temptations arising from this, to stop seeking, and to yield up the cause. But as they are still more terrified with fears of perishing, and as their former hopes of prevailing upon God to be merciful to them *fail* in great measure, their religious affections have sometimes turned into heart-risings against God — because He would not pity them. And it seems to have little regard to their distress and piteous cries, and to all the pains they take. They think of the mercy that God has shown to others — how soon, and how easily others have obtained comfort, and those too who were worse than them, and haven't labored as much as they have. And sometimes, they have had even dreadful and blasphemous thoughts in these circumstances.

But when they reflect on these wicked workings of heart against God — if their convictions are continued, and the Spirit of God is not provoked to utterly forsake them — they have more distressing apprehensions of the anger of God towards those whose hearts work in such a sinful manner about Him. It may be that they have great fears that they have committed the

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<sup>13</sup> *Vicious*: here it means vice-ridden or sinful, rather than cruel. — WHG

unpardonable sin,<sup>14</sup> or that God will surely never show mercy to them because they are such vipers; and so they are often tempted to quit in despair.

But then — perhaps by something they read or hear about the infinite mercy of God, and the all-sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners — they have some encouragement and hope renewed. But they think that as yet they are not fit to come to Christ; they are so wicked that Christ will never accept them. And then it may be that they set themselves on a new course of fruitless endeavors in their own strength to make themselves better, and still meet with new disappointments. They are earnest to inquire what they should do. They don't know if there is something else to be done in order to obtain converting grace, that they haven't done yet. It may be that they hope they are somewhat better than they were — but then the pleasing dream all vanishes again. If they are told that they trust too much in their own strength and righteousness, that they cannot unlearn this practice all at once, and they do not yet find the appearance of any good — then it all looks dark as midnight to them. Thus they wander about from mountain to hill, seeking rest and finding none. When they are beat out of one refuge they fly to another, till they are, as it were, debilitated, broken, and subdued with legal humblings. In this state, God gives them a conviction of their own utter helplessness and insufficiency, and reveals the true remedy in a clearer knowledge of Christ and his gospel.

When they begin to seek salvation, they are commonly profoundly ignorant of themselves. They're not sensible of how blind they are, and how little they can do towards bringing themselves to see spiritual things aright, and towards putting forth gracious exercises in their own souls. They're not sensible of how remote they are from love to God, and other holy dispositions, and how dead they are to sin.<sup>15</sup> When they see unexpected pollution in their own hearts, they go about trying to wash away their own defilements, and make themselves clean. They weary themselves in vain, till God *shows* them it is in vain, and that their help is not where they've sought it, but elsewhere.

But some people continue wandering in such a kind of labyrinth, ten times as long as others, before their own experience will convince them of their insufficiency. And so it appears not to be their own experience only, but the convincing influence of God's Spirit *with* their experience, that attains the effect. And God has of late abundantly shown that He doesn't need to wait to have men convinced by long and often repeated, fruitless trials. For in multitudes of instances, He has made a shorter work of it. He has so awakened and convinced people's consciences, and made them so sensible of their exceedingly great vileness, and given them such a sense of His wrath against sin, that it quickly overcame all their vain self-confidence, and has borne them down into the dust, before a holy and righteous God.

There have been some who have not had great terrors, but have had a very *quick* work. Some of those who have not had so deep a conviction of these things *before* their conversion, have had much more of it *afterwards*, it may be. God has appeared far from limiting himself to any certain method in his proceedings with sinners under legal convictions. In some instances, it seems easy for our reasoning powers to discern the methods of divine wisdom in His dealings with the soul under awakenings. In others, *his footsteps cannot be traced, and his ways are*

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<sup>14</sup> Alluding to Mat 12.32; Heb 6.4-6. — WHG

<sup>15</sup> That is, God has saved them by grace, through faith in Christ, but they continue to act as if it were by works. — WHG

*past finding out.* And some who are less distinctly worked upon, in what is *preparatory* to grace, appear no less eminent in gracious experiences *afterwards*.

There is no greater difference, in different people, than with respect to the time of their being under trouble. Some are but a few days, and others go on for months or years. There were many in this town, before this effusion of God's Spirit upon us, who had been for years (and some for *many* years) concerned about their salvation. Though probably not thoroughly awakened, they were still concerned to such a degree as to be very uneasy; so as to live an uncomfortable, disquieted life; and so as to continue in a way of taking considerable pains about their salvation. But they had never obtained any comfortable evidence of a good estate. *Now*, in this extraordinary time, they have received light; but many of them were some of the last. They first saw multitudes of others rejoicing with songs of deliverance in their mouths, who seemed wholly careless and at ease, and in pursuit of vanity, while they themselves had been bowed down with exceeding concern about their souls. Indeed, some had lived licentiously; and they continued so, until a little before they were converted. Then they grew up to a holy rejoicing in the infinite blessings that God had bestowed upon them.

Whatever minister has a similar occasion to deal with souls in a flock that is under such circumstances as this flock was in the last year, I cannot help but think he will soon find himself needing to greatly insist that God is under no manner of obligation to show mercy to *any* natural man whose heart is not turned to God. And to insist that a man can claim nothing, either in absolute justice or by free promise, from anything he does, before he has believed on Jesus Christ, or has begun true repentance in Him. It appears to me that if I had taught any other doctrine to those who came to me under trouble, I would have taken a most direct course to utterly undo them. I would have directly crossed what was plainly the drift of the Spirit of God in his influences upon them.<sup>16</sup> For if they had believed what I said, it would either have promoted self-flattery and carelessness, and so put an end to their awakenings — or else cherished and established their contention and strife with God, concerning his dealings with them and others. It would have blocked their way to that humiliation before the sovereign disposer of life and death, by which God usually prepares them for his consolations. And yet those who have been under awakenings, have oftentimes plainly stood in need of being encouraged, by being told of the infinite and all-sufficient mercy of God in Christ. And they need to be told it is God's manner to come after personal diligence, and to bless His own means. This is to ensure that awakenings and encouragements, fear and hope, may be duly mixed and proportioned to preserve the person's mind in a just medium between the two extremes of self-flattery and despondence — both of which tend toward slackness and negligence, and in the end to false security.

I think I have found that no discourses have been more remarkably blessed, than those which insist on the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty with regard to the salvation of sinners, and His just liberty with regard to answering the prayers, or succeeding the pains of mere natural men, continuing as such. I never found so much immediate saving fruit, in any measure, of any discourses I have offered to my congregation, as those taken from the words

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<sup>16</sup> In other words, spiritual new birth involves the *labor* of giving birth. These pains are part of the birthing process, not something to be avoided. Otherwise, it may be a mere verbal profession without a heart-change. — WHG



in Rom 3:19: “That every mouth may be stopped”<sup>17</sup> — endeavoring to show from this, that it would be just for God to forever reject and cast off mere natural men.

In those in whom awakenings seem to have a saving result, the first thing that commonly appears after their legal troubles, is a conviction of the justice of God in their condemnation, in a sense of their own exceeding sinfulness, and the vileness of all their performances. In giving an account of this, they expressed themselves variously. Some said that they saw God was sovereign, and might receive others and reject them; some that they were convinced God might justly bestow mercy on every person in the town, and on every person in the world, and yet damn themselves to all eternity; some, that they see God may justly have no regard for all the pains they have taken, and all the prayers they have made; some, that they see that if they were to seek, and take the utmost pains all their lives, God might justly cast them into hell in the end, because all their labors, prayers and tears, cannot atone for the least sin, nor merit any blessing at the hands of God; some have declared themselves to be in the hands of God, and that He can and may dispose of them just as he pleases; some, that God may glorify Himself in their damnation, and they wonder that God allowed them to live so long, and had not cast them into hell long ago.

Some are brought to this conviction, by a great sense of their sinfulness in general — that they are such vile wicked creatures in heart and life. Others have the sins of their lives set before them in an extraordinary manner — multitudes of these sins coming just then fresh to their memory, and being set before them with their aggravations. Some have their minds especially fixed on some particular wicked practice they have indulged; some are especially convinced by a sight of the corruption and wickedness of their hearts; some from a view they have of the horridness of some particular exercises of corruption which they had during their awakening, and by which the enmity of their heart against God has been manifested; some are convinced especially by a sense of the sin of *unbelief*— the opposition of their hearts to the way of salvation by Christ, and their obstinacy in rejecting Him and His grace.

There is a great deal of difference in people’s ability to see this distinctly. Some who don’t have as clear a sight of God’s justice in their condemnation, still mention things that plainly imply it. They are disposed to acknowledge that God is just and righteous in his threatenings, and that they deserve nothing. Many times, though they didn’t have so particular a sight of it at the beginning, they have very clear discoveries of it soon afterwards, with great humblings in the dust before God.

Commonly people’s minds immediately before this discovery of God’s justice are exceedingly restless, and in a kind of struggle and tumult, and sometimes in sheer anguish. But generally, as soon as they have this conviction, it immediately brings their minds to a calm, and a previously unexpected quietness and composure. And most frequently, though not always, the pressing weight then upon their spirits is taken away, and a general hope arises that at some time or other God will be gracious — even before any distinct and particular discoveries of mercy. Often they then come to a conclusion within themselves, that they will lie at God’s feet, and await His time. They rest in that, not being sensible that the Spirit of God has now

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<sup>17</sup> **Rom 3:19** Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

brought them to a frame in which they are prepared for mercy. For it is remarkable that when people first have this sense of the justice of God, rarely in the time of it, do they think anything of its being that humiliation which they have often heard insisted on, and others experience.

In many people, the first convictions of the justice of God in their condemnation, which they take particular notice of — and probably the first distinct conviction that they have of it — is of such a nature, that it seems to be above anything merely legal. Even if it is after legal humblings, and a great sense of their own helplessness, and of the insufficiency of their own duties, yet it doesn't appear to be forced by mere legal terrors and convictions. Rather, it is from a high exercise of *grace*, in saving repentance and evangelical humiliation. For there is a sort of satisfaction of soul in it, in the attribute of God's justice, as displaced in His threatenings of eternal damnation to sinners. Sometimes, upon discovering it, they can scarcely keep from crying out, *It's just! It's just!* — Some express themselves, that they see the glory of God would shine bright in their own condemnation; and they are ready to think that if they are damned, they could take God's side against themselves, and would glorify his justice in this. And when it is this way, they commonly have some evident sense of free and all-sufficient grace, even if they give no distinct account of it. But it is manifest by that great degree of hope and encouragement that they then conceive, even if they were never so sensible of their own vileness and ill-deservings as they are at that time.

