

# EDWARDS ON REVIVAL

## Section 2

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

Persons 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 how much they were in 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 some thing they hear in public, or in private conference—their consciences are smitten, as if their hearts were pierced through with a dart. Others are awakened more gradually; they begin at first to be something 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 improve the present opportunity. They have accordingly set themselves seriously to meditate on those things that have the most awakening tendency, on purpose to obtain convictions; and so their awakenings have increased, till a sense of their misery, by God's Holy Spirit setting in therewith, has had fast hold of them. Others who before 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 like to attain that purpose.

These awakenings when they have first seized on persons, 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. When once the Spirit of God began to be so wonderfully poured out in a general way through the town, people had soon done with their old quarrels, backbitings, and intermeddling with other men's matters. The tavern was soon left empty, and persons kept very much at home; none went abroad unless on necessary business, or on 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 ever the tavern had been wont to be.

There is a very great variety, as to the degree of fear and trouble that persons are exercised with, before they attain any comfortable evidences of pardon and acceptance with God. Some are from the beginning carried on with abundantly more encouragement and hope than others. Some have had ten times less trouble of mind than others, in whom yet the issue seems to be the same. Some have had such a sense of the displeasure of God, and the great danger they were in of damnation, that they could not sleep at nights; and many have said that when they have laid down, the thoughts of sleeping in such a condition have been frightful to 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 on persons minds, has had a painful influence on their bodies, and given disturbance to animal nature.

The awful apprehensions persons have had of their misery, have for the most part been increasing, the nearer they have approached to deliverance; though they often pass through many changes and alterations in the frame and circumstances of their minds. Sometimes they think themselves wholly senseless, and fear that the Spirit of God has left them, and that they are given up to judicial hardness; yet they appear very deeply exercised about that fear, and are in great earnest to obtain convictions again.

Together with those fears, and that exercise of mind which is rational, and which they have just ground for, they have often suffered many needless distresses of thought, in which Satan probably has a great hand, to entangle them, and block up their way. Sometimes the distemper of melancholy has been evidently mixed; of which, when it happens, the tempter seems to take great advantage, and puts an unhappy bar in the way of any good effect. One knows not how to deal with such persons; they turn every thing that is said to them the wrong way, and most to their own disadvantage. There is nothing that the devil seems to make so great a handle of, as a melancholy humor; unless it be the real corruption of the heart.

But it is very remarkable, that there has been far less of this mixture at this time of extraordinary blessing, than there was wont to be in persons under awakenings at other times; for it is evident that many who before had been exceedingly involved in such difficulties, seemed now strangely to be set at liberty.

Many times persons under great awakenings were concerned, because they thought they were not awakened, but miserable, hard-hearted, senseless, sottish creatures still, and sleeping upon the brink of hell. The sense of the need they have to be awakened, and of their comparative hardness, grows upon them with their awakenings; so that they seem to themselves to be very senseless, when indeed most sensible. There have been some instances of persons 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; and yet they have expressed themselves much amazed at their own insensibility and sottishness at such an extraordinary time.

Persons are sometimes brought to the borders of despair, and it looks as black as midnight to them a little before the day dawns in their souls. Some few instances there have been, of persons 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, wondering that God suffers such guilty wretches to live upon earth, and that he does not immediately send them to hell. Sometimes their guilt so stares them in the face, that they are in exceeding terror for fear that God will instantly do it; but more commonly their distresses under legal awakenings have not been to such a degree. In some, these terrors do not seem to be so sharp, when near comfort, as before; their convictions have not seemed to work so much that way, but 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 has discovered itself in various exercises, in the time of legal convictions; sometimes it appears in a great struggle, like something roused by an enemy, and Satan, the old inhabitant, 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 lately converted, and most of all towards acquaintances and companions, when they are thought to be

converted. Indeed, some have felt many heart-risings against God, and murmurings at His way of dealing with mankind, and His dealings with themselves in particular. It has been much insisted on, both in public and private, that persons should have the utmost dread of such envious thoughts; which if allowed tend exceedingly to quench the Spirit of God, if not to provoke Him finally to forsake them. And when such a spirit has much prevailed, and persons have not so earnestly strove against it as they ought to have done, it has seemed to be exceedingly to the hindrance of the good of their souls. But in some other instances, where persons have been much terrified at the sight of such wickedness in their hearts, God has brought good to them out of evil; and made it a means of convincing them of their own desperate sinfulness, and bringing them off from all self-confidence.

