

THOUGHTS
ON THE
REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN NEW ENGLAND

By Jonathan Edwards
(1740)

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The *occasion* of the following treatise will be seen, in part, in the preceding narrative.¹ The gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, with which Northampton was so abundantly enriched, and which spread through many towns in its vicinity, were soon followed with a very extensive revival over the land. An extraordinary zeal was excited in many gospel ministers. Itinerants travelled the country and preached daily. They addressed their crowded audiences, not in the dull monotony of a mere moral lecture, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. Their indefatigable labors were crowned with the most desirable success. Zion put on her robes of salvation. Converts to Jesus were multiplied like the drops of morning dew. Religion became almost the only subject of concern. Many indulged the hope that the millennial glory was commencing.

This glorious work had its opposers. Advantage was taken of the errors of some of its most zealous promoters to decry it, and render it altogether suspicious. Mr. Edwards' desire was to vindicate it as undoubtedly a work of God, and among the most admirable of His triumphs over the hearts of his enemies; to correct the errors which attended it; and to excite augmented efforts for its increase.

The scene which he describes is past. However, let it live in our memories. Let it excite our fervent gratitude, and call forth the devout aspirations of our souls for the spread of the victories of our glorious King in these days. Let the pertinent and instructive sentiments wrought into the treatise — most of which are adapted to every condition in which the church and the individual believer can be placed — take deep hold of our hearts, and be carried out in their proper effects on our lives.

This work had a second edition in Scotland, soon after it was first published in this country.

¹ Referring to Edwards' *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, Works, vol. 3, pp. 231-272.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In the ensuing treatise, I condemn ministers assuming, or taking too much upon themselves, and appearing as though they supposed they were the people to whom it especially belonged to dictate, direct, and determine. But perhaps I will be thought to be very guilty of it myself. Some, when they read this treatise, may be ready to say that I condemn this in *others*, so that I may have a monopoly over it. I confess that I have taken a great deal of liberty to freely express my thoughts concerning almost everything pertaining to the wonderful work of God that has lately been carried on in the land, and to declare what appeared to me to be the mind of God concerning the duty and obligations of all sorts of people, even those who are my superiors and fathers, ministers of the gospel, and civil rulers. Yet I hope the liberty I have taken is not greater than can be justified. In this nation, such liberty of the press is allowed, that every author takes leave, without offence, to freely speak his opinion concerning the management of public affairs, and the duty of the legislature, and of those who are at the head of the administration, even though vastly his superiors. Now at this day, private subjects offer their sentiments to the public from the press, concerning the management of the war with Spain; freely declaring what they think the duty of the Parliament is, and of the principal ministers of state, etc. We in New England are at this day engaged in a more important war. I am sure, if we consider the sad wrangling and confusion that has attended it, we will confess that it is highly requisite that somebody should speak his mind concerning the way in which it ought to be managed. Not only a few of the many particulars that are the matter of strife in the land, should be debated on one side and the other in pamphlets (as recently done with heat and fierceness enough). This doesn't tend to bring the contention in general to an end, but rather to inflame it, and to increase the uproar.

But *something* should be published to bring the affair in general, and also the many things that attend it, which are subjects of debate, under a particular consideration. Certainly it is high time this was done. If private people may speak their minds without arrogance, then much more may a minister of the kingdom of Christ speak freely about things of this nature which so nearly concern the interest of the kingdom of his Lord and Master, at so important a juncture. If some elder minister had undertaken this, I acknowledge that it would have been more proper. But I have heard of no such thing being done, nor likely to be done. I therefore hope I will be excused for undertaking such a piece of work. I think nothing that I have said can justly be interpreted as though I would impose my thoughts on anyone, or suppose that others would not have an equal right with myself, to think for themselves. We are not accountable to one another for our thoughts; but we must all give an account to Him who searches our hearts, and doubtless has His eye especially on us at such an extraordinary season as this. If I have well-confirmed with Scripture and reason, my opinion concerning this work, and the way in which it should be acknowledged and promoted, then I hope others who read it will receive it as a manifestation of the mind and will of God. If others would hold forth further light to me in any of these particulars, I hope I would thankfully receive it.

I think I have been made in some measure sensible, and much more lately than formerly, of my need for more wisdom than I have. I make it my rule to lay hold of light and embrace it wherever I see it, even if held forth by a child or an enemy. If I have assumed too much in the following discourse, and have spoken in a manner that savors of a spirit of pride, it would be

no wonder if others can better discern it than I myself. If it is so, I ask pardon, and beg the prayers of every Christian reader, that I may have more light, humility, and zeal; and that I may be favored with such measures of the divine Spirit, as a minister of the gospel stands in need of, in such an extraordinary season.

REVIVAL OF RELIGION

IN
NEW ENGLAND.

PART I.

Showing that the extraordinary work that has of late been going on in the land, is a glorious work of God.

The error of those who have had ill thoughts ¹ about the great religious operations on the minds of men, that have been carried on of late in New England (so far as the ground of such an error has been in the *understanding*, and not in the *disposition*), seems to fundamentally lie in three things:

First. Judging this work *a priori*. ²

Secondly. Not taking the holy Scriptures as a *whole rule* by which to judge such operations.

Thirdly. Not justly separating and distinguishing the good from the bad.

1. They have greatly erred in the way in which they have gone about testing this work, whether it is a work of the Spirit of God or not; *namely*, in judging it *a priori* — from the way it began, the instruments employed, the means made use of, and the methods taken and succeeded in carrying it on. To the contrary, if we duly consider the matter, it will appear evident that such a work is not to be judged *a priori*, but *a posteriori*.³ We are to observe the effect wrought; and if upon examination of it, it is found to be agreeable to the word of God, we are bound, without more ado, to rest in it as God's work. We will likely be rebuked for our arrogance, if we refuse to do so, till God explains to us how he has brought this effect to pass, or why he has made use of such and such means in doing it. These texts are enough to cause us to forbear with trembling, such a way of proceeding in judging a work of God's Spirit:

Isa 40.13-14, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel? And who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?"

Joh 3.8, "The wind blows where it wishes; and you hear the sound of it; but cannot tell where it comes from, and where it goes."

We hear the sound, we perceive the effect, and from there we judge that the wind does indeed blow, without waiting before we pass this judgment — first to be satisfied what the *cause* is of the wind's blowing from such a part of the heavens, and then how it comes to pass that it blows in such a manner, at such a time.

To judge *a priori*, is a wrong way to judge any of the works of God. We are not to resolve that we will first be satisfied how God brought this or the other effect to pass, and why he has made it thus, or why it pleased him to take such a course, and to use such and such means, before

¹ *Ill thoughts*: to consider something as morally reprehensible or wicked; to think badly of it.

² *a priori*: here it means derived by logic, without observed facts, or disregarding observable facts.

³ *a posteriori*: reasoning from observed facts to general principles, from effects to causes.

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we will acknowledge His work, and give Him the glory for it. This is too much for the *clay* to take upon itself with respect to the *Potter*.

God does not give an account of His matters. His judgments are a great deep. He has his way in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known; and who will teach God knowledge, or enjoin him in his way, or say to him, what are you doing? We don't know what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child; even so, we don't know the works of God, who makes all.

It is no wonder, therefore, if those who go to work in this forbidden way, in judging the present wonderful operation, are perplexed and confounded. We ought to take heed that we don't expose ourselves to the calamity of those who pried into the ark of God, when God mercifully returned it to Israel after it had departed from them.

Indeed, God has not taken that course, nor made use of those means, to begin and carry on this great work, which men in their wisdom would have thought most advisable if He had asked their counsel; but quite the contrary. But it appears to me that the great God has worked like Himself in the manner of carrying on this work, so as to very much show his own glory, and exalt his own sovereignty, power, and all-sufficiency, and pour contempt on all that human strength, wisdom, prudence, and sufficiency which men are prone to trust and to glory in. He has worked so as to greatly cross, rebuke, and chastise the pride and other corruptions of men, in a fulfilment of Isa 2.17: "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." God does it by intermingling in His providence, so many stumbling-blocks with this work; in allowing so much of human weakness and infirmity to appear; and in ordering so many things that are mysterious to men's wisdom. By pouring out his Spirit chiefly on the common people, and bestowing his greatest and highest favors upon them — allowing them to draw nearer to himself than the great, the honorable, the rich, and the learned — it is agreeable to that prophecy in Zec 12.7: "The Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not surpass that of Judah." Those who dwelled in the tents of Judah were the common people, who dwelt in the country, and were of inferior rank. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were their citizens, their men of wealth and figure. And Jerusalem was also the chief place of the habitation or resort of their priests, and Levites, and their officers and judges; there sat the great Sanhedrim. Those of the house of David were the highest rank of all, *the royal family*, and the great men who were around the king. It is evident by the context, that this prophecy regards something more than saving the people from the Babylonian captivity.

God in this work has begun at the lower end. He has made use of the weak and foolish things of the world to carry on His work. Some of the ministers who have been chiefly employed, have been mere babes in age and standing. Some of them have not been so high in reputation among their fellows as many others. And God has allowed their infirmities to appear in the sight of others, so as to greatly displease them. At the same time, it pleased God to employ them, and to greatly succeed them, while he has not so succeeded others who are generally reputed to be vastly their superiors. Yes, there is reason to think that it pleased God to make use of the infirmities and sins of some whom He employed and succeeded — in particular, their imprudent and rash zeal, and censorious spirit — in order to chastise the deadness,

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negligence, earthly mindedness, and vanity that have been found among ministers in recent times of general declension and deadness; times in which wise virgins, and foolish ministers and people, have sunk into such a deep sleep. These things in ministers of the gospel, who go forth as the ambassadors of Christ, and have the care of immortal souls, are extremely abominable to God. They are vastly more hateful in His sight than all the imprudence and intemperate heats, the wildness and distraction (as some call it) of these zealous preachers. A supine carelessness, and a vain, carnal, worldly spirit in a minister of the gospel, is the worst madness and distraction in the sight of God. In this day, God may also make use of the unchristian censoriousness of some preachers, to more humble and purify some of His own children and true servants who have been wrongfully censured, in order to fit them for more eminent service, and the future honor that He designs for them.

2. Another foundational error of those who do not acknowledge the divinity of this work, is not taking the Holy Scripture *as a whole*, and *in itself* a sufficient rule by which to judge such things. Those who have one certain and consistent rule to judge by, are likely to come to some clear determination. But for those who have half a dozen different rules to make the thing they would judge agree to, it's no wonder that instead of justly and clearly determining the truth, they only perplex and darken themselves and others. Those who would learn the *true* measure of anything, and yet have many different measures to test it by, and wish to find conformity to it, have a task that they will not accomplish.

Those I am speaking about, will indeed make some use of Scripture, so far as they think it serves their turn. But they don't make use of it *alone*, as a sufficient rule by itself. Rather, they make as much, and a great deal *more* use of other things, diverse and wide from it, by which to judge this work. In particular:

(1) Some make philosophy, instead of the Holy Scriptures, their rule for judging this work — particularly the philosophical notions that they entertain about the nature of the soul, its faculties and affections. Some are ready to say, "There is but little sober, solid religion in this work. It is little else but flash and noise. Religion now-a-days runs out into transports, and high flights of the passions and affections." In their philosophy, the affections of the soul are something different from the will — not pertaining to the noblest part of the soul, but the meanest principles that it has. These belong to man as part of his animal nature, and what he has in common with the brute creation, rather than anything by which he is conformed to angels and pure spirits. Though they acknowledge that a good use may be made of the affections in religion, they suppose that the substantial part of religion doesn't consist in those, but rather, they are to be seen as something adventitious and incidental in Christianity.

I cannot help but think that these gentlemen labor under great mistakes, both in their philosophy and their divinity. It's true, a distinction must be made in affections or passions. There is a great difference between *high* affections, and *raised* affections, which must be distinguished by the skill of the observer. Some are much more solid than others. There are many exercises of the affections that are very flashy, and little to be depended on. Often there is a great deal that pertains to them, or rather that is the effect of them, that has its seat in the animal nature, and is very much owing to the constitution and frame of the body; and what sometimes gets the special name of *passion*, is nothing solid or substantial. But it is false

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philosophy to suppose that this is the case with all exercises of affection in the soul, or with all great and high affections. And it is false divinity to suppose that religious affections don't pertain to the substance and essence of Christianity. On the contrary, it seems to me that the very life and soul of all true religion consists in them.

I humbly conceive that the affections of the soul are improperly distinguished from the will, as though they were two separate faculties in the soul. All acts of the affections of the soul are in some sense acts of the will, and all acts of the will are acts of the affections. All exercises of the will are in some degree or other, exercises of the soul's appetite or aversion; or (which is the same thing) of its love or hatred. The soul wills one thing rather than another, or chooses one thing rather than another, no differently than it loves one thing more than another. But love and hatred are affections of the soul. And therefore, all acts of the will are truly acts of the affections; though the exercises of the will are not termed *passions*, unless the will, either in its aversion or opposition, is exercised to a high degree, or in a vigorous and lively manner.

All will concede that true virtue or holiness has its seat chiefly in the heart, rather than in the head. It therefore follows from what has been said already, that it consists chiefly in holy affections. The things of religion take place in men's hearts, no further than they are *affected* by them. The informing of the understanding is all vain, any further than it *affects* the heart; or which is the same thing, it influences the *affections*.¹

Those gentlemen who make light of these raised affections in religion, will doubtless allow² that true religion and holiness, as it has its seat in the heart, is capable of very high degrees and high exercises in the soul. For instance, they will doubtless allow that the *holiness* of the heart or will, is capable of being raised to a hundred times as great a degree of strength as it is in the most eminent saint on earth; or being exerted a hundred times as strong and vigorous as the exercises of the heart. Yet it will still be *true* religion or holiness, except in a higher degree. Therefore, I would now ask them, by what terms will they call these high and vigorous exercises of the will or heart? Are they not *high affections*? What can they consist in, if not high acts of love; strong and vigorous exercises of benevolence and complacence;³ high, exalting, and admiring thoughts of God and his perfections; strong desires for God, etc.? And now, what have we come to if not high and raised affections? Yes, those very same high and raised affections that they previously objected to, or made light of, as worthy of little regard?

I further suppose that all will allow that there is nothing but solid religion in heaven — except that there, religion and holiness of heart are raised to an exceedingly great height, to strong, high, exalted exercises of heart. Now, what other kinds of such exceedingly strong and high exercises of the heart, or of holiness — as it has its seat in their hearts — can we devise for these, if not holy affections, high degrees of actings of love to God, rejoicing in God, admiring of God, etc.? Therefore, these things in the saints and angels in heaven, are not to be despised and dismissed by terms like “great heats” and “transports of the passions.”

¹ In 1746, Edwards will write his classic work, *Religious Affections*, further exploring this topic.

² *Allow*: to admit, agree to, or concede a point.

³ *Complacence* or complacency, is the feeling we have when fully satisfied (content).

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Doubtless it will be further allowed that the more eminent the saints are on earth, and the stronger their grace is, and the higher its exercises, the more they are like the saints in heaven; *i.e.*, (by what was just now observed) the more they have high or raised affections in religion.

Though there are *false* affections in religion — affections that in some respects are raised high, and are flashy¹ — undoubtedly there are also *true*, holy, and solid affections. And the higher these true ones are raised, the better. If they are raised to an exceedingly great height, they are not to be thought badly of, or suspected, merely because of their great degree. On the contrary, they are to be esteemed and rejoiced in. Charity or divine love is represented in Scripture as the sum of all the religion of the heart (Rom 13.10); this is nothing but a holy *affection*. Therefore, in proportion to how firmly this is fixed in the soul, and raised to a great height, the more eminent a person is in *holiness*. Divine love or charity is represented as the sum of all the religion of heaven; it is what the religion of the church will mainly consist in, in its more perfect state on earth— when knowledge, tongues, and prophesying will cease. And therefore, the higher this holy affection is raised in the church of God, or in a gracious soul, the more excellent and perfect is the state of the church, or of a particular soul.

If we take the Scriptures for our rule then, the greater and higher the exercises of love to God are — delight and complacency in God; desires and longings after God; delight in the children of God; love to mankind; brokenness of heart; abhorrence of sin, and self-abhorrence *for* sin; the peace of God which surpasses all understanding; joy in the Holy Ghost; joy unspeakable and full of glory; admiring thoughts of God; exulting and glorifying in God — that much higher Christ's religion, or that virtue which He and his apostles taught, is raised in the soul

It causes some to stumble, that religious affections should seem so powerful, or that they should be so *violent* in some people (as they express it). They are therefore ready to doubt whether it can be the Spirit of God, or whether this vehemence isn't rather a sign of the operation of an *evil* spirit. But why should such a doubt arise from no other ground than this? What is represented in Scripture, as more powerful in its effects than the Spirit of God? It is therefore called *the power of the Highest*, Luk 1.35. Its saving effect in the soul is called *the power of godliness*, 2Tim 3.5. So we read in 1Cor 2.4, of the *demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*. It is said to operate in the minds of men with the exceeding greatness of divine power, and *according to the working of God's mighty power*, Eph 1.19. So we read of the *effectual working of His power*, Eph 3.7; and of *the power that works in Christians*, 3.20. And of *the glorious power of God* in the operations of the Spirit, Col 1.11. And of *the work of faith being wrought with power*, 2The 1.11. In 2Tim 1.7, the Spirit of God is called *the spirit of power, and love, and of a sound mind*. So too, the Spirit is represented by a *mighty wind*, and by *fire* (Act 2.2; Mat 3.11) — things that are most powerful in their operation.

(2) Many are guilty of not taking the holy Scriptures as a sufficient and whole rule by which to judge whether this work is the work of God. They judge by those things which the Scripture does *not* give as any signs or marks by which to judge one way or the other. And therefore they judge by things which in no way belong to the Scripture rule: namely, the effects that religious exercises and affections of mind have upon the body. Scripture rules respect the state

¹ *Flashy*: showy; visually impressive, attention-getting.

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of the mind, and people's moral conduct, and voluntary behavior, and not the physical state of the body. The design of the Scripture is to teach us divinity, not physicality and anatomy. Ministers are made the watchmen of men's souls, not of their bodies. Therefore, the great rule which God has committed into their hands, is to make them divines, and not physicians. Christ knew better than we do, what instructions and rules his church would need. And if he had seen it needful for the church's safety, he doubtless would have given ministers rules to judge bodily effects; and he would have told them how the pulse should beat under such and such religious exercises of mind – when men should look pale; when they should shed tears; when they should tremble; whether or not they should ever be faint or cry out; or whether the body should ever convulse. He would probably have put some book into their hands, to make them excellent anatomists and physicians. But he hasn't done that, because he didn't see it as needed. He judged that if ministers did their duty thoroughly as watchmen and overseers of the state and frame of men's souls, and of their voluntary conduct, according to the rules he had given, his church would be well provided for as to its safety in these matters.

And therefore those ministers of Christ and overseers of souls, who busy themselves and are full of concern about the involuntary motions of the fluids and solids of men's bodies, and from there are full of doubts and suspicions about the cause, when nothing appears except that the state and frame of their minds and their voluntary behavior is good and agreeable with God's word – I say, such ministers step out of the place Christ has set them in, and they leave their proper business. It is like judging who is under the influence of the Spirit, by their looks or their gait. I cannot see in what way we are in danger, or how the devil is likely to get any notable advantage against us, if we but thoroughly do our duty with respect to those two things: (1) the state of people's minds, and (2) their moral conduct – seeing to it that they are maintained in accord with the rules that Christ has given us. If things are kept right in these two respects, then our fears and suspicions arising from extraordinary bodily effects seem wholly groundless.

The most specious thing that is alleged against these extraordinary effects on the body, is that the body is impaired, and health is wronged. It is hard to think that God, in the merciful influences of his Spirit on men, would wound their bodies and impair their health. But even if this were fairly common, or in multiplied instances (which I don't suppose it is) people received a lasting wound to their health by extraordinary religious impressions made upon their minds, it is too much for us to determine that God will never bring an outward calamity in bestowing a vastly greater spiritual and eternal good.

Jacob did his duty in wrestling with God for the blessing. And while God was striving with him, Jacob suffered a great outward calamity from God's hand, at the same time that he received the blessing from God. God impaired his body so that he never got over it as long as he lived. God gave him the blessing, but sent him away limping on his thigh, and he went lame all his life afterward (Gen 32.25). Yet this is not mentioned as if it were any diminution of the great mercy of God toward him when God blessed him. He received his name *Israel*, because like a Prince, he had power with God, and had prevailed.

But some say the operations of the Spirit of God are of a benign nature. Nothing is of a kinder influence on human nature, than the merciful breathings of God's own Spirit. But it has been generally supposed and allowed in the church of God till now, that there is such a thing as

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being *lovesick* toward Christ, or having our bodily strength weakened by strong and vigorous exercises of love towards him. (Song 2.5) But however kind to human nature the influences of the Spirit of God are, nobody doubts that divine and eternal things, as they may be revealed, might overpower the nature of man in its present weak state. And therefore the body in its present weakness, is not equipped for the views, pleasures, and employments of heaven. If God revealed but a little of what is seen by the saints and angels in heaven, our frail natures would sink under it. Indeed, I don't know what people may now deny, to defend themselves in a cause in which they have long engaged their spirits; but I know these things never used to be denied or doubted. Let us rationally consider what we profess to believe about the infinite greatness of the things of God, the divine wrath, the divine glory, the divine infinite love and grace in Jesus Christ, and the vastness and infinite importance of the things of eternity. Now consider how reasonable it is to suppose that if it pleased God to draw back the veil a little, and let light into the soul, and give somewhat of a view of the great things of another world in their transcendent and infinite greatness — that our human nature (which is like the grass, a shaking leaf, a weak and withering flower) might totter under such a revelation. Such a bubble is too weak to bear the weight of a view of things that are so vast. Alas! what is such dust and ashes, that it should support itself under a view of the awful wrath, or the infinite glory and love of Jehovah?

Therefore, it is no wonder that it is said, *No man can see me and live* (Exo 33.20), and *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God* (1Cor 15.50). The external glory and majesty of Christ which Daniel saw, when no strength remained in him and his vigor was turned into frailty, Dan. 10.6-8; and that glory which the apostle John saw, when he fell at his feet as if dead (Rev 1.17), was but an image or shadow of that spiritual glory and majesty of Christ, which will be manifested in the souls of the saints in another world. And sometimes, in some degree, it is manifested to the soul in this world, by the influences of the Spirit of God. If beholding the image and the external representation of this spiritual majesty and glory, so overpowered human nature, then is it unreasonable to suppose that the sight of the spiritual glory *itself* — which is the substance of that which was but a shadow — might have so powerful an effect? The prophet Habakkuk spoke of the awful manifestations God made of his majesty and wrath at the Red Sea; and in the wilderness; and at Mount Sinai where He gave the Law; and of the merciful influence and strong impression that God caused it to have on him. This was to the end that Habakkuk might be saved from that wrath, and rest in the day of trouble. Hab 3.16, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered my bones; I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble.” This is much the same effect that the revelation of the same majesty and wrath, in the same awful voice from Mount Sinai, had upon many in these recent days. And it is for the same purposes: to give them rest in the day of trouble, and to save them from that wrath. The Psalmist also speaks of that same effect that I have often seen on people under religious affections lately: Psa 119.131, “I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for your commandments.”

God is pleased sometimes, in distributing spiritual blessings to his people in some respect, to exceed the capacity of the vessel in its present scantiness. He not only fills it full, but he makes their *cup run over*, as in Psa 23.5. And He sometimes pours out a blessing in such a manner and measure, that there isn't room enough to receive it, Mal 3.10. He gives them more riches than they can carry away. He did this to Jehoshaphat and his people in a time of great favor.

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It came by the word of his prophet Jehaziel in answer to earnest prayer, when the people blessed the Lord in the valley of Berachah, 2Chr 20.14-26. It was so with the disciples of Christ, when for a long time, a time of great emptiness on spiritual accounts, they had gone hungry, and been toiling in vain during a dark season, a time of night for the church of God. It was so with the disciples of old, when they toiled all night for something to eat, and *caught nothing*, Luk 5.5, and Joh 21.3. But now, the morning has come. Jesus appears to his disciples, and takes a compassionate notice of their wants, and says to them. *Children, do you have any food?* He gives some of them such an abundance of food, that they are not able to draw in their net. Indeed, their net breaks and their vessel is overloaded, and it begins to sink. Thus it was with the disciples of old, Luk 5.6-7 and Joh 21.3-7.

We cannot determine that God will never give anyone so much of a revelation of Himself, as to not only weaken their body, but take away their lives. It is supposed by very learned and judicious divines, that Moses's life was taken away in this manner. And this was also supposed to be the case with some other saints. Indeed, I don't see any solid and sure grounds that anyone has to determine that God will never make such strong impressions on the mind by his Spirit, that it impairs the frame of the body and particularly *the brain*, that people are deprived of their use of reason. As I said before, it is too much for us to determine that God will not bring an outward calamity in bestowing spiritual and eternal blessings. So too, it is too much for us to determine how great an outward calamity He will bring. If God gives a great increase of revelations of Himself, and out of love for Him, the benefit is infinitely greater than the calamity. This is true even if the life were quickly taken away afterward — yes, even if the soul were *not* immediately taken to heaven, but lay for some years in a deep sleep, and then was taken to heaven — or much the same, if a soul were deprived of the use of its faculties, and inactive and unserviceable, laying as if in a deep sleep for some years, and then passed into glory. We cannot determine how great a calamity distraction¹ is, when considered with all its consequences, and all that might have been consequent if the distraction had *not* happened. Nor indeed can we determine whether (thus considered) it may be any calamity at all, or whether it is instead a mercy — by preventing some great sin, or some more dreadful thing if it had not happened.

It is a great fault in us to limit a sovereign, all-wise God, whose judgments are a great deep, and his ways past finding out, where He has not limited Himself; and to limit Him in things concerning which He has not told us what his way will be. It is remarkable, considering the multitude of instances, and how great a degree the frame of the body has been overpowered of late, that people's lives have notwithstanding been *preserved*. It's remarkable that the instances of those who have been deprived of reason have been so very few, and of those, perhaps all of them, people were under the peculiar disadvantage of a weak, nervous habit of body. A merciful and careful divine hand is very manifest in it, that in so many instances where the ship has begun to sink, it has yet been upheld, and hasn't totally sunk. The instances of those who have been deprived of reason are so few, that certainly they are not enough to cause us to be in any way frightened, as though this work that has been carried on in the

¹ *Distraction*: mental or emotional turmoil; "He is driving me to distraction!"

country, was likely to have a harmful influence — not unless we are disposed to gather up all that we can to darken it, and to set it forth in such frightful colors.

There is one particular kind of exercise and concern of mind that has overpowered many, and especially caused some to stumble. And that is the deep concern and distress they've been in for the souls of others. I am sorry that anyone would put us to the trouble of doing what seems so needless as *defending* such a thing as this. It seems like mere trifling in so plain a case, to enter into a formal and particular debate, in order to determine whether there is anything in the greatness and importance of the case that will correspond to, and bear a proportion to the greatness of the concern that some have manifested. Men may be allowed, from no higher a principle than common decency and humanity, to be very deeply concerned and greatly exercised in mind, at seeing others in great danger of no greater a calamity than drowning, or being burned up in a house fire. If so, then doubtless it will be allowed to be *equally* reasonable, if they saw them in danger of a calamity ten times greater, and were much more concerned. And even more so if the calamity was *vastly* greater. Why then should it be thought unreasonable, and looked at with a suspicious eye, as if it must come from some *bad* cause, when people are extremely concerned at seeing others in very great danger of suffering the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God unto all eternity? Besides, it will doubtless be allowed that those who have very great degrees of the Spirit of God, who is a spirit of love, may well be supposed to have vastly more of love and compassion for their fellow creatures, than those who are influenced only by common humanity. Why should it be thought strange that those who are full of the spirit of Christ, should be proportionately like Christ, in their love for souls? He had so strong a love for *them* and concern for *them*, as to be willing to *drink the dregs of the cup of God's fury for them?* (Isa 51.22; Luk 22.44). And at the same time that he offered up his blood for souls, he also offered up, *as their high priest, strong crying and tears* (Heb 5.6-7), with extreme agony, in which the soul of Christ was, as it were,¹ in travail for the souls of the elect. And therefore, in saving them he is said to *see the travail of his soul* (Isa 53.11).

As the spirit of Christ is a spirit of love to, and concern for souls, so it is the spirit of the *church*. Therefore, in desiring and seeking that Christ might be brought forth in the world, and in the souls of men, the church is represented in Rev 12.2, as a “woman crying, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” The spirit of those who have been in distress for the souls of others, so far as I can discern, doesn't seem to be different from that of the apostle, who travailed for souls, and was *ready to wish himself accursed from Christ for others* (Rom 9.3). Or that of the Psalmist, in Psa 119.53, “Horror has taken hold of me, because of the wicked who forsake your Law.” And 119.136, “Rivers of waters run down from my eyes, because they do not keep your Law.” Or that of the prophet Jeremiah, Jer 4.19, “My bowels! My bowels! ² I am pained in my very heart! My heart pounds in me! I cannot hold my peace! Because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war!” So too in Jer 9.1; 13.17, 14.17; and Isa 22.4. We read of Mordecai, that when he saw his people in danger of being destroyed with a temporal destruction, Est 4.1, “He tore his clothes, and put on sackcloth with

¹ *As it were*: as if it were so in some sense, but not literally. See Mat 11.14, “if you can accept it...”

² *Bowels*: our innermost emotional parts – our physical gut may feel twisted and on fire, whether it is caused by fear, love, anger, distress, anxiety, compassion, or delight.

ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry.” Why then should people be thought distracted, when they cannot keep from crying out at the consideration of the misery of those who are going to eternal destruction?