Some, when they're in such circumstances, have felt that sense of the excellency of God's justice, appearing in the vindictive exercises of it against such sinfulness as theirs was. And they've had such a submission of mind in their idea of this attribute — and of those exercises of it, together with an exceeding loathing of their own unworthiness, and a kind of indignation against themselves — that they have sometimes almost called it a *willingness to be damned*. Though it must be confessed that they didn't have clear and distinct ideas of damnation, nor does any word in the Bible require such self-denial as this. But the truth is, as some have more clearly expressed it, that salvation has appeared too good for them — that they were worthy of nothing but condemnation. And they couldn't tell how to think of salvation's being bestowed on them, fearing it was inconsistent with the glory of God's majesty that they had so contemned and affronted.

That calm of spirit that some people have found after their legal distresses, continues some time before any special and delightful manifestation is made to the soul of the grace of God as revealed in the gospel. But very often, some comfortable and sweet view of a merciful God, of a sufficient Redeemer, or of some great and joyful things of the gospel, immediately follows, or follows in a very short time. And in some, the first sight of their just desert of hell, and of God's sovereignty with respect to their salvation, and a discovery of His all-sufficient grace, are so near, that they seem to go together, as it were.

These gracious discoveries that are given, from which the first special comforts are derived, are in many respects quite varied. More frequently, Christ is distinctly made the object of the mind, in His all-sufficiency and willingness to save sinners. But some have their thoughts more especially fixed on God, in some of his sweet and glorious attributes manifested in the gospel, and shining forth in the face of Christ. Some view the all-sufficiency of the mercy and grace of God; some chiefly the infinite power of God and his ability to save them, and to do all things for them; and some look most at the truth and faithfulness of God. In some, the truth

and certainty of the gospel in general is the first joyful discovery they have. In others, it is the certain truth of some particular promises; in some, the grace and sincerity of God in his invitations. Commonly, this is some particular invitation in the mind; it now appears *real* to them, that God does indeed invite them. Some are struck with the glory and wonderfulness of the dying love of Christ; and some with the sufficiency and preciousness of his blood, as it was offered to make an atonement for sin; and others with the value and glory of his obedience and righteousness. In some, the excellency and loveliness of Christ chiefly engages their thoughts; in some his divinity, that he is indeed the Son of the living God; and in others, the excellency of the way of salvation by Christ, and the suitability of it to their necessities.

Some have an apprehension of these things so given, that it seems more natural to them to express it by sight or discovery; others think that what they experience is better expressed by the realizing conviction, or by a lively or feeling sense of heart — meaning, I suppose, nothing more than what is merely circumstantial or gradual.

Often in the mind, there is some particular text of Scripture that holds forth some gospel ground of consolation; sometimes it is a multitude of texts, gracious invitations and promises flowing in one after another, filling the soul more and more with comfort and satisfaction. And comfort is first given to some while reading some portion of Scripture; but in some it is attended with no particular Scripture at all, either in reading or meditation. In some, many divine things seem to be revealed to the soul, as it were, *at once*; others have their minds especially fixed on some one thing at first, and afterwards a sense is given of others; in some it is with a swifter succession, and in others a slower one; and sometimes with interruptions of much darkness.

The way that grace seems sometimes first to appear after legal humiliation, is in earnest longings of the soul after God and Christ — to know God, to love him, to be humbled before him, to have communion with Christ in his benefits. These longings, as they express them, seem evidently to be of such a nature that they can arise from nothing but a sense of the superlative excellency of divine things, with a spiritual taste and relish for them, and an esteem of them as their highest happiness and best portion. Such longings as I speak of, are commonly attended with firm resolutions to pursue this good forever, together with a hoping, waiting disposition. When people have begun in such frames, commonly other experiences and discoveries have soon followed, which have yet more clearly manifested a change of heart.

It must be confessed that Christ is not always distinctly and explicitly thought of in the first tangible act of grace (though most commonly he is). But sometimes he is the object of the mind only implicitly. Thus sometimes when people have evidently seemed to be stripped of all their own righteousness, and to have stood self-condemned as guilty of death, they have been comforted with a joyful and satisfying view that the mercy and grace of God is sufficient for them; that their sins, however great, will be no hinderance to their being accepted; that there is mercy enough in God for the whole world, and the like. When they give no account of any particular or distinct thought of Christ, but the account they give is duly weighed, and they're asked a little about it, it appears that the revelation of the mercy of God in the gospel is the ground of their encouragement and hope. And it appears that it is indeed the mercy of God through Christ, that is revealed to them, and that it is depended on in Him, and it is not in any way moved by anything in themselves.

SO sometimes disconsolate souls among us have been revived and brought to rest in God, by a sweet sense given of His grace and faithfulness in some special invitation or promise, in which there is no particular mention of Christ; nor is it accompanied with any distinct thought of Him in their minds. Yet it is not received as outside of Christ, but as one of the invitations or promises made by God to poor sinners *through* his Son Jesus, as it is indeed. And such people have afterwards had clear and distinct discoveries of Christ, accompanied with lively and special actings of faith and love towards Him.

It has more frequently been so among us, that when people have first had the gospel ground of relief for lost sinners revealed to them, and have entertained their minds with that sweet prospect, they have thought nothing at that time of their being converted. It exceedingly refreshes them to see that there is such an all-sufficiency in God, and such plentiful provision made in Christ, after they have been borne down and sunk with a sense of their guilt and fears of wrath. The view is joyful to them, as it is glorious in its own nature, and it gives them quite new and more delightful ideas of God and Christ. It greatly encourages them to seek conversion, and begets in them a strong resolution to surrender themselves, and devote their whole lives to God and his Son, and to patiently wait till God sees fit to make all effectual. And very often, they entertain a strong persuasion that He will do it for them in his own time.

There is wrought in them a holy repose of soul in God through Christ, and a secret disposition to fear and love Him, and to hope for blessings from him in this way. Yet they don't imagine that they are now converted; it doesn't so much as come into their minds. And very often the reason is that they don't see that their acceptance of this sufficiency of salvation which they behold in Christ is a real acceptance of it, having entertained a *wrong* notion of acceptance. Not being sensible that the obedient and joyful entertainment which their hearts give to this discovery of grace, they don't know that the sweet satisfaction they feel in the mercy and complete salvation of God — as it includes pardon and sanctification, and is held out to them only through Christ — is a true receiving of this mercy, nor a plain evidence of their receiving it. I don't know what kind of act of soul they expected, and perhaps they had no distinct idea of it themselves.

Indeed, it appears very plainly in some of them, that before their own conversion, they had very imperfect ideas what conversion was. It is all new and strange; and there was no clear conception of it before. It is most evident, as they themselves acknowledge, that the expressions that were used to describe conversion, and the graces of God's Spirit — such as a spiritual sight of Christ, faith in Christ, poverty of spirit, trust in God, being resigned to God, etc. — were expressions that did not convey those special and distinct ideas to their minds, which they were intended to signify. Perhaps to some of them, it was little more than what the *names* of colors are, to convey the *ideas* of color to someone who is blind from birth.

This town is a place where there has always been a great deal of talk of conversion and spiritual experiences. And therefore, people in general had previously formed a notion in their own minds of what these things were. But when they came to be the *subjects* of them, they find themselves much confounded in their notions, and overthrown in many of their former concepts. It has been very observable that people of the greatest understanding, and who had studied most about things of this nature, have been more confounded than others. Some of those people who have been recently converted, declare that all their former wisdom has been

brought to nothing, and they appear to have been mere babes who knew nothing. It has appeared that none have stood more in need of enlightening and instruction than they did — their fellow Christians, concerning their own circumstances and difficulties. It seems to have been with delight, that they have seen themselves thus brought down, and that they have become nothing, so that free grace and divine power may be exalted in them.

It was very wonderful to see in what manner people's affections were sometimes moved and worked upon when God, as it were, suddenly opened their eyes and let into their minds a sense of the greatness of his grace, and the fulness of Christ and his readiness to save. They were broken before with apprehensions of divine wrath, and sunk into an abyss under a sense of guilt which they were ready to think was beyond the mercy of God. Their joyful surprise has caused their hearts as it were to leap, so that they've been ready to break forth into laughter — tears often at the same time issuing like a flood, intermingled with loud weeping. Sometimes they haven't been able to forbear crying out with a loud voice, expressing their great admiration. In some, even the view of the glory of God's sovereignty in the exercises of his grace, has surprised the soul with such sweetness as to produce the same effects. I remember an instance of one who had been reading something concerning God's sovereign way of saving sinners as being self-moved; and having no regard for men's own righteousness as the motive for His grace, but as magnifying Himself and abasing man — or to that purpose. He felt such a sudden rapture of joy and delight in considering it. And yet he then suspected he was in a Christless condition, and had long been in great distress for fear that God would not have mercy on him.

Many continue a long time in a course of gracious exercises and experiences, and don't think they're converted, but conclude they are otherwise. No one knows how long they would continue so, if they were not helped by particular instruction. There are undoubted instances of some who have lived in this way for many years; and continuing in these circumstances of being converted and not believing it, has had various consequences with various people, and with the *same* people at various times. Some, in great encouragement and hope that they will obtain mercy, continue in a steadfast resolution to persevere in seeking it, and humbly waiting for it at God's foot. But very often, when the lively sense of the sufficiency of Christ, and of the riches of divine grace, begin to vanish upon a withdrawal of the influences of the Spirit of God, they return to greater distress than ever. For they now have a far greater sense of the misery of a natural condition than before — being sensible in a new way about the reality of eternal things, and the greatness of God, and his excellency, and how dreadful it is to be separated from Him, and to be subject to His wrath — so that they are sometimes swallowed up with darkness and amazement. Satan has a vast advantage in such cases to ply them with various temptations which he is not prone to neglect. In such a case, people very much need a guide to lead them to an understanding of what we are taught in the word of God about the nature of grace, and to help them to apply it to themselves.

I've been much blamed and censured by many, that I should make it my practice, once I am satisfied concerning a person's good estate, to signify it to them. This has been greatly misrepresented abroad, as with innumerable other things concerning us, to prejudice the country against the whole affair. But let it be noted that what I have undertaken to judge, has been *qualifications* and declared *experiences*, rather than *people*. Not that I haven't thought

it my duty as a pastor, to assist and instruct people in applying Scripture rules and characteristics to their own case (in doing this, I think many greatly need a guide). Indeed, where I thought the case was plain, I freely signified to others my hope about them. But I have been far from doing this concerning *all* those whom I had some hopes about. And I believe I have used much more caution than many have supposed. Yet I would consider it a great calamity to be deprived of the comfort of rejoicing with those of my flock who've been in great distress, and whose circumstances I've been acquainted with, when there seems to be good evidence that those who were dead are now alive, and those who were lost are now found. I am sensible that the practice would have been safer in the hands of one of a riper judgment and greater experience.<sup>18</sup> Yet there seemed to be an absolute necessity of it for the reasons mentioned above. And it has been found to be that which God has most remarkably owned and blessed among us, both to the people themselves and others.