The drift of the Spirit of God in His legal strivings with persons, has seemed most evidently to be, to bring to a conviction of their absolute dependence on His sovereign power and grace, and an universal necessity of a mediator. This has been effected by leading them more and more to a sense of their exceeding wickedness and guiltiness in His sight; their pollution, and the insufficiency of their own righteousness; that they can in no wise help themselves, and that God would be wholly just and righteous in rejecting them and all that they do, and in casting them off for ever. There is however a vast variety as to the manner and distinctness of such convictions.

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 it, and oftentimes never think themselves so far off from good as when they are nearest. Under the sense which the Spirit of God gives them of their sinfulness, they often think that they differ from all others; their hearts are ready to sink with the thought that they are the worst of all, and that none ever obtained mercy who were so wicked as they.

When awakenings first begin, their consciences are commonly most exercised about their outward vicious course, or other acts of sin; but afterwards 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 endeavors after saving good, to convince them of their own vile emptiness and universal depravity.

Very often, under first awakenings, when they are brought to reflect on the sin of their past lives, and have something of a terrifying sense of God's anger, they set themselves to walk more strictly, and confess their sins, and perform many religious duties, with a secret hope of appeasing God's anger, and making up for the sins they have committed. And oftentimes, at first setting out, their affections are so moved, that they are full of tears, in their confessions and prayers; which they are ready to make very much of, as though they were some atonement, and had power to move correspondent affections in God too. Hence they are for a while big with expectation of what God will do for them; and conceive they grow better apace, and shall soon be thoroughly converted. But these affections are but short-lived; they quickly find that they fail, and then they think themselves to be grown worse again. They do not find such a prospect of being soon converted, as they thought: instead of being nearer, they seem to be further off; their hearts they think are grown harder, and by this means their fears of perishing greatly increase. But though they are disappointed, they renew their attempts again and again; and still as their attempts are multiplied, so are their disappointments. All fails, they see no token of having inclined God's heart to them, they do not see that He hears their prayers at all, as they expected He would; and

sometimes there have been great temptations arising hence to leave off seeking, and to yield up the case. But as they are still more terrified with fears of perishing, and their former hopes of prevailing on God to be merciful to them in a great measure fail, sometimes their religious affections have turned into heart risings against God, because He will not pity them, and seems to have little regard to their distress, and piteous cries, and to all the pains they take. They think of the mercy God has shown to others; how soon and how easily others have obtained comfort, and those too who were worse than they, and have not labored so much as they have done; and sometimes they have had even dreadful 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 utterly to forsake them, they have more distressing apprehensions of the anger of God towards those whose hearts work after such a sinful manner about Him; and it may be, have great fears that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that God will surely never show mercy to them who are such vipers; and are often tempted to leave off in despair. But then perhaps by something they read or hear of the infinite mercy of God, and all-sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners, they have some encouragement and hope renewed; but 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 they set themselves upon a new course of fruitless endeavors, in their own strength, to make themselves better, and still meet with new disappointments. 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 which God gives them a conviction of their own utter helplessness and insufficiency, and discovers 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 are not sensible 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 are not sensible how remote they are from love to God, and other holy dispositions, and how dead they are in sin. When they see unexpected pollution in their own hearts, they go about to wash away their own defilements, and make themselves clean; and they weary themselves in vain, till God shows them that it is in vain, and that their help is not where they have sought it.

But some persons 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 Holy Spirit with their experience, that attains the effect. God has of late abundantly shown that He does not 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 persons' consciences, and made them so sensible of their exceeding great vileness, and given them such a sense of His wrath against sin, as has quickly overcome all their vain self-confidence, and 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 much more of it afterwards. 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 past finding out. Some who are less distinctly wrought upon, in what is preparatory to grace, appear no less eminent in gracious experiences afterwards.

There is in nothing a greater difference, in different persons, than with respect to the time of their being under trouble; some but a few days, and others for months or years. There were many in this town, who had been, before this effusion of the Spirit upon us, for years, and some for many years, concerned about their salvation. Though probably they were not thoroughly awakened, yet they were concerned to such a degree as to be very uneasy, so as to live an uncomfortable disquieted life. They continued in a way of taking considerable pains about their salvation; but had never obtained any comfortable evidence of a good state. Several such persons, in this extraordinary time, 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 before had seemed wholly careless and at ease, and in pursuit of vanity; while they had been bowed down with solicitude about their souls. Yea, some had lived licentiously, and so continued till a little before they were converted; and yet soon grew up to a holy rejoicing in the infinite blessings God had bestowed upon them.