(3) Another thing that some make their rule to judge this work by, instead of the Holy Scriptures, is history, or prior observation. They err in two ways by this:

First, if there is anything new and extraordinary in the circumstances of *this* work, that was not observed in former times, it is their rule to reject this work as not the work of God. In doing so, they make for their rule, what God has not given them for a rule. They limit God, where he has not limited himself. This is especially unreasonable in this case. For whoever has well weighed the wonderful and mysterious methods of divine wisdom in carrying on the work of the new creation, or in the progress of the work of redemption from the first promise of the seed of the woman to this time, they may easily observe that all along it has been God’s way to open *new* scenes; to bring into view things that are *new* and wonderful, that *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man or angels* (1Cor 2.9). This is to the astonishment of heaven and earth, not only in the revelations that He makes of his mind and will, but also in the works of his hands.

The old creation was carried on through six days, appeared all complete, and settled in a state of rest on the seventh day. So the new creation, which is immensely the greatest and most glorious work, is carried on in a gradual progress, from the fall of man, to the consummation of all things at the end of the world. In the progress of the old creation, new things were still accomplished; new wonders appeared every day in the sight of the angels, who were the spectators of that work. While those morning stars sang together, new scenes were opened, or things that they had not seen before, till the whole was finished. So it is in the progress of the new creation. Thus comes the promise in Isa 64.4, “For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what He has prepared for the one who waits for him.” It had a glorious fulfilment in the days of Christ and the apostles, as the words are applied in 1Cor 2.9. Yet it always remains to be fulfilled, in things that are yet to come, until the new creation is finished at Christ’s *delivering up the kingdom to the Father* (1Cor 15.24). And we live in those latter days, in which we may be especially warranted to expect that things will be accomplished, concerning which it will be said, *Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?* (Isa 66.8)

Besides this, those things in this work that have been chiefly complained about as “new,” are not as new as generally imagined. Though they have been more frequent lately, in proportion to the uncommon degree, extent, swiftness, and other extraordinary circumstances of the work, yet they are not new *in their kind*. Rather, they are things of the same nature as found and well approved of before in the church of God, from time to time.

We have a remarkable instance in Mr. Robert Bolton (1572-1631), that noted minister of the church of England. Being awakened by the preaching of the famous Mr. William Perkins (1558-1602), minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, he was subject to such terrors that they threw him to the ground, and caused him to roar with anguish. The pangs of the new birth in him were such that he lay pale and without sense, like someone dead. We have an

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account of this in the *Fulfilling of the Scripture*, 5th edition, pages 103-104.¹ We have an account on the same page of another whose comforts under the sunshine of God's presence were so great, that he could not forbear crying out in a transport of emotion, and expressing in exclamations, the great sense he had of forgiving mercy, and his assurance of God's love. We have a remarkable instance in the life of Mr. George Trosse (1631-1713), written by himself. He was a notoriously vicious ² and profligate liver, who became an eminent saint and minister of the gospel. He described terrors, occasioned by awakenings of conscience, that so overpowered his body, as to deprive him for some time, of the use of reason.

Yes, such extraordinary external effects of inward impressions are not only to be found here and there in a single person, but there have also been times before, in which many have been thus affected in some particular parts of the church of God; and such effects have appeared in many congregations at once. So it was in the year 1625, in the west of Scotland, in a time of great outpouring of the Spirit of God. It was then a frequent thing for many to be so extraordinarily seized with terror in the hearing of the word, by the Spirit of God convincing them of their sin, that they fell down and were carried out of the church. Afterwards they proved to be most solid and lively Christians; as the author of the *Fulfilling of the Scripture* informs us, p. 185. The same author, on the preceding page, informs us of many in France who were so wonderfully affected with the preaching of the gospel, in the time of those famous divines, Farel and Viret,³ that for a time, they could not follow their secular business. And on p. 186, we are informed of many in Ireland, in a time of great outpouring of the Spirit there in the year 1628, who were so filled with divine comforts, and a sense of God, that they made little use of either food, drink, or sleep, and professed that they didn't feel the need for them. The same author gives an account of very much the same things in the case of Mrs. Catherine Brettergh of Lancashire in England (pages 391-392), that have been complained about here among us, as "wild and distracted." He tells how, after great distress which very much affected her body, the sweat sometimes bursting out upon her, God so broke in upon her mind with light and revelations of Himself, that she was forced to burst out, crying,

"O the Joys, the Joys, the Joys, that I feel in my soul! O they are wonderful, they are wonderful! The place where I now am is sweet and pleasant! How comfortable is the sweetness I feel, that delights my soul! The taste is precious; don't you feel it? O so sweet as it is!"

And at other times,

"O my sweet Saviour, will I be one with you, as you are one with the Father? And do you so love me who am but dust, as to make me partaker of glory with Christ? O how wonderful is your love! And oh, that my tongue and heart were able to sound forth your praises as I should."

At another time she burst forth this way:

¹ Robert Fleming (1630-1694), *Fulfilling of the Scripture* (London, 3rd ed. 1681).

² *Vicious*: characterized by vice and sin.

³ William Farel (1489-1565), early reformer in Geneva – known as the Elijah of the Alps. He convinced Calvin that he couldn't remain in the classroom, but had to become active in the Reformation. Pierre Viret (1511-1571), "the unknown reformer," was also active in Geneva. He worked closely with Farel, who had convinced him to dedicate himself to spreading the gospel. See Kirchhofer's [The Life of William Farel](#) for more information.

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“Yes Lord, I feel your mercy, and I am assured of your love! And I am so certain of this, because you are that God of truth. Even so certainly, I know I am yours, O Lord my God; and my soul knows this right well!” She repeated these last words.

She said to a grave minister, one Mr. Harrison, who was then with her:

“My soul has been compassed with the terrors of death, the sorrows of hell were upon me, and a wilderness of woe was within me. But blessed, blessed, blessed be the Lord my God! He has brought me to a place of rest, even to the sweet running waters of Life. The way I now go in, is a sweet and easy way, strewn with flowers. He has brought me into a place sweeter than the garden of Eden. O the joy, the joy, the delights and joy that I feel! O how wonderful!”

Great outcries under awakenings were more frequently heard of in former times in the country, than they have been of late, as some aged people now living testify. Particularly, I think it fitting here to insert a testimony of my honored father, of what he remembers to have heard formerly.

“I well remember that one Mr. Alexander Allyn, a Scots gentleman of good credit, who dwelled formerly in this town, showed me a letter that came from Scotland. It gave an account of a sermon preached in the city of Edinburgh (as I remember), in the time of the sitting of the general assembly of divines in that kingdom. It so affected the people, that there was a great and loud cry made throughout the assembly. I have also been credibly informed — how often I cannot now say — that it was a common thing, when the famous Mr. John Rogers of Dedham in England was preaching, for some of his hearers to cry out. And by what I have heard, I conclude that it was usual for many who heard that very awakening and rousing preacher of God’s word, to make a great cry in the congregation.”

TIMOTHY EDWARDS.

WINDSOR, *May 5, 1742.*

Mr. John Flavel (1630-1691) gives a remarkable instance of a man that he knew, who was so wonderfully overcome with divine comforts. It is supposed he knew this, as the apostle Paul knew the man who was caught up to the third heaven. He relates,

“As the person was travelling alone, with his thoughts closely fixed on the great and astonishing things of another world, his thoughts began to swell higher and higher, like the water in Ezekiel’s vision, until at last they became an overflowing flood. Such was the intensesness of his mind, such were the ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such was his full assurance of his interest in it, that he utterly lost all sight and sense of this world and its concerns. For some hours, he didn’t know where he was, nor what he was about. But having lost a great quantity of blood at the nose, he found himself so faint, that it brought him around a little more to himself. After he had washed himself at a spring, and drank of the water for his refreshment, he continued to the end of his journey, which was thirty miles; and all this while he was scarcely sensible. He says he had several trances of considerable continuance. The same blessed frame was preserved all that night, and in a lower degree, a great part of the next day. The night passed without one wink of sleep; and yet he declares he never had a sweeter night’s rest in all his life. Still, *adds the story*, the joy of the Lord overflowed him, and he seemed to be an inhabitant of another world. And for many years after, he used to call that day *one of the days of heaven*. And he professed

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that he understood more about the life of heaven by it, than by all the books he ever read, or discourses he ever entertained about it.”

There have been instances before now, of people crying out in transports of divine joy in New England. We have an instance in Capt. Clap’s memoirs, published by the Rev. Mr. Prince, not of a silly woman or child, but of a man of solid understanding, who in a high transport of spiritual joy, was made to cry out aloud on his bed. His words on p. 9, are:

“God’s Holy Spirit witnessed, I do believe, together with my spirit, that I was a child of God, and filled my heart and soul with such full assurance that Christ was mine, that it so transported me, as to make me cry out upon my bed, with a loud voice, *He has come, He has come!*”

There has been before now, both crying out and falling down in this town, under awakenings of conscience, and in the pangs of the new birth; and also in some of the neighboring towns. In one of them, more than seven years ago, a great number were together who cried out and fell down under convictions; in most of which, by good information, there was a hopeful and abiding good result. The Rev. Mr. Williams of Deerfield gave me an account of an aged man in that town, many years before that, who being awakened by his preaching, cried out aloud in the congregation. There have been many instances before now, in this and in some neighboring towns, of people fainting with joyful revelations made to their souls — once, several together in this town. And formerly, there have also been several instances here of people’s flesh growing cold and numb, their hands clenched, even their bodies being set into convulsions, having been overpowered with a strong sense of the astonishingly great and excellent things of God, and the eternal world.

Secondly. Another way that some err in making history and former observation their rule to judge this work by, instead of the Holy Scripture, is in comparing some external, incidental circumstances of this work, with what has sometimes appeared in enthusiasts.¹ Because they find an agreement in some of those things, they reject the whole work, or at least the substance of it, concluding it is mere enthusiasm. Such great use has been made to this purpose, of many things that are found among the Quakers — no matter how totally and essentially different in its nature *this* work is, and the *principles* that it is built upon, from the whole religion of the Quakers. So, to the same purpose, some external appearances that were found among the French prophets,² and some other enthusiasts in former times, have been trumped up with great assurance and triumph of late.

(4) I propose that it be considered whether or not some, instead of making the Scriptures their only rule to judge this work by, make their own *experience* the rule, and reject those things which are now professed and experienced, because they never felt them themselves. Are there not many who chiefly on this ground, have entertained and vented suspicions, if not peremptory condemnations, of those extreme terrors, those great, sudden, and extraordinary revelations of the glorious perfections of God, and of the beauty and love of Christ — such vehement affections, such high transports of love and joy, such pity and distress for the souls of others; and exercises of mind that have such great effects on people’s bodies — merely or

¹ *Enthusiast*: a person exhibiting overly zealous (even irrational) religious fervor.

² For example, the French Roman Catholic mystic, Madame Guyon (1648-1717).

chiefly because they knew nothing about them by experience? People are very ready to be suspicious of whatever they haven't felt themselves. It is to be feared that many good men have been guilty of this error; yet this doesn't make it less unreasonable. Perhaps there are some who, on this ground, not only reject these *extraordinary* things, but also all such convictions of sin, and revelations of the glory of God, and of the excellency of Christ, and the inward conviction of the truth of the gospel, by the immediate influence of the Spirit of God. These are all things that are now supposed to be necessary to salvation.

These people who thus make their own experiences their rule of judgment, instead of bowing to the wisdom of God, and yielding to His word as an infallible rule, are guilty of casting a great reflection upon the understanding of the Most High.

3. Another foundational error by those who reject this work, is not duly distinguishing the good from the bad; and very unjustly judging the whole by a part. And so they reject the work in general, or in the main substance of it, for the sake of some things that are incidental to it, which are evil. They look for more in men who are divinely influenced, because they are subject to the operations of a good spirit, than is justly to be expected from them in an imperfect state and dark world, where so much blindness and corruption remain in the best of us. When any profess to have received light, and influence, and comforts from heaven, and to have had tangible communion with God, many expect that now they should appear like angels, and not still appear like poor, feeble, blind, and sinful worms of the dust. It is indeed a mysterious thing, that there is so much corruption left in the hearts of God's own children, and that it prevails as it sometimes does, and was always a stumbling-block to the world. But this won't be so wondered at by those who are well versed in, and duly mindful of two things: *first*, the word of God, which teaches us about the state of true Christians in this world; and *secondly*, their own hearts, at least if they have any grace, and have experienced its conflicts with corruption. Those who are true saints are most inexcusable in thinking it is a difficulty that there is a great deal of blindness and many sinful errors in those who profess godliness. If all our conduct were known, both open and secret, and our hearts were laid open to the world, how ready we would be to flee from the light of the sun, and to hide ourselves from the view of mankind! What great allowances would others need to make *for us*? Perhaps much greater than we are willing to make *for them*.

The great weakness of most of mankind, in any affair that is new and uncommon, appears in not distinguishing the *parts*, but either approving or condemning *the whole lump*. Those who highly approve of the affair in general, cannot bear to find fault with anything at all. On the other hand, those who fasten their eyes on some things in the affair that are amiss, and appear very disagreeable to them, at once reject the whole. Both these errors oftentimes arise from people's lack of a due acquaintance with themselves. It is rash and unjust when we proceed to thus judge either a particular person, or a people, or such an affair as the present wonderful influence on the minds of the people of this land. Many, if they see anything blameworthy in a particular person, whether a minister or a private professor, they will at once brand him as a hypocrite. And if there are two or three in a group or society who behave themselves very irregularly, the whole must bear the blame. And if there are a few, even if not more than one in a hundred, who professed and had a show of being the happy partakers of what are called *the saving benefits of this work*, that proves nothing, they say; it gives the world just grounds

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to suspect them. The whole work must be rejected on their account. And those in general, who make a similar profession of faith, must be condemned for their sakes.

So cautious are some people, lest this work be defended, that now they will hardly admit that the influences of the Spirit of God on the heart can so much as indirectly and incidentally be the occasion for the exercise of corruption, and the commission of sin. Thus far it is true, that the influence of the Spirit of God in His *saving* operations, will not be an occasion for the increase of the corruption of the heart in general; on the contrary, it will be an occasion for the weakening of it. Yet there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that at the same time that it weakens corruption in general, it may be an occasion for turning what is left into a new channel, and of there being more of some certain kinds of corruption than there was before. That which tends to hinder and stop up the course of a stream, if it doesn't do it entirely, it may give a new course to whatever water gets past the obstacle. The influences of the Spirit, for instance, may be an occasion of new ways for the exercise of *Pride*; this has been acknowledged by orthodox divines in general. It wasn't usually doubted that spiritual revelations and comforts may, through the corruption of the heart, be an occasion for the exercises of spiritual pride — not until now, when it is found useful to maintain the war against this work.

Those who would hardly allow that a work of the Spirit of God can be a remote occasion of any sinful behavior or unchristian conduct, I suppose will allow that the truly gracious influences of the Spirit of God, even a high degree of love to God, is consistent with these two things: namely, a considerable degree of remaining corruption, and also many errors in judgment in matters of religion and practice. And this is all that needs to be allowed in order to be most demonstratively evident, that a high degree of love to God may accidentally move a person to do what is very wrong, and contrary to the mind and will of God. For a high degree of love to God will strongly move a person to do what he believes to be agreeable to God's will. Therefore, if he is mistaken, and is persuaded that it is agreeable to the will of God, then his love will incidentally, but strongly, incline him to do what is indeed very *contrary* to the will of God.

Those who study logic, have learned that the nature of the *cause* is not to be judged by the nature of the *effect*, nor the nature of the *effect* from the nature of the *cause*, when the cause is not *causa sine qua non*, but only an occasional cause.¹ Indeed, in such a case, the nature of the *effect* is oftentimes quite contrary to the nature of the *cause*.

True disciples of Christ may have a great deal of false zeal, such as the disciples of old had when they would have called fire down from heaven on the Samaritans, because they did not receive them (Luk 9.54). Even so eminently holy, and great, and divine a saint as Moses, who conversed with God from time to time as a man speaks with his friend, and concerning whom God gives His testimony, that he *was very meek, more than any man on the face of the earth* — even he may be rash and sinful in his zeal. His spirit was so stirred by the hard-heartedness and opposition of others, that he spoke ill-advisedly with his lips, and greatly offended God.

¹ *causa sine qua non*: without it, the thing could not have occurred. By contrast, two things occurring at about the same time, does not prove that the one caused the other; it may be mere coincidence (what Edwards terms *occasional*). The original wording was misleading: “when the cause is only *causa sine qua non*, or an occasional cause.”

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He was shut out from possessing the good things that God was about to accomplish for his church on earth. Moses was excluded from Canaan, even though he had brought the people out of Egypt, Psa 106.32-33. Even in the very things in which men are influenced by a truly pious principle, they may yet, through error and lack of due consideration and caution, be very rash in their zeal. It was a truly good spirit that animated that excellent generation of Israel in Joshua's time, in that affair described in the 22nd chapter of Joshua. Yet they were rash and heady in their zeal, gathering all Israel together to go up to furiously war with their brethren of the two and a half tribes, about their building the altar *Ed*, without first inquiring into the matter, or so much as sending a messenger to be informed about it.

So the Christians of the circumcision, with heat and contention, condemned Peter for receiving Cornelius, as we have an account in Acts 11. Their heat and censure was unjust, and Peter was wronged in it. But it is apparent from the story, that they acted entirely from a real zeal and concern for the will and honor of God. So the primitive Christians, from their zeal for and against unclean meats, censured and condemned one another. This had a bad effect, and yet the apostle bears witness, or at least he expresses his charity towards them, that both sides acted from a good principle, and with true regard for the Lord, Rom 14.6. The zeal of the Corinthians regarding the incestuous man, though the apostle highly commends it, yet at the same time, he saw that they needed a caution lest they carry it too far, with undue severity, and thus fail to show Christian meekness and forgiveness. See 2 Cor 2.6-11, and chap. 7.11 to the end. Luther, that great reformer, had a great deal of bitterness with his zeal.

It surely cannot be wondered at by considerate people, that at a time when multitudes all over the land have their affections greatly moved, that great numbers of them should run into many errors and mistakes with respect to their duty — and consequently, into many acts and practices that are imprudent and irregular. I question whether there is a man in New England, of the strongest reason and greatest learning, who would not be put to the test, to keep master of himself, thoroughly weigh his words, and consider all the consequences of his behavior, so as to behave himself prudently in all respects — if he were as strongly impressed with a sense of divine and eternal things, and his affections were so exceedingly moved, as we have frequently seen of late among the common people. How little some consider human nature when looking at this as an insuperable stumbling-block; when all kinds of capacities, natural tempers, levels of education, customs and manners of life, are so greatly and variously affected, that imprudent and irregular conduct abounds. Especially in a state of things that is so uncommon, when the degree, extent, swiftness and power of the operation is so very extraordinary and so new, that there hasn't been time and experience enough to give birth to rules for people's conduct. It was so unusual in times past, that the writings of divines do not provide rules to direct us in such a state of things.

A great deal of noise and tumult, confusion and uproar, darkness mixed with light, and evil with good, is always to be expected in the beginning of something very extraordinary, and very glorious in the state of things in human society, or in the church of God. After nature has long been shut up in a cold dead state, as in winter, and the sun returns in the spring with an increase of light and heat, there is very dirty and tempestuous weather before all is settled again, calm and serene, and all nature rejoices in its bloom and beauty. It is in the *new* creation as it was in the *old*: the Spirit of God first moved upon the face of the waters, which

was an occasion of great uproar and tumult. And then things were gradually brought to a settled state, until at length all stood out in that beautiful, peaceful order, when the heavens and the earth were finished, and *God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.* (Gen 1.31) When God is about to bring to pass something great and glorious in the world, nature is in a ferment and struggle, and the world is, as it were, in travail. When God was about to introduce the Messiah into the world, and that new and glorious dispensation that He setup, *He shook the heavens and the earth, and shook all the nations.* (Heb 12.26) There is nothing in Scripture, that the church of God is more frequently represented by, than vegetation – such as a tree, a vine, corn, etc., which gradually bring forth their fruit, and are first green before they are ripe. A great revival of religion is expressly compared to this gradual production of vegetables, Isa 61.11: “As the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.” The church, in a special way, is compared to a *palm tree*: Song 7.7-8, Exo 15.27, 1Kng 6.29, Psa 92.12. This peculiar thing is observed about this tree: that its fruit is very sweet and good when it is ripe; but before it has had time to ripen, it has a mixture of poison in it.

The weakness of human nature has always appeared in times of great revival of religion, by a disposition to run to extremes and get into confusion, especially in these three things: *enthusiasm, superstition, and intemperate zeal.* So it very remarkably appeared during the Reformation, and also in the days of the apostles. Many were exceedingly disposed to lend weight to those things that were imaginary and fanciful, giving heed to tales and fantasies, as in 1Tim 1.4, 4.7; 2Tim 2.16, 23; Tit 1.14 and 3.9. Many, as ecclesiastical history informs us, fell into the wildest enthusiasm, and extravagant notions of spirituality, and extraordinary illumination from heaven, far beyond others. Many were prone to superstition, will-worship, and false humility; giving heed to the commandments of men; being fond of unprofitable bodily exercise, as it appears in many passages in the apostles’ writings. What proneness then appeared among professors, to swerve from the path of duty and the spirit of the gospel, in exercises of a rash and indiscreet zeal, censuring and condemning ministers and people; one saying, *I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, another I am of Cephas*; judging one another for differences of opinion about smaller matters, unclean meats, holy days and holy places, and their different opinions and practices respecting civil intercourse and communication with their heathen neighbors. How much vain discord and disputes and confusion prevailed through undue heated spirits, under the name of *religious zeal*? See 1Tim 6.4-5, 2Tim 2.16, and Tit 3.9. And what a task the apostles had to keep them within bounds, and maintain good order in the churches! How often they mentioned their irregularities! Such a prevailing of similar disorder seems to have been the special occasion of writing many of their Epistles.

The church in that great effusion of the Spirit which occurred then, and the strong impressions God’s people were under then, was under the care of infallible guides who watched over them day and night. And yet they were so prone to step out of the way, through the weakness and corruption of human nature, that irregularity and confusion arose in some churches where there was an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit to a very great height – even in the apostles’ lifetime, and under their eye. Though some of the apostles lived long enough to settle the state of things, yet soon after they were dead, the Christian church ran into many superstitions and childish notions and practices, and in some respects, into great

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severity in their zeal. Let any wise person who has gone beyond calm consideration in the midst of our *present* dispute, impartially consider to what lengths we may reasonably suppose many of the primitive Christians would soon have gone in their heated zeal, and under their extraordinary impressions, if they had no inspired guides. Then consider whether it isn't probable that the church of Corinth in particular, by an increase of their irregularities and contentions, would not shortly have broken to pieces, and dissolved in a state of utmost confusion? Yet this would have been no evidence that there hadn't been a most glorious and remarkable outpouring of the Spirit in that ancient city. As for us, we have no infallible apostle to guide us, to rectify disorders and reclaim us when we are wandering; but *everyone does what is right in his own eyes*. Those who err in judgment, and have gotten onto a wrong path, will continue to wander till experience of the mischievous result convinces them of their error.

If we look over this affair, and seriously weigh it in its circumstances, it will appear a matter of no great difficulty to account for the errors that have occurred, supposing the work in general to be from a very great outpouring of the Spirit of God. It may easily be accounted for, why many have run into great errors, and into just those errors they have. It is known that some who have been employed as great instruments to promote this work, have been very young. They are themselves newly awakened out of sleep, and brought out of that state of darkness, insensibility, and spiritual death which they had been in since they were born. They have a new and wonderful scene opened to them; they have in view the reality, vastness, infinite importance, and nearness of spiritual and eternal things. It is natural for them, at the same time, to be surprised to see the world asleep around them. They don't have the advantage of age and experience, and they've had little opportunity to study divinity, or to converse with aged and experienced Christians and divines. I say, how natural it is for them to fall into many errors with respect to the state of mankind which so surprised them, and with respect to the means and methods of their relief. Is it any wonder they haven't *at once* learned how to make all the allowances that are to be made; and that they don't *at once* discover that method of dealing with the world, that is adapted to the mysterious state and nature of mankind? Is it any wonder that they cannot *at once* foresee what the consequences of things will be, and what evils are to be guarded against, and what difficulties are likely to arise, that need to be provided for?

We have long been in a strange stupor. The influences of the Spirit of God on the heart have been little felt, and the nature of them little taught. So that, they are in many respects *new* to great numbers of those who have lately fallen under them. Is it any wonder that those who never before experienced the supernatural influence of the divine Spirit on their souls, and were never instructed in the nature of these influences, don't know how to distinguish one extraordinary new impression from another, and so (imperceptibly to themselves) they run into enthusiasm, taking every strong impulse or impression to be divine? How natural is it to suppose that among the multitudes of illiterate people (most of whom are in their youth), who find themselves so wonderfully changed, and brought into such new and (to them) almost unheard of circumstances — that many should make wrong and very strange judgments about both the people and the things around them? They now behold them in such a new light, that in their surprise, they go further than they should from the judgment they used to make about them. In their great change of sentiments, they pass from one extreme to another. Why should it be thought strange that those who scarcely ever heard of any such thing as *an outpouring*

of the Spirit of God before (or if they did, they had no concept of it), don't know how to behave themselves in such a new and strange state of things? Is it any wonder that they are ready to listen to those who have instructed them, who have been the means of delivering them from such a state of death and misery as they were in before, or have a reputation for being the happy instruments of promoting the same work among others? Is it inexplicable that people in these circumstances are ready to receive everything these people say, and to drink down error as well as truth from them? Why should there be all indignation and no compassion towards those who are thus misled?

These people are extraordinarily affected with a new sense, and a recent revelation they have received, of the greatness and excellency of the divine Being, the certainty and infinite importance of eternal things, the preciousness of souls, and the dreadful danger and madness of mankind, together with a great sense of God's distinguishing kindness and love toward them. It is no wonder that now they think they must exert themselves, and do something extraordinary for the honor of God, and for the good of the souls of their fellow creatures; or that they don't know how to sit still, and forbear speaking and acting with uncommon earnestness and vigor. In these circumstances, if they are not people of more than common steadiness and discretion, or if they don't have some person of wisdom to direct them, it is a wonder if they *don't* proceed without due caution, and do things that are irregular, and as a result, will do much more hurt than good.

Censuring others is the worst disease with which this affair has been attended. Yet such a time as this is indeed a time of great temptation to this sinful error. When there has been such a time of great and long-continued deadness, and many are brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace in so extraordinary a manner, and filled with such uncommon degrees of light, it is natural for them to form their notions of a state of grace entirely from what they experience. Many of them know no other way; for they have never been taught much about a state of grace, and the different degrees of grace, and the degrees of darkness and corruption that grace is consistent with, nor concerning the manner of the influences of the Spirit in converting a soul, and the variety of the manner of His operations. Therefore they form their idea of a state of grace only by their own experience. No wonder it appears an insuperable difficulty to them to reconcile such a state, about which they have this idea, with what they observe in the professors around them. It is indeed in itself, a very great mystery, that grace should be consistent with so much and so many kinds of corruption as sometimes prevail in the truly godly. And no wonder that it especially appears this way to uninstructed new converts, who have been converted in an extraordinary manner.

Though censoriousness is a very sinful thing, and most commonly found in hypocrites and people of a pharisaical spirit, yet it is not as inconsistent with true godliness as some imagine. We have remarkable instances of it in those holy men we have an account of in the book of Job. Job's three friends, who seem to have been eminently holy men, were guilty of it in very unreasonably censuring the best man on earth. They positively determined that he was an unconverted man. But even Job himself, who was not only a man of true piety, but excelled all men in piety, and who particularly excelled in a humble, meek, and patient spirit, was guilty of bitterly censuring his three friends as wicked, vile hypocrites.

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“He tears me in his wrath and hates me. He gnashes at me with his teeth. My enemy sharpens his eyes upon me. They have gaped at me with their mouth. God has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over to the hands of the wicked.” Job 16.9-11

So in the next chapter he is very positive that they are hypocrites and will be miserably destroyed as such. Job 17.2-4,

“Aren’t there mockers with me? And doesn’t my eye dwell on their provocation? Lay down a pledge for me now as my surety. Who will strike hands with me? For you have hidden their heart from understanding. Therefore, do not exalt them.”

And again, verses 8-10:

“Upright men will be astonished at this, and the innocent will stir himself against the hypocrite. Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger. But as for you all, return and come now. For I cannot find one wise man (*i.e.*, one good man) among you.”

Thus I think the errors and irregularities that attend this work may be accounted for, from the consideration of the infirmity, weakness, and common corruption of mankind, together with the circumstances of the work, even if we suppose it to be the work of God. It would *not be just*, for anyone to object that if these powerful impressions and great affections are from the Spirit of God, then why doesn’t the same Spirit give strength of understanding and capacity, in proportion to those people who are the subjects of them, so that strong affections may not, through their error, drive them to irregular and sinful conduct? For I don’t know that God has anywhere obliged himself to do that. The purpose of the influences of God’s Spirit, is to make men spiritually knowing, *wise unto salvation*, which is the most excellent wisdom. And He has also appointed means for our gaining those degrees of *other* knowledge that we need to conduct ourselves regularly; those means should be carefully used. But the purpose of the influence of the Spirit of God is not to increase men’s *natural* capacities; nor has God obliged himself to immediately increase civil prudence in proportion to our degrees of spiritual light.