Grace in many people, through this ignorance of their state, and looking at themselves as still being the objects of God's displeasure, has been like trees in winter, or seed in the spring that has been suppressed under a hard clod of earth. Many in such cases have labored to their utmost to divert their minds from the pleasing and joyful views they have had, and to suppress those consolations and gracious affections that arose from them. And once it has come into their minds to inquire whether or not this was true grace, they have been much afraid lest they be deceived with common illuminations and flashes of affection, and eternally undone with a false hope. But when they've been better instructed, and so brought to allow themselves to hope, this has awakened the gracious disposition of their hearts into life and vigor, like the warm beams of the sun in the spring quicken the seeds and produce of the earth. Grace now being at liberty, and cherished with hope, has soon flowed out to their abundant satisfaction and increase.

There is nothing I know of, that God has made such a means of promoting His work among us, as the news of others' conversion in the awakening of sinners, and engaging them to earnestly seek the same blessing, and in the quickening of saints. Though I have thought that a minister's declaring his judgment about particular people's experiences might be justified from these things, yet I am often signifying to my people how unable man is to know another's heart, and how unsafe it is to depend merely on the judgment of ministers or others. And I have abundantly insisted on it with my people, that a manifestation of sincerity in *fruits brought forth*, is better than any manifestation they can make of it *in words alone*. Without this, all pretences to spiritual experiences are vain, as all my congregation can witness. — And the people in general, in this recent extraordinary time, have manifested an extraordinary dread of being deceived, of being exceedingly fearful lest they build wrong; and some of them are hesitant to receive hope even to a great extreme. This has occasioned me to dwell longer on this part of the narrative.

Conversion is a great and glorious work of God's power, at once changing the heart, and infusing life into the dead soul — though the grace that is then implanted, more gradually displays itself in some than in others. But as to fixing on the precise time when they put forth the very first act of grace, there is a great deal of difference in different people. In some it

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<sup>18</sup> Edwards was only 33 years old when this narrative was written. — WHG

seems to be very discernible when the exact time was; but others are more at a loss. In this respect, there are many who don't know the time (as observed already) when they have the first exercises of grace; they don't know that it is the grace of conversion; and sometimes they don't think it is so until a long time afterward. Many, even when they come to entertain great hope that they are converted, if they remember what they experienced in the first exercises of grace, they are at a loss whether it was any more than a common illumination — or whether some other clearer and more remarkable experience they had afterwards, was the first of a saving nature. And the manner of God's work on the soul is very mysterious (sometimes especially so). It is with the kingdom of God, as to its manifestation in the heart of a convert, as it is said in Mark 4.26-28,

“So the kingdom of God is as if a man were to toss seed on the ground, and sleep and rise, night and day; and the seed springs up and grows, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit by herself: first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”

In some, converting light is like a glorious brightness, suddenly shining in upon a person, and all around him. They are brought in a remarkable manner *out of darkness into marvellous light*. In many others, it has been like the dawning of the day, when at first but a little light appears, and maybe it is quickly hidden by a cloud; and then it appears again and shines a little brighter, and gradually increases with intervening darkness, till at length, perhaps, it breaks forth more clearly from behind the clouds. Many, doubtless, are ready to date their conversion wrong, tossing aside those lesser degrees of light that appeared at first dawning, and calling some more remarkable experience that they had afterwards, their conversion. This often arises, in great measure, from a wrong understanding of what they have always been taught: that conversion is a great change in which *old things are done away, and all things become new* — or at least falsely arguing from that doctrine.

People commonly, at first conversion and afterwards, have had many texts of Scripture brought to their minds, that are exceeding suitable to their circumstances. These often come with great power, and as the word of God or Christ indeed. And many have a multitude of sweet invitations, promises, and doxologies flowing in one after another, bringing great light and comfort with them, filling the soul brim full, enlarging the heart and opening the mouth in religion. And it seems to me necessary to suppose that there is an immediate influence of the Spirit of God, oftentimes in bringing texts of Scripture to the mind — not that I suppose it is done by immediate *revelation*, without any use of the memory. Yet there plainly seems to be an immediate and extraordinary *influence* in leading their thoughts to such and such passages of Scripture, and exciting them in the memory. Indeed in some, God seems to bring texts of Scripture to their minds by leading them into such frames and meditations that harmonize with those Scriptures. But in many, there seems to be something more than this.

Those who had the greatest terrors while under legal convictions, have not always obtained the greatest light and comfort; nor do they always have that light communicated the most suddenly. Yet I think the *time* of conversion has generally been most sensed in such people. Oftentimes, the first tangible change after the extremity of terrors, is a calmness; and then the light gradually comes in — small glimpses at first, after their midnight darkness and a word or two of comfort, as it were, softly spoken to them. They have a little taste of the sweetness of divine grace, and the love of a Saviour, when terror and distress of conscience

begins to be turned into a humble, meek sense of their own unworthiness before God. And there is felt inwardly, perhaps, some disposition to praise God; after a little while, the light comes in more clearly and powerfully. Yet, I think more frequently, great terrors are followed with more sudden and great light, and comfort. When the sinner seems to be subdued, and brought to a calm from a kind of tumult of mind, *then* God lets in an extraordinary sense of His great mercy through a Redeemer.

The converting influences of God's Spirit commonly bring an extraordinary conviction of the reality and certainty of the great things of religion (though in some, this is much greater some time after conversion, than at first). They have that sight and taste of the divinity, or of divine excellency, that there is in the things of the gospel, that does more to convince them than reading many volumes of argument without it. It seems to me that in many instances among us, when the divine excellency and glory of the things of Christianity are set before people, and at the same time, as it were, they have seen, tasted, and felt the divinity of them, they have been as far from doubting the truth of them, as they are from doubting there's a sun when their eyes are open in the midst of a clear hemisphere. The strong blaze of His light overcomes all objections against His being. And yet many of them, if we asked them *why* they believe those things to be true, they would not be able to express or communicate a sufficient reason to satisfy the inquirer. Perhaps they could give no other answer than they see they are true. But a person may soon be satisfied by a particular conversation with them, that what they mean by such an answer, is that they have intuitively beheld, and immediately felt these most illustrious works, and seen powerful evidence of divinity in them.

Some are thus convinced of the truth of the gospel *in general*, and that the Scriptures are the word of God. Others have their minds more especially fixed on some particular great doctrine of the gospel, some particular truths they're meditating on. Or they're convinced in a special way about the divinity of the things they're reading about in some portion of Scripture; some have such convictions in a much more remarkable manner than others. And there are some who never had such a special sense of the certainty of divine things impressed upon them with such inward evidence and strength; yet they have very clear exercises of grace, *i.e.*, of love to God, repentance, and holiness. And if they're examined more particularly, they plainly appear to have an inward, firm persuasion of the reality of divine things, which they didn't have before their conversion. Those who have the clearest discoveries of divine truth in the manner spoken of, cannot always have this in view. When the sense and relish of the divine excellency of these things fades, upon a withdrawment of the Spirit of God, they don't have the medium of their conviction of truth at their command. In a dull frame, they cannot perfectly recall the idea and inward sense they had; things appear very dim compared to what they had before. Though there still remains a habitual and strong persuasion, it doesn't exclude temptations to unbelief, nor to any possibility of doubting, as before. But then at particular times, by God's help, the same sense of things revives again, like fire that lays hidden in ashes.

I suppose the *grounds* for having such a conviction of the truth of divine things, are just and rational; yet in some, God makes use of their own reason, much more sensibly than He does in others. Oftentimes people have (so far as can be judged) received the first saving conviction from reasoning which they heard from the pulpit; and they may often be led into this course of reasoning in their own meditations.



The arguments may be the same that they've heard hundreds of times before; but the *force* of the arguments, and their *conviction* of them, is altogether new. They come with a new and previously unexperienced power. Before they heard it was so, and they admitted it to be so; but now they see it to be *so indeed*. Things now look exceedingly plain to them, and they wonder that they didn't see them before.

They are so greatly taken with their new discovery, and things appear so plain and so rational to them, that at first they're ready to think they can convince others. They are apt to engage in talk to this end, with almost everyone they meet. When they are disappointed, they wonder that their reasonings seem to make no more impression than they do.

Many make the mistake of doubting their own good estate, because so much use was made of their own reasoning in the conviction they received. They are afraid they have no illumination beyond the natural force of their own faculties. Many raise as an objection to the *spirituality* of their convictions, that it is so easy to see things as they now see them. They have often heard that conversion is a work of mighty power, manifesting to the soul what no man or angel can give such a conviction of. But it seems to them that the things which they now see are so plain and easy and rational, that *anybody* can see them. And if they are asked why they never saw it before, they say it seems to them that they never thought of it before. But very often these difficulties are soon removed by those of another nature. For when God withdraws, they find themselves blind again, as it were. For the present, they lose their realizing sense of those things that looked so plain to them; and they cannot recover it by all that they can do, till God renews the influences of his Spirit.

After conversion, people often speak of things of religion as seeming *new* to them. Preaching is a new thing; they never heard such preaching before. The Bible is a new book; they find new chapters, new psalms, new histories, because they see them in a new light. Here was a remarkable instance of an aged woman over seventy years old, who had spent most of her days under Mr. Stoddard's powerful ministry. Reading in the New Testament concerning Christ's sufferings for sinners, she seemed surprised and astonished at what she read, as a real thing and very wonderful, but quite new to her. At first, before she had time to turn her thoughts, she wondered that she had never heard of it before. But then she immediately recollected herself, and thought that she had *often* heard of it and read it, but never until now had she seen it as a real thing. And then she cast in her mind, how wonderful this was, that the Son of God should undergo such things for sinners, and how she had spent her time in ungratefully sinning against so good a God, and such a Saviour — even though, as to what was visible, she had led a very blameless and inoffensive life. And she was so overcome by those considerations, that her nature was ready to fail under them. Those who were around her, and didn't know what was the matter, were surprised and thought she was a dying.