Whatever minister has a like occasion to deal with souls, in a flock under such circumstances, as this was in the last year, I cannot but think he will soon find himself under a necessity, greatly to insist upon it with them, that God is under no manner of obligation to show mercy to any natural man, whose heart is not turned to God: and that a man can challenge nothing either in absolute justice, or by free promise, from any thing he does before he has believed on Jesus Christ, or has true repentance begun in him. It appears to me, that if I had taught those who came to me under trouble any other doctrine, I should have taken a most direct course utterly to undo them. I should have directly crossed what was plainly the drift of the Spirit of God in His influences upon them; 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 cherished and established their contention and strife with God, concerning His dealings with them and others, and blocked up their way to that humiliation before the Sovereign Disposer of life and death, whereby God is wont to prepare 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 that it is God's manner to succeed diligence, and to bless His own means. I think I have found that no discourses have been more remarkably blessed, than those in which 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 natural men, continuing such, have been insisted on. I never found so much immediate saving fruit, in any measure, of any discourses I have offered to my congregation, as some from these words, Rom. 3:19. "That every mouth may be stopped"; endeavoring to show from thence that it would be just with God for ever to reject and cast off mere natural men.

As to those in whom awakenings seem to have a saving issue, commonly the first thing that appears after their legal troubles, is a conviction of the justice of God in their condemnation, appearing in a sense of their own exceeding sinfulness, and the vileness of all their performances. In giving an account of this, they expressed themselves very variously; some, 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, in the world, and damn themselves to all eternity; some, that they see God may justly have no regard to all the pains they have taken, and all the prayers they have made; some, that if they should seek, and take the utmost pains all their lives, God might justly cast them into hell at last, because

all their labors, prayers, and tears cannot make an atonement for the least sin, nor merit any blessing at the hands of God. Some have declared themselves to be in the hands of God, that He may dispose of them just as He pleases; some, that God may glorify Himself in their damnation, and they wonder that God has suffered them to live so long, and has 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 in an extraordinary manner set before them, multitudes of them 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 have had in the time of their awakening, whereby the enmity of the 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 as to distinctness here; some, who have not so clear a sight of God's justice in their condemnation, yet mention things that plainly imply it. They find a disposition to acknowledge God to be just and righteous in His threatenings, and that they are undeserving: and many times, though they had not 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 persons' minds immediately before this discovery of God's justice are exceedingly restless, in a kind of struggle and tumult, and sometimes in mere anguish; but generally, as soon as they have this conviction, it immediately brings their minds to a calm, and unexpected quietness and composure; and most frequently, though not always, then the pressing weight upon their spirits is taken away, and a general hope arises, that 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 wait His time; and they rest in that, not being sensible that the Spirit of God has now brought them to a frame whereby they are prepared for mercy. For it is remarkable, that persons when they first have this sense of the justice of God, rarely, at the time, think any thing of its being that humiliation they have often heard insisted on, and that others experience.

In many persons, the first conviction of the justice of God in their condemnation which they take particular notice of, and probably the first distinct conviction of it that they have, is of such a nature, as seems to be above any thing merely legal. Though it be after legal humblings, and much of a sense of their own helplessness, and of the insufficiency of their own duties; yet it does not appear to be forced by mere legal terrors and convictions, but rather from a high exercise of grace, in saving repentance, and evangelical humiliation. For there is in it a sort of complacency of soul in the attribute of God's justice, as displayed in His threatenings of eternal damnation to sinners. Sometimes at the discovery of it, they can scarcely forbear crying out, It is just! It is just! Some express themselves, that they could 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 part with God against themselves, and would glorify His justice therein. And when it is thus, they commonly have some evident sense of free and all-sufficient grace, though they give no distinct account of it; but it is manifest, by that great degree of hope and encouragement they then conceive, though they were never so sensible of their own vileness and ill-deservings as they are at that time.

Some, when 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 have 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 owned they had not 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 could not tell how to think of salvation being bestowed upon them, fearing it was inconsistent with the glory of God's majesty, that they had so much contemned and affronted.

That calm of spirit that some persons 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 in a very little time: and in some, the first sight of their just deserts of hell, and God's sovereignty with respect to their salvation, and a discovery of all-sufficient grace, are so near, that they seem to go as it were together.

These gracious discoveries given, whence the first special comforts are derived, are in many respects very various. 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, the certain truth of some particular promises; in some, the grace and sincerity of God in His invitations, very commonly in some particular invitation in the mind, and 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 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 suitableness 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 what they experience is better expressed by the realizing conviction, or a lively or feeling sense of heart; meaning, as I suppose, no other difference but what is merely circumstantial or gradual.

There is, often, in the mind, some particular text of Scripture, holding forth some evangelical ground of consolation; sometimes a multitude of texts, gracious invitations and promises flowing in one after another, filling the soul more and more with comfort and satisfaction. 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 discovered to the soul as it were at once; others have their minds especially fixing on some one thing at first, and afterwards a sense is

given of others; in some with a swifter, and others a slower succession, and sometimes with interruptions of much darkness.