If we consider the errors that attend this work, not only from man and his infirmity, but also from God, and by His permission and disposal, they are not strange — not if we suppose that its *substance* is a work of God. If God intends this great revival of religion to be the dawning, or forerunner of a happy state of His church on earth, then it may be an instance of the divine wisdom to allow so many irregularities and errors in conduct at its beginning. He knew that men were most exposed to this in their present weak state, under great religious affections, and when animated by great zeal. For it will very likely be of excellent benefit to His church in the continuance and progress of the work afterwards. Their experience in first setting out the mischievous consequences of these errors, and smarting from them at the start, may be a happy defence for them afterwards, for many generations. For they might otherwise be exposed to these errors *continually*: as when David and all Israel went to bring back the ark into the midst of the land, after it had long been absent, first in the land of the Philistines, and then in Kiriath Jearim, in the utmost borders of the land. At first, they didn’t seek the Lord in due order; and so they smarted for their error. But this set them to studying the law, and more thoroughly acquainting themselves with the mind and will of God, and seeking and serving Him with greater circumspection. The consequence was *glorious*: namely, they sought God in such a manner that it was accepted by Him. And the ark of God ascended into the heights

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of Zion, with those great and extraordinary rejoicings of the king and all the people, without any frown or rebuke from God. God dwelled in the midst of the people from then on, to those glorious purposes that are expressed in the 68th Psalm.

It is very analogous to the manner of God's dealing with his people, to permit a great deal of error, and to let the infirmity of his people greatly appear in the beginning of a glorious work of *His* grace for *their* felicity. It is to teach them what they are; to humble and fit them for that glorious prosperity that He is about to advance them to; and to secure for Himself more of the honor for such a glorious work. For man's exceeding weakness appearing at the start, it is evident that God does not lay the foundation of it in man's strength or wisdom.

We need not wonder at the errors that attend this work, if we look at the hand of men who are guilty of them, and the hand of God who permits them. So too, there is no cause to wonder if we consider the hand that Satan had in them. The work being much greater than any other outpouring of the Spirit in New England, it is no wonder that the devil is more alarmed and enraged, exerts himself more vigorously against it, and more powerfully endeavors to tempt and mislead those who are its subjects or promoters.

Whatever imprudence; whatever sinful irregularities; whatever vehemence of passions and heats of the imagination; whatever transports and ecstasies; whatever error in judgment and indiscreet zeal; and whatever outcries, faintings, and agitations of body there have been — it is yet manifest and noteworthy that of late there has been a very uncommon influence upon the minds of a very great part of the inhabitants of New England. It has occurred from one end of the land to the other, and it is attended with the following effects:

- a great increase of a spirit of seriousness;
- a sober consideration of the things of the eternal world;
- a disposition to listen with attention and affection to anything said about such things;
- a disposition to treat matters of religion with solemnity, as matters of great importance;
- a disposition to make these things the subject of conversation;
- a great disposition to hear the word of God preached, and take all opportunities for it;
- attending to the public worship of God, and to all external duties of religion, in a more solemn and decent manner;

So that there is a remarkable and general alteration in the face of New England in these respects:

- multitudes of vain, thoughtless, careless people, in all parts of the land, are quite changed, and have become serious and considerate;
- there is a vast increase in concern for the salvation of the precious soul, and about that inquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?*
- the hearts of multitudes have been greatly taken off the things of the world — its profits, pleasures and honors;
- there has been a great increase of sensibleness and tender consciences;
- multitudes in all parts have had their consciences awakened;
- they have been made sensible of the pernicious nature and consequences of sin, and what a dreadful thing it is to lie under guilt and the displeasure of God, and to live without peace and reconciliation with Him;

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- they have been awakened to a sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, the reality of another world and future judgment, and the necessity of having an interest in Christ;
- they are more afraid of sin, more careful and inquisitive to know what is contrary to the mind and will of God, that they may avoid it; and to know what He requires of them, that they may do it;
- they are more careful to guard against temptations, and more watchful over their own hearts;
- they earnestly desire to be informed of the means that God has directed them to for their salvation, and diligent in the use of the means that God has appointed in his word.

Many dull, senseless sinners, and people of a vain mind, have been greatly awakened. There is a strange alteration over almost all of New England among young people. By a powerful, invisible influence on their mind, they have been brought at once to generally forsake those things they were extremely fond of, and greatly addicted to — things they seemed to place the happiness of their lives in; things that nothing before could induce them to forsake — things such as their frolicking, vain company-keeping, night-walking,¹ their mirth and jollity, their impure language and lewd songs. In vain, ministers preached against those things before; in vain, laws were made to restrain them; and in vain was all the vigilance of magistrates and civil officers. But now they have, almost everywhere, dropped them as it were, *by themselves*.

And there is a great alteration among old and young as to drinking, tavern haunting, profane speaking, and extravagant apparel. Many notoriously vicious people have been reformed, and have externally become quite new creatures. Some are wealthy, of a fashionable and frivolous education; some are great beaux and fine ladies who seemed to have their minds swallowed up with nothing but the vain shows and pleasures of the world. They have all been wonderfully altered. They have relinquished these vanities, and have become serious, mortified, and humble in their conduct. It is astonishing to see the alteration that occurred in some towns, where before there was but little appearance of religion, or anything but vice and vanity. So remote was all that was to be seen or heard among them, from anything that savored of vital piety or serious religion, or had any relation to it, that one would have thought, if they judged only by what appeared in them, that they had been some other species from the serious and religious. They previously had no concern with another world; their natures were not made capable of those things that pertain to Christian experience and pious conversation. It was especially so among young people.

But now they are transformed into another sort of people. Their former vain, worldly, and vicious conversation and dispositions seem to be forsaken, and they have, as it were, gone over to a new world. Their thoughts, their talk, and their concern, affections, and inquiries, are now about the favor of God, an interest in Christ, a renewed, sanctified heart, a spiritual blessedness, and acceptance and happiness in a future world. And through the greater part of New England, the Holy Bible is held in much greater esteem and is used more than it used to be. The great things that are contained in it are much more regarded as things of the greatest consequence, and they are much more the subjects of meditation and conversation. Other

¹ *Company-keeping* means gathering together for no purpose. Night-walking is wandering streets and alleyways at night, looking for trouble. *Tavern haunting* is a form of “pub-crawling” or “bar-hopping;” *i.e.*, getting drunk regularly.

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books of piety that have long had an established reputation as the most excellent, and tending most to promote true godliness, have been abundantly more in use. The Lord's day is more religiously observed. Lately, there has been an abundance of reconciling differences, and confessing faults to one another, and making restitution — probably more in these two years than was done in the thirty years preceding. Undoubtedly, it has been so in many places. The power of that spirit that has been poured out on the land, has been surprising in many instances, to destroy old grudges, and repair long-continued breaches, and to bring those who seemed to be in a confirmed and irreconcilable alienation, to embrace each other in a sincere and complete amity.

Great numbers under this influence have been brought to a deep sense of their own sinfulness and vileness — the sinfulness of their lives, the heinousness of their disregard for the authority of the great God, and the heinousness of their living in contempt of a Saviour. They have lamented their former negligence of their souls, and neglecting and losing precious time. Their sins of life have been extraordinarily set before them. They have also had a great sense of their sins of heart; of their hardness of heart, and enmity against that which is good; of their proneness to all kinds of evil; and also of the worthlessness of their own religious performances — how unworthy their prayers, praises, and all that they did in religion, was to be regarded by God. It has been a common thing that people have had such a sense of their own sinfulness, that they thought themselves to be the worst of all, and that none was ever so vile as themselves. Many seem to have been greatly convinced that they were utterly unworthy of any mercy at the hands of God — however miserable they were, and though they stood in extreme need of mercy — and that they deserved nothing but eternal burnings. They have been sensible that God would be altogether just and righteous in inflicting endless damnation upon them, at the same time they had an exceedingly affecting sense of the dreadfulness of such endless torments, and apprehended themselves to be in great danger of them. Many have been deeply affected with a sense of their own ignorance and blindness, and exceeding helplessness, and so too of their extreme need for divine pity and help.

So far as we are worthy to be credited by one another in what we say,¹ multitudes in *New England* have lately been brought to a new and great conviction of the truth and certainty of the things of the gospel; to a firm persuasion that Christ Jesus is the Son of God, and the great and only Saviour of the world; and that the great doctrines of the gospel touching reconciliation by his blood, and acceptance in his righteousness, and eternal life and salvation through him, are matters of undoubted truth. This is combined with a most affecting sense of the excellency and sufficiency of this Saviour; and the glorious wisdom and grace of God shining in this way of salvation; and of the wonders of Christ's dying love; and the sincerity of Christ in the invitations of the gospel. There is a consequent affiancement² and sweet rest of soul in Christ, as a glorious Saviour, a strong rock and high tower. This is accompanied with an admiring and exalting apprehension of the glory of the divine perfections, of God's majesty, holiness, sovereign grace, etc., with a sensible, strong and sweet love to God, and delight in him, far surpassing all temporal delights, or earthly pleasures. The soul rests in Him as a

¹ And people of good understanding and sound mind, of known and experienced probity, have a right to be believed by their neighbors when they speak of things that fall under their observation and experience. — Edwards

² *Affiance*: an engagement or betrothal; having a permanent covenantal pledge and bond.

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portion, and the fountain of all good, attended with an abhorrence of sin, and self-loathing for it, and earnest longings of soul for more holiness and conformity to God, with a sense of the great need of God's help in order for holiness of life. This is together with a dearest love for all who are supposed to be the children of God, and a love for mankind in general, and a most sensible and tender compassion for the souls of sinners, and earnest desires for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world.

And these things have appeared to be in many of them — abiding now for many months, indeed for more than a year and a half — with an abiding concern to live a holy life. And there are great complaints about remaining corruption, longing to be freer from the body of sin and death. Not only do these effects appear in new converts, but great numbers of those who were formerly esteemed the most sober and pious people. Under the influence of this work, they have been greatly quickened, and their hearts renewed with greater degrees of light, renewed repentance and humiliation, and livelier exercises of faith, love, and joy in the Lord. Many, as I well know, have lately been remarkably engaged to watch, and strive, and fight against sin, and cast out every idol, and sell all for Christ, and give themselves up entirely to God, and make a sacrifice of every worldly and carnal thing to the welfare and prosperity of their souls. And there has lately appeared in some places an unusual disposition to bind themselves to it in a solemn covenant with God. Now, instead of meetings at taverns and drinking houses, and meetings of young people in frolics and vain company, the country is full of meetings of all sorts and ages of people, young and old, men, women and little children, to read and pray, and sing praises, and to converse about the things of God and another world.

In very many places, the main conversation in all companies turns on religion, and things of a spiritual nature. Instead of vain mirth among young people, there is now either mourning under a sense of the guilt of sin, or holy rejoicing in Christ Jesus. And instead of their lewd songs, songs of praises to God are now to be heard from them, and of the Lamb that was slain to redeem them by his blood. There has been this alteration abiding on multitudes all over the land, for a year and a half, without any appearance of a disposition to return to former vice and vanity. Under the influences of this work, have been many of the remains of those wretched people and dregs of mankind, the poor Indians, who seemed to be next to a state of brutality, and with whom, up to now, it seemed to be to little more purpose to endeavor to instruct and awaken them, than with the beasts. Their minds have now been strangely opened to receive instruction. They have been deeply affected with the concerns of their precious souls, and have reformed their lives, and forsaken their former stupid, barbarous, and brutish way of living — and particularly that sin to which they have been so exceedingly addicted, their drunkenness. They have become devout and serious people; many of them apparently are brought truly and greatly to delight in the things of God, and to have their souls very much engaged and entertained with the great things of the gospel.¹ Many of the poor negroes also have in like manner been wrought upon and changed. The souls of very many little children have been remarkably enlightened, and their hearts wonderfully affected and enlarged, and their mouths opened. They express themselves in a manner far beyond their years, to the just astonishment of those who have heard them. Some of them from time to time, for many

¹ Edwards would later describe this transformation, in *The Life of David Brainerd*, 1749.

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months, have been greatly and delightfully affected with the glory of divine things, and the excellency and love of the Redeemer. Their hearts are greatly filled with love to Him, and joy in Him, and they have continued to be serious and pious in their behavior.

The divine power of this work has marvellously appeared in some instances that I have been acquainted with, in supporting and fortifying the heart under great trials — such as the death of children, and extreme pain of body — wonderfully maintaining the serenity, calmness and joy of the soul, in an immovable rest in God, and sweet resignation to him. There have also been instances of some who have been the subjects of this work, that under the blessed influences of it, they have in such a calm, bright, and joyful frame of mind, been carried through the valley of the shadow of death.

And now let us consider — isn't it strange that in a Christian, orthodox country, and such a land of light as this, there should be so many at a loss to know whose work this is, whether it is the work of God, or the work of the devil? Isn't it a shame to New England, that such a work should be so doubted here? Need we look over the histories of all past times, to see if there aren't some circumstances and external appearances that attend this work, that have been formerly found among enthusiasts? Whether the Montanists ¹ didn't have great transports of joy, and whether the French Prophets didn't have agitations of body? Blessed be God! He doesn't put us to the toil of such inquiries. We need not ask, *Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring us down something by which to judge this work?* Nor does God send us beyond the seas, nor into past ages, to obtain a rule that will determine and satisfy us. But we have a rule near at hand, a sacred book that God himself has put into our hands, with clear and infallible marks, sufficient to resolve all things of this nature. If we reject such a work that has now been described, as not being the work of God, then I think we must reject this book, not only in some particular passages, but in its substance. The whole tenor of the gospel *proves* it; all the notion of religion that the Scripture gives us *confirms* it.

I suppose there is scarcely a minister in this land, who has not from Sabbath to Sabbath prayed that God would pour out his Spirit, and work a reformation and revival of religion in the country, and turn us from our intemperance, profaneness, uncleanness, worldliness and other sins. And we have kept from year to year days of public fasting and prayer to God, to acknowledge our backslidings, and humble ourselves for our sins, and to seek forgiveness and reformation from God. And now, when so great and extensive a reformation is so suddenly and wonderfully accomplished, in those very things that we have sought from God, will we not acknowledge it? Or when we do, will we do it with great coldness, caution, and reserve, and scarcely take any notice of it in our public prayers and praises; or mention it except slightly and cursorily, and in such a manner that it carries the appearance that we would contrive to say as little about it as we could, and would be glad to pass on from it? And will we do this because (even though there is indeed a work that is attended with all these glorious effects) the work is attended with a mixture of error, imprudence, darkness, and sin; because some people are carried away with impressions, and are indiscreet, and too censorious with

¹ *Montanism* – ancient heresy (c. 156-172) with new prophets, new revelation, asceticism, imminent return of Christ, speaking in tongues, future millennial reign — as if Scripture were somehow incomplete or inadequate.

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their zeal; because there are high transports of religious affection; and because of some effects on people's bodies that we don't understand the reason for?

I have been particularly acquainted with many people who have been the subjects of the high and extraordinary transports of the present day — the highest transports of any of the instances that I have been acquainted with, where the affections of admiration, love, and joy, so far as another could judge, have been raised to a higher pitch than in any other instances I have observed or been informed of. *And yet the following things have been united:* namely, frequent dwelling, for a considerable length of time, in such views of the glory of the divine perfections, and of Christ's excellencies, that the soul in the meantime has been, as it were, perfectly overwhelmed and swallowed up with light and love, and a sweet solace, rest and joy of soul, that was altogether unspeakable.

[For one person in particular,] ¹ more than once, this has continued for five or six hours at a time, without any interruption, in that clear and lively view or sense of the infinite beauty and amiableness of Christ's person, and the heavenly sweetness of his excellent and transcendent love. So that (to use the person's own expressions), the soul remained in a kind of heavenly Elysium,² and it swam, as it were, in the rays of Christ's love, like a little speck swimming in the beams of the sun, or streams of His light coming through a window. The heart was swallowed up in a kind of glow of Christ's love coming down from Christ's heart in heaven, as a constant stream of sweet light. And at the same time, the soul was all flowing out in love to him, so that there seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing from heart to heart. The soul dwelt on high, and was lost in God, and seemed almost to leave the body — dwelling in a pure delight that fed and satisfied the soul; enjoying pleasure without the least sting or interruption; a sweetness that the soul was lost in. So that (as far as the judgment and word of a person of discretion may be taken, speaking from the most deliberate consideration), what was enjoyed in each single minute of the whole space — which was many hours — was undoubtedly worth more than all the outward comfort and pleasure of the whole life put together. And this was without being in any trance, or being at all deprived of the exercise of the bodily senses.

The same heavenly delight and unspeakable joy of soul was enjoyed from time to time, for years at a time — though not frequently so long together, nor to such a height. Extraordinary views of divine things, and religious affections, were frequently attended with very great effects on the body. Nature often sank under the weight of divine revelations; the strength of the body was taken away, so as to deprive the person of all ability to stand or speak; sometimes the hands clenched, and the flesh grew cold, but the senses still remained. Of late, the animal nature is often in great emotion and agitation, and the soul is often so overcome with great admiration and a kind of omnipotent joy, that it caused the person (wholly unavoidably) to leap with all his might, with joy and mighty exultation of soul. At the same time, the soul was so strongly drawn towards God and Christ in heaven, that it seemed to the person as though soul and body would, as if by themselves and of necessity, mount up and leave the earth and ascend there.

¹ Added for clarity. This individual serves as an exemplar of Edwards' general experience with others.

² *Elysium*: a place or condition of ideal happiness.

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These effects on the body did not begin *now*, in this wonderful season, as if owing to the influence of the example of the times, but about *seven years ago*.¹ And they began in a much higher degree, and with greater frequency, nearly *three years ago*, when there was no such enthusiastic season, as many consider *this* to be. Rather, it was a very dead time throughout the land. They arose from no aberration caught from Mr. Whitefield or Mr. Tennent,² because these things began before either of them came into the country. They began, as I said, nearly three years ago, in great increase, upon an extraordinary self-dedication and renunciation of the world, and a resignation of all to God, made in a great view of God's excellency, high exercise of love to Him, and rest and joy in Him. Since that time, they have been very frequent. They began in a still higher degree, with greater frequency, about *a year and a half ago*, upon another new resignation of all to God, and with a still greater fervency and delight of soul. Since that time, the body has very often fainted with the love of Christ. It began in a much higher degree still, last winter, upon another resignation and acceptance of God as the only portion and happiness of the soul. The whole world, with the dearest enjoyments in it, were renounced as dirt and dung. All that is pleasant and glorious, and all that is terrible in this world, seemed to perfectly vanish into nothing; and nothing was left but God, in whom the soul was perfectly swallowed up, as in an infinite ocean of blessedness. Since that time there have often been great agitations of body, and an unavoidable leaping for joy, as if the soul were dwelling, almost without interruption, in a kind of paradise.

Being in high transports, this person was very often disposed to speak of those great and glorious things of God and Christ, and of the eternal world that are in view, to others who are present. This is done in a most earnest manner and with a loud voice, so that it is next to impossible to avoid it. These effects on the body did not arise from any bodily distemper or weakness, because the greatest of all have been in a good state of health. This great rejoicing has been a *rejoicing with trembling*, *i.e.*, attended with a deep and lively sense of the greatness and majesty of God, and the person's own exceeding littleness and vileness. Spiritual joys in this person were never attended, either formerly or recently, with the least appearance of laughter, or lightness in countenance or manner of speaking. Rather, there was a peculiar abhorrence of such appearances in spiritual rejoicings, especially since joys have been greatest of all. Once these high transports have passed, they left abiding effects on the soul, in the increase of sweetness, rest, and humility; and a new eagerness of heart to live to God's honor, and to watch for and fight against sin.

And these things were not found in someone who is in the giddy age of youth, nor in a new convert or inexperienced Christian, but in someone who was converted over twenty-seven years ago. He was neither converted nor educated in that *enthusiastical* town of Northampton (as some are ready to call it), but in a town and family that none I know of suspected of enthusiasm. This is a Christian who, in an uncommon way, has long been growing in grace, rising by very sensible degrees to higher love to God, weaned from the world, and gaining mastery over sin and temptation through great trials and conflicts, who has long continued struggling and fighting with sin, earnest and constant in prayer, laboring in religion, and

¹ The first stirrings of *revival* were 1734-36; the *Great Awakening* was 1740-42, taking place as Edwards was writing down these thoughts on that earlier revival, as well as this current "awakening."

² George Whitefield (1714-1770), and Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764).

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eager-minded in the use of all means, attended with a great exactness of life. This existing growth has been attended not only with a great increase of religious affections, but with a wonderful alteration of outward behavior in many things, visible to those who are most intimately acquainted with him. So that, as of late, the individual seems to have become a *new person*. This is particularly apparent in living so much more above the world: in a greater degree of steadfastness; strength in the way of duty and self-denial; maintaining the Christian conflict against temptations; conquering from time to time under great trials; persisting in an unmoved, untouched calm and rest, under the changes and incidentals of time.

Previously, the person had, in lower degrees of grace, been subject to unsteadiness, with many ups and downs in the frame of mind. He had been under great disadvantages through a nervous habit of body, often subject to melancholy, and at times almost overborne with it. This has been true even from early youth. But strength of grace and divine light has, for a long time, wholly conquered these disadvantages, and carried the mind in a constant manner, quite above all such effects of depression. Since that resignation spoken of before, made nearly three years ago, everything of that nature seems to be overcome and crushed by the power of faith and trust in God, and resignation to Him. The person has remained in a constant uninterrupted rest, and humble joy in God, and assurance of His favor, without one hour's melancholy or darkness, from that day to this. Nerves¹ have had great effects on the body, as they used to have before, but the soul has always been out of their reach. And this steadfastness and constancy has remained through great outward changes and trials, such as times of the most extreme pain, and apparent risk of immediate death. What has been felt in recent great transports, is known to be nothing new in kind, but of the same nature as what was felt formerly, when a little child of about five or six years of age; but now, in a vastly higher degree. These transporting views and rapturous affections are not attended with any enthusiastic disposition to follow impulses, nor any supposed prophetic revelations. Nor have they been observed to be attended with any appearance of spiritual pride, but very much a *contrary* disposition: with an increased spirit of humility and meekness, and a disposition to honor and prefer others.

This was at a time remarkably distinguished from all others, in which revelations and holy affections were evidently at the greatest height ever. The greatness and clearness of divine light was overwhelming, and the strength and sweetness of divine love was altogether overpowering. It began early in the morning of the holy Sabbath, and lasted for days together, melting everyone down in the deepest humility and poverty of spirit, in reverence and resignation, and the sweetest meekness and universal benevolence. It is worthy to be observed that *two things* were felt in a remarkable manner at that time:

(1) A peculiar and sensible aversion to *judging others* who were professing Christians of good standing in the visible church, that they were not converted, or with respect to their degrees of grace. They would not at all intermeddle with that matter, not even so much as to determine against and condemn others in the thoughts of their own heart. This was because it appeared hateful to them, and not agreeing with that lamblike humility, meekness, gentleness, and charity which their soul then, above other times, saw the beauty of and felt a disposition

¹ Originally, "vapors" – general anxiety or nervousness; high-strung; susceptible.

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toward. The disposition then felt was, on the contrary, to prefer others to self, and to hope they saw more of God, and loved Him better — though before, under smaller revelations, and feebler exercises of divine affection, they felt a disposition to censure and condemn others.

(2) Another thing that was felt at that time, was a very great sense of the importance of *moral social duties*, and how great a part of religion lay in them. There was such a new sense and conviction of this, beyond what had been before, that it seemed to be a clear revelation then made to the soul. But in general, there has been a very great increase of a sense of these two things, as divine views and divine love have increased.

The things already mentioned have also been attended with the following sense of things:

- an extraordinary sense of the awful majesty and greatness of God, so as to oftentimes take away bodily strength;
- a sense of the holiness of God, like an infinitely pure and bright flame, which sometimes overwhelms soul and body;
- a sense of the piercing all-seeing eye of God, which sometimes takes away bodily strength;
- an extraordinary view of the infinite terribleness of the wrath of God, which has frequently been strongly impressed on the mind, together with a crushing sense of the ineffable misery of sinners who are exposed to this wrath;
- sometimes the exceeding pollution of the person's own heart is seen as a sink of all manner of abomination, and a nest of vipers;
- the dreadfulness of an eternal hell of God's wrath is opened to view, together with a clear view of the deservedness of that misery; without the least degree of divine pity;
- the pollution of our best duties, especially by the pollution, irreverence, and lack of humility that once attended speaking of the holy name of God, even if done in the best manner that could ever be done;
- the strength of the body is very often taken away with a deep mourning for sin, as committed against so holy and good a God;
- sometimes this conviction is with an affecting sense of *actual* sin; sometimes especially *indwelling* sin; sometimes the consideration of the sin of the heart as it appears in a particular thing — for instance, that there was no greater eagerness and readiness for self-denial for God and Christ, who had so denied himself for us;
- sometimes the consideration of sin in saying only *one word* concerning the infinitely great and holy God, has been so affecting as to overcome the strength of nature;
- a very great sense of the certain truth of the great things revealed in the gospel;
- an overwhelming sense of the glory of the work of redemption, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ;
- the glorious harmony of the divine attributes appearing in this, in which mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other;
- a sight of the fulness and glorious sufficiency of Christ, that has been so affecting as to overcome the body;
- a constant immovable trust in God through Christ, with a great sense of his strength and faithfulness, the sureness of his covenant, and the immutability of his promises, so that the everlasting mountains and perpetual hills appear like mere shadows compared to these things;
- the sufficiency and faithfulness of God as the covenant God of his people, appearing in the words, I AM THAT I AM, is so affecting as to overcome the body;

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- a sense of the glorious, unsearchable, unerring wisdom of God in his works, both of creation and providence, so as to swallow up the soul, and overcome the body's strength;
- a sweet rejoicing of soul at thoughts of God's being infinitely and unchangeably happy, and an exulting gladness of heart that God is self-sufficient, and infinitely above all dependence, reigns over all, and does His will with absolute and uncontrollable power and sovereignty;
- a sense of the glory of the Holy Spirit, as the great comforter, so as to overwhelm both soul and body;
- only mentioning the word *Comforter*, has immediately taken away all strength; that word, as the person expressed it, seemed great enough to fill heaven and earth:
- a most vehement and passionate desire for the honor and glory of God's name; a sensible, clear and constant preference for it, not only as to the person's own temporal interest, but for spiritual comfort in this world;
- a willingness to suffer God hiding his face, and to live and die in darkness and horror if God's honor required it; and to have no other reward for it but that God's name should be glorified, even though so much of the sweetness of the light of God's countenance had been experienced;
- a great lamenting of ingratitude, and the lowness of the degree of love to God, so as to deprive of bodily strength;
- vehement longings and faintings for more love to Christ, and greater conformity to him;
- especially longing for these two things: to be more perfect in *humility*, and in *adoration*;
- the flesh and heart often seem to cry out for lying low before God, and adoring him with greater love and humility;
- thoughts of the perfect humility with which the saints in heaven worship God, and fall down before his throne, have often overcome the body, and set it into great agitation;
- great delight in singing praises to God and Jesus Christ, and longing that this present life may be, as it were, one continued song of praise to God;
- longing, as one person expressed it, to sit and sing this life away; and an overcoming pleasure in thoughts of spending an eternity in that exercise;
- living by faith to a great degree;
- constant and extraordinary distrust of our own strength and wisdom;
- great dependence on God for his help in order to perform anything acceptable to God;
- being restrained from the most horrid sins, and running to God, even *upon his neck, and the thick bosses of his bucklers*; (Job 15.26)
- such a sense of the black ingratitude of true saints' coldness and deadness in religion, and of setting their hearts on the things of this world, as to overcome the bodily frame;
- a great longing that all the children of God might be lively in religion, fervent in their love, and active in the service of God; and when there have been appearances of it in others, so rejoicing in beholding the pleasing sight, that the joy of the soul has been too great for the body;
- taking pleasure in thoughts of watching and striving against sin, and fighting through the way to heaven, and filling up this life with hard labor, and bearing the cross for Christ, as an opportunity to give God honor;
- not desiring to rest from labors till arrived in heaven, but abhorring the thought of it, and seeming astonished that God's own children should be backward to strive and deny themselves for God;
- earnest longings that all God's people might be clothed with humility and meekness, like the Lamb of God, and feel nothing in their hearts but love and compassion for all mankind;

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- great grief when anything to the contrary seems to appear in any of the children of God, such as any bitterness or fierce zeal, or censoriousness, or reflecting uncharitably upon others, or disputing with any appearance of a heated spirit;
- a deep concern for the good of others' souls;
- a melting compassion for those who looked at themselves as being in a state of nature, and to saints under darkness, so as to cause the body to faint;
- universal benevolence to mankind, with a longing to embrace the whole world in the arms of pity and love;
- ideas of suffering the utmost conceivable rage and cruelty from their enemies, with a disposition to feel fervent love and pity for them, so far as it could be realized in thought;
- fainting with pity for the world that lies in ignorance and wickedness;
- sometimes a disposition is felt for a life given up to mourning alone in a wilderness over a lost and miserable world; with compassion towards them often being to that degree, that would allow no support or rest, except in going to God, and pouring out the soul in prayer for them;
- earnest desires that the work of God now occurring in the land, may be carried on with greater purity, and freedom from all bitter zeal, censoriousness, spiritual pride, hot disputes, etc.
- a vehement and constant desire for setting up Christ's kingdom throughout the earth, as a kingdom of holiness, purity, love, peace and happiness to mankind;
- the soul often entertained with unspeakable delight, and bodily strength overcome by thoughts of heaven as a world of love, where love will be the saints' eternal food, and they will dwell in the light of love, and swim in an ocean of love, where the very air and breath will be nothing but love;
- love for the people of God, or God's true saints, as those who have the image of Christ, and as those who will, in a very short time, shine in his perfect image; this has been attended with that endearment and oneness of heart, and that sweetness and ravishment of soul, that has been altogether inexpressible;
- the strength is very often taken away with longings that others might love God more, and serve God better, and have more of his comfortable presence than the person longing for it;
- desiring to follow the whole world to heaven, or that everyone should go before, and be higher in grace and happiness – not by this person's diminution, but by others' increase;
- a delight in conversing about things of religion, and in seeing Christians together, talking about the most spiritual and heavenly things in religion, in a lively and feeling manner, and very frequently overcome with the pleasure of such conversation;
- a great sense often expressed, of the importance of the duty of charity to the poor, and how most Christians come far short in the practice of it;
- a great sense of the need that God's ministers have for much of the Spirit of God, especially in this day;
- most earnest longings and wrestlings with God for them, so as to take away bodily strength;
- the greatest, fullest, longest continued, and most constant assurance of the favor of God, and of a title to future glory, that I ever saw appear in any person, especially enjoying of late (to use the person's own expression), *the riches of full assurance*;
- formerly longing to die somewhat impatiently; but lately – since that resignation mentioned about three years ago – an uninterrupted entire resignation to God with respect to life or death, sickness or health, ease or pain, has remained unchanged and unshaken when actually under extreme and violent pains, and when immediate death threatened; but though there is this patience and submission, yet thoughts of death and the day of judgment are always exceedingly sweet to the soul;

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- this resignation is also attended with a constant resignation of the lives of dearest earthly friends, and sometimes when some of their lives have been imminently threatened;
- often expressing the sweetness of the liberty of having wholly left the world, and renounced all for God, and having nothing but God, in whom there is an infinite fulness.
- these things have been attended with a constant sweet peace and calm and serenity of soul, without any cloud to interrupt it;
- continual rejoicing in all the works of God’s hands, the works of nature, and God’s daily works of providence, all appearing with a sweet smile upon them;
- wonderful access to God by prayer, as it were, *seeing him*, and sensibly conversing with him directly, oftentimes as much (to use the person’s own expressions) as if Christ were here on earth, sitting on a visible throne, to be approached and conversed with;
- frequent, plain, tangible and immediate answers to prayer;
- all tears wiped away; all former troubles and sorrows of life forgotten, and all sorrow and sighing fled away, except grief for past sins and remaining corruption;
- that Christ is not loved more, and God is not more honored in the world; and a compassionate grief towards fellow creatures;
- a daily sensible doing and suffering everything for God, for a long time past — eating for God, and working for God, and sleeping for God, and bearing pain and trouble for God, and doing all as the service of love, and so doing it with a continual uninterrupted cheerfulness, peace and joy. *Oh how good it is*, the person once said, *to work for God in the day time, and at night to lie down under His smiles!*

High experiences and religious affections in this person have not been attended with any disposition at all to neglect the necessary business of a secular calling, in order to spend time in reading and prayer and other exercises of devotion; but worldly business has been attended with great alacrity, as part of the service of God. The person declared that it being done this way, it is found to be as good as prayer. These things have been accompanied with an exceeding concern and zeal for moral duties, and that all professors might adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour with them;

- an uncommon care to perform relative and social duties, and a noted eminence in them;
- a great inoffensiveness of life and conversation in the sight of others;
- a great meekness, gentleness, and benevolence of spirit and behavior;
- a great alteration in those things that formerly used to be the person’s failings;
- seeming to be overcome and swallowed up by the recent great increase of grace, as observed by those who are most conversant and intimately acquainted with them;
- in times of the brightest light, and highest flights of love and joy, finding no disposition to any opinion that we are now perfectly free from sin (a notion of the Wesleys and their followers, and some other high pretenders to spirituality in these days), but exceedingly to the contrary;
- at such times especially, seeing how loathsome and polluted the soul is; soul and body and every act and word appearing like rottenness and corruption in that pure and holy light of God’s glory;
- not slighting instruction nor means of grace anymore, for having had great revelations; on the contrary, never more sensible of the need for instruction than now.