Many have spoken much about their hearts being drawn out in love to God and Christ, and their minds being wrapped up in delightful contemplation of the glory and wonderful grace of God, and the excellency and dying love of Jesus Christ, and of their souls going forth in longing desires for God and Christ. Several of our young children have expressed much about this, and manifested a willingness to leave father and mother, and all things in the world, to go to be with Christ. Some people have had longing desires for Christ, which have risen to such a degree as to take away their natural strength. Some have been so overcome with a sense

of the dying love of Christ for such poor, wretched, and unworthy creatures, as to weaken their body. Several people have had so great a sense of the glory of God, and the excellency of Christ, that nature and life have seemed almost to sink under it. In all probability, if God had showed them a little more of Himself, it would have dissolved their frame. I have seen and conversed with some who have been in such frames, who have certainly been perfectly sober, and very remote from anything like enthusiastic wildness. When they were able to speak of the glory of God's perfections, and the wonderfulness of his grace in Christ, and their own unworthiness, they talked in such a manner that cannot be perfectly expressed. Their sense of their exceeding littleness and vileness, and their disposition to abase themselves before God, has appeared to be great in proportion to their light and joy.

Commonly, those people among us who have been distinguished with the most extraordinary discoveries of God, in no way appeared with the assuming, self-conceited, and self-sufficient airs of enthusiasts. It was exceedingly to the contrary: they were eminent for a spirit of meekness, modesty, self diffidence, and a low opinion of themselves. No people seem to be as sensible of their need for instruction, and so eager to receive it, as some of them; nor so ready to think others are better than themselves. Those who were thought to be converted among us, have generally manifested a longing to lie low and in the dust before God; and with this, they have complained of not being able to lie low enough.

They very often speak much about their sense of the excellency of the way of salvation, by free and sovereign grace, through the righteousness of Christ alone; and how it is with delight that they renounce their own righteousness, and rejoice in having no account taken of it. Many have expressed themselves to this purpose: that it would lessen the satisfaction they hope for in heaven, to have it by their own righteousness, or in any other way than as bestowed by free grace, and for Christ's sake alone. They speak much about the inexpressibleness of what they experience, and how their words fail, so that they can in no way declare it. And particularly, they speak with exceeding admiration of the superlative excellency of that pleasure and delight of soul which they sometimes enjoy; how even a little of it is sufficient to repay them for all the pains and trouble they've gone through in seeking salvation; and how far it exceeds all earthly pleasures. Some express much of the sense which these spiritual views give them of the vanity of earthly enjoyments, how low and worthless all these things appear to them.

While their minds have been filled with spiritual delights, many have, as it were, forgotten their food. Their bodily appetite has failed, while their minds have been entertained with *food to eat that others know nothing of*. The light and comfort which some of them enjoy, gives a new relish to their common blessings, and causes all things around them to appear beautiful, sweet, and pleasant. All things abroad, the sun, moon and stars, the clouds and sky, the heavens and earth, appear to have a cast of divine glory and sweetness upon them. The sweetest joy that these good people among us express, includes in it a delightful sense of the safety of their own state, that they are now out of danger of hell. Yet frequently, in times of their highest spiritual entertainment, this doesn't seem to be the chief object of their fixed thought and meditation. The supreme attention of their minds is to the glorious excellencies of God and Christ, which they have in view. Very often there is a ravishing sense of God's love accompanying a sense of his excellency, and they rejoice in a sense of the faithfulness of God's promises, as they respect the future eternal enjoyment of God.

The joy that many of them speak of is one to which no other is to be paralleled. It is that joy which they find when they are lowest in the dust, emptied most of themselves, and as it were, annihilating themselves before God — when they are nothing, and God is all; seeing their own unworthiness, and depending not at all on themselves, but on Christ alone; ascribing all glory to God. *Then* their souls are most in the enjoyment of satisfying rest. Except that at such times, they apprehend themselves to be insufficiently self-abased; for then, above all times, they long to be lower. Some speak much about the exquisite sweetness, and the rest for their soul, that is to be found in the exercises of a spirit of resignation to God, and humble submission to His will. Many express the earnest longings of their soul to praise God; but at the same time, they complain that they cannot praise Him as they would, and they want others to help them in praising him. They want to have *everyone* praise God, and are ready to call upon *everything* to praise Him. They express a longing desire to live to God's glory, and to do something to His honor. But at the same time, they cry out about their insufficiency and barrenness, that they are poor impotent creatures who can do nothing of themselves, and are utterly insufficient to glorify their Creator and Redeemer.

While God was so remarkably present among us by his Spirit, no *book* was so delighted in as the Bible — especially the book of Psalms, the prophecy of Isaiah, and the New Testament. Some, because of their esteem and love for God's word, have at times been greatly and wonderfully delighted and affected at the sight of a Bible. Then also, no *time* was so prized as the Lord's day; and no place in this world was so desired as God's house. Our converts then appeared remarkably united in dear affection for one another, and many have expressed much of that spirit of love which they felt for all mankind; and particularly for those who had been least friendly to them. Never, I believe, was so much done in confessing injuries, and reconciling differences, as this last year. After their own conversion, people have commonly expressed an exceeding desire for the conversion of others. Some thought they would be willing to die for the conversion of any soul, even one of the meanest of their fellow creatures, or their worst enemies; and many have indeed been in great distress with desires and longings for it. This work of God also had a good effect to unite the people's affections for their minister.

There are some people I have been acquainted with, but more especially *two*, who belong to other towns, who have been exceedingly swallowed up with a sense of the awful greatness and majesty of God. Both of them told me to this purpose: that if at this time, they had the least fear that they were not at peace with so great a God as this, they would instantly have died.

It is worthy to be remarked that some people by their conversion, seem to be greatly helped as to their doctrinal notions of religion. It was particularly remarkable in someone who, having been taken captive in his childhood in Canada, was trained up in the Popish religion. Some years later he returned to his native place, and in a measure, was led away from Popery. But he seemed uncomfortable, and dull to receive any true and clear notion of the Protestant scheme, till he was converted; and then he was remarkably altered in this respect.

There is a vast difference, as observed, in the degree and also in the particular manner of people's experiences, both at and after conversion. Some have grace working more sensibly in one way, and others in another way. Some speak more fully of a *conviction* of the justice of God in their condemnation; others more of *consenting* to the way of salvation by Christ; some speak of the actings of love to God and Christ; some of acts of affiance, in a sweet and assured

conviction of the truth and faithfulness of God in his promises; others more of their choosing and resting in God as their whole and everlasting portion, and of their ardent and longing desires for God, and to have communion with him. Others speak more of their abhorrence of themselves for their past sins, and earnest longings to live to God's glory for the time to come; some have their minds fixed more on God, others on Christ, as I observed before, and I am afraid of too much repetition. But it all seems evidently to be the same work, the same thing done, the same habitual change wrought in the heart; it all tends the same way, and to the same end; and it is plainly the same spirit that breathes and acts in various people.

There is an endless variety in the particular manner and circumstances in which people are worked on, and an opportunity to see so much of such a work of God. This shows that God is further from confining himself to certain steps, and a particular method in his work on souls, than maybe some imagine. I believe it has occasioned some good people among us, who before were too ready to make their own experiences a rule for others, to be less censorious and more extended in their charity; and this is an excellent advantage indeed. The work of God has been glorious in its variety, which has further displayed the manifold and unsearchable wisdom of God, and wrought more charity among his people.

There is a great difference among those who are converted, as to the degree of hope and satisfaction that they have concerning their own state. Some have a high degree of satisfaction in this matter, almost constantly. And yet it is rare that any enjoy so full an assurance of their interest in Christ, that self-examination seems needless to them except in particular seasons, while actually enjoying some great revelation that God gives of His glory, and of His rich grace in Christ, so as to draw forth extraordinary acts of grace. But most, as they sometimes fall into dead frames of spirit, are frequently exercised with qualms and fears concerning their condition.

They generally have an awful apprehension of the dreadful and undoing<sup>19</sup> nature of false hope. Great caution has been observed in most, lest in giving an account of their experiences, they say too much, or use overly strong terms. Many, after they related their experiences, have been greatly afflicted with fears that they have played the hypocrite, and used stronger terms than their case would fairly allow; and yet couldn't find how they could correct themselves.

I think that the main ground of the doubts and fears that people have about their own state, after their conversion, has been that they found so much corruption remaining in their hearts. At first their souls seem to be all alive, their hearts are fixed, and their affections are flowing. They seem to live quite above the world, and meet with little difficulty in religious exercises. They are ready to think it will always be so. Though truly abased under a sense of their vileness from former acts of sin, they are not then sufficiently sensible of what corruption still remains in their hearts. And therefore they are surprised when they find that they begin to be dull and dead in their frames, to be troubled by wandering thoughts during public and private worship, and utterly unable to keep themselves from them. Also, when they find themselves unaffected at seasons in which they think there is the greatest occasion to be affected; and when they feel worldly dispositions working in them — maybe pride, envy, stirrings of revenge, or some ill spirit towards someone who injured them, as well as other workings of indwelling sin — their

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<sup>19</sup> To be *undone*, is to be doomed or ruined; without hope. – WHG

hearts are almost sunk with disappointment. They are quickly ready to think that all they have enjoyed is nothing, and that they are mere hypocrites.

They are ready to argue that if God had indeed done such great things for them as they hoped, such ingratitude would be inconsistent with it. They cry out of the hardness and wickedness of their hearts. They say there is so much corruption that it seems to them impossible that there should be any goodness there. Many of them seem to be much more sensible of how corrupt their hearts are, than they ever were before they were converted; and some have been too ready to be impressed with the fear that instead of becoming better, they have grown much worse, and they make it an argument against the goodness of their state. But in truth, the case plainly seems to be that now they feel the pain of their own wound. They have a watchful eye on their hearts, that they didn't used to have. They take more notice of what sin is there; and that sin is now more burdensome to them. They strive more against it, and thus feel more of its strength.

They are somewhat surprised that in this respect, they should find themselves so different from the idea they had generally entertained about godly people. For though grace is indeed of a far more excellent nature than they imagined, those who are godly have much less of it, and much more remaining corruption than they thought. They never realized that people usually meet with such difficulties once they are converted. They are thus exercised with doubts about their state, through the deadness of their frames of spirit. As long as these frames last, they are commonly unable to satisfy themselves about the truth of their grace, by all their self-examination. When they near the signs of grace, laid down for them to test themselves by, they are often so clouded that they don't know how to apply them. They hardly know whether they have such things in them or not, or whether they've experienced them or not. They cannot recover a sense or idea of what was sweetest, best, and most distinguishing in their experiences. But upon a return of the influences of the Spirit of God, to revive the lively actings of grace, the light breaks through the cloud, and their doubting and darkness soon vanish away.