The way that grace seems sometimes first to appear, after legal humiliation, is in earnest longings of soul after God and Christ: to know God, to love Him, to be humble before Him, to have communion with Christ in His benefits; which longings, as they express them, seem evidently to be of such a nature as can arise from nothing but a sense of the superlative excellency of divine things, with a spiritual taste and relish of 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 for ever, together with a hoping, waiting disposition. When persons 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 needs be confessed that Christ is not always distinctly and explicitly thought of in the first sensible act of grace (though most commonly He is), but sometimes He is the object of the mind only implicitly. Thus sometimes when persons have seemed evidently 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, though never so great, shall be no hindrance 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 yet, when the account they give is duly weighed, and they are a little interrogated about it, it appears that the revelation of mercy in the gospel is the ground of their encouragement and hope; and that it is indeed the mercy of God through Christ that is discovered in them, and that it is depended on in Him, and not in any wise moved by any thing in them.

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

Frequently, when persons have first had the gospel-ground of relief discovered to them, and have been entertaining their minds with the sweet prospect, they have thought nothing at that time of their being converted. To see that there is 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, exceedingly refreshes them. The view is joyful to them to seek conversion. This begets in them a strong resolution to devote themselves and their whole lives to God and His Son, and patiently to wait till God shall see fit to make all effectual; and they very often entertain a strong persuasion that He will in His own time do it for them.

There is wrought in them a holy repose of soul in God through Christ, with a secret disposition to fear and love Him, and to hope for blessings from Him in this way. Yet they have no imagination that they are now converted; it does not so much as come in their minds: and very often the reason is, that they do not see that they accept of this sufficiency of salvation they behold in Christ, 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 is a real acceptance of it. They know not that the sweet complacency they



feel in the mercy and complete salvation of God, as it includes pardon and sanctification, and is held forth to them only through Christ, is a true receiving of this mercy, or a plain evidence of their receiving it. They expected I know not what kind of act of soul, and perhaps they had no distinct idea of it themselves. And 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 what there was no clear conception of before.

In this town there has always been a great deal of talk about conversion and spiritual experiences; and therefore people in general had formed a notion in their own minds what these things were. But when they come to be the subjects of them, they find themselves much confounded in their notions, and overthrown in many of their former conceits. And it has been very observable, that persons of the greatest understanding, and who had studied most about things of this nature, have been more confounded than others. Some such persons declare, that all their former wisdom is brought to nought, and that they appear to have been mere babes, who knew nothing. It has appeared, that none have stood more in need of instruction, even of their fellow-Christians, concerning their own circumstances and difficulties, than they: and it seems to have been with delight, that they have seen themselves thus brought down, and become nothing; that free grace and divine power may be exalted in them.

It was very wonderful to see how persons affections were sometimes moved—when God did as it were suddenly open their eyes, and let into their minds a sense of the greatness of His grace, the fullness of Christ, and His readiness to save—after having been broken 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 have been ready to break forth into laughter, tears often at the same time issuing like a flood, and intermingling a loud weeping. Sometimes they have not 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, reading something concerning God's sovereign way of saving sinners, as being self-moved—having no regard to men's own righteousness as the motive of His grace, but as magnifying Himself and abasing man, or to that purpose—felt such a sudden rapture of joy and delight in the consideration of it: and yet then he suspected himself to be in a Christless condition, and had been long 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 do not think themselves to be converted, but conclude otherwise; and none knows how long they would continue so, were they not helped by particular instructions. There are undoubted instances of some who have lived in this way for many years together; and these circumstances had various consequences, with various persons, and with the same persons, at various times. Some continue in great encouragement and hope, that they shall obtain mercy in a steadfast resolution to persevere in seeking it, and in an humble waiting in it before God. But very often, when the lively sense of the sufficiency of Christ and the riches of divine grace, begins to vanish, upon a withdrawalment of divine influences, they return to greater distress than ever. For they have now a far greater sense of the misery of a natural condition than before, being in a new manner sensible of the reality of eternal things, the greatness of God, 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 wont to neglect: in such a case, persons very much need a guide to

lead them to an understanding of what we are taught in the word of God concerning the nature of grace, and to help them to apply it to themselves.

I have been much blamed and censured by many, that I should make it my practice, when I have been satisfied concerning persons' good estate, to signify it to them. This has been greatly misrepresented abroad, as 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 of, has rather been qualifications, and declared experiences, than persons. Not but that I have thought it my duty, as a pastor, to assist and instruct persons in applying Scripture—rules and characters to their own case (in which, I think, many greatly need a guide); and I have, where the case appeared plain, used freedom in signifying my hope of them to others. I am sensible the practice would have been safer in the hands of one of a riper judgment and greater experience: but yet, there seems to be an absolute necessity of it on the forementioned accounts; and it has been found what God has most remarkably owned and blessed amongst us, both to the persons themselves, and to others.