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And one thing more may be added: namely, that these things have been attended with a particular dislike for placing religion in an elaborate garb; for spending much zeal on matters of indifference; for affecting a show of humility and devotion by a plain habit, or a demure and melancholy countenance; or for anything singular and superstitious.

Now, if such things are *enthusiasm*, and the fruits of a *distempered* brain, then let my brain be evermore possessed by that happy distemper! If this is *distraction*, then I pray to God that the world of mankind may all be seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, beatific, glorious distraction! If agitations of the body were found in the French prophets, and ten thousand prophets more, it is to little purpose to bring it as an objection against a work such as this, unless the purpose is to disprove the whole of the Christian religion. The great affections and high transports that others have been under lately, are of the same kind in general as those in the instance given, though not to so high a degree; and many of those others were not so pure and unmixed, nor so well regulated.

I have had opportunity to observe many instances here and elsewhere. Though there are some instances of great affections in which there has been a great mixture of nature with grace, and in some, a sad degenerating of religious affections, there is still an observable uniformity that is easily seen. In general, it is *the same spirit* from which the work in all parts of the land has originated. What notions do those have of religion, who reject what has been described, as *not* being true religion? What will we find corresponding to these expressions in Scripture:

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding: rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in believing in and loving an unseen Saviour; all joy and peace in believing; God's shining into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; with open face, beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given to us; having the Spirit of God, and of glory, rest upon us; being called out of darkness into marvellous light; and having the day star arise in our hearts.

I say, if those things that have been mentioned, don't correspond to these expressions, then what else can we discover that *does*? Those who don't think such things as these are the fruits of the true Spirit, would do well to consider what kind of spirit they are waiting and praying for, and what sort of fruits they expect Him to produce when he comes. I suppose it will generally be allowed that there *is* such a thing as a glorious outpouring of the Spirit of God to be expected, to introduce very joyful and glorious times on religious accounts — times in which holy love and joy will be raised to a great height in true Christians. But if those things that have been mentioned are rejected, then what is left that we can find, with which to patch together a notion or form an idea of the high, blessed, joyful religion of these times? What is it that any have a notion of, which is very sweet, excellent, joyful, and of a religious nature, that has an entirely different nature from *these* things?

Those who are waiting for the fruits, in order to determine whether this is the work of God or not, would do well to consider two things:

1. *What they are waiting for.* Whether it isn't to have this wonderful religious influence that is on the minds of people, be over and past, and then to see how they behave themselves. That

is, to have grace subside, and its actings cease in great measure, and to have people grow cold and dead, and then to see whether *after that*, they will behave themselves with that exactness and brightness of conversation that is to be expected of lively Christians, or of those who are in the vigorous exercises of grace. — There are many who won't be satisfied with any exactness or laboriousness in religion *now*, while people's minds are greatly moved, and their affections are high. For they lay it to their *flash of affection* and their *heat of zeal*, as they call it. They are waiting to see whether they will carry themselves as well, when these affections are *over*. That is, they are waiting to have people sicken and lose their strength, so that they may see whether they will *then* behave like healthy strong men. I would desire that they also consider whether they aren't waiting for more than is reasonably to be expected, supposing this is really a great work of God, and is much more than has been found in former great outpourings of the Spirit of God, which have been universally acknowledged in the Christian church? Do they expect fewer instances of apostasy, and evidences of hypocrisy in professors, and those who for the present seem to be under the influences of the Spirit, than there were after that great outpouring of the Spirit in the apostles' days, or in the time of the reformation? Do they stand prepared to make a mighty argument against this work, if there should be *half* so many?

2. *How long they will wait to see the good fruit of this work, before they determine in favor of it.* Isn't their waiting unlimited? The visible fruit that is to be expected from an outpouring of the Spirit of God on a country, is a visible reformation in that country. What reformation has lately been brought to pass in New England by this work, has been observed. Hasn't it continued long enough already, to give reasonable satisfaction? If God cannot work on the hearts of a people in such a way as to show His hand so plainly, and if we cannot reasonably expect it to be acknowledged in a year and a half or two years' time, surely it is *unreasonable* that our expectations and demands be unlimited, and our waiting be without bounds.

As there is the clearest evidence from those things that have been observed, that this is the work of God, so it is evident that it is a very great, and wonderful, and exceedingly glorious work of God. This is certain: that it is a great and wonderful event, a strange revolution, an unexpected and surprising overturning of things, suddenly brought to pass, never before seen in New England, and scarcely ever heard of in *any* land. Whoever had seen the state of things in New England a few years ago, the state it was settled in, and the way we had been going for so long— how could they have thought there would be such a change in so little time? This is undoubtedly either a very great work of God, or a great work of the devil, as to its main substance. Undoubtedly, God and the devil may work together at the same time, and in the same land. And when God is at work, especially if He is very remarkably at work, Satan will intrude to his utmost; and by intermingling his work, he will endeavor to darken and hinder God's work. Yet God and the devil do not work together in producing the same event, and in effecting the same change in the hearts and lives of men. But it is apparent that there are some things in which the main substance of this work consists, a certain *effect* that is produced, and an *alteration* that is made in the apprehensions, affections, dispositions and behavior of men, in which there is a likeness and agreement everywhere. Now, I say this is either a wonderful work of God, or else a mighty work of the devil. And so it is either a most happy event, greatly to be admired and rejoiced in, or else a most awful calamity. Therefore, if what has been said before is sufficient to determine that, in the main, it is the work *of God*, then it must be acknowledged to be a very wonderful and glorious work of God.

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Such a work is, *in its nature and kind*, the most glorious of any work of God whatsoever; and it is always spoken of this way in Scripture. It is the work of redemption in the event, success, and end of it (which is the great end of all other works of God, and of which the work of creation was but a shadow). It is the work of new creation, that is infinitely more glorious than the old. I am bold to say that the work of God in the conversion of one soul, considered together with the source, foundation, and purchase of it, and also the benefit, end, and eternal issue of it, is a more glorious work of God than the creation of the whole material universe. It is the most glorious of God's works, because above all others, it manifests the glory of God. It is spoken of in Scripture as that which shows *the exceeding greatness of God's power, and the glory and riches of divine grace* — it is that in which Christ has the most glorious triumph over his enemies, and in which God is mightily exalted. And it is a work that is glorious above all others, as it concerns the happiness of mankind. The fruit of each single drop of such a shower, brings more happiness and a greater benefit to man, than all the temporal good of the happiest revolution in a land or nation amounts to, or all that a people could gain by the conquest of the world.

And as this work is very glorious in its nature, so it is *in its degree and circumstances*. It will appear very glorious if we consider the unworthiness of the people who are its subjects; what obligations God has laid us under by the special privileges we have enjoyed for our souls' good; the great things God did for us at our first settlement in the land; how He has followed us with his goodness to this day, and how we have *abused* his goodness; how long we have been revolting more and more (as we all confess), how very corrupt we had become at last; in how great a degree we had cast off God, and forsaken the fountain of living waters; how obstinate we have been, under all manner of means that God has used to reclaim us; how often we have mocked God with hypocritical pretences of humiliation, as in our annual days of public fasting and other things. Instead of reforming, we only grew worse and worse. How dead a time it was everywhere, before this work began. If we consider these things, we will be most stupidly ungrateful if we don't acknowledge God's visiting us, as he has done, as an instance of the glorious triumph of free and sovereign grace.

The work is very glorious if we consider *the extent of it*. In this respect, it is vastly beyond any former outpouring of the Spirit that was ever known in New England. Formerly, there has sometimes been a remarkable awakening and success of the means of grace in some particular congregation. This used to be greatly taken notice of, and acknowledged to be glorious, even though the surrounding towns and congregations continued dead. But now God has brought to pass a *new* thing. He has wrought a great work of this nature, that has extended from one end of the land to the other, besides what was wrought in other British colonies in America.

The work is very glorious *in the great numbers* who have apparently been turned from sin to God. And so they have been delivered from a wretched captivity to sin and Satan, saved from everlasting burnings, and made heirs of eternal glory. How high an honor, and how great a reward for their labors, some eminent people of note in the church of God have signified they would esteem it, if they were made the instruments of the conversion and eternal salvation of even *one* soul! No greater event than that, is thought worthy of great notice in heaven among the hosts of glorious angels, who rejoice and sing on such an occasion (Luk 15.10). And so, when there are many *thousands* of souls thus converted and saved, will it be esteemed worthy

Part I. – This is a Glorious Work of God

of but little notice, and be mentioned with coldness and indifference here on earth, by those among whom such a work is wrought?

The work has been very glorious and wonderful *in its many circumstances and events*, which have been extraordinary. God has, in an uncommon way, made his hand visible and his power conspicuous in them, as in the extraordinary degrees of awakening, and the suddenness of conversions in innumerable instances. Though such work was quick, the thing wrought is manifestly durable. How common it has been for a great part of a *congregation* to at once be moved by a mighty invisible power, and in the exercise of that power, for six, eight, or ten souls to be converted to God (to all appearance), in whom the visible change still continues! How great an alteration has been made in some *towns*, even some populous towns; and the change still abides! How many very vicious people have been worked upon, so as to become visibly new creatures! God has also made his hand very visible, and his work glorious, in the multitudes of little children who have been worked upon. I suppose there have been some hundreds of instances of this nature lately, any one of which formerly would have been looked upon as so remarkable, as to be worthy of being recorded and published throughout the land. The work is very glorious in its influences and effects on many who have been very ignorant and barbarous,¹ as I observed before about the Indians and Negroes.

The work is also exceedingly glorious *in the high attainments of Christians*, the extraordinary degrees of light, love, and spiritual joy that God has bestowed upon great multitudes. In this respect also, the land in all parts has abounded with such instances, any one of which, if they had happened formerly, would have been thought worthy to be taken notice of by God's people throughout the British dominions. In this respect, the New Jerusalem has begun to come down from heaven; and perhaps never were more of the foretastes of heaven's glory given on earth.

There are a great many errors and sinful irregularities mixed with this work of God, arising from our weakness, darkness, and corruption. That does not keep this work of God's power and grace from being very glorious. Our follies and sins that we mix with it, in some respects manifest its glory. The glory of divine power and grace is set off with greater lustre, by what appears at the same time from the weakness of the earthen vessel. It is God's pleasure that there should be something to remarkably manifest the weakness and unworthiness of the subject, at the same time that He displays the excellency of his power and the riches of his grace. I don't doubt that some of those things which make some of us here on earth out of sorts, and make us look at this work with a sour, displeased countenance, actually heighten the songs of the angels when they praise God and the Lamb for what they see of the glory of God's all-sufficiency, and the efficacy of Christ's redemption. How unreasonable it is that we should be hesitant to acknowledge the glory of what God has done, just because along with this, the devil and we (in listening to him) have done a great deal of mischief!

¹ Considering Edward's era, these were not epithets or condescending terms. They were *ignorant* of the Christian faith and its practices. *Barbarous* means they belonged to a foreign civilization and culture. Act 28.2, "And the *barbarous* people showed us much kindness." The Greek word is literally, *barbaros*.

PART II.

Showing the obligations that all are under, to acknowledge, rejoice in, and promote this work, and the great danger of the contrary.

There are many things in the word of God, that show that when God remarkably appears in any great work for his church, and against his enemies, it is a most dangerous thing, and highly provoking to God, to be slow and hesitant to acknowledge and honor God in the work, and to lie still and not to offer a helping hand. Christ's people are represented in Scripture as his army; he is the Lord of Hosts or armies. He is the captain of the host of the Lord, as he called himself when he appeared to Joshua with a sword drawn in his hand, Jos 5.13-15. He is the captain of his people's salvation. And therefore it may well be highly resented if they don't resort to Him when he orders his banner to be displayed; or if they refuse to follow him when he blows the trumpet, and gloriously appears going forth against his enemies. God expects that every living soul should have his attention roused on such an occasion, and should most cheerfully yield to the call, and heedfully and diligently obey it. Isa 18.3, "All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, see when he lifts up a banner on the mountains; and when he blows the trumpet, *hear!*" All Israel should especially be gathered to follow after their captain, as we read they were after Ehud blew the trumpet on Mount Ephraim, when he had slain Eglon king of Moab, Jdg 3.27-28. How severe the martial law is in such a case, when anyone in an army refuses to obey the sound of a trumpet, and to follow his general into the battle! God at such a time appears in peculiar manifestations of his glory. And therefore, *not* to be affected and animated by that, and to lie still, and refuse to follow God, will be resented as high contempt of Him. If a subject stood by as a spectator of the solemnity of his prince's coronation, and appeared silent and sullen as the whole multitude were testifying of their loyalty and joy, with loud acclamations — how greatly he would expose himself to be treated as a rebel, and to quickly perish by the authority of the prince that he refuses to honor!

At a time when God manifests himself in such a great work for his church, there is no such thing as being neutral. There is a need to be either for or against the King who then gloriously appears. When a king is crowned, and there are public manifestations of joy on that occasion, there is no such thing as standing by as an indifferent spectator. All must appear as loyal subjects, and express their joy on that occasion, or be accounted enemies. So it always is when God, in any great dispensation of his providence, remarkably sets his king on his holy hill of Zion, and Christ in an extraordinary manner comes down from heaven to the earth, and appears in his visible church in a great work of salvation for his people. So it was when Christ came down from heaven at his incarnation, and appeared on earth in his human presence. There was no such thing as being neutral, neither on his side nor against him. Those who sat still and said nothing, and did not declare for him, nor come and join him after he had given sufficient evidence of who he was by his word and works — they were justly looked at as his enemies. As Christ says in Mat 12.30, "He who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me, scatters abroad." So it is in a time when Christ is remarkably *spiritually* present, as well as when he is *bodily* present; and when he comes to carry out the work of redemption in the *application* of it, as well as in the revelation and *purchase* of it. If a king came into one of his provinces that had been oppressed by its foes, where some of his subjects

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had fallen away to the enemy, and joined with them against their lawful sovereign and his loyal subjects — I say, if the lawful sovereign himself came into the province, and rode forth against his enemies there, and called upon all who were on his side to come and gather themselves to him — there would be no such thing in such a case, as standing neutral. Those who laid still and stayed at a distance would undoubtedly be looked at and treated as rebels. So in the day of battle, when two armies join, there is no such thing for any who are present, as being of *neither* party. All must be on one side or the other. And those who are not found with the conqueror in such a case, must expect to have his weapons turned against them, and to fall with the rest of his enemies.

When God manifests himself with such glorious power in a work of this nature, he appears especially determined to put honor upon his Son, and to fulfil his oath that he has sworn to him, that he would make every knee bow, and every tongue confess to him. God has had it much on his heart, from all eternity, to glorify his dear and only-begotten Son. There are some special seasons that he appoints to that end, in which He comes forth with omnipotent power to fulfil his promise and oath to him. And these times are times of a remarkable outpouring of his Spirit to advance his kingdom. Such a day is a day of his power, in which his people will be made willing, and he will rule in the midst of his enemies. These especially are the times in which God declares his firm decree that his Son shall reign on his holy hill of Zion. And therefore, those who at such a time do not *kiss the Son* — as he then manifests himself and as he appears in the glory of his majesty and grace — expose themselves to *perish from the way*, and to be *dashed in pieces with a rod of iron*. (Psa 2.9, 12)

Such a time is a time in which God eminently *sets his king on his holy hill of Zion*. So too, it is a time in which he remarkably fulfils Isa 28.16: “Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation.” The two Apostles Peter and Paul (1Pet 2.6-8, and Rom 9.33) join with that prophecy made in Isa 8.14-15, “He will be as a sanctuary; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both houses of Israel, for a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared and taken.” This signifies that both are fulfilled together. Yes, both are joined together by the prophet Isaiah himself, as you may see in the context of that forementioned verse, Isa 28.16. In ver. 13, preceding, it is said “But the word of the Lord was to them, ‘Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little,’ that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.” Accordingly it always is so, that when Christ is manifested and magnified in a peculiar and eminent manner by a glorious work of God in his church as a foundation and sanctuary for some, he is also remarkably a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, a trap and a snare for others. Those who long continue to stumble, and are offended and ensnared in their minds at such a great and glorious work of Christ —in God’s account, they stumble at *Christ*, and are offended by him. For the work is that by which God makes Christ manifest, and shows his glory, and by which he makes *the stone that the builders refused, become the chief cornerstone*. This shows how dangerous it is to always continue stumbling at such a work, forever doubting it, forbearing to fully acknowledge it and give God the glory for it. Such people are in danger, *to go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken*, and to have Christ be *a stone of stumbling to them*, which will be the occasion of their ruin — while to others he is *a sanctuary, and a sure foundation*.

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The prophet Isaiah, in Isa 29.14, speaks of God's proceeding to do a marvellous work and a wonder, which would stumble and confound the wisdom of the wise and prudent. In Act 13.41, the apostle applies this to the glorious work of salvation wrought in those days by the redemption of Christ, and that glorious outpouring of the Spirit that followed. The prophet in the context of Isa 29, speaking of the same thing, and of the prophets, rulers, and seers, those wise and prudent ones whose eyes God had closed, says to them in verse 9, "Delay yourselves and wonder." In the original it is, *Be slow and wonder*. I leave it to others to consider whether it isn't natural to interpret it this way: "Wonder at this marvellous work; let it be a strange thing, a great mystery that you don't know what to make of, and that you are very slow and hesitant to acknowledge, long delaying to come to a determination concerning it." What people are in danger of, those who wonder and are slow to acknowledge God in such a work, we learn by that saying of the apostle in the forementioned Act 13.41, "Behold, you despisers, wonder and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, even if a man declared it to you"

The church of Christ is called upon to greatly rejoice when Christ at any time remarkably appears, coming to his church to carry on the work of salvation, to enlarge his own kingdom, and to deliver poor souls out of the pit in which there is no water. Zec 9.9-11: "Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King comes to you. He is just and having salvation. — His dominion shall be from sea to sea. — As for you also, by the blood of your covenant, I have set your prisoners free from the pit in which there is no water."

Christ was pleased to give a notable type or symbolic representation of such a great event as spoken of in that prophecy, in his solemn entry into the *literal* Jerusalem, which was a type of the church, or "daughter of Zion" spoken of there. He probably intended it as a figure and prelude of that great actual fulfilment of this prophecy, that was to come after his ascension, by the outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles; and that fuller accomplishment that would occur in the latter ages of the Christian church. We have an account, that when Christ made this his solemn entry into Jerusalem, and the whole multitude of the disciples were rejoicing and praising God with loud voices for all the mighty works that they had seen, the Pharisees from among the multitude said to Christ, *Master, rebuke your disciples*. But we are told in Luk 19.39-40, Christ "answered and said to them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out," signifying that if Christ's professing disciples should be unaffected on such an occasion, and did not appear to openly acknowledge and rejoice in the glory of God appearing in this, it would manifest such a fearful hardness of heart, exceeding that of the stones, that the very stones would condemn them. Shouldn't this make those reconsider, who have held their peace for so long since Christ has come to *our* Zion, having salvation, and has so wonderfully manifested his glory in this mighty work of his Spirit, and so many of his disciples have been rejoicing and praising God with loud voices?

It must be acknowledged that so great and wonderful a work of God's Spirit, is a work in which God's hand is remarkably *lifted up*, and in which he displays his majesty, and shows great favor and mercy to sinners in the glorious opportunity he gives them; and by which He makes our land more of a land of uprightness. Therefore, that passage in Isa 26.10-11 shows the great danger of not seeing God's hand, and acknowledging his glory and majesty in such a work: "Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness. In the land of

uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when your hand is lifted up, they will not see. But they will see, and be ashamed for their envy of the people. Yes, the fire of your enemies shall devour them.”

Two Continents¹

It is not unlikely that this work of God’s Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least a prelude of that glorious work of God so often foretold in Scripture, which in the progress and outcome of it, will renew the world of mankind. If we consider that the things foretold, that would precede this great event, have long ago been accomplished; and how long this event has been expected by the church of God, and thought to be near by the most eminent men of God in the church; and along with that, if we consider what the state of things now is, and has been for a considerable time, in the church of God and the world of mankind, we cannot reasonably think otherwise, than that the beginning of this great work of God must be near. There are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America. It is signified that it will begin in some very remote part of the world, which the rest of the world has no communication with except by navigation — Isa 60.9: “Surely the Isles will wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring my sons from afar.” It is exceedingly manifest that this chapter is a prophecy of the prosperity of the church in its most glorious state on earth, in the latter days.

And I cannot think that anything but America can be intended by *the isles that are afar off*, from where the firstborn sons of that glorious day will be brought. Indeed *the isles*, in prophecies of gospel times, very often meant Europe. This is true in prophecies of that great spreading of the gospel that would occur soon after Christ’s time, because it was far separated from that part of the world where the church of God had been until then — by the sea. But this prophecy cannot refer to the conversion of Europe in the time of that great work of God in the primitive ages of the Christian church. For it was not then fulfilled. The isles and ships of Tarshish, thus understood, did not wait for God first. That glorious work did not begin in Europe, but in Jerusalem; and for a considerable time it had been very wonderfully carried on in Asia before it reached Europe. And because it is not *that* work of God which is chiefly intended in this chapter, but that more glorious work that would occur in the latter ages of the Christian church, some other part of the world is therefore intended here by *the Isles*. That would be as Europe then was, far separated from that part of the world where the church had been before, by the sea, and with which it can have no communication except by the ships of Tarshish. And what is chiefly intended is not the British Isles, nor any Isles near the other continent; for they are spoken of as being at a great distance from that part of the world where the church had been till then. This prophecy therefore seems plainly to point out America as the first fruits of that glorious day.

¹ What follows are Edwards’ *musings* about America as the locus of this revival. This is not an eschatology *per se*. He merely draws an analogy with some portions of Scripture, laying out the possibility that this has been the will of God from the beginning. He has the following purpose in mind (see below): “I have insisted on this point at length, because if these things are so, it greatly manifests how much it behooves us to encourage and promote this work, and how dangerous it will be to forbear doing so.” His fellow Americans haven’t been taking the revival seriously. He therefore gives them an *American* reason to do so.

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God has made, as it were, two worlds here below — the old and the new (according to the names they are now called by) — two great habitable continents, far separated from one another. The latter is but newly discovered. It was formerly wholly unknown from age to age, and it is now but newly created, as it were. Until lately, it has been wholly the possession of Satan, the church of God having never been in it, as it has been in the other continent from the beginning of the world. This new world is probably discovered now, so that the new and most glorious state of God's church on earth might commence there; that God might begin in it a new world, in a spiritual sense, when he creates the *new heavens* and *new earth*.

God has already put that honor upon the other continent, that Christ was literally born there, and there He made the *purchase of redemption*. So, as Providence observes a kind of equal distribution of things, it is not unlikely that the great spiritual birth of Christ, and the most glorious *application of redemption*, is to begin in this one, just as the elder sister brought forth Judah, from whom Christ came, and so she was the mother of Christ. But the younger sister, after long barrenness, brought forth Joseph and Benjamin, the beloved children. Joseph had the most glorious apparel, the coat of many colors. He was separated from his brethren and exalted to such glory out of a dark dungeon. He fed and saved the world. When he was ready to perish with famine, he was *like a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches ran over the wall*, Gen 49.22-26. He was blessed with all manner of blessings and precious things of heaven and earth, through the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush. He was, like the horns of a wild ox, to push the people together, to the ends of the earth, *i.e.*, to conquer the world, Deu 33.13-17. Benjamin's goods were five times as great as that of any of his brethren; and Joseph, a type of Christ, gave him wealth and raiment far beyond all the rest, Gen. 45.22.

The other continent has slain Christ, and from age to age has shed the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, and has often been, as it were, deluged with the church's blood. God has therefore probably reserved the honor of building the glorious temple to the daughter who has not shed so much blood, when those times of the peace, prosperity, and glory of the church commence, which were typified by the reign of Solomon.

The Gentiles first received the true religion from the Jews. God's church of ancient times had been among them, and Christ was of them. But that there might be a kind of equality in the dispensations of Providence, God has so ordered things, that when the Jews come to be admitted to the benefits of the evangelical dispensation, and to receive their highest privileges of all, they should receive the gospel from the Gentiles. Though Christ was of them, yet they had been guilty of crucifying him. It is therefore the will of God, that those people should not have the honor of communicating to the Gentiles the blessings of the kingdom of God in its most glorious state, but on the contrary, they will *receive* the gospel in the beginning of that glorious day, from the Gentiles. In some analogy to this, I apprehend God's dealings will be with the two continents. America has received the true religion of the old continent; the church of ancient times has been there, and Christ is from there. But that there may be an equality, and because that continent has crucified Christ, they will not have the honor of communicating religion in its most glorious state to *us*, but we to *them*.

The old continent has been the source and origin of mankind in several respects. The first parents of mankind dwelt there; and Noah and his sons dwelt there; and the second Adam

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was born there, and was crucified and rose again. It is probable that to *balance* these things in some measure, the most glorious renovation of the world will originate from the new continent; and the church of God in that respect will be from here. And so it is probable that with respect to America, that will come to pass in spiritual things, which has come to pass in temporal things. Till lately, the world was supplied with its silver, gold, and earthly treasures from the old continent. Now it is supplied chiefly from the new. So the course of things in spiritual respects will be turned in like manner.

It is worthy to be noted that America was discovered about the time of the reformation, or only little before. This reformation was the first thing that God did towards the glorious renovation of the world, after it had sunk into the depths of darkness and ruin under the great antichristian apostasy. So that, as soon as this new world is created (as it were), and stands in view, God immediately goes about doing some great thing to make way for the introduction of the church's latter day glory, which is to have its first seat in that new world, and to take its rise from it.

It is agreeable to God's manner of working, when he accomplishes any glorious work in the world, to introduce a new and more excellent state of his church — to begin his work where his church had not been till then, and where no foundation was already laid, so that the power of God might be more conspicuous; so that the work might appear to be entirely God's; and to be more manifestly a creation out of nothing. It is agreeable to Hos 1.10: "And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people, there it will be said to them, you are the sons of the living God." When God is about to turn the earth into a Paradise, he doesn't begin his work where there is some good growth already, but in a wilderness, where nothing grows, and nothing is to be seen but dry sand and barren rocks — so that the light may shine out of darkness, and the world be replenished from emptiness, and the earth watered by springs from a drougthy desert. This is agreeable to many prophecies of Scripture, such as Isa 32.15: "Until the Spirit is poured from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field." And Isa 41.18, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, the myrtle and oil tree. I will set in the desert the cypress tree, and the pine, and the box tree together." And Isa 43.20, "I will give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen." Many other parallel Scriptures might be mentioned.