People are often revived out of their dead and dark frames, by religious conversation. While they are talking about divine things, or ever aware, their souls are carried away into holy exercises with abundant pleasure. And oftentimes, while they are relating their past experiences to their Christian brethren, they have a fresh sense of them revived, and the same experiences are again renewed in a degree. Sometimes while people are exercised in mind with several objections against the goodness of their state, they have Scriptures come to mind, one after another, to answer their qualms and unravel their difficulties, exceedingly pertinent and proper to their circumstances. By this means their darkness is scattered. Often, before the bestowment of any *new* remarkable comforts (especially after long-continued deadness and ill frames), there are renewed humblings, in a great sense of their own exceeding vileness and unworthiness, as there were before their *first* comforts were bestowed.

Many in the country have been scornful of this great work among us, from what they have heard about the impressions made on people's imaginations. But there have been exceedingly great misrepresentations and innumerable false reports concerning that matter. It is not, that I know of, the profession or opinion of anyone in the town, that any weight is to be laid on anything seen with the bodily eye. I know the contrary to be a received and established

principle among us. I cannot say that there have been no instances of people who were ready to give too much heed to vain and useless imaginations, but they have been easily corrected. And I conclude that it won't be wondered at, that a congregation should need a guide in such cases, to assist them in distinguishing the wheat from the chaff. But those impressions on the imagination which have been more usual, seem to me no more than what is to be expected in human nature in such circumstances, and what is the natural result of the strong exercise of the mind, and impressions on the heart.

I don't suppose the affected people imagined they saw anything with their *bodily* eyes; but only had strongly impressed ideas, and as it were, lively pictures in their minds. For instance, some, when in great terrors through fear of hell, have had lively ideas of a dreadful furnace. Some, when their hearts were strongly impressed, and their affections greatly moved with a sense of the beauty and excellency of Christ, it worked on their imaginations. So that, together with a sense of His glorious spiritual perfections, there has risen in the mind an idea of someone of glorious majesty, and of a sweet and gracious aspect. So some, when they've been greatly affected by Christ's death, have at the same time a lively idea of Christ hanging on the cross, and of his blood running from his wounds. These things won't be wondered at by those who have observed how strong affections about temporal matters will excite lively ideas and pictures of different things in the mind.

Yet, the vigorous exercise of the mind doubtless more strongly impresses it with imaginary ideas in some people than in others. This probably arises from the difference of constitution; and evidently in some, it seems to partly arise from their peculiar circumstances. When people have been exercised with extreme terrors, and there is a sudden change to light and joy, the imagination seems more susceptible to strong ideas. And the inferior powers, even the frame of the body, is much more affected and worked on, than when the same people have as great a spiritual light and joy afterwards. It might, perhaps, be easy to give a reason for this. The forementioned Rev. Messrs. Lord and Owen, who I believe are esteemed people of learning and discretion where they are best known, declared that they found these impressions on people's imaginations, quite different from what *fame* had represented to them before. None need to wonder at these things, or stumble over them, or anything to that purpose.

There have indeed been a few instances of impressions made on people's imaginations, that have been somewhat mysterious to me; I have been at a loss about them. For though it has been exceedingly evident to me by many things that appeared in these people, both when they related them and afterwards, that they indeed had a great sense of the spiritual excellency of divine things accompanying them. Yet I haven't been able to satisfy myself well, whether their imaginary ideas have been more than could naturally arise from their spiritual sense of things. However, I have used the utmost caution in such cases. Great care has been taken both in public and private, to teach people the difference between what is *spiritual*, and what is merely *imaginary*. I have often warned people not to lay the stress of their hope on any ideas of outward glory, or any external thing whatsoever. And I have met with no opposition in such instructions. But it isn't strange if some weaker people, giving an account of their experiences, haven't so prudently distinguished between the spiritual and imaginary part. Some who haven't been well disposed to religion, might take advantage of that.

There has been much talk in many parts of the country, as though these people symbolize the Quakers. And the Quakers themselves have been moved by such reports, and came here time and again hoping to find good waters to fish in, but without the least success. They seemed to be discouraged, and have stopped coming. There have also been reports spread around the country, as though the first occasion of so remarkable a concern on people's minds here, was an apprehension that the world was nearing its end, which was an altogether false report. Indeed, after this stirring and concern became so general and extraordinary, as was related, the minds of some were filled with speculation about what so great a dispensation of divine providence might forebode. Some reports were heard from abroad, as though certain divines and others thought the conflagration was near. But such reports were never generally seen as worthy of notice.

The work that has now been wrought on souls, is evidently the same that was wrought in my venerable predecessor's days. I've had abundant opportunity to know that, having been in the ministry here two years with him; and so I conversed with a considerable number that my grandfather thought to be savingly converted in that time. I've been particularly acquainted with the experiences of many who were converted under his ministry before. I know none who in the least doubts its being the *same* spirit, and the *same* work. People have not now been subject to impressions on their imagination otherwise than formerly. The work is of the same nature, and has not been attended with any extraordinary circumstances, except those that are analogous to the extraordinary degree of it described before. And God's people who were formerly converted, have now partaken of the same shower of divine blessing in the renewing, strengthening, and edifying influences of the Spirit of God, that others have in His converting influences. And the work here has also plainly been the same work as that which has been wrought in those of other places that were mentioned, as partaking of the same blessing. I have particularly conversed with people about their experiences, who belong to all parts of the country, and in various parts of Connecticut, where a religious concern has lately appeared. And I have been informed of the experiences of many others by their own pastors.

It is easily perceived by the foregoing account, that it is very much the practice of the people here to converse freely with one another about their spiritual experiences, which is a thing that many have been disgusted at. But however our people may have, in some respects, gone to extremes in it, it is doubtless a practice that the circumstances of *this town* and *neighboring towns*, have naturally led them into. Whatever people are in such circumstances, where all of them have their minds engaged to such a degree, in the same affair that it is uppermost in their thoughts, they will naturally make it the subject of conversation with one another when they get together, in which they will grow more and more free. Restraints will soon vanish, and they will not conceal from one another what they meet with. It has been a practice which, in general, has been attended with many good effects, and what God has greatly blessed among us. But it must be confessed, there may have been some ill consequences of it, which are to be laid to the indiscreet management of it, rather than to the practice itself. None can wonder if, among such a multitude, some fail to exercise as much prudence in choosing the time, manner, and occasion of such discourse, as is desirable.

### ***The Instance of Abigail Hutchinson – now deceased***

But to give a clearer idea of the nature and manner of the operations of God's Spirit, in this wonderful effusion of it, I would give an account of two particular instances. The first is an adult person, a young woman whose name was Abigail Hutchinson. I focus on her especially, because she is now dead; and so it may be more fitting to speak freely of her than of living instances. However, I am under far greater disadvantages on other accounts, to give a full and clear narrative of her experiences than I might of some others. Nor can any account be given except what has been retained in the memories of her near friends and some others, of what they heard her express during her lifetime.

She was from a rational, understanding family. There could be nothing in her education that tended to enthusiasm, but rather to the contrary extreme. It is in no way the temper of the family to be ostentatious about their experiences, and it was far from being her temper. Before her conversion, as her neighbors observed, she was of a sober and inoffensive conduct, and was a still, quiet, and reserved person. She had long been infirm of body; but her infirmity had never been observed to incline her at all to be speculative or fanciful, or to produce anything of religious melancholy. She was under awakenings scarcely a week, before there seemed to be plain evidence of her being savingly converted.

She was first awakened in the winter season, on Monday, by something she heard her brother say about the necessity of being in good earnest in seeking regenerating grace, together with the news of the conversion of the young woman mentioned before, whose conversion so generally affected most of the young people here. This news worked much upon her, and stirred up a spirit of envy in her towards this young woman whom she thought very unworthy of being distinguished from others by such a mercy. But with that, it engaged her in a firm resolution to do her utmost to obtain the same blessing. And considering with herself what course she should take, she thought that she didn't have a sufficient knowledge of the principles of religion to render her capable of conversion. Thereupon, she resolved to thoroughly search the Scriptures, and accordingly, she immediately began at the beginning of the Bible, intending to read it through. She continued this way till Thursday. And then there was a sudden alteration caused by a great increase of her concern, and an extraordinary sense of her own sinfulness — particularly the sinfulness of her *nature*, and the wickedness of her *heart*. This came upon her (as she expressed it) like a flash of lightning, and struck her into an exceeding terror. Upon which she set aside reading the Bible in the course she had begun, and turned to the New Testament, to see if she couldn't find some relief there for her distressed soul.

Her great terror, she said, was that she had sinned against God. Her distress grew more and more for three days, until (as she said) she saw nothing but blackness of darkness before her, and her very flesh trembled for fear of God's wrath. She wondered and was astonished at herself, that she had been so concerned for her *body*, and had applied so often to physicians to heal *that*, and yet had neglected her *soul*. Her sinfulness appeared with a very awful aspect to her, especially in three things: *namely*, her original sin; her sin in murmuring at God's providence in the weakness and afflictions that she had been under; and in her lack of duty toward her parents, though others looked at her as excelling in dutifulness. On Saturday, she was so earnestly engaged in reading the Bible and other books, that she continued in it —



searching for *something* to relieve her — till her eyes were so dim that she couldn't read the letters. While she was thus engaged in reading, prayer, and other religious exercises, she thought of those words of Christ, in which he wants us not to be like the heathen, who think they will be heard for their speaking so much. This, she said, led her to see that she had trusted to her own prayers and religious performances. Now she was confounded, and didn't know which way to turn, or where to seek relief.

While her mind was in this posture, her heart, she said, seemed to fly to the minister for refuge, hoping that he could give her some relief. She came the same day, to her brother, with the countenance of a person in distress, arguing with him as to why he hadn't told her more about her sinfulness, and earnestly inquiring of him, what she should do. She seemed, that day, to feel in herself at enmity against the Bible, which greatly frightened her. Her sense of her own exceeding sinfulness continued increasing from Thursday till Monday. She gave this account of it: that it had been an opinion which she had entertained till now, that she was not guilty of Adam's sin, nor in any way concerned in it, because she was not *active* in it. But now she saw that she was guilty of that sin, and completely defiled by it, and that the sin which she brought into the world with her, was sufficient by itself to condemn her.

On the Sabbath day, she was so ill that her friends thought it best that she not go to public worship, which she seemed very desirous to do. But when she went to bed on the Sabbath day night, she resolved that the next morning, she would go to the minister, hoping to find some relief there. As she awaked on Monday morning a little before daylight, she wondered within herself at the *easiness* and *calmness* she felt in her mind. It was of a kind that she never felt before. As she thought about this, words such as these were in her mind: *the words of the Lord are pure words* (Psa 12.6), *health to the soul, and marrow to the bones* (Pro 16.24). And then these words came to her mind: *the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin* (1Joh 1.7). These were accompanied with a lively sense of the excellency of Christ, and of His sufficiency to satisfy for the sins of the whole world. She then thought of that expression — *it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun* (Ecc 11.7). These words then seemed to her to be very applicable to Jesus Christ. By these things, her mind was led into such contemplations and views of Christ, that they filled her exceedingly full of joy. She told her brother in the morning that she had seen Christ last night (*i.e.*, in realizing views of Him by faith), and that she really thought she didn't have knowledge enough to be converted. But, she said, God can make it quite easy! On Monday she felt all day long a constant sweetness in her soul. She had a repetition of the same discoveries of Christ three mornings in a row, that she had on Monday morning, and in much the same manner — each time waking a little before daylight, but brighter and brighter every time.