Grace in many persons, through this ignorance of their state, and their looking on themselves still as the objects of God's displeasure, has been like the trees in winter, or like seed in the spring 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 thereupon. And when it has once come into their minds to inquire, whether or not this was not true grace, they have been much afraid lest they should be deceived with common illuminations and flashes of affection, and eternally undone with a false hope. But when they have been better instructed, and so brought to allow of hope, this has awakened the gracious disposition of their hearts into life and vigor as the warm beams of the sun in the spring have quickened the seeds and productions of the earth. Grace being now at liberty, and cherished with hope, has soon flowed out to their abundant satisfaction and increase.

There is no one thing that I know of which God has made such a means of promoting His work amongst us, as the news of others' conversion. This has been owned in awakening sinners, engaging them earnestly to seek the same blessing, and in quickening saints. Though I have thought that a minister declaring his judgment about particular persons' experiences, might from these things be justified; yet I often signify to my people how unable man is to know another's heart, and how unsafe it is to depend merely on the judgment of others. I have abundantly insisted, that a manifestation of sincerity in fruits brought forth, is better than any manifestation they can make of it in words alone: and that without this, all pretenses to spiritual experiences are vain. This all my congregation can witness. And the people in general have manifested an extraordinary dread of being deceived; being exceeding fearful lest they should build wrong. Some of them have been backward to receive hope, even to a great extreme, which 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 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 persons; in some it seems to be very discernible when the very time was; but others are more at a loss. In this respect, there are very many who do not know, even when they have it, that it is the grace of conversion, and sometimes do not think it to be so till a long time after. Many, even when they come to entertain great hopes 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 more clear and remarkable experience which they had afterwards, was not the first of a saving nature. The manner of God's work on the soul, sometimes especially, is very mysterious; and it is with the kingdom of God as to its manifestation in the heart of a convert, as is said, Mark 4:26, 27, 28, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of 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 upon a person, and all around him: they are in a remarkable manner brought out of darkness into marvelous light. In many others it has been like the dawning of the day, when at first but a little light appears, and it may be presently hid with a cloud; and then it appears again, and shines a little brighter, and gradually increases, with intervening darkness, till at length it breaks forth more clearly from behind the clouds. And many are, doubtless, ready to date their conversion wrong, throwing by those lesser degrees of light that appeared at first dawning, and calling some more remarkable experience they had afterwards, their conversion. This often, in a great measure, arises from a wrong understanding of what they have always been taught, that conversion is a great change, wherein old things are done away, and all things become new, or at least from a false inference from that doctrine.

Persons commonly at first conversion, and afterwards, have had many texts of Scripture brought to their minds, which are exceeding suitable to their circumstances, often come with great power, as the word of God or of 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 brimful, enlarging the heart, and opening the mouth in religion. And it seems to be 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 in a way of immediate revelation, without any use of the memory; but yet there seems plainly 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 no otherwise than by leading them into such frames and meditations as harmonize with those Scriptures; but in many persons there seems to be something more than this.

Those who, while under legal convictions, have had the greatest terrors, have not always obtained the greatest light and comfort; nor have they always light most suddenly communicated; but yet, I think, the time of conversion has generally been most sensible in such persons. Oftentimes, the first sensible 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 Savior, when terror and distress of conscience begin to be turned into an humble, meek sense of their own unworthiness before God. There is felt, inwardly, sometimes a disposition to praise God; and after a little while the light comes in more clearly and powerfully. But yet, I think, more frequently, great terrors have been followed with more sudden and great light and comfort; when the sinner seems to be as it were 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.

Converting influences very 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 divine excellency there is in the gospel, which is more effectual to convince them than reading many volumes of arguments without it. It seems to me, that in many instances, when the glory of Christian truths has been set before persons, and they have at the same time as it were seen, and tasted, and felt the divinity of them, they have been as far from doubting their truth as they are from doubting whether there be a sun, when their eyes are open in the midst of a clear hemisphere, and the strong blaze of His light overcomes all objections. And yet, many of them, if we should ask them why they believed those things to be true, would not be able well to express or communicate a sufficient reason to satisfy the inquirer; and perhaps would make no other answer but that they see Him to be true. But a person might 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, most illustrious and 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 that they are meditating on, or reading of, in some portion of Scripture. Some have such conviction 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, but who yet have very clear exercises of grace; i.e. of love to God, repentance, and holiness. And if they be more particularly examined, they appear plainly to have an inward firm persuasion of the reality of divine things, such as they did not use to have before their conversion. And those who have the most clear discoveries of divine truth in the manner that has been mentioned, cannot have this always in view. When the sense and relish of the divine excellency of these things fades, on a withdrawal of the Spirit of God, they have not the medium of the conviction of their truth at command. In a dull frame, they cannot recall the idea and inward sense they had, perfectly to mind; things appear very dim to what they did before. And though there still remains an habitual strong persuasion; yet not so as to exclude temptations to unbelief, and all possibility of doubting. But then, at particular times, by God's help, the same sense of things revives again, like fire that lay hid in ashes.