I observed before, that when God is about to do some great work for his church, his manner is to begin at the lower end. So when he is about to renew the whole habitable earth, it is probable that he will begin in this utmost, meanest, youngest and weakest part of it, where the church of God has been planted last of all. And so the first shall be last, and the last first. And that Scripture will be fulfilled in an eminent manner: Isa 24.16, "From the ends of the earth we have heard songs, even 'Glory to the righteous!'"

There are several things that seem to me to argue that when the Sun of Righteousness, the sun of the new heavens and new earth, comes to rise, it will rise in the west, contrary to the course of this world, or the course of things in the old heavens and earth. *He comes forth like the bridegroom of his church, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race, having his going forth from one end of heaven, and his circuit to the other end, so that nothing may be hidden*

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*from its light and heat.*¹ The course of God's providence in that day will be so wonderfully altered in many respects, that God will, as it were, change the course of nature in answer to the prayers of his church. God changed the course of nature and caused the sun to go from the West to the East when Hezekiah was healed. And God promised to do such great things for his church, to deliver it out of the hand of the king of Assyria by that mighty slaughter by the angel. This is often used by the prophet Isaiah, as a type of the glorious deliverance of the church from her enemies in the latter days. The resurrection of Hezekiah (as it were), the king and captain of the church (as he is called in 2Kng 20.5), is given as an earnest of the church's resurrection and salvation (Isa 38.6), and it is a type of the resurrection of Christ. At the same time, there is a resurrection of the sun, as it returns and rises again from the west where it had gone down — a type of the Sun of Righteousness. The sun was brought back ten degrees; which probably brought it to the meridian. The Sun of Righteousness has long been going down from east to west. And probably when the time comes for the church's deliverance from her enemies, so often typified by the Assyrians, the Light will rise in the west, until it shines throughout the world, like the sun in its meridian brightness.

The same thing also seems to be represented by the course of the waters of the sanctuary, in Eze 47, which was from west to east. These waters undoubtedly represent the Holy Spirit in the progress of His saving influences in the latter ages of the world. For it is manifest that those last chapters of Ezekiel concern the glorious state of the church that will then be.

And if we may suppose that this glorious work of God will begin in any part of America, then I think if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must appear the most likely of all American colonies, to be the place from which this work will principally take its rise.

And *if these things are so*, it gives more abundant reason to hope that what is now seen in America, and especially in New England, may prove to be the dawn of that glorious day. And the very uncommon and wonderful circumstances and events of this world seem to me to strongly argue that God intends it as the beginning or forerunner of something vastly great.

I have insisted on this point at length, because if these things are so, it greatly manifests how much it behooves us to encourage and promote this work, and how dangerous it will be to forbear doing so.

It is very dangerous for God's professing people to lie still, and not come to the help of the Lord whenever he remarkably pours out his Spirit to carry on the work of redemption in its application — but above all, when he comes forth in that last and greatest outpouring of his Spirit, to introduce that happy day of God's power and salvation, so often spoken of. That is especially the appointed season of the application of the redemption of Christ. It is the proper time of the kingdom of heaven on earth, the appointed time of Christ's reign. The reign of

¹ It is evident that the Holy Spirit, in those expressions in Psa 19.4-6, respects something else besides the natural sun; and that an eye is had to the Sun of Righteousness, that by His light he converts the soul, makes wise the simple, enlightens the eyes, and rejoices the heart. And by his preached gospel, He enlightens and warms the world of mankind. This is by the Psalmist's own application in verse 7, and the apostle's application of verse 4, in Rom 10.18. — Edwards

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Satan as god of this world lasts till then. This is the proper time of actual redemption, or *new creation*, as evident in Isa 65.17-18; 66.22, and Rev 21.1. All the outpourings of the Spirit of God before this, are by way of anticipation.

There was indeed a glorious season of the application of redemption in the first ages of the Christian church, that began at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But that was not the proper time of ingathering; it was only (as it were) the Feast of first fruits. The ingathering is at the *end* of the year, or in the last ages of the Christian church, as represented in Rev 14.14-16. And it will probably as much exceed what occurred in the first ages of the Christian church (even though that filled the Roman empire), as it exceeded all that came before under the Old Testament, which was confined only to the land of Judea.

The great danger of not appearing to openly acknowledge, rejoice in, and promote that great work of God in bringing in that glorious harvest, is represented in Zec 14.16-19:

“And it shall come to pass, that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be, that whichever of all the families of the earth will not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt will not go up, and come in, they will have no rain. There shall be a plague with which the Lord strikes the heathen who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.”

It is evident by all the context, that the glorious day of the church of God in the latter ages of the world, is the time spoken of. The Feast of Tabernacles here seems to signify that glorious spiritual feast which God shall then make for his church, the same spoken of in Isa 25.5, and the great spiritual rejoicings of God’s people at that time. There were three great feasts in Israel, at which all the males were appointed to go up to Jerusalem: the Feast of the Passover; the Feast of the first fruits (or Feast of Pentecost); and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year (or Feast of Tabernacles). The first of these, namely *the Feast of the Passover*, represented the purchase of redemption by Jesus Christ, the paschal Lamb, that was slain at the time of that feast. The other two that followed it, were to represent the two great seasons of the application of the purchased redemption. The former of them, namely, *the Feast of the Firstfruits* (which was also called the Feast of Pentecost), represented the outpouring of the Spirit that occurred in the first ages of the Christian church — for bringing in the first fruits of Christ’s redemption, which began at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The other was the *Feast of Ingathering*, at the end of the year. The children of Israel were appointed to keep this on the occasion of their gathering in their corn and their wine, and all the fruit of their land. It was also called the *Feast of Tabernacles*, which represented the other more joyful and glorious season of the application of Christ’s redemption, which is to be in the latter days. It is the great day of ingathering the elect, the proper and appointed time for gathering in God’s fruits, when the angel of the covenant will *thrust in his sickle*, and gather the harvest of the earth; and also the clusters of the vine of the earth. (Rev 14.18)

This was, on many accounts, the greatest feast of the three. There were much greater tokens of rejoicing in this feast than in any other. The people then dwelt in booths of green boughs, and were commanded to take boughs of bountiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs

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of thick trees, and the willows of the brook, and to rejoice before the Lord their God. This represents the flourishing, beautiful, pleasant state the church will be in, rejoicing in God's grace and love, triumphing over all her enemies, at the time typified by this feast. The tabernacle of God was first set up among the children of Israel at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. But in that glorious time of the Christian church, God will, above all other times, set up His tabernacle among men. Rev 21:3, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, 'The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God.'" The world is supposed to have been created about the time of the year in which the Feast of Tabernacles was appointed.¹ So in that glorious time, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. The temple of Solomon was dedicated at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, when God descended in a pillar of cloud, and dwelt in the temple. So at this happy time, the temple of God will be gloriously built up in the world, and God will in a wonderful manner come down from heaven to dwell with his church. Christ is supposed to have been born at the Feast of Tabernacles; so at the commencement of that glorious day, Christ shall be born. Then, above all other times, the *Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, who is in travail, and pained to be delivered*, will bring forth her son to rule all nations, Rev 12:1-5.

The Feast of Tabernacles was the last feast that Israel had in the whole year, before the face of the earth was destroyed by the winter. Immediately after the rejoicings of that feast were past, a tempestuous season began. Act 27:9, "Sailing was not as dangerous because the feast was now already past." So this great feast of the Christian church will be the last feast she will have on earth. Soon after it is past, this lower world will be destroyed. At the Feast of Tabernacles, Israel left their houses to dwell in booths or green tents, which signifies the great weanedness of God's people from the world, as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and their great joy in this. Israel was prepared for the Feast of Tabernacles, by the Feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement both in the same month. So a way will be made for the joy of the church of God, in its glorious state on earth, by the extraordinary preaching of the gospel, deep repentance and humiliation for past sins, and the great and long-continued deadness and carnality of the visible church. At the great Feast of Tabernacles (Joh 7:37-38), Christ stood in Jerusalem and cried out saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water." This signified the extraordinary freedom and riches of divine grace towards sinners in that day, and the extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit that would be given, agreeable to Rev 21:6, and 22:17.²

It is threatened in the 14th chapter of Zechariah (cited above), that those who at that time do not come to keep this feast — *i.e.*, those who won't acknowledge God's glorious works, and praise his name, and rejoice with his people, but stand at a distance, unbelieving and disaffected — *upon them no rain shall fall*. And *this* will be the plague with which they will all be struck. That is, they will have no share in that shower of divine blessing that will then

¹ Bishop Ussher, in his 1650 chronology (*Annals*), calculated the earth was created Oct 23, 4004 B.C.

² **Rev 21:6** And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. **Rev 22:17** And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

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descend on the earth, that spiritual rain spoken of in Isa 45.8.¹ But God would give them over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. (Isa 6.10).

The curse is denounced in a still more awful manner against those who appear as opposers at that time. Zec 14.12, “And this shall be the plague with which the Lord shall strike all the people who have fought against Jerusalem, their flesh shall be consumed while they stand on their feet, and their eyes shall be consumed in their sockets, and their tongue shall be consumed in their mouth.” In all probability, what is intended here is a spiritual judgment, or a plague and curse from God on the soul rather than on the body. Those who at that time oppose God’s people in his work, will in an extraordinary manner be given over to a state of spiritual death and ruin. They will remarkably appear dead while still alive, and will be like walking rotten corpses, while they go about among men.

The great danger of not joining with God’s people on that glorious day is also represented in Isa 60.12: “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish. Yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

Most of the great temporal deliverances that were wrought for Israel of old, as divines and expositors observe, were typical of the great spiritual works of God for the salvation of men’s souls, and the deliverance and prosperity of his church in the days of the gospel. And they especially represented that greatest of all deliverances of God’s church, and the chief of God’s works of actual salvation, which will occur in the latter days. As observed earlier, this above all others is the appointed time and proper season of the actual redemption of men’s souls. But it may be observed that if any appeared to oppose God’s work in those great temporal deliverances; or if there were any of his professing people who lay still on such occasions, and stood at a distance, and didn’t arise and acknowledge God in his work and appear to promote it — *this* was what in a remarkable manner incensed God’s anger, and brought his curse upon such people.

So when God wrought that great work of bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, how highly God resented it when the Amalekites appeared as opposers in that affair! This was a type of God’s delivering his church out of *spiritual* Egypt, at the time of the fall of Antichrist, as evident in Rev 11.8 and 15.3. And how dreadfully He cursed them for it! Exo 17.14-16:

“And the Lord said to Moses, write this for a memorial in the book, and repeat it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it *Jehovah Nissi*;² for he said, because the Lord will have war with Amalek, from generation to generation.”

Accordingly, we find that God remembered it a long time after, 1Sam 15.3. And how highly God resented it in the Moabites and Ammonites, that they didn’t lend a helping hand, and encourage and promote the affair! Deu 23.3-4:

¹ Originally, Isa 64.3, which has nothing to do with rain.

² “The LORD is my banner.”

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“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation they will not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever; because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt”

And how the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, were threatened if they didn't go and help their brethren in their wars against the Canaanites. Num 32.20-23:

“And Moses said to them, If you do this thing, if you will go armed before the Lord to war, and all of you armed will go over Jordan before the Lord, until he has driven out his enemies from before him, and the land is subdued before the Lord. Then afterward you will return and be guiltless before the Lord and before Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if you will not do so, *behold*, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out.”

That was a glorious work of God that he wrought for Israel when he delivered them from the Canaanites by the hand of Deborah and Barak. Almost everything about it showed a remarkable hand of God. It was a prophetess, one directly inspired by God, who called the people to battle, and conducted them in the whole affair. The people seem to have been miraculously animated and encouraged in the matter, when they willingly offered themselves and gathered together for the battle. They risked their lives in the high places of the field, without being pressed or hired – when one might think they would have but little courage for such an undertaking. For what could a number of poor, weak, defenceless slaves do, *without a shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand of them*, to go against a great prince with his mighty host, and nine hundred chariots of iron? The success wonderfully showed the hand of God. It makes Deborah exultingly say, Jdg 5.21, “O my soul, you have marched on in strength!”

Christ with his heavenly host was engaged in that battle. And therefore it is said, Jdg 5.20, “They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” The work of God in this victory and deliverance, which Christ and his host wrought for Israel, was therefore a type of that victory and deliverance which he will accomplish for his church in that Great Battle, that last conflict that the church will have with her open enemies, which will introduce the church's latter-day glory. This appears in Rev 16.16 (speaking of that great battle): “And he gathered them together at a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon,” *i.e.*, the mountain of Megiddo – alluding (as supposed by expositors) to the place where the battle was fought with the host of Sisera, Jdg 5.19: “The kings came and fought, the kings of Canaan, in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.” This can signify nothing else, than that this battle which Christ and his church will have with their enemies, is the antitype of the battle that was fought there.

But what a dreadful curse from Christ some of God's professing people Israel brought upon themselves, by lying still at that time, and not giving a helping hand! Jdg 5.23: “Curse you Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly its inhabitants, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” The Angel of the Lord was the captain of the host. He led Israel, and fought for them in that battle. He is very often called the *Angel of the Lord* in Scripture; the one who appeared to Joshua with a sword drawn in his hand, and told him that *he had come as the Captain of the host of the Lord*. And we have

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an account of that same glorious Captain, leading his hosts to that battle in Rev 19.11-14, of which this battle was the type. It seems the inhabitants of Meroz were unbelieving concerning this great work; nor would they listen to Deborah's pleas;¹ nor did it enter their minds that such a poor defenceless company would ever prevail against those who were so mighty. They didn't acknowledge the hand of God; and therefore stood at a distance, and did nothing to promote the work. But what a bitter curse from God they brought upon themselves by it!

It is very probable that one great reason why the inhabitants of Meroz were so unbelieving concerning this work, was that they argued *a priori*. They didn't like the beginning of it, that it was a woman who first led the way and chiefly conducted the affair. Nor could they believe that such despicable instruments as a company of unarmed slaves, were ever likely to effect so great a thing. And so, pride and unbelief worked together in not being willing to follow Deborah into the battle.

It was another glorious work of God that he wrought for Israel, in the victory that was obtained by Gideon over the Midianites and Amalekites, and the children of the east, when they came up against Israel like grasshoppers, *a multitude that could not be numbered*. This was also a remarkable type of the victory of Christ and his church over His enemies, by the outpouring of the Spirit with the preached gospel — as evident by the manner which Gideon was immediately directed to by God. This victory was not by human sword or bow, but only by blowing trumpets, and by lights in earthen vessels. We read that on this occasion, Gideon called the people together to help in this great affair. And accordingly, great numbers resorted to him, and came to the help of the Lord, Jdg 7.23-24. But there were also some at that time who were unbelieving, and would not acknowledge the hand of God in that work, even though it was so great and wonderful; nor would they join to promote it. They were the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel. Gideon desired their help when he was pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna. But they despised his overtures and his confidence in the Lord's being on his side, to deliver those two great princes into the hands of such a despicable company as he and his three hundred men. They would not admit the work of God, nor afford Gideon any assistance.

God proceeded in this work in a way that was exceedingly cross to their pride. And they also refused to own the work, because they argued *a priori*. They could not believe that God would do such great things by such a despicable instrument — someone from such a poor and lowly family in Manasseh, who was the least in his father's house. And the company that was with him appeared very wretched, being only three hundred men; and they were weak and faint. But we see how Succoth and Penuel suffered for their folly, in not acknowledging and appearing to promote this work of God. *Gideon*, when he returned from the victory, *took them, and taught them with the briers and thorns of the wilderness, and beat down the tower of Penuel* (he brought down their pride, and their false confidence), and slayed the men of the city, Judges chapter 8. In all probability, Gideon did this as he was moved and directed by the Angel of the Lord — that is, by Christ, who first called him and sent him into this battle, and instructed and directed him in the whole affair.

The return of the ark of God to dwell in Zion, in the midst of the land of Israel, after it had long been absent — first in the land of the Philistines and then in Kirjath Jearim, in the utmost

¹ Originally, "pretenses" — here it means importuning; an impassioned summons.

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borders of the land — vividly represented the return of God to a professing people, in the spiritual tokens of His presence, after long absence from them. The ark's ascending up into a mountain, typified Christ's ascension into heaven. It is evident by the Psalms that were penned on that occasion, especially the 68th Psalm, that the exceeding rejoicings of Israel on that occasion, represented the joy of the church of Christ on his returning to it, after it has been in a low and dark state. This is to revive his work, bringing his people *back*, as it were, *from Bashan, and from the depth of the sea*, scattering their spiritual enemies, and *though they had lain among the pots*, causing them to *be like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold*. He gives these blessed tokens of his presence in his house, that his people may *see the goings of God the King in his sanctuary*. The gifts which David distributed with such royal bounty among the people on that occasion (2Sam 6.18-19, and 1Chr 16.2-3), represent the spiritual blessings that Christ liberally sends down upon his church, by the outpourings of his Spirit. See Psa 68.1, 3, 13, 18-19, 20-24. And we have an account of how all the people from Shihor of Egypt, even to the entrance of Hamath, gathered together and appeared to join and assist in that great affair. All Israel *brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord, with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making loud sounds with lyres and harps*, 1Chr 13.2, 5, and 15.28. And not only the men, but the women of Israel, the daughters of Zion, appeared to publicly join in the praises and rejoicings on that occasion, 2Sam 6.19. But we read that the heart of one of David's wives, Michal, Saul's daughter, was not engaged in the affair. She did not appear with the others to rejoice and praise God on this occasion, but kept away, and stood at a distance, disaffected and disliking the management of it. She despised and ridiculed the transports, and the extraordinary manifestations of joy there were. The curse that she brought upon herself by this, was being barren till the day of her death.

Let this be a warning to us. Let us take heed in this day of bringing up the ark of God, that while we are the spouse of the spiritual David, in visibility and in profession, we do not show ourselves to indeed be the children of false-hearted and rebellious Saul, by standing aloof, and by not joining in the joy and praises of the day; and by disliking and despising the joys and affections of God's people, because they are to such a high degree — and thus bring the curse of perpetual barrenness upon our souls.

Let us take heed that we not be like the son of the bond woman, who was born after the flesh, who persecuted the one born after the Spirit, and mocked at the feasting and rejoicings that were made for Isaac when he was weaned — lest we be cast out of the family of Abraham as *he* was, Gen 21.8-12. That affair contained spiritual mysteries, and was typical of things that come to pass in these days of the gospel. This is evident by the apostle's testimony in Gal 4.23 to the end. And particularly, it seems to have been typical of *two things*:

1. The weaning of the church from its milk of carnal ordinances, ceremonies, shadows, and beggarly elements upon the coming of Christ; and the outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles. The church of Christ in the times of the Old Testament was in its minority, a babe. The apostle tells us that babes must be fed with milk, not with strong meat (1Cor 3.2). But when God weaned his church from these carnal ordinances upon ceasing the legal dispensation, a glorious gospel feast was provided for souls, and God fed his people with spiritual delicacies, and filled them with the Spirit, and gave them joy in the Holy Ghost.

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Ishmael, in mocking at the time of Isaac's feast, by the apostle's testimony, represented the carnal Jews, the children of the literal Jerusalem. When they beheld the rejoicings of Christians in their spiritual and evangelical privileges, they were filled with envy, deriding, contradicting and blaspheming, Act 2.13, 13.45, and 18.6. And therefore they were cast out of the family of Abraham, and out of the land of Canaan, to wander through the earth.

2. This weaning of Isaac also seems to represent the conversion of sinners, indicated several times in Scripture by the weaning of a child, as in Psa 131.2 and Isa 28.9. Because in conversion, the soul is weaned from the enjoyments of the world, which are (as it were) the breast of our mother earth. The soul is also weaned from the covenant of our first parents, which we naturally hang upon as a child hangs upon its mother's breasts. The great feast that Abraham made on that occasion represents the spiritual feast, the heavenly privileges, and holy joys and comforts, which God gives souls at their conversion. Now is the time when God is bestowing the blessings of such a feast in a remarkable manner. Let everyone take heed that they don't show themselves to be the son of the bond woman, born after the flesh, by standing and deriding with mocking Ishmael, lest they be cast out as he was — and lest it be said concerning them, *these sons of the bond woman, shall not be heirs with the sons of the free woman*. Don't let us stumble at the things that occurred, because they are so great and extraordinary. For if we have run with the footmen, and *they* have wearied us, then how will we contend with horses? There is doubtless a time coming when God will accomplish things vastly greater and more extraordinary than these.

Let us consider the example of the unbelieving officer in Samaria, so we may be warned not to continue doubting and unbelieving concerning this work, because of the extraordinary degree of it, and the suddenness and swiftness of the accomplishment of the great things that pertain to it. He could not believe that so extraordinary a work of God would be accomplished as suddenly as it was declared to him. The prophet Elisha foretold that the great famine in Samaria would very suddenly, *in one day*, be turned into an extraordinary plenty. But the work was too great, and too sudden for the man to believe. He says, *If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?* And the curse that he brought upon himself by it, was that he saw it with his eyes, and didn't eat of it, but miserably perished, and was trodden down like the mire of the streets, while others were feasting and rejoicing, 2Kings, chap. 7.

When God redeemed his people from their Babylonian captivity, and they rebuilt Jerusalem, it was, as universally admitted, a remarkable type of the spiritual redemption of God's church. And particularly, it was an eminent type of the great deliverance of the Christian church from spiritual Babylon, and of their rebuilding the spiritual Jerusalem in the latter days. Therefore, they are often spoken of as one thing by the prophets. This was probably the main reason that it was so ordered in Providence, and particularly noted in Scripture, that the children of Israel on that occasion, kept the greatest *Feast of Tabernacles* that had ever been kept in Israel since the days of Joshua, when the people were first settled in Canaan (Neh 8.16-17). It was because the restoration of Israel happened at that time, which had the greatest resemblance to that great restoration of the church of God, of which the *Feast of Tabernacles* was the type. It was the greatest of any that had occurred since Joshua first brought the people out of the wilderness, and settled them in the good land. But we read about some who opposed the Jews in that affair, and weakened their hands. They ridiculed God's people, and the instruments

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that were employed in that work. They despised their hope, and made out as though their confidence was little more than a shadow, and would utterly fail them. *What are these feeble Jews doing? they ask. Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Even what they build, if a mere fox goes up, he will break down their stone wall.* (Neh 4.2-3)

Let us not be in any measure like them, lest it be said to us, as Nehemiah said to them, “We his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem,” Neh. 2.20. And lest we bring Nehemiah’s imprecation upon us, Neh 4.5, “Do not cover their iniquity, and don’t let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.”

People will greatly expose themselves to the curse of God by opposing or standing at a distance, and keeping silent at such a time as this. But to arise and readily acknowledge God, and honor Him in such a work, and cheerfully and vigorously exert themselves to promote it — such people will put themselves much in the way of the divine blessing. What a mark of honor God puts upon those in Israel who willingly offered themselves and came to the help of the Lord against the mighty, when the Angel of the Lord led forth his armies, and they fought from heaven against Sisera! Jdg 5.2, 9, 14-18. And what a great blessing is pronounced upon Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for appearing on the Lord’s side, and for what she did to promote this work. This was no less vehement than the curse pronounced against Meroz for lying still, in the preceding verse. Jdg 5.24, *Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent.* And see what a blessing is pronounced on those who have any hand in the destruction of Babylon, which was the head city of the kingdom of Satan, and of the enemies of the church of God: Psa 137.9, “Happy is the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the stones.”

What a particular and honorable notice is taken, in the records of God’s word, of those who arose and appeared as David’s helpers, to introduce him into the kingdom of Israel, 1Chr 12. The host of those who thus came to the help of the Lord in that work of His, and the glorious revolution in Israel by which the kingdom of that great type of the Messiah was set up in Israel, is compared to the host of God, verse 22: “At that time, day by day, they came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.” And doubtless it was intended to be a type of that host of God that will appear with the spiritual David as his helpers, when He comes to set up his kingdom in the world — the same host we read about in Rev 19.14. The Spirit of God then pronounced a special blessing on David’s helpers, as co-workers with God. 1Chr 12.18, “Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, We are yours, David, and on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace be to you, and peace be to your helpers, for your God helps you.” So we may conclude that God will give His blessing much more to those who come to the help of the Lord when he sets his own dear Son as king on his holy hill of Zion. And they will be received by Christ, and he will put peculiar honor upon them, as David did on those helpers of his. We have an account of this in the following words, verse 18: “Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.” They came to David at Hebron, armed and ready for war, to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him. It is particularly noted about them, according to the word of the Lord, that “they were men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do,” verses 23 and 32. In this,

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they differed from the Pharisees and other Jews who didn't come to the help of the Lord at the time that the great Son of David appeared to set up his kingdom in the world. Christ condemns them for *not understanding the times*. Luk 12.56, "You hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth. But how is it that you don't discern these times?" So it will always be. When Christ remarkably appears on earth, with the design of setting up his kingdom here, there will be many who will not understand the times, nor what Israel ought to do, and so they will not come to turn over the kingdom to David.

The favorable notice that God will take of those who appear to promote the work of God at such a time as this, may also be argued from such a very particular notice taken in the sacred records, of those who helped in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem upon their return from the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah chapter 3.

At such a time as this, when God is setting his king on his holy hill of Zion, or establishing his dominion, or showing forth his regal glory from there, He expects that his visible people, without exception, should openly appear to acknowledge him in such a work, and bow before him, and join with him. But he especially expects this of *civil rulers*. God's eye is especially on them, to see how they behave themselves on such an occasion. If a new king comes to the throne, when he comes from abroad and enters into his kingdom, and makes his solemn entry into the royal city, it is expected that all sorts of people will acknowledge him. But above all others, it is expected that the great men, and the public officers of the nation, should then make their appearance and attend to their sovereign with suitable congratulations, and manifestations of respect and royalty. If such as these stand at a distance at such a time, much more notice will be taken of it, and it will awaken the Prince's jealousy and displeasure much more than such behavior in the common people. It should be this way when the eternal Son of God and heir of the world, the one by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, whom his Father has appointed to be King of kings, comes from far as it were; and in the spiritual tokens of His presence, he enters into the royal city Zion. At such a time, God has his eye especially on those princes, nobles, and judges of the earth spoken of in Pro 8.16, to see how they behave themselves — whether they bow to the One who has been made the head of all principality and power. This is evident in the 2nd Psalm, verses 6-12:

"Yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to me, 'You are my Son. This day I have begotten you.' Be wise now therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

There seems to be in the words, an allusion to a new King's coming to the throne, and making his solemn entry into the royal city (as Zion was the royal city in Israel). It is expected that all, especially men in public office and authority, should manifest their loyalty by some open and visible token of respect *by the way*, as he passes along. And those who refuse or neglect it are in danger of being immediately struck down, and perishing *from the way* by which the King goes in solemn procession.

The day in which God in an eminent manner sends forth the rod of Christ's strength out of Zion, that He may rule in the midst of his enemies — the day of his power, in which his people will be made willing — is also eminently a day of his wrath, especially to those rulers who oppose him, or will not bow to him. It is a day in which he "will execute kings, and fill the

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places with dead bodies, and execute the heads of many countries.” Psa 110.5-6. And thus it is, that when the Son of God *girds his sword upon his thigh, with his glory and his majesty, and in his majesty rides prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness; his right hand teaches him awesome things.* (Psa 45.3-4) It was the princes of Succoth especially, that suffered punishment when the inhabitants of that city refused to come to the help of the Lord, when Gideon was pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna. We read that Gideon took the elders of the city, and with thorns from the wilderness, and briers, he taught the men of Succoth. It is especially taken notice of that the rulers and chief men of Israel were called upon to assist in the affair of bringing up the ark of God. They were chiefly consulted, and were principal in the management of the affair. 1Chr 13.1, “And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.” And chapter 15.25, “So David and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed Edom with joy.” See also 2Sam 6.1. And so it was when the ark was brought into the temple, 1Kng 8.1, 3 and 2Chr 5.2, 4.

Rulers, by neglecting their duty at such a time, will especially expose themselves to God’s great displeasure. But by fully acknowledging God in such a work, and by cheerfully and vigorously exerting themselves to promote it, they will especially be in a position to receive peculiar honors and rewards from God’s hands. It is noted about the princes of Israel, that they especially appeared to honor God with their princely offering, on the occasion of setting up the tabernacle of God in the congregation of Israel (which, as I observed already, was done at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, as a type of the tabernacle of God’s being with men, and of His dwelling with men in the latter days). In the 7th chapter of Numbers, it is noted with abundant particularity how much each prince offered to God on that occasion, to their everlasting honor. And so, with how much favor and honor the Spirit of God takes notice of those princes in Israel, who came to the help of the Lord in the war against Sisera, Jdg 5.9: “My heart is with the governors of Israel, who offered themselves willingly with the people.” And verse 14, “Governors came down from Machir;” verse 15, “And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah.” In the account we have of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, in the third chapter of Nehemiah, it is particularly noted what a hand one and another of the rulers had in this affair. We have an account that a part of the wall was repaired by the ruler of half of Jerusalem, a part by the ruler of the other half of Jerusalem, a part by the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem, a part by the ruler of part of Mizpah, a part by the ruler of half of Bethzur; and a part by the ruler of Mizpah (Neh 3.9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19). And it is particularly noted there about the rulers of one of the cities, that they didn’t put their shoulders ¹ to the work of the Lord, though the common people did; and they are stigmatized for it in the sacred records, to their everlasting reproach. Neh 3.5: “Next to them, the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles didn’t put their shoulders to the work of the Lord.” So the Spirit of God, with special honor, takes notice of the princes and rulers of several tribes, who assisted in bringing up the ark, Psa 68.24-27.

I humbly desire that it be considered whether we have reason to fear that God is provoked with this land: that no more notice has been taken by the civil authority, of this glorious work

¹ Originally, “necks” – the meaning is to *make an effort*.