The last time, on Wednesday morning, while in the enjoyment of a spiritual view of Christ's glory and fulness, her soul was filled with distress for Christless people, to consider what a miserable condition they were in. She felt in herself a strong inclination to immediately go out to warn sinners, and the next day she proposed to her brother that he assist her in going from house to house. But her brother restrained her, telling her about the unsuitableness of such a method. She told one of her sisters that day, that she loved all mankind, but especially the people of God. Her sister asked her, *Why do you love all mankind?* She replied, *Because God had made them.* After this, there happened to come into the shop where she was at work,

three people who were thought to have been recently converted. Her seeing them as they stepped in one after another through the doorway, so affected her, and so drew out her love for them, that it overcame her, and she almost fainted. And when they began to talk about the things of religion, it was more than she could bear — they were obliged to cease on that account. It was a very frequent thing with her to be overcome with a flow of affection towards those she thought godly, in *conversation* with them, and sometimes only at the *sight* of them.

She had many extraordinary revelations of the glory of God and Christ — sometimes in some particular attributes, and sometimes in many. She gave an account that once, as those four words passed through her mind — WISDOM, JUSTICE, GOODNESS, and TRUTH — her soul was filled with a sense of the glory of each of these divine attributes, but especially the last — *Truth*, she said, *sunk the deepest!* And therefore, as these words passed, this was repeated, TRUTH, TRUTH! Her mind was so swallowed up with a sense of the glory of God's truth and other perfections, that she said it seemed as though her life was going, that she saw it was easy with God to take her life away by revelations of Himself. Soon after this, she went to a private religious meeting; her mind was full of a sense and view of the glory of God all the time. And when the exercise was ended, some asked her concerning what she experienced. She began to give them an account, but as she was relating it, it revived such a sense of the same things, that her strength failed, and they were obliged to take her and lay her on the bed. Afterwards she was greatly affected, and rejoiced with these words: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.*

She had for several days in a row, a sweet sense of the excellency and loveliness of Christ in his meekness, which disposed her to continually repeat these words, which were sweet to her, MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART, MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART. She once expressed herself to one of her sisters to this purpose: that she had continued whole days and whole nights, in a constant ravishing view of the glory of God and Christ, having enjoyed as much as her life could bear. Once, as her brother was speaking of the dying love of Christ, she told him that she had such a sense of it, that the mere mention of it was ready to overcome her.

Once, when she came to me, she told me how at such and such a time, she thought she saw as much of God, and had as much joy and pleasure as was possible in this life. And yet afterwards God revealed himself still far more abundantly. She saw the same things that she had seen before, yet more clearly, and in another and far more excellent and delightful manner, and was filled with a more exceeding sweetness. She likewise gave me such an account of the sense she once had from day to day of the glory of Christ, and of God in his various attributes, that it seemed to me she dwelt for days together in a kind of beatific vision of God, and seemed to have, I thought, as immediate an intercourse with Him as a child does with a father. And at the same time, she appeared most remote from any high thought of herself, and of her own sufficiency, but was like a little child. She expressed a great desire to be instructed, telling me that she longed very often to come to me for instruction, and wanted to live at my house, that I might tell her, her duty.

She often expressed a sense of the glory of God appearing in the trees and growth of the fields, and in other works of God's hands. She told her sister who lived near the heart of the town, that she once thought it a pleasant thing to live in the middle of the town. *But now*, she said, *I think it much more pleasant to sit and see the wind blowing the trees, and to behold in the country what God has made.* She sometimes had the powerful breathings of the Spirit of God

on her soul, while reading the Scripture; and she would express a sense that she had of the certain truth and divinity of it. She would sometimes appear with a pleasant smile on her countenance; once, when her sister took notice of it and asked why she smiled, she replied, *I am brimful of a sweet feeling within!* She often used to express how good and sweet it was to lie low before God; *And the lower, she said, the better!* She said it was pleasant to think of lying in the dust all the days of her life, mourning for sin. She was prone to manifest a great sense of her own lowliness and dependence. She often expressed an exceeding compassion, and pitiful love, which she found in her heart towards people in a Christless condition. This was sometimes so strong that, as she was passing by such people in the streets, or those whom she feared were such, she would be overcome by the sight of them. She once said that she longed to have the whole world saved — she wanted, as it were, to pull them all to her — she couldn't bear to have one lost.

She had great longings to die, so that she might be with Christ. This increased till she thought she didn't know how to be patient to wait till God's time should come. But once, when she felt those longings, she thought to herself, *If I long to die, why do I go to physicians?* — from this she concluded that her longings for death were not well-regulated. After this, she often put it to herself, which one she would choose, whether to live or die, to be sick or well, and she found that she couldn't tell, till at last she found herself disposed to say these words: *I am quite willing to live, and quite willing to die; quite willing to be sick, and quite willing to be well; quite willing for anything that God brings upon me!* Then she said, *I felt myself perfectly easy in full submission to the will of God.* She then greatly lamented that she had been so eager in her longings for death, because it argued for a lack of such a resignation to God as there ought to be. She seemed from then on to continue in this resigned frame till death.

After this, her illness increased upon her. Once, after she had spent the greater part of the night before in extreme pain, she awakened out of a little sleep with these words in her heart and mouth. — *I am willing to suffer for Christ's sake. — I am willing to spend and be spent for Christ's sake. — I am willing to spend my life, even my very life for Christ's sake!* And though she had an extraordinary resignation with respect to life or death, yet thoughts of dying were exceeding sweet to her. At a time when her brother was reading in Job, concerning worms feeding on the dead body, she appeared with a pleasant smile,. Being asked about it, she said it was sweet to her to think of her being in such circumstances. At another time, when her brother mentioned to her the danger there seemed to be that the illness she then labored under, might be the occasion of her death, it filled her with joy that almost overcame her. At another time, when she met a company following a corpse to the grave, she said it was sweet to her to think that in a little time, they would follow her in like manner.

Her illness, in the latter part of it, was seated much in her throat, and inward swelling filled up the pipe, so that she could swallow nothing but what was perfectly liquid, and only very little of that. With great and long struggling, and stranglings, whatever she took in, flew out her nostrils, till at last she could swallow nothing at all. She had a raging appetite for food, so that she told her sister, when talking with her about her circumstances, that the worst bit she threw to her swine would be sweet to her. Yet when she saw that she couldn't swallow it, she seemed to be as perfectly contented without it, as if she had no appetite for it. Others were greatly moved to see what she underwent, and were filled with admiration at her unexampled

patience. At a time, when she was striving in vain to get down a little food, something liquid, and was very much spent with it, she looked at her sister with a smile, saying, *O sister, this is for my good!* At another time, when her sister was speaking of what she underwent, she told her that she lived a heaven upon earth for all that. She used to sometimes say to her sister, under her extreme sufferings — *It is good to be so!* Her sister once asked her why she said so! *Why, she says, because God would have it so. It is best that things should be as God would have them. — It looks best to me.* After her confinement, as they were leading her from the bed to the door, she seemed overcome by the sight of things abroad, as displaying the glory of the Being who had made them. As she lay on her death-bed, she would often say these words — *God is my friend!* And once looking upon her sister with a smile, she said, *O sister! How good it is! How sweet and comfortable it is to consider, and think of heavenly things!* And used this argument to persuade her sister to be much in such meditations.

She expressed, on her deathbed, an exceeding longing, both for people in a natural state — that they might be converted — and for the godly, that they might see and know more of God. And when those came to see her, who looked at themselves as in a Christless state, she would be greatly moved with compassionate affection. One, in particular, who seemed to be in great distress about the state of her soul, and had come to see her from time to time, she desired her sister to persuade her not to come any more, because the sight of her so worked on her compassions, that it overcome her nature. — The same week that she died, when she was in distressing circumstances as to her body, some of the neighbors who came to see her, asked if she was willing to die? she replied that she was quite willing either to live or die. — She was willing to be in pain. — She was willing to be so *always* as she was then, if that was the will of God. She willed what God willed. They asked her whether she was willing to die that night? She answered, yes, if it is God's will; and seemed to say it all with that perfect composure of spirit, and with such a cheerful and pleasant countenance, that it filled them with admiration.

She was very weak a considerable time before she died, having pined away with famine and thirst, so that her flesh seemed to be dried upon her bones. And therefore she could say but little, and made known her mind very much by signs. She said she had matter enough to fill up all her time with talk, if she only had strength. A few days before her death, some asked her whether she held her integrity still? Whether she wasn't afraid of death? She answered to this purpose: that she didn't have the least degree of fear of death. They asked her why she could be so confident? She answered, *If I were to say otherwise, I would speak contrary to what I know. There is, she says, indeed a dark entry, that looks somewhat dark. But on the other side there appears such a bright shining light, that I cannot be afraid!* She said, not long before she died, that she used to be afraid of how she would grapple with death. *But, she says, God has showed me that He can make it easy in great pain.* Several days before she died, she could scarcely say anything but yes or no to questions that were asked her, for she seemed to be dying for three days in a row. But she seemed to continue to the last in an admirable sweet composure of soul, without any interruption, and died like a person who went to sleep without any struggling, about noon, on Friday, June 27, 1735.

She had long been infirm, and had often been exercised with great pain. But she died chiefly of famine. Doubtless, it was partly owing to her bodily weakness that her nature was so often overcome, and ready to sink with gracious affection. Yet the truth was, she had more grace,

and greater revelations of God and Christ, than consisted with her present frail state well. She wanted to be where strong grace might have more liberty, and be without the clog of a weak body. There she longed to be, and there she doubtless is now. She was looked upon among us, as a very eminent instance of Christian experience. This is but a very broken and imperfect account that I have given of her. Her eminency would be much more apparent, if her experiences were fully related as she was inclined to express and manifest them while living. I once read this account to some of her pious neighbors who were acquainted with her. They said to this purpose, that the picture fell far short of the life, and that it particularly failed to duly represent her humility, and that admirable lowliness of heart, that appeared in her at all times. But there are (blessed be God!) many living instances of much the same nature, and in some things, no less extraordinary.