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

The arguments are the same that they have heard hundreds of times; but the force of the arguments, and their conviction by them, is altogether new; they come with a new and before unexperienced power. Before, they heard it was so, and they allowed it to be so; but now they see it to be so indeed. Things now look exceeding plain to them, and they wonder they did not see them before. They are so greatly taken with their new discovery, and things appear so plain and so rational to them, that they are often at first ready to think they can convince others; and are apt to engage in talk with every one they meet with, almost to this end; and when they are disappointed, are ready to wonder that their reasonings seem to make no more impression.

Many fall under such a mistake as to be ready to doubt of their good estate, because there was so much use made of their own reason in the convictions they have received; they are afraid that they have no illumination above the natural force of their own faculties: and many make that an objection against 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 neither man nor angel can give such a conviction of; but it seems to them that these things are so plain and easy, and rational, that any body can see them. If they are asked, why they never saw thus before, they say, it seems to them it was because they never thought of it. But very often these difficulties are soon removed by those of another nature; for when God withdraws, they find themselves as it were blind again, they for the present lose their realizing sense of those things that looked so plain to them, and, by all they can do, they cannot recover it, till God renews the influence of His Spirit.

Persons after their conversion often speak of religious things as seeming new to them; that preaching is a new thing; that it seems to them they never heard preaching before; that the Bible is a new book: they find there new chapters, new psalms, new histories, because they see them in a new light. Here was a remarkable instance of an aged woman, of about seventy years, 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 to be astonished at what she read, as what was real and very wonderful, but quite new to her. At first, before she had time to turn her thoughts, she wondered within herself, that she had never heard of it before; but then immediately recollected herself, and thought she had often heard of it, and read it, but never till now saw it as real. She then 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 Savior; though she was a person, apparently, of 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 about her, and knew not what was the matter, were surprised, and thought she was dying.

Many have spoken much of their hearts being drawn out in love to God and Christ; and of their minds being wrapt up in delightful contemplation of the glory and wonderful grace of God, the excellency and dying love of Jesus Christ; and of their souls going forth in longing desires after God and Christ. Several persons have had so great a sense of the glory of God, and excellency of Christ, that nature and life seemed almost to sink under it; and in all probability, if God had showed them a little more of Himself, it would have dissolved their frame. I have seen some, and conversed with them in such frames, who have certainly been perfectly sober, and very remote from any thing like enthusiastic wildness. And they have talked, when able to speak, of the glory of God's perfections, the wonderfulness of His grace in Christ, and their own unworthiness, in such a manner as cannot be perfectly expressed after them. 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.

Such persons amongst us as have been thus distinguished with the most extraordinary discoveries, have commonly nowise appeared with the assuming, self-conceited, and self-sufficient airs of enthusiasts, but exceedingly the contrary. They are eminent for a spirit of meekness, modesty, self-diffidence, and a low opinion of themselves. No persons appear so sensible of their need of instruction and so eager to receive it, as some of them; nor so ready to think others better than themselves. Those that have been considered as converted amongst us, have generally manifested a longing to lie low and in the dust before God; withal complaining of their not being able to lie low enough.

They speak much of their sense of excellency in 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 made 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 of the inexpressibleness of what they experience, how their words fail, so that they cannot declare it. And particularly they speak with exceeding admiration of the superlative excellency of that pleasure and delight which they sometimes enjoy; how a little of it is sufficient to pay them for all the pains and trouble they have 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 mean and worthless all these things appear to them.

Many, while their minds have been filled with spiritual delights, have as it were forgot their food; their bodily appetite has failed, while their minds have been entertained with meat to eat that others knew not of. The light and comfort which some of them enjoy, give a new relish to their common blessings, and cause all things about them to appear as it were beautiful, sweet, and pleasant. The supreme attention of their minds is to the glorious excellencies of God and Christ; and there is very often a ravishing sense of God's love accompanying a sense of His excellency. They rejoice in a sense of the faithfulness of God's promises, as they respect the future eternal enjoyment of Him.