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of the Lord that has been carried on lately; that no more has been done by them as a public acknowledgment of God in this work; and that no more use has been made of their authority to promote it. They haven't appointed a day of public thanksgiving to God for so unspeakable a mercy, nor a day of fasting and prayer to humble ourselves before God for our past deadness and unprofitableness under the means of grace, and to seek the continuance and increase of the tokens of His presence. Nor have they done so much as to seek public consultation, as to what should be done to advance the present revival of religion, and the great reformation that has begun in the land. Isn't there a danger that such behavior, at such a time, will be interpreted by God as a denial of Christ? If a new governor came into a province, how much would be done to honor him, especially by those in authority there; to arise and go out to meet him publicly; to address and congratulate him, and with great expense, to attend to and aid him? If the authorities of the province on such an occasion, sat still and said and did nothing, and took no notice of their new governor, wouldn't there be a danger of its being interpreted by him, and by his prince who sent him, as a denial of his authority, or as refusing to receive and honor him as their governor? And will the Head of the angels, and Lord of the universe, come down from heaven into the land in so wonderful a manner, and yet all of the rulers stand at a distance, and be silent and inactive on such an occasion? I would humbly recommend to our rulers, that they consider whether God now says to them. *Be wise now, you rulers, be instructed you judges of New England; kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way.*

It is prophesied in Zec 12.8, that in the glorious day of the Christian church, the house of David, or the rulers in God's Israel, *shall be like God, like the Angel of the Lord, before his people.* But how can such rulers expect to have any share in this glorious promise, if they do not so much as openly acknowledge God in the work of that Spirit, by which the glory of that day is to be accomplished? The days are coming that were so often spoken of, when the saints shall reign on earth, and all dominion and authority shall be given into their hands. But if our rulers would partake of this honor at such a day as this, they should bring their glory and honor into the spiritual Jerusalem, agreeably to Rev 21.24.

But above all others, God's eye is upon *ministers of the gospel*, expecting them to arise, and acknowledge and honor Him in such a work as this, and to do their utmost to encourage and promote it. For to promote such a work, is the very business to which they are called and devoted. It is the office to which they are appointed as co-workers with Christ, and as his ambassadors and instruments to awaken and convert sinners, and to establish, build up, and comfort the saints. It is the business they've been solemnly charged with before God, angels, and men, and that they have given themselves to by the most sacred vows. These especially are the officers of Christ's kingdom, who above all other men on earth, represent His person; into whose hands Christ has committed the sacred oracles, and holy ordinances, and all his appointed means of grace, to be administered by them. They are the stewards of his household, into whose hands he has committed His provision. The immortal souls of men are committed to them, as a flock of sheep are committed to the care of a shepherd, or as a master commits a treasure to the care of a servant, and which he must give an account of. It is expected of them, above all others, that they should have an understanding of the times, and know what Israel ought to do. For it is their business to acquaint themselves with things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and to teach and enlighten others in things of this nature.

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We who are employed in the sacred work of the gospel ministry, are the watchmen over the city, to whom God has committed the keys of the gates of Zion. And if when the rightful king of Zion comes to deliver his people from the enemy that oppresses them, we refuse to open the gates to him, how greatly we will expose ourselves to his wrath!

We are appointed to be the captains of the host in this war. If a general would highly resent it if a private soldier refused to follow him when his banner is displayed and his trumpet blown, then how much more will he resent it in the officers of his army! The work of the gospel ministry, consisting in the administration of God's word and ordinances, is the principal means that God has appointed for carrying on his work in the souls of men. And it is his revealed will, that whenever that glorious revival of religion and reformation of the world so often spoken of in his word, is accomplished, it should be done principally by the labors of his ministers. Therefore, how heinous it will be in the sight of God, if when a work of that nature has begun, we appear to be unbelieving, slow, hesitant, and disaffected! There was no sort of people among the Jews that was in any measure treated with such manifestations of God's great displeasure and severe indignation, for not acknowledging Christ and the work of his Spirit in the days of Christ and his apostles, as the ministers of religion. See how Christ deals with them for it in Matthew 23. With what gentleness Christ treated publicans ¹ and harlots, in comparison to *them*!

When the tabernacle was erected in the camp of Israel, and God came down from heaven to dwell in it, the priests above all others, were concerned and busily employed in the solemn transactions of that occasion, Leviticus chapters 8 and 9. And so it was at the time of the dedication of the temple of Solomon, 1Kings, chapter 8, and 2Chronicles chapters 5-7. This was at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, at the same time that the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness. And the Levites were primarily, and most immediately concerned in bringing up the ark to mount Zion; the business properly belonged to them, and the ark was carried on their shoulders. 1Chr 15.2, "Then David said, None should carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God, and to minister for Him forever." And verses 11 and 12,

"David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Aminadab, and said to them. you are the heads of the fathers of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, both you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it."

So too, we have an account that the priests led the way in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, after the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah chapter 3, at the beginning.

If ministers preach doctrine ever so well, and are ever so painstaking and laborious in their work, yet if at such a day as this, they show to their people that they are not well inclined to this work, but are very doubtful and suspicious of it, then they will likely do their people a great deal more hurt than good. For the very fame of such a great and extraordinary work of God (if their people were allowed to believe it *is* His work), and the example of other towns, together with whatever preaching they might occasionally hear, would likely have a much

¹ *Publican*: tax-collector in ancient Rome.

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greater influence on the minds of their people to awaken and animate them in religion, than all their own labors with them. And besides, their minister's opinion will not only induce in them a suspicion about the work they hear about abroad (by which the mighty hand of God that appears in it, will lose its influence on their minds), but it will also tend to create a suspicion about everything of a similar nature that appears among themselves — that it has something of the same distemper that has become an epidemic in the land. In effect, that will create a suspicion about *all* vital religion, and set the people to talking against it, discouraging it wherever it appears, knocking it in the head as fast as it rises. We who are ministers, by looking at this work from year to year with a displeased countenance, will effectually keep the sheep from their pasture, instead of doing the part of shepherds by feeding them. Our people would be a great deal better off without any settled minister at all, in such a day as this.

We who are in this sacred office need to take heed what we do, and how we behave ourselves at this time. A lesser thing in a minister will hinder the work of God, more than in others. If we are very silent, or say but little about the work in our public prayers and preaching, or we seem to carefully avoid speaking about it in our conversation, it will be interpreted by our people, and justly so, that we who are their guides, those to whom they look for spiritual instruction, are suspicious of it. This will tend to raise the same suspicions in them; and thus the forementioned consequences will follow. And if we really hinder, and stand in the way of the work of God, we whose business it is, *above all others*, to promote it, then how can we expect to partake of its glorious benefits? And by keeping others from the benefit of it, we will keep them out of heaven. Therefore, those awful words of Christ to the Jewish teachers, should be considered *by us*: Mat 23.13, “Woe to you, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven; for you neither go in yourselves, nor will you allow those who are entering, to go in.” If we keep the sheep from their pasture, how shall we answer the Great Shepherd, who has bought the flock with his precious blood, and has committed the care of them to us? I would humbly desire every minister who has thus long remained disaffected to this work, and thought of it with contempt, to consider whether he hasn't up to now been like Michal, without child, or at least been in great measure barren and unsuccessful in his work. I pray to God that it may not be a perpetual barrenness, as hers was.

The times of Christ's remarkably appearing on behalf of his church, to revive religion and advance his kingdom in the world, are often spoken of in the prophecies of Scripture, as times in which he will remarkably execute judgments on those ministers or shepherds who do not feed the flock, but hinder their being fed. And so he will deliver his flock from them, as in Jeremiah 23 throughout, Ezekiel 34 throughout, Zec 10.3, and Isa 56.9-11, etc. I observed before that Christ's solemn, magnificent entry into Jerusalem, seems to be designed, as a representation of his glorious coming into his church, the spiritual Jerusalem. And therefore it is worthy to be noted, for our present purpose, the time that Christ cast out all of those who sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those who sold doves. He signified by this, that when he came to set up his kingdom on earth, he would cast out of his house those who, instead of being faithful ministers, officiated there only for worldly gain. It's not that I've determined that all ministers who are suspicious of this work are doing so; but I mention these things to show that in a time of glorious outpouring of the Spirit of God to revive religion, it is to be expected that it will be a time of remarkable judgments on those ministers who do not serve the end of their ministry.

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The example of the unbelieving officer in Samaria, should especially be a warning to ministers and rulers. At the time when God turned an extreme famine into a great plenty by a wonderful work of his, the king appointed this officer to have charge of the city gate. There he saw the common people in multitudes, entering with great joy and gladness, loaded with provision to feed and feast their almost famished bodies. But he himself, though he saw it with his eyes, never had one taste of it. Rather, being weak with famine, he sunk down in the crowd and was trodden to death, as a punishment from God, for not giving credit to that great and wonderful work of God, when it was sufficiently manifested to him to require his belief. Ministers are those whom the King of the Church has appointed to have charge of the gate at which his people enter the kingdom of heaven, there to be entertained and satisfied with an eternal feast. Ministers have charge of the *House of God*, which is the *Gate of Heaven*.

Ministers should especially take heed of a spirit of envy towards other ministers whom God is pleased to make more use of to carry on this work. They must not, from such a spirit, reproach some preachers who have the true spirit, as though they were influenced by a false spirit, or bereft of reason, mad, proud, false pretenders, and deserved to be put in prison or the stocks as disturbers of the peace. Otherwise, they expose themselves to the curse of Shemaiah, the Nehelamite, who envied the prophet Jeremiah, and reviled him in this way in his letter to Zephaniah the priest. Jer 29.26-27:

“The Lord has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, so that you should be officers in the house of the Lord over every man who is mad, and thinks himself a prophet, that you should put him in prison and in the stocks. Now therefore, why haven’t you reprov’d Jeremiah of Anathoth, who makes himself a prophet to you?”

His curse is denounced in the 32nd verse.

“Therefore, thus says the Lord: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his seed. He shall not have a man to dwell among his people, nor shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, says the Lord, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord.”

All those who are others’ superiors or elders, should take heed that in this day, they not be like the elder brother, who could not bear it that the prodigal should be made so much of, and should be so sumptuously entertained, and would not join in the joy of the feast. He was, like Michal, Saul’s daughter, offended by the music and dancing that he heard. The transports of joy displeas’d him. It seem’d to him to be an unseemly and untimely noise and fuss that was being made. And therefore he stood at a distance, sullen, greatly offended, and full of invectives against the young prodigal.

It is our wisest and best way — fully and without reluctance — to bow to the great God in this work, and to be entirely resigned to Him with respect to the manner in which He carries it on, and the instruments he is pleased to make use of. It is best not to show ourselves out of sorts, nor to sullenly refuse to acknowledge the work in its full glory, because we haven’t had so great a hand in promoting it, nor shared so largely in its blessings as some others. It is best not to refuse to give all that honor that belongs to others as instruments, because they are young, or on other accounts are much inferior to ourselves and many others, and may appear to us very unworthy to have God put so much honor upon them. When God comes to accomplish any great work for his church, and for the advancement of the kingdom of his Son,

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He always fulfils Isa 2.17: “The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.” If God has a design to carry on this work, then everyone, whether great or small, must either bow to it, or be broken before it. It may be expected that God’s hand will be upon everything that is high, and stiff, and strong in opposition, as in Isa 2.12-15:

“For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone who is proud and lofty, and upon everyone who is lifted up — and he shall be brought low — and upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall.”

Not only magistrates and ministers, but every living soul is now obliged to acknowledge God in this work, and put to his hand to promote it, if they would not expose themselves to God’s curse. All sorts of people throughout the whole congregation of Israel, great and small, rich and poor, men and women, helped to build the tabernacle in the wilderness —some in one way, some in another, each according to his own capacity. Everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing. All sorts contributed, and all sorts were employed in that affair in labors of their hands, both men and women. Some brought gold and silver; others brought blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen; others offered an offering of brass; others who were found with acacia wood, brought it as an offering to the Lord. The rulers brought onyx stones, and spice, and oil; some brought goats’ hair; some rams’ skins, and others badgers’ skins. See Exodus 35.20 ff. We are told in verse 29, “The children of Israel brought a willing offering to the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them willing.” And thus it should be in *this* day of building the tabernacle of God. With such a willing and cheerful heart, every man, woman, and child ought to do something to promote this work. Those who don’t have onyx stones, or aren’t able to bring gold or silver, may yet bring goats’ hair.

All sorts of people were employed in building the tabernacle in the wilderness. So too, the whole congregation of Israel were called together to set up the tabernacle in Shiloh after they came into Canaan, Jos 18.1. Again, the whole congregation of Israel were gathered together to bring up the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim. And again, they were all assembled to bring up from the house of *Obed Edom to mount Zion*. So again, all Israel met together to assist in the great affair of the dedication of the temple, and bringing the ark into it. We have an account of how all sorts assisted in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, not only the proper inhabitants of Jerusalem, but those who dwelt in other parts of the land; not only the priests and rulers, but the Nethinim and merchants, farmers, goldsmiths, and women, Neh 3.5, 12, 26, 31, 32. And we have an account of one and another who repaired opposite his own house, verses 10, 23, and 28; and of one who repaired opposite his room, ver. 30.

So now, at this time of the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, everyone ought to promote the work of God within his own sphere, and by doing his part in the place in which God has set him. Men in a private capacity, may repair opposite their houses: and even those who don’t govern a family, and have only part of a house belonging to them, should repair, each one opposite his room. Each one should be engaged doing the utmost that lies within his power, laboring with the utmost watchfulness, care, and diligence, with united hearts and united strength, and the greatest readiness to assist one another in this work. God’s people rebuilt

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the wall of Jerusalem. They were so diligent in it, that they worked from break of day till the stars appeared, and didn't so much as change clothes overnight. They worked with such care and watchfulness that they labored with one hand, and held a weapon with the other, besides the guard they set to defend them. They were so well united in it, that they took care that one should stand ready with a trumpet in his hand, so that if any were assaulted in one part, those in the other parts, at the sound of the trumpet, might resort to them and help them, Neh 4.17 to the end.

Great care should be taken that the press be employed to no purpose contrary to the interest of this work. We read that when God fought against Sisera, for the deliverance of His oppressed church, *those who handle the pen of the writer* came to the help of the Lord in that affair, Jdg 5.14.¹ Whatever sort of men in Israel were intended by this, consider that the words were penned by a Spirit who had a perfect view of all events to the end of the world. And he had a special eye in this song of praise, to that great event of the deliverance of God's church in the latter days. This deliverance of Israel was a type of that, and so it is not unlikely that the words regard *authors*, who should fight against the kingdom of Satan with their pens. Therefore, those who publish pamphlets to the disadvantage of this work, tending to bring it under suspicion, either directly or indirectly, and to discourage or hinder it, would do well to consider thoroughly whether what is happening is indeed the work of God. If it is, then it is likely that God will go forth like a fire, to consume all that stands in His way, and so burn up those pamphlets. Consider then, whether there isn't some danger that the fire kindled in them will scorch the authors.

When a people oppose Christ in the work of his Holy Spirit, it is because it touches them in something that is dear to their carnal minds; and because they see that its tendency is to cross their pride, and deprive them of the objects of their lusts. We should take heed in this day, that we not be like the Gadarenes who, when Christ came into their country in the exercise of his glorious power and grace, triumphing over a legion of devils, and delivering a miserable creature who had long been their captive, were all alarmed because they lost their swine by it. The whole multitude of the country came and begged him to depart from their coasts. They loved their filthy swine better than Jesus Christ. They would rather have a legion of devils in their country, with their herd of swine, than to have Jesus Christ without them.

This work may be opposed, not only by *directly* speaking against the whole of it, [but in other *indirect* ways]. People may say that they believe there is a good work being carried on in the country. And they may sometimes bless God in their public prayers, in general terms, for any awakenings or revivals of religion that have lately occurred in any parts of the land. They may pray that God would carry on His own work, and pour out his Spirit more and more. And yet, in the sight of God (as I apprehend it), they may be great opposers of his work. Some will express themselves in this way: that they are so far from acknowledging and rejoicing in the infinite mercy, and glorious grace of God, in causing so happy a change in the land, that they

¹ KJV, from an alternate Septuagint Mss., “ἐν ῥάβδῳ διηγήσεως γραμματέως (*en rabdoo diegeseoos grammateoos*); lit. “in a rod account of a scribe.” It could be the rod that his scroll was rolled on, or perhaps the scribe's stick that he wrote it with. The Hebrew could be rendered, “drawn (pulled) from the scribe's rod.” Most modern translations have, “those who carry a commander's staff,” or the like. John Gill, a contemporary of Edwards, interpreted it to mean the writers dropped their pens and took up their swords to come to the aid of their fellows.

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look at the religious state of the country, on the whole, as much more sorrowful than it was ten years ago. Their conversation with those who are well acquainted with them, evidently shows that they are more out of sorts with the state of things, and enjoy themselves less than they did before this work ever began. If it is manifestly this way with us, and our talk and behavior with respect to this work is such that it has even an *indirect* tendency to engender ill thoughts and suspicions in others concerning it, then we are opposers of the work of God.

Instead of coming to the help of the Lord, we will actually fight against Him if we abundantly insist on and set forth the blemishes of the work. It manifests that we choose and are more inclined to notice what is amiss, than what is good and glorious in the work. It's not that the errors that are committed shouldn't be observed and lamented, and a proper testimony borne against them, and the most probable means be used to have them amended. But by insisting so much on them (as if it were a pleasing theme), or by speaking of them heatedly, or with ridicule, or an air of contempt — more than with *grief* for them — it has no tendency to correct the errors. Rather, it has a tendency to darken the glory of God's power and grace appearing in the *substance* of the work, and to produce jealousies and ill thoughts in the minds of others concerning the whole of it. Whatever errors many zealous people have run into, if the *substance* of the work is the work of God, then it is a joyful day indeed. It is so in heaven, and it ought to be so among God's people on earth, especially in that part of the earth where this glorious work is carried on. It is a day of great rejoicing with Christ himself, the Good Shepherd, when he finds one of his sheep that was lost, lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, and calls together his friends and neighbors saying, *Rejoice with me!* Therefore, if we are Christ's friends, it should now be a day of great rejoicing with us. If we viewed things in a just light, then so great an event as the conversion of such a multitude of sinners, would draw and engage our attention far more than all the imprudence and irregularities that have occurred. Our hearts would be swallowed up with the glory of this event, and we would have no great disposition to attend to anything else. The imprudence and errors of poor feeble worms, do not hinder or prevent great rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God, over so many poor sinners who have repented. And it would be an argument that something is very wrong with us, if these things prevent our rejoicing.

In a day of great joy and gladness, who loves to spend time pointing out those things that are uncomfortable? Wouldn't it be very improper, on a king's coronation day, to spend much time pointing out the blemishes of the royal family? Or would it be agreeable to the bridegroom on the day of his espousals, on the day of the gladness of his heart, to point out the blemishes of his bride? We have an account given, at the tune of that joyful dispensation of Providence, the restoration of the church of Israel following the Babylonian captivity, at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, of many weeping at the faults that were found among the people. But they were reprov'd for taking so much notice of the blemishes of that affair, that they overlooked the cause of their rejoicing. Neh 8.9-12,

“Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, ‘Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Nor be sorrowful, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’ So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, ‘Hold your peace, for the day is holy; nor be grieved.’ And

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all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.”

Doubtless, God now expects that all sorts of people in New England — rulers, ministers and people, high and low, rich and poor, old and young — should take great notice of His hand in this mighty work of His grace. And they should show that they acknowledge His glory in it, and greatly rejoice in it, everyone doing his utmost to promote it in the place that God has set them. And according to his wonderful patience, God seems to still be waiting to give us opportunity to thus acknowledge and honor Him. But if we finally refuse, there isn't the least reason to expect anything else, than that His awful curse will pursue us, and the outpourings of His wrath will be proportional to the despised outpourings of his Spirit and grace.

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PART III.

Showing the many instances in which the subjects, or zealous promoters of this Work, have been injuriously blamed.

This work that has lately been carried on in the land, is the work of God, and not the work of man. Its beginning has not been of man's power or device, and its being carried on doesn't depend on our strength or wisdom. Yet God expects that all of us will use our utmost endeavors to promote it, and that the hearts of all should be greatly engaged in this affair, and that we should employ our utmost strength in it, however vain human strength is without the power of God. And so He no less requires that we should employ our utmost care, wisdom, and prudence, even though human wisdom, of itself, is as vain as human strength. God usually carries on such a work in such a manner that, in many ways, it shows the weakness and vanity of means and human endeavors in themselves. And yet at the same time, He carries it on in such a manner as to encourage diligence and vigilance in the use of proper means and endeavors, and to punish their neglect. Therefore, in our endeavors to promote this great work, we ought to use the utmost caution, vigilance, and skill in the measures we take in order to further it. A great affair should be managed with great prudence. This is the most important affair that New England was ever called to be concerned in. When a people are engaged in war with a powerful and crafty nation, it concerns them to manage an affair of such consequence with the utmost discretion. How vastly important it must be, then, that we be vigilant and prudent in the management of this great war that New England now has with so great a host of such subtle and cruel enemies, in which we must either conquer or be conquered. And the consequence of the victory, on one side, will be our eternal destruction, in both soul and body in hell; and on the other side, it will be our obtaining the kingdom of heaven and reigning in it in eternal glory! We must always stand on our watch, and be well-versed in the art of war, and not be ignorant of the devices of our enemies, and take heed lest by any means we are beguiled through their subtlety.

Though the devil is strong in such a war as this, he depends more on his craftiness than on his strength. The course he has chiefly taken from time to time to clog, hinder, and overthrow revivals of religion in the church of God, has been by his subtle, deceitful management, to beguile and mislead those who have been engaged in it. And in such a course, God has been pleased in his holy and sovereign providence, to allow him to succeed, often to overthrow in great measure, that which in its beginning appeared most hopeful and glorious. The work that has now begun in New England, as I have shown, is eminently glorious. And if it should go on and prevail, it would make New England a kind of heaven on earth. Therefore, is it not a thousand pities that it should be overthrown through wrong and improper management that we are led into by our subtle adversary, in our endeavors to *promote* it?

In treating the methods that ought to be taken to promote this work, I would,

1. Take notice of some instances in which fault has been found, without just cause (as I apprehend it), with the conduct of those who have appeared to be its subjects, or who have been zealous to promote it (Part III).
2. Show what things ought to be corrected or avoided (Part IV).
3. Show *positively*, what ought to be done to promote this glorious work of God (Part V).

1. *I would note some things that offence has been taken at, without or beyond just cause.*

One thing that has been complained about, is ministers addressing the *affections* of their hearers, rather than their *understandings*. Striving to raise their passions to the utmost height by a very emotional¹ manner of speaking, and a great appearance of earnestness in voice and gesture, rather than by clear reasoning and informing their judgment. It is objected that by these means, the affections are moved without a proportionate enlightening of the understanding.

To this I would say, I am *far* from thinking that it is not very profitable for ministers in their preaching, to endeavor to clearly and distinctly explain the doctrines of religion, and unravel the difficulties that attend them, and to confirm them with strength of reason and argumentation, and also to observe some easy and clear method and order in their discourses, to help the understanding and memory. And it is very probable that these things have been too neglected by many ministers lately. Yet I believe that the objection made about the affections being raised without enlightening the understanding, is in great measure built on a mistake, and confused notions that some have about the nature and cause of the affections, and the manner in which they depend on the understanding. All affections are raised either by light *in the understanding*, or by some error and delusion *in the understanding*. For all affections certainly arise from some apprehension in the understanding. And that apprehension must either be agreeable to truth, or else be some mistake or delusion. If it is an apprehension or notion that is agreeable to truth, then it is *light in the understanding*. Therefore the thing to be asked is whether the apprehensions or notions of divine and eternal things that are raised in people's minds by these emotional preachers, and from which their affections are excited, are *agreeable to truth*, or are *mistakes*. If the former, then the affections are raised the way they should be — namely, by informing the mind, or conveying light to the understanding. It is a wrong notion to think that preachers cannot affect their hearers by enlightening their understandings, unless they do it by such a distinct and learned handling of the doctrinal points of religion, that it must depend on human discipline or on the strength of natural reason, and will tend to enlarge only their hearers' learning and speculative knowledge in divinity.²

But the manner of preaching *without* this may still be such that it tends very much to set divine and eternal things in a right view, and to give the hearers such ideas and apprehensions of them that are agreeable to truth, and also make impressions on their hearts that correspond to the real nature of things. Not only the words that are spoken, but the *manner* of speaking, is one thing that has a great tendency toward this. I think an exceedingly emotional way of preaching about the great things of religion, has in itself no tendency to engender *fake* apprehensions of them. On the contrary, it has a much greater tendency to engender *true* apprehensions of them, than a moderate, dull, indifferent way of speaking about them. Affection and earnestness in the manner of delivery, even if it is very great indeed, has a much greater tendency to engender true ideas or apprehensions in the minds of the hearers about

¹ Originally, "affectionate" – meaning their speech stimulates the affections; it is intense, inflammatory.

² *Speculative knowledge*: theoretical or informational; a sermon may lack any practical import for the hearer, if the preacher fails to bring it down to earth and strike the heart.

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the subject spoken about (and thus enlighten the understanding) — so long as it is agreeable to the nature of the subject, and is not beyond proportion to its importance and worthiness of affection, and there is no appearance of its being feigned or forced. For this reason, such a way or manner of speaking about these things, in fact more truly represents them than a cold and indifferent way of speaking about them. If the subject is, in its own nature, worthy of very great affection, then speaking of it with very great affection, is most agreeable to the nature of that subject, or it is the truest representation of it. And therefore it has the most tendency to engender true ideas of it in the minds of those to whom the representation is made.

I don't think ministers are to be blamed for raising the affections of their hearers too high, if what they are affected with, is worthy of such affection, and their affections are not raised beyond proportion to their importance, or worthiness of affection. I should think it my duty to raise the affections of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected by. I know it has long been fashionable to despise a very earnest and compassionate way of preaching. Only those preachers have been valued, who have shown the greatest extent of learning, strength of reason, and correctness of method and language. But I humbly conceive that it has been for lack of understanding, or duly considering human nature, that such preaching has been thought to have the greatest tendency to fulfill the ends of preaching. The experience of present and past ages abundantly confirms this. As I said before, clearness of distinction and illustration, strength of reason, and a good method in the doctrinal handling of religious truths, are in many ways necessary and profitable, and not to be neglected. Yet an increase in speculative knowledge in divinity is not so much what is needed by our people, as *something else*. Men may abound in this sort of *light*, and yet have no *heat*. How much of this sort of knowledge has been in the Christian world in this age! Was there ever an age in which strength and penetration of reason, extent of learning, exactness of distinction, correctness of style, and clearness of expression, so abounded? And yet, was there ever an age in which there has been so little sense of the evil of sin, so little love to God, heavenly mindedness, and holiness of life, among the professors of the true religion? Our people don't so much need to have their *heads* stored, as to have their *hearts* touched. So they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching which has the greatest tendency to do this.

Texts such as Isa 58.1, "Cry aloud, and do not spare; Lift up your voice like a trumpet: show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins;" and Eze 6.11, "Thus says the Lord God, pound your fists, and stamp your feet, and say, Alas! for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel!" — I say these texts (despite how some have laughed at the use made of them) will fully justify a great degree of *pathos*, and the manifestation of zeal and fervency in preaching the word of God. They may indeed be abused to justify whatever is odd and unnatural among us, by not making due allowance for the difference in manners and customs in different ages and nations. But let us interpret them how we will, they at least imply that in many cases, a most affectionate and earnest manner of delivery is appropriate for a preacher of God's word.

Preaching the word of God is commonly spoken of in Scripture, in expressions that seem to import a *loud* and *earnest* speaking, as in Isa 40.2, "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her iniquity is pardoned." Verse 3, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

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prepare the way of the Lord.” Verse 6, “The voice said, Cry out! and he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its goodliness, is like the flower of the field.” Jer 2.2, “Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the Lord,” etc. Jon 1.2, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it.” Isa. 61.1-2, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.” Isa 62.11, “Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth, say to the daughter of Zion, Behold your salvation comes.” Rom 10.18, “Their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” Jer 11.6, “Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear the words of this covenant, and do them;” so also 19.2 and 7.2. Pro 8.1, “Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice?” Verses 3-4, “She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors: To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men!” And Pro 1.20, “Wisdom cries aloud outside, she raises her voice in the streets.” Pro 9.3, “She has sent out her maidens, she cries out on the high places of the city.” Joh 7.37, “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”

It seems to be foretold that the gospel *especially* should be preached in a loud and earnest manner, at the introduction of the prosperous state of religion in the latter days. Isa 40.9, “O Zion, who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain! O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength! Lift up, and do not be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, behold your God!” Isa 52.7-8, “How beautiful upon the mountains, are the feet of him who brings good tidings! Your watchmen shall lift up their voices.” Isa 27.13, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet will be blown, and they will come, who were ready to perish.” This will be one way that the church of God cries out at that time, like a woman in labor, when Christ mystical ¹ is birthed, as in Rev 12.1-2. It will be by ministers, who are her mouth. And it will be this way: that Christ will then cry like a woman in labor, as in Isa 42.14, “I have long held my peace. I have been still, and restrained myself. Now I will cry like a woman in labor.” Christ cries by his ministers, and the church cries by her officers. And it is noteworthy that the word commonly used in the New Testament, which we translate *preach*, properly signifies to *proclaim aloud like a town crier*.²

Another thing that some ministers have been greatly blamed for, and I think unjustly, is speaking terror to those who are already under great terrors, instead of comforting them. — Indeed, if ministers in such a case, go about terrifying people with something that is not true, or frighten them by representing their case as worse than it is, or in any respect other than as it is, they are to be condemned. But if they terrify them only by holding out still more light to them, and by letting them understand more about the truth of their case, they are altogether justified. When sinners’ consciences are greatly awakened by the Spirit of God, it is by light imparted to the conscience, enabling them to see their case in some measure *as it is*; and if more light is let in, it will terrify them still more. But ministers are not therefore to be blamed

¹ The Church is the mystical body of Christ.