### ***The Instance of Phebe Bartlet – aged four.***

But I now proceed to the other instance that I would give an account of, which is of the little child mentioned before. Her name is Phebe Bartlet, daughter of William Bartlet. I will give the account as I took it from the mouths of her parents, whose veracity none who know them doubt.

She was born in March, in the year 1731. About the latter end of April, or beginning of May, 1735, she was greatly affected by the talk of her brother, who had been hopefully converted a little before, at about eleven years of age. Then he seriously talked to her about the great things of religion. Her parents didn't know about it at that time. And usually in the counsels they gave to their children, they did not particularly direct themselves to her because she was so young, and they supposed was not capable of understanding. But after her brother had talked to her, they observed her very earnestly listening to the advice they gave the other children, and she was observed to constantly retire, several times a day (it was concluded) for secret prayer. She grew more and more engaged in religion, and was more frequently in her closet, till at last she habitually visited it five or six times a day. She was so engaged in it that nothing would at any time divert her from her stated closet exercises. Her mother often observed and watched her when such things occurred, as she thought it most likely she could divert her either by putting it out of her thoughts, or otherwise engaging her inclinations; but she never could observe her fail. She mentioned some very remarkable instances.

Once, of her own accord, Phebe spoke of her unsuccessfulness, in that she couldn't find God, or something to that purpose. But on Thursday, the last day of July, about the middle of the day, the child being in the closet where she used to retire, her mother heard her speaking aloud, which was unusual and never observed before. Her voice seemed like someone exceedingly importunate and engaged. But her mother could distinctly hear only these words (spoken in her childish manner, but they seemed to be spoken with extraordinary earnestness and out of a distress of soul). *Pray blessed Lord, give me salvation! I pray, beg pardon all my sins!* When the child was done with prayer, she came out of the closet, and came and sat down by her mother, and cried out aloud. Her mother very earnestly asked her several times, what the matter was, before she would make any answer. But she continued crying exceedingly, and rocked her body to and fro, like someone in anguish of spirit. Her mother then asked her whether she was afraid that God would not give her salvation. She answered, *Yes, I am afraid I will go to hell!* Her mother then endeavored to quiet her, and told her she

wouldn't have her cry — she must be a good girl, and pray every day, and she hoped God would give her salvation. But this didn't quiet her at all. She continued earnestly crying this way, and going on for some time, till at length she suddenly ceased crying and began to smile. Presently she said with a smiling countenance — *Mother, the kingdom of heaven has come to me!* Her mother was surprised at the sudden alteration, and at her statement, and didn't know what to make of it. At first she said nothing to her. The child presently spoke again, and said, *There is another come to me, and there is another — there is three.* And being asked what she meant, she answered, *One is — Thy will be done; and there is another — Enjoy him forever.* By this, it seems that when the child said, *There is three come to me*, she meant three passages of her catechism that came to her mind.

After the child had said this, she retired again into her closet; and her mother went over to her brother's, who was next neighbor; and when she came back, the child having come out of the closet, met her mother with this cheerful statement: — *I can find God now!* Referring to what she had before complained of, that she couldn't find God. Then the child spoke again, and said — *I love God!* Her mother asked her how well she loved God, whether she loved God better than her father and mother, she said *Yes*. Then she asked her whether she loved God better than her little sister Rachel, she answered, *Yes, better than anything!* Then her eldest sister, referring to her saying that she could find God now, asked her where she could find God; she answered, *In heaven.* Her sister asked, *Why, have you been in heaven?* *No*, said the child. By this it doesn't seem to have been her imagination of anything seen with bodily eyes, that she called *God*, when she said *I can find God now*. Her mother asked her whether she was afraid of going to hell, and if that made her cry. She answered, *Yes, I was; but now I will not.* Her mother asked her whether she thought that God had given her salvation. She answered, *Yes*. Her mother asked her when: she answered, *Today*.

All that afternoon she appeared to be exceedingly cheerful and joyful. One of the neighbors asked her how she felt. She answered, *I feel better than I did.* The neighbor asked her what made her feel better; she answered, *God makes me.* That evening as she lay in bed, she called one of her little cousins to her, who was present in the room, having something to say to him. And when he came, she told him that heaven was better than earth. The next day being Friday, her mother asking her, her catechism, asked her what God made her for. She answered, *To serve Him*; and she added, *Everybody should serve God, and get an interest in Christ.*

The same day, when the elder children came home from school, they seemed greatly affected by the extraordinary change that seemed to be made in Phebe. Her sister Abigail standing by, her mother took occasion to counsel her to now improve her time, to prepare for another world, upon which Phebe burst into tears, and cried out *Poor Nabby!* Her mother told her, she would not have her cry. She hoped that God would give Nabby salvation; but that didn't quiet her. Rather, she continued earnestly crying for some time;. And when she had in a measure ceased, her sister Eunice being by her, she burst into tears again, and cried, *Poor Eunice!* and she cried exceedingly. When she was almost done, she went into another room, and there looked at her sister Naomi, and burst out again, crying, *Poor Amy!* Her mother was greatly affected at such a behavior in the child, and didn't know what to say to her. One of the neighbors coming in a little after, asked her what she had cried for. At first Phebe seemed

hesitant to tell the reason. Her mother told her she might tell that person, for he had given her an apple; upon which she said she cried because she was afraid they would go to hell.

At night, a certain minister who was occasionally in town, was at their house, and talked considerably with Phebe about the things of religion. After he was gone, she sat leaning on the table, with tears running out of her eyes. Being asked what made her cry, she said it was thinking about God. The next day being Saturday, she seemed to be in a very affectionate frame for most of the day, had four turns of crying, and seemed to endeavor to curb herself, and hide her tears, and was very hesitant to talk about the reason for it. On the Sabbath day, she was asked whether she believed in God; she answered, *Yes*; and being told that Christ was the Son of God, she made ready her answer, and said, *I know it*.

From this time there has appeared a very remarkable abiding change in the child. She has been very strict on the Sabbath, and seems to long for the Sabbath day before it comes, and will often during the week, inquire how long it is to the Sabbath day. She must have the days between particularly counted, before she will be contented. She seems to love God's house, and is very eager to go there. Her mother once asked her why she had such a mind to go? Was it to see fine folks? She said no, it was to hear Mr. Edwards preach. When she is in the place of worship, she is far from spending her time there as children of her age usually do, but appears with an attention that is extraordinary for such a child. She also appears very desirous at all opportunities, to go to private religious meetings; she is very still and attentive at home during prayer time; and she has appeared affected during the time of family prayer. She seems to delight much in hearing religious conversation. Once, when I was there with some others who were strangers, and talked to her somewhat about religion, she seemed more than ordinarily attentive. And when we had gone, she looked out very wistfully after us, and said — *I wish they would come again!* Her mother asked why. She said, *I love to hear them talk!*

She seems to have very much of the fear of God before her eyes, and an extraordinary dread of sin against Him. Her mother mentioned this in the following remarkable instance. Some time in August, last year, she went with some bigger children, to get some plums in a neighbor's lot, knowing nothing of any harm in what she did. But when she brought some of the plums into the house, her mother mildly reproved her, and told her that she must not get plums without leave, because it was sin. God had commanded her not to steal. The child seemed greatly surprised, and burst out into tears, and cried out, *I will not have these plums!* Turning to her sister Eunice, she very earnestly said to her — *Why did you ask me to go to that plum tree? I would not have gone if you hadn't asked me.* The other children didn't seem to be much affected or concerned about it; but there was no pacifying Phebe. Her mother told her she might go and ask leave, and then it would not be sin for her to eat them, and sent one of the children to that end. When she returned, her mother told her that the owner had given her leave; now she might eat them, and it would not be stealing. This stilled her a little while, but shortly she broke out again into an exceeding fit of crying. Her mother asked her what made her cry again? Why did she cry now, since they had asked leave? What was it that troubled her now? She asked Phebe several times very earnestly, before she answered, but at last she said it was because — BECAUSE IT WAS SIN. She continued to cry for a considerable time, and said she wouldn't go again if Eunice asked her a hundred times. She retained her aversion to that fruit for a considerable time, in remembrance of her former sin.

At some times she appears greatly affected and delighted with texts of Scripture that come to her mind. Particularly about the beginning of November, last year, this text came to her mind: Rev 3.20, *Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in, and sup with him and he with me.* She spoke of it to those of her family, with a great appearance of joy, a smiling countenance, and elevated of voice. Afterwards she went into another room, where her mother overheard her talking very earnestly to the children about it, and particularly heard her say to them, three or four times over, with an air of exceeding joy and admiration — Why, it is to SUP WITH GOD. Some time about the middle of winter, very late in the night when all were in bed, her mother perceived that she was awake, and heard her as though she was weeping. She called to Phebe, and asked her what was the matter. She answered with a low voice, so that her mother couldn't hear what she said; but thinking it might be occasioned by some spiritual affection, said no more to her. But she perceived that Phebe was lying awake, and continued in the same frame for a considerable time. The next morning she asked Phebe whether she cried last night. The child answered, *Yes, I did cry a little, for I was thinking about God and Christ, and they loved me.* Her mother asked her whether thinking of God and Christ's loving her made her cry. She answered, *Yes, it does sometimes.*

She has often manifested a great concern for the good of other souls; and has many times been in the habit of affectionately counseling the other children. Once, about the latter end of September last year, when she and some of the other children were in a room by themselves husking Indian corn, the child, after a while, came out and sat by the fire. Her mother noticed that she appeared to have a more than ordinarily serious and pensive countenance. At last Phebe broke the silence and said, *I have been talking to Nabby and Eunice.* Her mother asked her what she had said to them. *Why,* she said, *I told them they must pray, and prepare to die; that they had but a little while to live in this world and they must always be ready.* When Nabby came out, her mother asked her whether she had said that to them. *Yes,* she said, *She said that and a great deal more.* At other times the child took her opportunities to talk to the other children about the great concern of their souls — sometimes so as much to affect them, and send them into tears. She was once exceedingly importunate with her mother to go with her sister Naomi to pray. Her mother endeavored to put her off, but she pulled her by the sleeve, and seemed as if she would by no means be denied. At last her mother told her that Amy must go and pray herself. *But,* Phebe said, *she won't go.* She earnestly persisted to beg her mother to go with her.

She has revealed an uncommon degree of a spirit of charity, particularly on the following occasion. A poor man who lives in the woods, had recently lost a cow that the family much depended on. Being at the house, he was relating his misfortune, and telling about the straits and difficulties they were reduced to by it. Phebe took much notice of it, and it worked exceedingly on her compassions. After she had attentively heard him for a while, she went away to her father, who was in the shop, and entreated him to give that man a cow; and told him that the poor man had no cow! That the hunters or something else had killed his cow! And she entreated him to give him one of theirs. Her father told her that they could not spare one. Then she entreated him to let him and his family come and live at his house. She talked much of the same nature, by which she manifested bowels of compassion toward the poor.