The unparalleled joy that many of them speak of, is what 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, depending not at all on themselves, but alone on Christ, and ascribing all glory to God. Then their souls are most in the enjoyment of satisfying rest; excepting that, at such times, they apprehend themselves to be not sufficiently self-abased; for then above all times do they long to be lower. Some speak much of the exquisite sweetness, and rest of soul, that is to be found in the exercise of resignation to God, and humble submission to His will. Many express earnest longings of soul to praise God; but at the same time complain that they cannot praise Him as they would, and they want to have others help them in praising Him. They want to have every one praise God, and are ready to call upon every thing 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 complain of their insufficiency and barrenness; that they are poor and impotent creatures, can do nothing of themselves, and are utterly insufficient to glorify their Creator and Redeemer.

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

There are some persons whom I have been acquainted with, but more especially two, that belong to other towns, who have been swallowed up exceedingly with a sense of the awful greatness and majesty

of God; and both of them told me to this purpose, that if, at the time, they had entertained the least fear that they were not at peace with this so great a God, they should certainly have died.

It is worthy to be remarked, that some persons, by their conversion, seem to be greatly helped as to their doctrinal notions of religion. It was particularly remarkable in one, who, having been taken captive in his childhood, was trained up in Canada in the popish religion. Some years since he returned to his native place, and was in a measure brought off from popery; but seemed very awkward and dull in receiving any 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 persons' experiences, both at and after conversion; some have grace working more sensibly in one way, others in another. Some speak more fully of a conviction of the justice of God in their condemnation; others, more of their consenting to the way of salvation by Christ; and some, more of the actings of love to God and Christ. Some speak more 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 desire after God, to have communion with Him; and others, more of their abhorrence to themselves for their past sins, and earnest longings to live to God's glory for the time to come. But it seems evidently to be the same work, 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 persons. There is an endless variety in the particular manner and circumstances in which persons are wrought on; and an opportunity of seeing so much will show that God is further from confining Himself to a particular method in His work on souls than some imagine. I believe it has occasioned some good people amongst us, who were before too ready to make their own experience a rule to 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; it has the more 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 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 should seem needless to them; unless it be at particular seasons, while in the actual enjoyment of some great discovery God gives of His glory and rich grace in Christ, to the drawing forth of extraordinary acts of grace. But the greater part, as they sometimes fall into dead frames of spirit, are frequently exercised with scruples and fears concerning their condition.

They generally have an awful apprehension of the dreadful nature of a false hope; and there has been observable in most a great caution, lest in giving an account of their experiences, they should say too much, and use too strong terms. Many, after they have related their experiences, have been greatly afflicted with fears, lest they have played the hypocrite, and used stronger terms than their case would fairly allow of; and yet could not find how they could correct themselves.

I think the main ground of the doubts and fears that persons after their conversion have been exercised with about their own state, has been, that they have found so much corruption remaining in their hearts. At first, their souls seem to be all alive, their hearts are fixed, and their affections flowing; they seem to live quite above the world, and meet with but little difficulty in religious exercises; and they are ready to

think it will always be so. Though they are truly abased under a sense of their vileness, by reason of former acts of sin, yet they are not then sufficiently sensible what corruption still remains in their hearts; and therefore are surprised when they find that they begin to be in dull and dead frames, troubled with wandering thoughts at the time of public and private worship, and utterly unable to keep themselves from them. When they find themselves unaffected, while yet there is the greatest occasion to be affected; and when they feel worldly dispositions working in them—pride, envy, stirrings of revenge, or some ill spirit towards some person that has injured them, as well as other workings of indwelling sin—their hearts are almost sunk with the disappointment; and they are ready presently to think 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 complain of the hardness and wickedness of their hearts; and say there is so much corruption, that it seems to them impossible there should be any goodness there. Many of them seem to be much more sensible how corrupt their hearts are, than before they were converted; and some have been too ready to be impressed with fear, that instead of becoming better, they are grown much worse, and make it an argument against the goodness of their state. But the truth, the case seems plainly to be, that now they feel the pain of their own wound; they have a watchful eye upon their hearts, that they did not use to have. They take more notice of what sin is there, which is now more burdensome to them; they strive more against it, and feel more of its strength.

They are somewhat surprised that they should in this respect find themselves so different from the idea they generally had entertained of godly persons. For, though grace be indeed of a far more excellent nature than they imagined, yet those who are godly have much less of it, and much more remaining corruption, than they thought. They never realized it, that persons were wont to meet with such difficulties, after they were once converted. That which was the sweetest, best, and most distinguishing in their experiences, they cannot recover a sense of. But on a return of the influences of the Spirit of God, to revive the lively actings of grace, the light breaks through the cloud, and doubting and darkness soon vanish away.