² *Town crier*: an official who made public announcements in the city square with a loud voice.

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that they endeavor to hold out more light to the conscience, instead of alleviating the pain they are under by intercepting and obstructing that light that shines already. To say anything to those who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to represent their case as anything other than exceedingly terrible, is not to preach the word of God to them. For the word of God reveals nothing but truth; withholding that light only deludes them. Why should we be afraid to let people who are in an infinitely miserable condition, know the truth or bring them into the light, for fear it would terrify them? It is *light* that must convert them if they are ever to be converted. The more we bring sinners into the light, *while* they are miserable and the light is terrible to them, the more likely it is that, by and by, the light will be joyful to them.

The ease, peace, and comfort that natural men enjoy, have their foundation in darkness and blindness. Therefore, as that darkness vanishes and light comes in, their peace vanishes and they are terrified. But that is not a good argument for why we should endeavor to hold them in darkness, that we may uphold their comfort. The truth is, as long as men reject Christ and do not savingly believe in him, however awakened they may be, however strict, conscientious, and laborious they may be in religion, they have the wrath of God abiding on them (Joh 3.36). They are His enemies, and the children of the devil (as the Scripture calls all those who are not savingly converted, Mat 13.38, 1Joh 3.10). It is uncertain whether they will ever obtain mercy. God is under no obligation to show them mercy, nor will He, even if they fast and pray and cry out ever so much. They are then especially provoking God under those terrors, that they set it against Christ, and won't accept an offered Saviour, even though they see so much need for him. Seeing that this is the truth, they should be *told* so, that they may be sensible of what their case truly is.

To blame a minister, for thus declaring the truth to those who are under awakenings, and not immediately administering comfort to them, is like blaming a surgeon because when he has begun to cut with his lancet¹ — by which he has already put his patient to great pain, and he shrieks and cries out in anguish — the surgeon is so *cruel* that he won't stay his hand, but goes on to cut further, until he comes to the core of the wound. The sort of compassionate physician who instead withdraws his hand as soon as his patient begins to flinch, and immediately applies a plaster to skin over the wound, leaving the core untouched, is one who would heal the hurt only slightly, crying *peace, peace, when there is no peace*.

Indeed, something else besides terror is to be preached to those whose consciences are awakened. The *gospel* is to be preached to them. They are to be told that a Saviour is provided, who is excellent and glorious, who has shed his precious blood for sinners, and is in every way sufficient to save them. He stands ready to receive them, if they will heartily embrace him. For this is the truth as well: that they now are in an infinitely dreadful condition. *This is the word of God*. Sinners at the same time that they are told how miserable their case is, should be earnestly invited to come and accept a Saviour, and yield their hearts to Him with all the winning, encouraging arguments that the gospel affords for them to do so. This is to induce them to escape from the misery of the condition that they are now in. But to make them think their present condition is less miserable than it is, or to at all abate their uneasiness and

¹ *Lancet*: a surgical knife with a pointed double-edged blade; used for punctures and small incisions.

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distress, *while* they are in it — that would be the way to quiet them, and fasten them in it, and not to excite them to fly from it.

Comfort, in one sense, is to be held out to sinners who are under awakenings of conscience; *i.e.*, comfort is to be offered to them in Christ, on condition of their flying to Him *from their present miserable state*. But comfort is not to be administered to them *in their present state*, as anything they now have any title to, while they remain out of Christ. No comfort is to be administered to them from anything *in them* — any of their qualifications, prayers, or other performances, past, present, or future. But ministers should, in such cases, strive to their utmost to take all such comforts away from them, even if it greatly increases their terror. A person who sees himself ready to sink into hell, is ready to strive in some way or other, to lay God under some obligation to him. But he is to be beaten away from everything of that nature, even if it greatly increases his terror, till he sees himself wholly destitute on every side, of any refuge, or anything of his own to lay hold of. A man who sees himself in danger of drowning, is in terror, and he endeavors to catch hold of every twig within his reach. Whoever pulls those twigs away from him, increases his terror. Yet if they are insufficient to save him, and by being in his way, they prevent him from looking to what *will* save him, pulling them away is necessary to save his life.

If sinners are in distress from any error they embrace, or any mistake they are under, that error or mistake is to be removed. For instance, if they are in terror from an apprehension that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that things have happened to them that are certain signs of reprobation, or any other delusion, such terrors have no tendency to do them any good; for such terrors are from temptation, not from conviction. But that terror which arises from conviction or a sight of truth, is to be *increased*. For those who are most awakened have great remaining stupidity.¹ They have but little sense of what is true; and it is from remaining blindness and darkness that they can see no more than they do. And that remaining blindness is a disease that we should endeavor to remove. I am not afraid to tell sinners who are most sensible of their misery, that their case is indeed as miserable as they think it is, and a thousand times more so; for this is the truth.

Some may be ready to say that though it is the truth, the truth is not to be spoken at all times, and it doesn't seem to be seasonable then. But it seems to me that such truth is never more seasonable than at such a time, when Christ is beginning to open the eyes of the conscience. Ministers ought to act as co-workers with Him; to take that opportunity, and do their utmost to employ that advantage, and strike while the iron is hot. And when the light has begun to shine, to then remove all obstacles and use all proper means so that the light may come in more fully, and the work then be done thoroughly. Experience abundantly shows that taking this course does not have a hurtful tendency, but is very much to the contrary. I have seen its happy effects in very many instances, and oftentimes a very speedy and happy outcome. And I never knew any ill consequence in the case of real conviction, and when the distress has come only from that. I know of but one case in which the truth ought to be withheld from sinners in distress of conscience; that is the case of *melancholy*. The truth is to be withheld from them then, *not* because the truth tends to hurt them, but because if we speak the truth

¹ *Stupidity*: A poor ability to understand or profit from experience, or to recognize what is true and good.

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to them, they will sometimes be deceived and led into error, through their strange disposition to take things wrong. So that, what is *spoken* is truth; but as it is *heard*, received, and applied by them, is falsehood. And it will be unless the truth is spoken with abundant caution and prudence, and in consideration of their disposition and circumstances. But the most awful truths of God's word should not be withheld from public congregations just because some melancholy people may happen to be in it. Likewise, the Bible is not to be withheld from the Christian world, just because it is manifest that there are a great many melancholy people in Christendom,¹ who exceedingly abuse the awful things contained in the Scripture, to their own wounding.

Nor do I think there is any weight to the objection made use of by some, against the recent "terrifying preaching" in New England, that it is great and dreadful because there have been some instances of melancholy people who have so abused it, that it led to their suicide. The objection from this is no stronger against awakening preaching, than it is against the Bible itself. There are hundreds, and probably thousands of instances that might be produced, of people who have murdered themselves under religious melancholy. These murders probably never would have happened, if it had not been for the Bible, or if the world had remained in a state of heathen darkness. The Bible has not only been the occasion for these sad effects, but of thousands, and I suppose millions, of other cruel murders that have been committed in the persecutions that have arisen. This never would have happened if it hadn't been for the Bible. Many entire countries have been, as it were, deluged with innocent blood, which would not have happened if the gospel had never been preached in the world.

It is not a good objection against any kind of preaching, that some men abuse it greatly to their hurt. It has been acknowledged by all divines, as something common in all ages, and in all Christian countries, that a very great part of those who sit under the gospel, so abuse it that it only proves to be an occasion for their far more aggravated damnation, and so of men's eternally murdering their *souls*. This is an effect that is infinitely more terrible than the murder of their *bodies*. It is as unjust to lay the blame for these self-murders on those ministers who have declared the awful truths of God's word, in the most lively and affecting manner they were capable of, as it would be to lay the blame of hardening men's hearts, and blinding their eyes, and their more dreadful eternal damnation, on the prophet Isaiah, or on Jesus Christ, because this was the consequence of their preaching with respect to many of their hearers (Isa 6.10, Joh 9.39, Mat 13.14). Very few have abused the awakening preaching of late, to so sad an effect as to be the cause of their own temporal death. Yet it may be that for every one such instance, there have been hundreds, even thousands, who have been saved by this means from eternal death.

What has more especially given offence to many, and raised a loud cry against some preachers – as though their conduct were intolerable – is that they frighten poor innocent children with talk of hell-fire, and eternal damnation. But if those who complain so loudly about this, really believe what is the general profession of the country: namely, that all are by nature the

¹ *Christendom or the Christian world*: nations that embrace Christianity as their religion. It is comprised of believers and unbelievers alike, as in Mat 13.25f. England had a national church. Citizenship, in a sense, included membership in that church. Its cities and townships were divided into parishes, whose residents were overseen by the parish priest, and listed on church rolls. England was thus considered a *Christian nation*, and part of *Christendom*.

children of wrath, and heirs of hell; and that everyone who has not been born again, whether young or old, is exposed every moment to eternal destruction under the wrath of Almighty God — I say, if they really believe this, then such a complaint and cry as this, betrays a great deal of weakness and inconsideration. As innocent as children seem to be to us, if they are out of Christ, they are not innocent in God's sight, but are young vipers, and infinitely more hateful than vipers. They are in a most miserable condition, as much as grown people would be. They are naturally senseless and stupid, being *born like a wild donkey's colt* (Job 11.12), and need much to awaken them. Why should we conceal the truth from them? Will those children who have been dealt tenderly with in this respect, and lived and died insensible of their misery until they come to feel it in hell, ever thank their parents and others for their tenderness in not letting them know what they were in danger of? If parents' love towards their children was not blind, it would affect them much more to see their children liable to eternal burnings every day, and yet senseless, than to see them suffer the distress of that awakening that is necessary to escape them, and that tends to their being eternally happy as the children of God. A child who has a dangerous wound may need the painful lancet as much as grown people. And it would be a foolish pity, in such a case, to hold back the lancet and throw away the life. I have seen in many instances the happy effects of dealing plainly and thoroughly with children in the concerns of their souls, without sparing them at all. And I never knew any ill consequences of it in even one instance.

Another thing that a great deal has been said against, is having frequent religious meetings, and spending so much time in religion. Indeed, all of the externals of religion are capable of excess. And I believe it is true that a due proportion in religion has not been maintained lately. We have placed religion too much in the external duties of the *first* tablet. We have abounded in religious meetings, and in praying, reading, hearing, singing, and religious conference. But there hasn't been a proportionate increase of zeal for deeds of charity, and other duties of the *second* tablet — though it must be acknowledged that they too are much increased. Yet it appears to me that this objection about people spending too much time in religion has been groundless, in general. Though worldly business must be done, and people should not neglect the business of their particular callings, it is to the honor of God, that a people should be so engaged in outward acts of religion, that they conduct it in a visible, public display, showing their minds are greatly engaged in it as the main business of life. And it is especially fitting at such an extraordinary time, when God appears unusually present with a people, in wonderful works of power and mercy, that they should spend more time than usual in religious exercises, to put honor upon that God who is then extraordinarily present, and to seek His face. This is how it was with the Christian church in Jerusalem, on the occasion of that extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit, soon after Christ's ascension. Act 2.46: "And they continued daily with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread, from house to house." And so it was at Ephesus, at a time of great outpouring of the Spirit there. The Christians there attended public religious exercises every day, for two years continuously, Act 19.8-10:

"And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of Tyrannus. This continued for the space of two years; so that all who dwelt in Asia, heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

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And as to the grand objection that “six days you shall labor,” all that can be understood by it, and all that the very objectors themselves understand by it, is that we may follow our secular labors on those six days that are not the Sabbath, and should be diligent in them. It’s not that we cannot sometimes turn from them, even within those six days, to keep a day of fasting or thanksgiving, or to attend a lecture. And we may do that more frequently or rarely, as God’s providence and the state of things call us to, according to the best judgment of our discretion.

Though secular business, as I said before, should not be neglected, I cannot see how it can be maintained that religion should not be attended to, if it injures our temporal affairs in the least, on any principles other than those of infidelity. No one objects to injuring one temporal affair for the sake of another temporal affair of much greater importance. And therefore, if eternal things are as real as temporal things, and are indeed of infinitely greater importance, then why may we not voluntarily suffer, in some measure, in our temporal concerns, while we are seeking eternal riches and immortal glory? It is not looked at as improper in any way, for a whole nation to spend considerable time, and much of their outward substance, on some extraordinary temporal occasions, merely for the sake of ceremonies of public rejoicing. And it would be thought dishonorable to be very strict about what we spend, or careful lest we injure our estates on such an occasion. Why then should we be strict only with Almighty God, so that it would be a crime not to be scrupulously careful, lest we injure our temporal interests, or put honor upon Him and seek our own eternal happiness? We should take heed that none of us are in any way like Judas, who greatly complained about needless expense, and a waste of outward substance, when to put honor upon Christ, Mary broke open her box, and poured the precious ointment on his head. Judas was indignant on that account, and cries out, “Why was this ointment wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii,¹ and given to the poor,” Mar 14.3-5, and Joh 12.4-5.

And besides, if the matter is justly considered and examined, I believe it will be found that the country has lost no time from their temporal affairs, by the recent revival of religion, but have rather gained time. And more time has been saved from frolicking and tavern haunting, idleness, unprofitable visits, vain talk, fruitless pastimes, and needless diversions, than has lately been spent in extraordinary religion. Probably five times as much has been saved in people’s assets spent at the tavern and in their apparel, as was spent for religious meetings.

The great complaint that is made against so much time spent in religion cannot, in general, be from a real concern that God might be honored, that His will be done, or the best good be promoted by men. This is very manifest from this: there is a much more earnest and zealous outcry made in the country against this extraordinary religion now, than there was before, against so much time spent in tavern haunting, vain company-keeping, night-walking, and other things, which wasted both our time and substance, and injured our moral virtue.

The frequent preaching that has lately occurred, has particularly been objected to as *unprofitable* and *prejudicial*. It is objected that when sermons are heard so very often, one sermon tends to push another aside; so that people lose the benefit of all. They say two or three sermons in a week is as much as they can remember and digest. Such objections against frequent preaching, if they are not made from an enmity against religion, are for lack of duly

¹ One denarii was a day’s wages.

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considering the way that sermons usually profit their hearers. *The main benefit that is obtained by preaching, is by the impression made upon the mind during the sermon, and not by any effect that arises afterwards by remembering what was delivered.* Although an after-remembrance of what was heard in a sermon is often very profitable, for the most part, that remembrance is from an impression that the words made on the heart as it was spoken. The memory profits as it renews and increases that impression. Frequently inculcating the more important things of religion in preaching, has no tendency to erase such impressions, but to increase them, and fix them deeper and deeper in the mind, as found by experience. It never used to be objected that on the Sabbath, after people have heard two sermons that day, they should go home and spend the remaining part of the Sabbath reading the Scriptures and printed sermons. In proportion to its tendency to affect the mind at all, that would have as much of a tendency to drive out what they heard, as to hear another sermon preached. Yet it seems to have been the practice of the apostles to preach every day in places where they went; even though sometimes they long continued in one place. (Act 2.42, 46; 19.8-10). They did not avoid preaching one day, for fear they would thrust out of the minds of their hearers what they had delivered the day before. Nor did Christians avoid going every day to hear, for fear of any such bad effect. This is evident in Act 2.42, 46.

There are some things in Scripture that seem to signify as much — that preaching should occur at an extraordinary frequency when God is about to introduce that flourishing state of religion that would occur in the latter days. Take Isa 62.1-2: “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace; for Jerusalem’s sake, I will not rest until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. And the Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory.” And verses 5, 6, “For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem. They shall never hold their peace, day or night.” The destruction of the city of Jericho is evidently, in all its circumstances, intended by God as a great type of the overthrow of Satan’s kingdom. The priests blowing with trumpets at that time, represents ministers preaching the gospel; the people compassed the city seven days, with the priests blowing the trumpets. But when the day had come that the walls of the city were to fall, the priests were more frequent and abundant in blowing their trumpets. There was as much done in one day then, as in the seven before. They compassed the city seven times that day, blowing their trumpets, until at length it came to one long and perpetual blast. Then the walls of the city fell down flat.

The extraordinary preaching that will be done at the beginning of that glorious jubilee of the church, is represented by the extraordinary sounding of trumpets throughout the land of Canaan at the beginning of the year of jubilee; and also by the reading of the law before all Israel in the year of their release, at the Feast of Tabernacles. And the crowing of the rooster at daybreak, which brought Peter to repentance, seems to me intended to signify the awakening of God’s church out of their lethargy in which they had denied their Lord. It signifies the extraordinary preaching of the gospel that will occur at the dawning of the day of the church’s light and glory. And there seems to be in our day, an uncommon hand of divine Providence in animating, enabling, and upholding some ministers in such abundant labors.

Another thing in which I think some ministers have been injured, is being very much blamed for making so much of the outcries, faintings, and other bodily effects — in speaking of them as tokens of the presence of God, and arguments for the success of preaching. They seemed to strive to their utmost to bring a congregation to that point, and to rejoice in it; yes, even blessing God for it, when they see these effects.

Concerning this I would observe, in the first place, that there are many things with respect to crying out, falling down, etc., that are charged to ministers, that they are not guilty of. Some would have it that they speak about these things as certain evidences of a work of the Spirit of God on the hearts of their hearers; or that they esteem these bodily effects themselves to be the work of God, as though the Spirit of God took hold of, and agitated the bodies of men. And some are charged with making these things essential, and supposing that people cannot be converted without them. However, I never did see the person who held either of these things.

But for speaking about such effects as probable tokens of God's presence, and arguments for the success of preaching, it seems to me that these ministers are not to be blamed, because I think they are *indeed* such tokens. And therefore, when I see people who are excited by preaching the important truths of God's word, urged and enforced by proper arguments and motives, or consequents of other sound means, I don't hesitate to speak of them, and to rejoice in them, and to bless God for them *as such*. And (I think) there is good reason for this; namely, that from time to time, upon proper inquiry and examination, and observation of the consequence and fruits, I have found that these are all evidences that people in whom these effects appear, are under the influences of God's Spirit in such cases. Crying out in such a manner, and with such circumstances as I have seen from time to time, is as much an evidence to me of the general cause that it proceeds from, as language. I have learned the meaning of it, the same way that people learn the meaning of language — by use and experience. I confess that when I see a great crying out in a congregation, in the manner that I have seen it when those things are presented to them which are *worthy* of their being greatly affected by them, I rejoice in it — much more than merely in an appearance of solemn attention, and a show of affection by weeping. That is because when there have been those outcries, I have found a much greater and more excellent effect from time to time. To rejoice that the work of God is carried on *calmly*, without much ado, is in effect to rejoice that it is carried on with less power, or without so much of the influence of God's Spirit. The degree of the influence of the Spirit of God on *particular people*, is by no means to be judged by the degree of external appearances, because of the different constitutions, temperaments, and circumstances of men. Yet, if there is a very powerful influence of the Spirit of God on a mixed multitude, it will cause in some way or other, a great and visible commotion.

As for ministers aiming at such effects, and striving by all means to bring it to pass that a congregation has such an uproar among them, I suppose that none aim at it other than as they strive to raise the affections of their hearers to such a height, as very often appears in these effects. And if it is so, that those affections are commonly *good*, and it is found by experience that such a degree of them commonly has a *good effect*, then I think they are to be justified in doing so.

Again, some ministers have been blamed for keeping people together who have been under great affections, which have appeared in such extraordinary outward manifestations. Many

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think this promotes confusion — that people in such circumstances discompose each other's minds, and disturb the minds of others. And therefore, it is best if they were dispersed, and that when any in a congregation are so strongly seized that they cannot forbear outward manifestations of it, they should be removed so that others' minds may not be diverted.¹

I cannot help but think that those who thus object, do so based on quite wrong notions of things. For though people ought to take heed that they don't make a needless ado — for this will be the way, in time, to have such appearances lose all their effect — the unavoidable manifestations of strong religious affections tend toward a happy influence on the minds of bystanders, and are found by experience to have an excellent and durable effect. And so, to contrive and order things, so that others may have an opportunity and advantage to observe them, has been found to be blessed as a great means to promote the work of God. To prevent their being observed, is to prevent the effect of what God makes use of as a principal means of carrying on His work at such an extraordinary time; *namely*, by example. This is often spoken of in Scripture as one of the chief means by which God will carry on his work during the prosperity of religion in the latter days. I have already mentioned some texts to this purpose, in what I published before,² about *the marks of a work of the true Spirit*. But I would mention some others here. In Zec 9.15-16, those in the latter days would be so filled with the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary manner, that it would appear in outward manifestations, and making noise. They are spoken of as those whom God, in these uncommon circumstances, will set up for others to view, like a prize or banner. By their example and the excellency of their attainments, they will animate and draw others, as men gather around a banner, and run for a prize, a crown and precious jewels, set up in their view. The words are:

And they shall drink, and make an uproar as if by wine; and they will be filled like bowls, and like the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God will save them in that day, as the flock of his people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted up like a banner over his land.

I will have occasion to say something more about this Scripture afterwards. Those who make the objection that I speak of, instead of allowing this prize or banner to be in public view, would rather have it removed, and hidden in some corner. To the same purpose is Isa 62.3, “You shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.” Here it is observable that it is not said, you shall be a crown upon the *head*, but in the *hand* of the Lord; *i.e.*, held out in your beauty and excellency, like a prize, to be bestowed upon others who behold you, and are animated by the brightness and lustre which God will endow you with. The great influence of the example of God's people, in their bright and excellent attainments, to propagate religion in those days, is further signified in Isa 60.3, “And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” With ver. 22, “A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.” And Zec 10.8-9, “And they shall increase as they once increased; and I will sow them among the people.” And Hos 2.23, “And I will sow her for Myself in the earth.” See also, Jer 31.27.

¹ The danger is mass hysteria, rather than a shared emotional response by many of the hearers.

² See Edwards, *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, in vol. 1 of *President Edwards Works*.

Another thing that gives great disgust to many, is the disposition that people display under great affections, to speak so much, and with such earnestness and vehemence; to set forth the greatness and wonderfulness and importance of divine and eternal things; to so passionately warn, invite, and entreat others.

Concerning this I would say that I am *far* from thinking that such a disposition should be wholly without any limits or regulation (as I will more particularly show afterwards). And I believe some have erred in setting no bounds, and indulging and encouraging this disposition without any kind of restraint or direction. Yet, it seems to me that such a disposition in general, is what both reason and Scripture justify. Those who are offended at such things, as though they were unreasonable, are not fair. On examination, it will probably be found that they have one rule of reasoning about *temporal* things, and another about *spiritual* things. They would not at all wonder if a person on some very great and affecting occasion of extraordinary danger or great joy, which eminently and immediately concerns him and others, is disposed to speak a great deal, and with great earnestness — especially to those to whom he is united in the bonds of dear affection, and great concern for their good. And therefore, if they were fair, why wouldn't they allow it in *spiritual* things? Indeed much *more* in those things, reflecting the vastly greater importance and more affecting nature of spiritual things; the concern which true religion causes in men's minds for the good of others; and the disposition it gives and excites in us to speak God's praises, to show forth his infinite glory, and to talk of all his glorious perfections and works.

A very great sense of the right kind — about the importance of the things of religion, and the danger that sinners are in — should sometimes cause an almost insuperable disposition to speak to and warn others. This is reflected in Jer 6.10-11:

“To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord. I am weary of holding it in. I will pour it out on the children abroad, and on the assembly of the young men together. For even the husband shall be taken with the wife, the aged with him who is full of days.”

True Christians, when they come to be, as it were, awakened out of sleep, and are filled with a sweet and joyful sense of the excellent things of religion by the preaching of the gospel, or by other means of grace, should be disposed to speak much about divine things, even though before they were mute. This is agreeable to what Christ says to his church in Song 7.9: “And the roof of your mouth is like the best wine, which goes down sweetly for my beloved, causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak.” The roof of the church's mouth, is the officers in the church, who preach the gospel. Their word, for Christ's beloved, is like the best wine that goes down sweetly. It is extraordinarily refreshing and enlivening to the saints, causing them to speak, even though before they were mute and asleep. It is said by some that the people who are the subjects of this work, when they get together, talking loudly and earnestly in their great joys, several in a room talking at the same time, make an uproar just like a company of drunken people. On this, I would observe that it was foretold that God's people would do so, in that passage mentioned before, Zec 9.15-17. I will now take more particular notice of it. The words are as follows:

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¹⁵ The Lord of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour and subdue with sling-stones; and they shall drink, and make an uproar as if by wine; and they will be filled like bowls, and like the corners of the altar. ¹⁶ And the Lord their God will save them in that day, as the flock of his people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted up like a banner over his land. ¹⁷ For how great is his goodness! And how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

The words are quite remarkable. Here it is foretold that at the time when Christ sets up a universal kingdom on earth, the children of Zion shall drink, until they are filled like the vessels of the sanctuary (ver. 15). And if we want to know what they will be filled with, the prophecy, in effect, explains itself: they will be filled like the vessels in the sanctuary that contained the drink offering, which was wine. And yet the words imply that it will not literally be wine that they drink and are filled with, because it is said that they will drink and make an uproar *as if by wine*, as if they had drunk wine. This implies that they had not done it literally. Therefore, we must understand that they will drink and be filled with whatever the wine of the drink offering represented, or was a type of – which is the Holy Spirit, as well as the blood of Christ. It is the *new wine* that is drunk in our heavenly Father's kingdom (Mat 26.29). They shall be filled with the Spirit, which the apostle sets in opposition to being drunk with wine, Eph 5.18. This is the *new wine* spoken of in verse 17 above. It is the same as the *best wine* spoken of in Song of Solomon, *that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak*. It is foretold here, that the children of Zion, in the latter days, would be filled with what would make them cheerful, and cause them to make an uproar as if by wine. These joyful happy people who are thus filled, will be like the stones of a crown, lifted up like a banner over God's land, made joyful in the extraordinary manifestations of the beauty and love of Christ. And so it follows, *How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!* It is further remarkable that it is foretold here, that it would be this way especially among young people: *Corn will make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids*. It would be ridiculous to understand this as literal bread and wine. Without doubt, the same spiritual blessings are signified by bread and wine here, which were represented by Melchizedek's bread and wine, and are signified by the bread and wine in the Lord's supper. One of the marginal readings is: *shall make the young men speak*, which is agreeable to that verse in Song of Solomon, about the *best wine causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak*.

We should not be, in any measure, like the unbelieving Jews in Christ's time, who were disgusted both with crying out with distress, and with joy. The poor blind man cried out before all the multitude, *Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on me*. And he continued insistently this way. The multitude rebuked him, and charged him to hold his tongue, Mar 10.46-48 and Luk 18.38-39. They looked at it as an indecent clamor that he made, something unbecoming of him, to make his voice heard so much and so loudly among the multitude. And when Christ made his solemn and triumphant entry into Jerusalem (which I observed before, was a type of the glory and triumph of the latter days), the whole multitude of the disciples, of all sorts, especially young people, began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, *Blessed be the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!* The Pharisees said to Christ, *Master, rebuke your disciples*. They did not understand such great transports of joy. It seemed to them a very unsuitable and indecent noise and clamor that they made, a confused uproar, many crying

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out together, as though they were out of their wits. They wondered that Christ would tolerate it. But what does Christ say? *I tell you that if these held their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.* His words seems to intimate that there was cause enough to constrain those whose hearts were *not* harder than the very stones, to cry out and make noise. This is something like that other expression, of *causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.*

When many, under great religious affections, earnestly speak about divine wonders to those who are next to them in various parts of a company — some attending to what one says, some to another — there is something very beautiful in it. That is, provided so many aren't speaking as to drown out each other's voices, so that none can hear what anyone says. There is a greater and more affecting appearance of a joint eagerness of heart, in the love and praises of God. I would rather see that, than to see someone speaking alone, with all attending to what he says; the former has more of the appearance of conversation. When a multitude meet on any occasion of temporal rejoicing, freely and cheerfully conversing together, they don't usually observe the ceremony of only one speaking at a time, while all the rest, in a formal manner, set themselves to attend to what he says. That would spoil all conversation, and turn it into the formality of set speeches, and the solemnity of preaching. It is better for lay people, when they meet together, and are speaking to one another about the things of God, to speak in the manner of Christian conversation, than to observe the formality of but one speaking at a time, the whole multitude silently and solemnly attending to what he says. That would carry in it too much of the air of the authority and solemnity of preaching. Here is what the apostle says, 1Cor 14.29-31, "Let the prophets speak, two or three, and let the others judge. If anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first hold his peace. For you may all prophesy, one by one, so that all may learn, and all may be comforted." I say, this does not apply to *this case*, because what the apostle is speaking about there is the solemnity of their religious exercises in public worship; and about people speaking in the church by immediate inspiration, in the use of the gift of prophecy or some gift of inspiration. In exercising this gift, they acted as *extra-ordinary* ministers of Christ.

Another thing that some have found fault with, is abounding so much in singing in religious meetings. Objecting against such a thing as this seems to arise from a suspicion already established about this work: they doubt the spontaneous extraordinary love and joys that attend this work, and so they find fault with their manifestations. If they thought people were truly the subjects of an extraordinary degree of divine love, and heavenly rejoicing in God, I suppose they wouldn't wonder so much at their having a disposition to be in so much praise. They won't object to the saints and angels in heaven singing praises and hallelujahs to God without ceasing, day or night. And therefore they will doubtless allow that the more the saints on earth are like those in heaven, in their *dispositions*, the more they will be disposed to *do* like them. They will readily admit that most Christians have great reason to be ashamed that they have so little thankfulness, and are not *more* in praising God, whom they have such infinite cause to praise. Why, therefore, should Christians be faulted for showing a disposition to be much in praising God, and manifesting a delight in that heavenly exercise? To complain about this, is to be too much like the Pharisees who were disgusted when the multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and to praise God with loud voices, and cry *Hosanna* when Christ was entering into Jerusalem.