She has manifested great love for her minister. Particularly when I returned from my long journey for my health last fall, when she heard of it, she appeared very joyful at the news, and told the children about it with an elevated voice, as the most joyful tidings, repeating over and over, *Mr. Edwards has come home! Mr. Edwards has come home!* She still continues very constant in secret prayer, so far as can be observed (for she seems to have no desire that others observe her when she retires, but seems to be a child of a reserved temper). Every night before she goes to bed, she will say her catechism, and will by no means miss it. She never forgot it except once; and then, after she was in bed, she thought of it and cried out in tears — *I have not said my catechism!* And she would not be quieted till her mother asked her the catechism as she lay in bed. She sometimes appears to be in doubt about the condition of her soul. When asked whether she thinks she is prepared for death, she says something doubtful about it. At other times, she seems to have no doubt, and when asked, replies *Yes*, without hesitation.

### ***Concluding Thoughts***

In the *former part* of this great work of God among us, till it got to its height, we seemed to be wonderfully smiled upon and blessed in all respects. Satan (as observed already) seemed to be unusually restrained. People who before had been involved in melancholy, seemed to be, as it were, awakened from it; those who had been entangled with extraordinary temptations, seemed to be wonderfully set at liberty; and not only so, but it was the most remarkable time of health that I have ever known since I have been in the town. We ordinarily have several bills put up, every Sabbath, for people who are sick, but now we haven't had so much as one for many Sabbaths in a row.

But *after this* it seemed to be otherwise, when this work of God appeared to be at its greatest height. A poor weak man who belongs to the town, being in great spiritual trouble, was hurried with violent temptations to cut his own throat; he made an attempt, but didn't do it effectually. After this, he continued for a considerable time to be exceedingly overwhelmed with melancholy. But now, after a long time, he has been greatly delivered by the light of God's countenance lifted up upon him, and has expressed a great sense of his sin in so far yielding to temptation. And there are in him all hopeful evidences of his having been made a subject of saving mercy.

In the latter part of May, it began to be greatly sensed that the Spirit of God was gradually withdrawing from us, and after this time Satan seemed to be more let loose, and raged in a dreadful manner. The first instance in which this appeared, was when a person put an end to his own life, by cutting his throat. He was a gentleman of more than common understanding, of strict morals, religious in his behavior, and a useful, honorable person in the town. But he was from a family who are exceedingly prone to the disease of melancholy, and his mother was killed with it. From the beginning of this extraordinary time, he had been exceedingly concerned about the state of his soul, and there were some things in his experience that appeared very hopeful. But he dared not entertain any hope concerning his own good estate. Towards the latter part of his time, he grew very discouraged. Melancholy quickly grew upon him, till he was wholly overpowered by it. He was, in great measure, past the capacity of receiving advice, or being reasoned with to any purpose. The devil took advantage, and drove him into despairing thoughts. He was kept awake nights, meditating in terror, so that he had scarcely any sleep at all for long periods of time. It was observable at last, that he was scarcely

well capable of managing his ordinary business, and was judged *delirious* by the coroner's inquest. The news of this extraordinarily affected the minds of people here, and struck them with astonishment. After this, multitudes in this and other towns seemed to have it strongly suggested to them, and pressed upon them, to do as this person had done. Many who seemed to be under no melancholy — even some pious people who had no special darkness or doubts about the goodness of their state, nor were under any special trouble or concern of mind about anything spiritual or temporal — yet had it urged upon them, as if somebody had said to them, *Cut your own throat; now is a good opportunity. Now! Now!* So that they were obliged to fight with all their might to resist it; yet no reason suggested to them why they should do it.

About the same time, there were two remarkable instances of people led away with strange enthusiastic delusions: one at Suffield, and another at South Hadley. What made the greatest noise in the country, was the instance of the man at South Hadley. His delusion was that he thought he was divinely instructed to direct a poor man in melancholy and despairing circumstances, to say certain words in prayer to God, as recorded in Psa 116.4, for his own relief. The man is esteemed a pious man. Since this error of his, I have had a particular acquaintance with him. I believe none who had such an acquaintance, would question his piety. He gave me a particular account of how he was deluded, which is too long to be inserted here. But in short, he was exceedingly rejoiced and elevated with this extraordinary work that was so carried on in this part of the country; and he was possessed with an opinion that it was the beginning of the glorious times of the church spoken of in Scripture. He had read it as the opinion of some divines, that there would be many in these times who would be endued with extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. He had embraced the notion, though at first he had no apprehensions that any besides ministers would have such gifts. But he since exceedingly laments the dishonor that he has done to God, and the wound he has given religion in this, and has lain low before God and man for it.

After these things, the instances of conversion were rare here in comparison to what they had been before (though that remarkable instance of the little child was after this). The Spirit of God, after that time, appeared to very sensibly withdraw from all parts of the country (though we have heard of the work going on in some places of Connecticut, and that it continues to be carried on even to this day). But *religion* remained here, and I believe in some other places, and was the main subject of conversation for several months after this. There were some turns in which God's work seemed to revive somewhat, and we were ready to hope that all was going to be renewed again. Yet in the main, there was a gradual decline of that general, engaged, lively spirit in religion, which had existed before.

Several things have happened since, that have diverting people's minds, and turned their conversation more to other affairs, such as particularly his Excellency the Governor's coming up, and the Committee of the General Court, concerning the treaty with the Indians, and afterwards the Springfield controversy. Since then, our people in this town have been engaged in building a new meeting-house; some other occurrences might be mentioned that seemed to have this effect.

But as to those who have been thought to be converted among us during this time, they generally seem to be people who have had an abiding change wrought upon them. I have had particular acquaintance with many of them since, and they generally appear to be people who

have a new sense of things, new apprehensions and views of God, of the divine attributes, of Jesus Christ and the great things of the gospel. They have a new sense of the truth of them, and they affect them in a new way; though it is far from always being alike with them; nor can they revive a sense of things whenever they please. Their hearts are often touched, and sometimes filled with new sweetness and delights. There seems to be an inward ardor and a burning heart that they express, the like to which they never experienced before. Sometimes, this is occasioned only by the mention of Christ's name, or one of the divine perfections. There are new appetites, and a new kind of breathing and panting of heart, and groanings that cannot be uttered. There is a new kind of inward labor and struggle of soul towards heaven and holiness.

Some who before were very rough in their temper and manners, seem to be remarkably softened and sweetened. And some have had their souls exceedingly filled and overwhelmed with light, love, and comfort, long since the work of God has ceased to be so remarkably carried on in a general way. Some have had much greater experiences of this nature than they had before. And there is still a great deal of religious conversation continued in the town among young and old. A religious disposition appears to still be maintained among our people, by their upholding frequent private religious meetings. And all sorts generally are worshipping God at such meetings, on Sabbath nights, and in the evening after our public lecture. Many children in the town still keep up such meetings among themselves. I don't know of any young people in the town who have returned to their former ways of looseness and extravagancy in any respect. Rather, we still remain a *reformed* people, and God has evidently made us a *new* people.

I cannot say there has been no instance of any one person who has carried himself in such a way, that others would justly be stumbled concerning his profession. Nor am I so vain as to imagine that we have not been mistaken concerning any that we have entertained a good opinion of, or that there are none who pass among us for sheep, who are indeed wolves in sheep's clothing — who may some time or other, reveal themselves by their fruits. We are not so pure that we have no great cause to be humbled and ashamed that we are so impure; nor are we so religious that those who watch for our stumbling may not see things in us from which they may take occasion to reproach us and religion. But in the main, there has been a great and marvellous work of conversion and sanctification among the people here, and they have paid all due respects to those who have been blessed by God to be the instruments of it. Both old and young have shown a forwardness to hearken not only to my counsels, but even to my reproofs from the pulpit.

A great part of the country have not received the most favorable thoughts of this affair. And to this day, many retain a jealousy concerning it, and a prejudice against it. I have reason to think that the meanness and weakness of the instrument that has been made use of in this town, has prejudiced many against it. It doesn't appear strange to me that it should be so. Yet the circumstance of this great work of God is analogous to other circumstances of it. God has so ordered the manner of the work in many respects, as to signally and remarkably show it is His own peculiar and immediate work, and to secure the glory of it wholly to His own almighty power and sovereign grace. Whatever the circumstances and means have been, and though

we are so unworthy, yet it has pleased God to work so! And we are evidently a people blessed by the Lord! Here in this corner of the world, God dwells and manifests his glory.

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Thus, Reverend Sir, I have given a large and particular account of this remarkable affair. And yet, considering how manifold God's works have been among us, that are worthy to be written about, it is but a very brief one. I would have sent it much sooner, if I had not been greatly hindered by illness in my family, and also in myself. It is probably much larger than you expected, and maybe than you would have chosen. I thought that the extraordinariness of the thing, and the innumerable misrepresentations which have gone abroad about it, many of which have doubtless reached your ears, made it necessary that I be particular. But I would leave it entirely to your wisdom to make whatever use of it you think best — to send a part of it to England, or all of it, or none of it if you think it isn't worthy. Otherwise, dispose of it as you may think is most for God's glory, and the interest of religion. If you are pleased to send anything to the Rev. Dr. Guyse, I would be glad to have it indicated to him, as my humble desire, that since he and the congregation to which he preached have been pleased to take so much notice of us as they have, that they would also think of us at the Throne of Grace, and seek for us there, that God would not forsake us, but enable us to bring forth fruit according to our profession and our mercies; and that our *light may so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.*

When first I heard of the notice the Reverend Dr. Watts and Dr. Guyse took of God's mercies toward us, I took occasion to inform our congregation of it in a discourse from these words: *A city that is set upon a hill cannot be hidden.* Since then, I have seen a particular account of the notice taken from it by the Reverend Dr. Guyse, and the congregation that he preached to, in a letter that you wrote to my honored uncle Williams. I read that part of your letter to the congregation, and labored as much as it lay within me to enforce their duty from it. The congregation was very sensibly moved and affected at both times.

I humbly request of you, Reverend Sir, your prayers for this country in its present melancholy circumstances, into which it is brought by the Springfield quarrel. Doubtless, above all things that have happened, this has tended to put a stop to the glorious work here, and to prejudice this country against it, and to hinder the propagation of it. I also ask your prayers for this town. And I would particularly beg an interest in them for the one who is, Honored Sir, with humble respect,

Your obedient son and servant,  
**JONATHAN EDWARDS**

NORTHAMPTON, Nov 6, 1736.