Persons are often revived out of their dead and dark frames by religious conversation: while they are talking of divine things, or ever they are aware, their souls are carried away into holy exercises with abundant pleasure. And oftentimes, while relating their past experiences to their Christian brethren, they have a sense of them revived, and the same experiences are in a degree again renewed. Sometimes, while persons are exercised in mind with several objections against the goodness of their state, they have Scriptures one after another coming to their minds, to answer their scruples, and unravel their difficulties, exceedingly apposite and proper to their circumstances. By these means, their darkness is scattered; and often, before the bestowment of any new remarkable comfort, especially after long continued deadness and ill frames, there are renewed humblings, in a great sense of their own exceeding vileness and unworthiness, as before their first comforts were bestowed.

Many in the country have entertained a mean thought of this great work, from what they have heard of impressions made on persons' imaginations. But there have been exceeding great misrepresentations, and innumerable false reports, concerning that matter. It is not, that I know of, the profession or opinion of any one person in the town, that any weight is to be laid on any thing seen with the bodily eyes. I know the contrary to be a received and established principle amongst us. I cannot say that there have been no instances of persons who have been ready to give too much heed to vain and useless



imaginations; but they have been easily corrected, and I conclude it will not be wondered at, that a congregation should need a guide in such cases, to assist them in distinguishing wheat from chaff. But such impressions on the imaginations as have been more usual seem to me to be plainly no other 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.

The vigorous exercises of the mind, doubtless, more strongly impress it with imaginary ideas in some than others, which probably may arise from the difference of constitution, and seems evidently in some, partly to arise from their peculiar circumstances. When persons have been exercised with extreme terrors, and there is a sudden change to light and joy, the imagination seems more susceptible of strong ideas; the inferior powers, and even the frame of the body, are much more affected, than when the same persons have as great spiritual light and joy afterwards; of which it might, perhaps, be easy to give a reason. The forementioned Reverend Messrs. Lord and Owen—who, I believe, are esteemed persons of learning and discretion where they are best known—declared, that they found these impressions on persons' imaginations quite different things from what fame had before represented to them, and that they were what none need to wonder at—or to that purpose.

There have indeed been some few instances of impressions on persons imaginations, which have been somewhat mysterious to me, and I have been at a loss about them. For, though it has been exceeding evident to me, by many things that appeared both then and afterwards, that they indeed had a greater sense of the spiritual excellency of divine things accompanying them, yet I have not been able well to satisfy myself 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 in private to teach persons the difference between what is spiritual and what is merely imaginary. I have often warned persons not to lay the stress of their hope on any ideas of any outward glory, or any external thing whatsoever, and have met with no opposition in such instructions. But it is not strange if some weaker persons, in giving an account of their experiences, have not so prudently distinguished between the spiritual and imaginary part; of which some who have not been well affected to religion might take advantage.

There has been much talk in many parts of the country, as though the people have symbolized with the Quakers, and the Quakers themselves have been moved with such reports; and some came here, once and again, hoping to find good waters to fish in, but without the least success, and have left off coming. also been reports spread about the country, as though the first occasion of so remarkable a concern was an apprehension that the world was near to an end; which was altogether a false report. Indeed, after this concern became so general and extraordinary, as related, the minds of some were filled with speculation what so great a dispensation of Divine Providence might forebode; and some reports were heard from abroad, as though certain divines and others thought the conflagration was nigh; but such reports were never generally looked upon worthy of notice.

The work which has now been wrought on souls, is evidently the same that was wrought in my venerable predecessor's days; as I have had abundant opportunity to know, having been in the ministry here two years with him, and so conversed with a considerable number whom my grandfather thought to be savingly converted at that time; and having been particularly acquainted with the experiences of many who were converted under his ministry before. And I know no one of them, who in the least doubts of its being the same Spirit and the same work. Persons have now no otherwise been subject to

impressions on their imaginations than formerly: the work is of the same nature, and has not been attended with any extraordinary circumstances, excepting such as are analogous to the extraordinary degree of it before described. And God's people who were formerly converted have now partaken of the same shower of divine blessing—in the renewing, strengthening, edifying, influences of the Spirit of God—that others have in His converting influences; and the work here has also been plainly the same with that of other places which have been mentioned, as partaking of the same blessing. I have particularly conversed with persons 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 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 one with another about their spiritual experiences; which 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. Whatsoever people have their minds engaged to such a degree in the same affair, that it is ever uppermost in their thoughts, they will naturally make it the subject of conversation 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. And it has been a practice which, in the general, has been attended with many good effects, and what God has greatly blessed amongst us: but it must be confessed, there may have been some ill consequences of it; which yet are rather to be laid to the indiscreet management of it than to the practice itself; and none can wonder, if among such a multitude some fail of exercising so much prudence in choosing the time, manner, and occasion of such discourse, as is desirable.