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There are many things in Scripture that seem to intimate that praising God, both in speeches and songs, will be what the church of God will very much abound in, in the approaching glorious day. So on the seventh day of compassing the walls of Jericho, when the priests blew with the trumpets in an extraordinary manner, the people shouted with a great shout, and the walls of the city fell down flat. So the ark was brought back from its banishment with extraordinary shouting and singing of the whole congregation of Israel. And the places in the prophecies of Scripture are too many to be mentioned, which signify that the church of God in that glorious jubilee that is foretold, will greatly abound in singing and shouting out the praises of God. And there will be cause enough for it. I believe it will be a time in which both heaven and earth will be much more full of joy and praise than ever before.

But what is more especially found fault with in the singing that is now practised, is making use of hymns of human composition. I am far from thinking that the book of Psalms should be thrown aside in our public worship; rather, it should always be used in the Christian church to the end of the world. But I know of no obligation we are under to *confine* ourselves to it. I can find no command or rule of God's word, that any more confines us to the words of the Scripture in our *singing*, than it does in our *praying*, We speak to God in both. And I can see no reason to limit ourselves to those particular forms of words we find in the Bible, in speaking to Him by way of praise in metre and with music, than when we speak to him in prose by way of prayer and supplication. It is really necessary that we have some other songs besides the psalms of David. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Christian church should forever, even in times of her greatest light in her praises of God and the Lamb, be confined only to the words of the Old Testament, in which all the greatest and most glorious things of the gospel, which are infinitely the greatest subjects of her praise, are spoken of *under a veil*. Not so much as the name of our glorious Redeemer is ever mentioned in the Psalms, except in some dark figure, or as hidden under the name of some type. As for making use of the words of others, and not those that are conceived by ourselves, it is no more than we do in all our public prayers. The whole worshipping assembly, except for one, makes use of the words that are conceived by the one who speaks for the rest.

Another thing that many have disliked, is the religious meetings of children, to read and pray together, and perform religious exercises by themselves. The objection is children's lack of that knowledge and discretion that is requisite for a decent and profitable management of religious exercises. But it appears to me that the objection is not sufficient. Children, having the nature of men, are inclined to society; and those of them who are capable of society with one another, are capable of the influences of the Spirit of God in its active fruits. And if they are inclined by a religious disposition that they have from the Spirit of God, to employ their society with one another in a religious manner, and for religious purposes, then who should forbid them? If they don't have discretion to observe method in their religious performances, or to speak sense in all that they say in prayer, they may notwithstanding have a good meaning, and *God* understands them, and it doesn't spoil or interrupt their devotion for one another. We who are grown people, have defects in our prayers that are a thousand times worse in the sight of God; they are a greater confusion and more absurd nonsense in His eyes, than their childish indiscretions. There is not so much difference before God, between children and grown people, as we are ready to imagine. We are all poor, ignorant, foolish

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babes in his Sight. Our adult age doesn't bring us so much nearer to God, as we are apt to think. God in this work has shown a remarkable regard for little children. Never was there such a glorious work among people in their childhood, as there has been of late in New England. He has been pleased, in a wonderful manner, to *perfect praise out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants*. Many of them have more of that knowledge and wisdom that pleases Him, and renders their religious worship acceptable, than many of the great and learned men of the world. In the sight of God, *they* are the ignorant and foolish children, these grown men, a hundred years old in comparison with them. It is to be hoped that the days are coming, prophesied by Isa 65.20, when "the child shall die one hundred years old."

I have seen many happy effects of children's religious meetings. And God has often seemed to remarkably own them in their meetings, and has really descended from heaven to be among them. I have known several probable instances of children's being converted at such meetings. I would therefore think that if children appear to be really moved to it by a religious disposition, and not merely from a childish affectation of imitating grown people, they should by no means be discouraged or discountenanced. Yet it is fitting that care should be taken of them by their parents, and pastors, to instruct and direct them, and to correct imprudent conduct and irregularities if such are perceived; or to correct anything by which the devil may pervert and destroy the design of their meetings. All should take heed that they not find fault with, and despise the religion of children, from an evil principle — lest they be like the chief priests and scribes, who were sorely displeased at the religious worship and praises of little children, and the honor they gave Christ in the temple. We have an account of it, and what Christ said on that occasion, in Mat 21.15-16:

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple saying, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, they were sorely displeased, and said to him, Do you hear what they are saying? And Jesus said to them, Yes; have you never read, *Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise?*"

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PART IV.

Showing what things are to be corrected or avoided in promoting this Work, or in our behavior under it.

Having thus observed some instances in which the conduct of those who appeared to be the subjects of this work, or were zealous to promote it, have been objected to or complained about, without or beyond just cause, I now proceed *to show what things ought to be corrected or avoided.*

Many who are zealous for this glorious work of God, are heartsick about the great uproar in the country, about *imprudence* and *disorders*. They have heard it so often from the mouths of opposers, that they are prejudiced against what is sound. They look at what is called *prudent* and *regular* (what is so insisted on) as none other than being asleep, or cold and dead in religion. And the great imprudence that is so much decried, is merely being alive, and engaged in the things of God. They are therefore confirmed in their practice, rather than brought away from it, by the clamor that they hear against it, as being imprudent and irregular. To tell the truth, the cry of irregularity and imprudence has been much more in the mouths of those who have been the main enemies of the work. For they have watched for the stumbling of the zealous, and eagerly snatched at anything that has been wrong — greatly insisted on it, made the most of it, and magnified it. They have especially watched for errors in zealous preachers who are much involved in reproving and condemning the wickedness of the times. They would therefore do well to consider Isa 29.20-21: “The scorner is consumed, and all who watch for iniquity are cut off — those who make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for the one who reproves in the gate, and turn aside the just for nothing.” They have not only too much insisted on and magnified real errors, but they have very injuriously charged them as guilty in things in which they have been innocent, and have done their duty. This has so prejudiced the minds of some, that they were ready to think that *all* that has been said about errors and imprudence was injurious, and proceeded only from an ill spirit. It has confirmed for them, that there is no such thing as a “prevailing imprudence.” And so it has made them *less* cautious and suspicious of themselves, that they might err.

In this, the devil has had an advantage put into his hands, and has taken that advantage; and doubtless he has been too subtle for some of the true friends of religion. That would be a strange thing indeed, if in so great a commotion and revolution, and in such a new state of things, in which so many have been engaged, none have been guilty of any imprudence. It would be such a revival of religion as never before seen, if among so many men who are not guided by infallible inspiration, there had not prevailed many notable errors in judgment and conduct. Our young preachers and young converts would in general have vastly exceeded Luther, the head of the Reformation, who was guilty of a great many excesses in that great affair, in which God made him the chief instrument.

If we look back at the history of the church of God in past ages, we may observe that it has been a common device of the devil, to overturn a revival of religion. When he finds that he can keep men quiet and self-secure no longer, he drives them to excesses and indulgences. He holds them back as long as he can; but when he can do it no longer, he pushes them onward, and if possible, turns them on their heads. It has been chiefly by such means that he has been successful in several instances, in overthrowing the most hopeful and promising beginnings.

Part IV. – Things to be Corrected or Avoided

Indeed, the principal means by which the devil was successful, was *by degrees* to overturn that grand religious revival of the world during the primitive ages of Christianity. In a way, he overthrew the Christian church throughout the earth, to make way for and introduce the great antichristian apostasy.¹ That masterpiece of the devil's work, was to employ the indiscreet ² *zeal* of Christians, to drive them into three extremes: *enthusiasm*,³ *superstition*, and *severity towards opposers*. This should be enough for an everlasting warning to the Christian church.

Though the devil will be diligent to stir up the open enemies of religion, he knows what serves his interest so well, that in a time of revival of religion, he will try his main strength with its *friends*; he will chiefly exert himself in his attempts to mislead them. One truly zealous person during such an event, who seems to have a great hand in the affair, and draws the eyes of many upon him, may do more to hinder the work (through Satan's being too subtle for him), than a hundred great, strong, and open opposers.

During the time of a great work of Christ, his hands with which he *works*, are often wounded in the house of his friends; his work is hindered chiefly by them. So that if anyone asks, as in Zec 13.6, "What are those wounds in your hands?" he may answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

The errors of the *friends* of the work of God, and especially of its great promoters, give vast advantage to the *enemies* of such a work. Indeed there are many things that are not errors, but only duties faithfully and thoroughly done, that wound the minds of such people more, and cross them more, than real errors. And yet, one real error gives opposers as much advantage, and hinders and clogs the work as much as ten that are only supposed to be errors. Real errors do not fret and gall the enemies of religion so much as those things that are strictly right. But such errors encourage these enemies more; they give them liberty and open a gap for them. So that some who before kept their enmity burning in their own hearts, and dared not show themselves, will be encouraged on such an occasion to vent themselves. Their rage will be like that of an enemy let loose. Those who lay still before, having nothing to say except what they would be ashamed of (Tit 2.8⁴), when they have such a weapon put into their hands, will fight with all violence. And indeed, the enemies of religion would not know what to do for weapons to fight with, if it were not for the errors of religion's friends — and so it must soon fall before them. And besides this, in *real* errors — things that are truly disagreeable to the rules of God's word — we cannot expect divine protection, nor that God will appear on our side, as if our errors were only supposed ones.

Therefore, since the errors of the friends and promoters of such a glorious work of God, have such a dreadful consequence; and seeing that the devil, being sensible of this, is so assiduous, watchful, and subtle in his attempts with them, and has been so successful using them to overthrow religion up to now — certainly such friends and promoters should be exceedingly

¹ *Great antichristian apostasy*: presumably the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in the 4th century. After many centuries of papal abuse, the reformers and Puritans labelled every occupant of that office, *the Antichrist*.

² *Indiscreet*: lacking discretion; injudicious; tossing off restraints.

³ *Enthusiasm*: exhibiting overly zealous (even irrational) religious fervor.

⁴ **Tit 2:8** ... sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say about you.

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circumspect and vigilant, diffident,¹ watchful of themselves, and humbly dependent on the guidance of the Good Shepherd. 1Pet 4.7, “Be sober, and watchful in your prayers.” And 5.8, “*Be sober, be vigilant*; because your adversary the devil, walks about like a roaring lion.” People go on resolutely in a kind of heated and vehement way, despising admonition and correction, being confident that they *must* be in the right, because they are “full of the Spirit.” This is directly contrary to the import of these words: *be sober, be vigilant*.

I have observed a mistake in some, greatly exposing them to being wounded, that they think they are in no danger of going astray, or being misled by the devil, because they are “near to God.” And so they don’t keep a watchful eye on themselves. They neglect vigilance and circumspection as needless in their case. They say they don’t think that God would leave them to dishonor Him, and wound religion, so long as they keep near to Him. And I believe so too, as long as they keep near to God in the sense that they maintain a universal and diligent watch, and take care to do their duty, and avoid sin and snares, with diffidence in themselves, and humble dependence and prayerfulness. But it is *not* merely because they are near to God, in the sense that they now are receiving blessed communications from God, in refreshing views of Him — if at the same time, they let down their watch, and are not jealous over their own heart, considering its remaining blindness and corruption, and a subtle adversary. It is a grand error for people to think that they are out of danger of the devil, and of a corrupt and deceitful heart, even in their highest flights and most raised frames of spiritual joy. For people in such a confidence, to cease to be protective of themselves, and to neglect watchfulness and care, is a presumption by which I have known many to be woefully ensnared. However highly we may be favored with divine revelations and comforts, as long as we are in the world, we are in the enemy’s country. And therefore, that direction of Christ to his disciples is never out of date in this world: Luk 21.36, “Watch and pray *always*, so that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

It was not out of date for the disciples, to whom this direction was given, even after they came to be filled so full with the Holy Ghost — when out of their bellies flowed rivers of living water by that great effusion of the Spirit upon them, which began on the day of Pentecost. Though God stands ready to protect his people, especially those who are near to him, He expects great care and labor by all — and that we should *put on the whole armor of God, so that we may stand in the evil day*. (Eph 6.13) Whatever spiritual privileges we are raised to, we have no warrant to expect protection in any other way. For God has appointed this whole life as a state of labor, *all* of it like a race or a battle. The state of rest in which we will be so out of danger, as to have no need for watching and fighting, *is reserved for another world*. I have known abundant instances in which the devil has come in very remarkably, even in the midst of the most exalted, and on some accounts, *excellent* frames. It may seem a great mystery that it should be so. But it is no greater mystery than that Christ should be taken captive by the devil, and carried into the wilderness — immediately after the heavens had been opened to him, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon him, and he heard that comfortable, joyful voice from the Father, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. In like manner, Christ in the heart of a Christian is oftentimes taken by the devil and carried captive into a

¹ *Diffident*: not self-assured or over-confident.

wilderness as it were — immediately after heaven has been opened to the soul, and the Holy Ghost has descended on it like a dove, and God has been sweetly owning the believer, and testifying of His favor toward him as His beloved child.

It is therefore a great error, and sin in some people in this day, that they are fixed in their way, in some things that others consider errors, and will not listen to admonition and counsel, but are confident that they are in the right in those practices that they find themselves disposed to, because “God is with them,” and they have great degrees of the Spirit of God. There were some such people in the apostles’ days. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, was sensible that some of them would not be easily convinced that they had been in any error, because they looked at themselves as *spiritual*, or full of the Spirit of God. 1Cor 14.37-38: “If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you, are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant.”

Although those who are spiritual among us, have no infallible apostle to admonish them, let me entreat them by the love of Christ, to calmly and impartially weigh what may be said to them by someone who is their hearty and fervent friend (although an inferior worm). Let him give his humble opinion concerning the errors that have been committed, or that we may be exposed to, in the methods or practices that have been or may be fallen into by the zealous friends or promoters of this great work of God.

In speaking of the errors that have occurred, or that we are in danger of, I would,

First, take notice of the causes from which the errors that attend a great revival of religion usually arise. And as I go along, take notice of some particular errors that arise from each of those causes.

Secondly, observe some errors that some have lately fallen into, that have been owing to the influence of several of those causes conjunctly.

First. As to the first of these, the errors that attend a great revival of religion, usually arise from these three things:

1. Undiscerned spiritual pride.
2. Wrong principles.
3. Ignorance of Satan’s advantages and devices.

1. Spiritual Pride. The first and worst cause of errors that prevail in such a state of things, is *spiritual pride*. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of religion. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit, to darken the mind, and mislead the judgment. This is the main handle by which the devil gains hold of religious people, and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces to clog and hinder a work of God. This cause of error is the mainspring, or at least the main support of all the rest. Until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to heal other diseases. It is by *this* that the mind defends itself in other errors, and guards itself against the light by which it might be corrected and reclaimed. The spiritually proud man thinks he is full of light already, and doesn’t need instruction; and so he is ready to despise its offer. But if this disease is healed, then other things are easily rectified. The humble person is like a little child.

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He easily receives instruction; he is watchful over himself; and he is sensible of how liable he is to go astray. Therefore, if it is suggested to him that he has gone astray, he is ready to inquire most narrowly and impartially. Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach, as humility; nothing so prepares the mind for true divine light, without darkness, and so clears the eye to look at things as they truly are. Psa 25.9, "The humble He will guide in judgment, and the humble he will teach his way." Therefore, we should *fight neither with small, nor with great, but with the king of Israel.* (1Kng 22.31) Our first care should be to rectify the heart, and to *pull the beam out of our own eye; then we will see clearly.* (Mat 7.5)

I know that a great many things in this day, are injuriously laid to the pride of those who are zealous in the cause of God. When a person appears in any respect, remarkably distinguished in religion from others — if he professes those spiritual comforts and joys that are greater than ordinary; if he appears distinctly zealous in religion; if he exerts himself more than others do in the cause of religion; or if he seems to be distinguished with success — then ten to one, it will immediately awaken the jealousy of those who are around him. They will suspect (whether they have cause to or not) that he is very proud of his goodness, and that he affects to have it thought that nobody else is as good as he is. And all his talk is heard, and all his behavior is beheld, with this prejudice. Those who are themselves cold and dead, and especially those who have never experienced the power of godliness on their own hearts, are ready to entertain such thoughts about the best Christians. It arises from a secret enmity against vital and fervent piety.

But then, those who are zealous Christians should take heed that this injuriousness by those who are cold in religion, doesn't prove a snare to themselves — that the devil doesn't take advantage of it, to blind their eyes from beholding what there is indeed of this nature in their own hearts; that he doesn't make them think that because they are wrongfully charged with pride, and it is done from an ill spirit in many things, that therefore it is so in *everything*. Alas, how much pride the best of us have in our hearts! It is the worst part of the body of sin and death. It is the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and the last that is rooted out. It is God's most stubborn enemy.

The corruption of nature may all be resolved into two things, *pride* and *worldly-mindedness* — the *devil* and the *beast*, or *self* and the *world*. These are the two pillars of Dagon's temple, on which the whole house leans. But the first of these, *pride*, is in every way the worst part of the corruption of nature. It is the first-born son of the devil; and his image in the heart of man chiefly consists in this. It is the last thing in a sinner that is overcome by conviction in order for conversion; and here is the saint's hardest conflict. It is the last thing that he obtains a good degree of conquest over and liberty from. It is that which most directly militates against God, and is most contrary to the Spirit of the Lamb of God, and most like the devil, its father, in its serpentine deceitfulness and secrecy. It lies deepest, is most active, and is most ready to secretly mix itself with *everything*.

Of all kinds of pride, *spiritual* pride is on many accounts the most hateful. It is most like the devil; it is most like the sin that he committed in a heaven of light and glory, where he was exalted high in divine knowledge, honor, beauty, and happiness. Pride is much more difficult to discern than any other corruption, for this reason: that its nature very much consists in a person's having too high a thought of himself. But it is no wonder that he that has too high a

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thought of himself, and doesn't know it. For he necessarily thinks that the opinion he has of himself is what he has just grounds for, and therefore it isn't too high. If he thought such an opinion of himself was without just grounds, he would cease to have it. But of all kinds of pride, spiritual pride is the most hidden, and the most difficult to discover. That is because the pride of those who are spiritually proud, greatly consists in having a high conceit about those two things: namely, their *light*, and their *humility* — both of these strongly prejudice a person against a discovery of their pride. Being proud of their *light* makes them less watchful of themselves. Whoever thinks that a clear light shines around him, is not suspicious of any enemy lurking near him, unseen. And then, being proud of their *humility* makes them least of all watchful of themselves in that particular — namely, being under the prevalence of pride.

There are many sins of the heart that are very secret in their nature, and discerned with difficulty. The Psalmist says, Psa 19.12, “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.” But spiritual pride is the most secret of all sins. The heart is not as deceitful and unsearchable in anything in the world, as it is in this matter. There is no sin in the world, that men are so confident in, and convinced of with such difficulty. The very nature of spiritual pride is to work self-confidence, and to drive away self-diffidence, and to be protective of any evil of that kind. There is no sin so much like the devil as this one, for its secrecy and subtlety, and for appearing in a great many shapes — undiscerned and unsuspected, and appearing as an angel of light. It takes occasion to arise from everything; it perverts and abuses everything. Even the exercises of real grace, and real humility, are an occasion to exert itself. It is a sin that has, as it were, many lives. If you kill it, it will still live; if you mortify and suppress it in one shape, it arises in another. If you think it is all gone, it is still there. There are a great many kinds of it that lie in different forms and shapes, one under another, and encompass the heart like the layers of an onion. If you pull off one, there is another underneath. We therefore need to have the greatest watch imaginable over our hearts with respect to this matter, and to cry most earnestly to the great searcher of hearts for His help. *Whoever trusts his own heart is a fool.* (Pro 28.26)

God's own people should be more watchful of themselves with respect to this particular, in this day, because the temptations that many have to this sin are exceedingly great. The great and distinguishing privileges to which God admits many of his saints, and the high honors that He puts on some minister, are great trials in this respect. It is true that great degrees of the spiritual presence of God tend to greatly mortify pride and all corruption. Yet, even if the experience of such favors greatly restrains pride in one way, there is much to tempt and provoke it in another. Without great watchfulness and prayerfulness, we will be in great danger by this. There was much in the circumstances that the fallen angels were in, in heaven — in their great honors and high privileges, in beholding the face of God, and in their view of His infinite glory — to cause them to exercise humility, and to keep them from pride. Yet through lack of watchfulness, their great honor and heavenly privilege proved to be for them an undoing temptation to pride, even though they had no *principle* of pride in their hearts to expose them to it. Therefore, let no saint, however eminent and however near to God, think he is out of danger of this. Whoever thinks himself most *out* of danger, is indeed most *in* danger. The apostle Paul, who doubtless was as eminent a saint as any are now, was not out of danger of it — even after just being admitted to see God in the third heaven, as he himself describes in 2Cor 12.1-9. And yet, what he saw in heaven of the ineffable glory of the divine

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Being, doubtless had a direct tendency to make him appear exceedingly little and vile in his own eyes.

Spiritual pride in its own nature is so secret, that it is not discerned by immediate intuition about the thing itself, as it is by its effects and fruits. I would mention some of these, together with the contrary fruits of pure Christian humility.

Spiritual pride disposes us to speak of *other* people's sins with bitterness, or with laughter and levity, and an air of contempt — their enmity against God and his people, the miserable delusion of hypocrites and their enmity against vital piety, and the deadness of some saints. But pure Christian humility rather disposes us either to be silent about them, or to speak of them with grief and pity.

Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others; whereas a humble saint is most suspect of *himself*. He is suspicious of nothing in the world as much as he is of his own heart. The spiritually proud person is apt to find fault with other saints — that they are low in grace, observing how cold and dead they are; decrying them for it; and being quick to discern and note their deficiencies. But the eminently humble Christian has so much to do at home, and sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with others' hearts. He complains most about himself, and decries his *own* coldness and lowness in grace. He is apt to esteem others better than himself, and is ready to hope that everyone has more love and thankfulness to God than he does. He cannot bear to think that others might bring forth no more fruit to God's honor than he does.

Some who have spiritual pride mixed with high revelations and great transports of joy, which dispose them to talk to others in an earnest manner, are apt in such frames to call upon other Christians around them, sharply reproofing them for being so cold and lifeless. But there are others who behave very differently. In their raptures, they are overwhelmed with a sense of their own vileness. And when they have extraordinary revelations of God's glory, they are absorbed by their *own* sinfulness. Though they too are disposed to speak much and earnestly, it is very much in decrying themselves, and yes, exhorting fellow Christians, but in a charitable and humble manner. Pure Christian humility disposes a person to take notice of everything that is in any respect good in others, and to make the best of it, and to diminish others' failings — but to have his eye chiefly on those things in himself that are bad, and to take notice of everything that aggravates them.

Contrary to this, it has been the manner in some places, or at least the manner of some *people*, to speak of almost everything they see amiss in others, in the harshest, most severe and terrible language. It is frequent for them to say about others' opinions, or conduct, or advice, or about their coldness, silence, caution, moderation, prudence, and many other things that appear in them — that they are from the devil, or from hell; that such a thing is devilish, or hellish, or cursed; and that such people are serving the devil; or the devil is in them; that they are soul-murderers, and the like — so that the words *devil* and *hell* are almost continually in their mouths. They will commonly use such language, not only towards wicked men, but towards those whom they themselves admit to be the true children of God; and also towards ministers of the gospel, and others who are very much their superiors. And they look at it as a virtue and high attainment to behave themselves this way. — *Oh*, they say, *we must be plain-spoken and bold for Christ; we must declare war against sin wherever we see it; we must*

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not mince words in the cause of God, and when speaking for Christ. To make any distinction between people, or to speak more tenderly because what is amiss is seen in a superior, they look at as beneath a follower of Christ when speaking in his Master's cause.

What a strange device of the devil this is to overthrow all Christian meekness and gentleness, and even all show and appearance of it, and to defile the mouths of the children of God, and to introduce the language of common sailors among the followers of Christ, under a cloak of high sanctity and zeal and boldness for Christ! It is a remarkable instance of the weakness of the human mind, and how the devil is much too cunning for us!

The grand defence of this way of talking, is that they say no more than what is true; that they only speak the truth without mincing the matter; and that true Christians who have a great sight of the evil of sin, and an acquaintance with their own hearts, know it to be true — and therefore, they won't be offended to hear such harsh expressions made use of, concerning them and their sins. They say it is only hypocrites, or cold and dead Christians, who are provoked and feel their enmity rise on such an occasion.

But it is a grand mistake to think that we may commonly use with one another, all such language that represents the worst about each other, according to strict truth. It is really true that every kind of sin, and every degree of it, is devilish and from hell, and is cursed, hellish, and condemned or damned. And if people had a full sight of their hearts, they would think that no terms are too bad for them. They would look like beasts, like serpents, and like devils to themselves. They would be at a loss for words to express what they see in themselves. The worst terms they could think of, would seem faint to represent what they see in themselves. But may a child therefore, from time to time, concerning an excellent and eminently holy father or mother, say that the devil is in them, that they have devilish, cursed dispositions, that they commit hundreds of hellish, damned acts every day, and that they are cursed dogs, hell-hounds, and devils? Will the lowliest of people be justified in commonly using such language concerning the most excellent magistrates, or their most eminent ministers?

I hope nobody has gone to this height. But the same presence of boldness, plain-spokenness, and declared war against sin, will justify these things, as well as the things they are actually used to justify. If we proceed in such a manner, on such principles as these, what a face will be put upon the church of Christ, the little beloved flock of that gentle shepherd, the Lamb of God! What a sound we will bring into the house of God, into the family of His dear little children! How far away we will soon banish that lovely appearance of humility, sweetness, gentleness, mutual honor, benevolence, contentment, and esteem of others above themselves, which ought to clothe the children of God all over! It's not that Christians shouldn't watch over one another, or in any way reprove one another, and do it much, and do it plainly and faithfully. But it does not follow from there, that dear brethren in the family of God, in rebuking one another, should use worse language than Michael the archangel dared to use when rebuking the devil himself. (Jude 1.9)

Christians who are but fellow worms, should at least treat one another with as much humility and gentleness as Christ treats them, who is infinitely above them. And how did Christ treat his disciples when they were so cold towards him, and so regardless of him, at the time when his soul was *exceedingly sorrowful even unto death*, and he was crying out in dismal agony and sweating blood for them, and they wouldn't watch with him, and allow him the comfort

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of their company even one hour in his great distress, even though time and again he desired it from them? One would think that *then* was a proper time, if ever, to have reproved them for their devilish, hellish, cursed and damned slothfulness and deadness. But in what manner does Christ reprove them? Behold his astonishing gentleness! He says, *What, could you not watch with me one hour? The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* And how did He treat Peter when he was ashamed of his master, while He was mocked and spit upon for him? Why, He looked at him with a look of love, and melted his heart.

And we read that Christ once turned and said to Peter, on a certain occasion, *Get behind me, Satan.* Though this may seem like an instance of harshness and severity in reproving Peter, I humbly conceive that this is taken wrongly by many, and that this is indeed not an instance of Christ's severity in his treatment of Peter, but on the contrary, of his wonderful gentleness and grace, distinguishing between Peter and the devil in him — not laying the blame for what Peter had then said, or imputing it to him, but to the devil who influenced him. Christ saw the devil then present, secretly influencing Peter to play the part of a tempter to his master. And therefore Christ turned around to Peter, in whom the devil was then acting, and spoke to the devil, and rebuked him. Thus the grace of Christ does not behold iniquity in his people, nor impute what is amiss in them to themselves, but to the sin that dwells in them, and to Satan who influences them. But to return to the topic:

Spiritual pride often disposes people to be singular in external appearance, to affect a singular way of speaking, to use a different sort of dialect from others, or to be singular in voice, or in air of countenance or behavior. But one who is an eminently humble Christian, though he will be firm to his duty (however singular he is in it), he will go in the way that alone leads to heaven, even if all the world forsakes him. He doesn't delight in singularity for singularity's sake; he doesn't affect to set himself up to be viewed and observed as someone distinguished, as desiring to be accounted better than others, or despising their company, or to be in union and conformity to them. On the contrary, he is disposed to become all things to all men, and to yield to others, and conform to them and please them in everything but sin.

Spiritual pride commonly occasions a certain stiffness and inflexibility in people, in their own judgment and their own ways. Whereas the eminently humble person, though he is inflexible in his duty, and in those things in which God's honor is concerned, and with regard to temptation to those things he apprehends as sinful in however small a degree, he is not at all of a yieldable spirit, but is like a bronze wall. Yet in other things, he has a pliable disposition, not disposed to set up his own opinion or his own will. He is ready to pay deference to others' opinions, and loves to comply with their inclinations, and has a heart that is tender and flexible like a little child.

Spiritual pride disposes people to affect separation, to stand at a distance from others as being better than they are. And he loves the show and appearance of that distinction. But on the contrary, the eminently humble Christian is ready to look at himself as not worthy that others should be united to him, to think of himself as more brutish than any man, worthy to be cast out of human society, and especially unworthy of the society of God's children. Though he won't be a companion with someone who is visibly Christ's enemy, and delights most in the company of lively Christians, he will choose them for his companions, and be most intimate with them, and doesn't at all delight in spending much time in the company of those who

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seem to relish no conversation that isn't about worldly things. Yet he doesn't love the appearance of open separation from visible Christians, or of being a kind of distinct company from those who are one visible company with him by Christ's appointment. He will as much as possible shun all appearances of superiority, or of distinguishing himself as better than others. His universal benevolence delights in the appearance of union with his fellow creatures, and he will maintain it as much as he possibly can, without giving open countenance to iniquity, or wounding his own soul. And in this he follows the example of his meek and lowly Redeemer, who didn't keep such a separation and distance as the Pharisees did, but freely ate with publicans and sinners, so that he might win them.

The eminently humble Christian is clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behavior, with a soft, sweet, condescending, winning air and deportment. These things are just like garments to him; he is clothed all over with them. 1Pet 5.5, "And be clothed with humility." Col 3.12, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering."

Pure Christian humility has no such thing as roughness, or contempt, fierceness or bitterness in its nature. It makes a person like a little child, harmless and innocent, that no one needs to be afraid of; or like a lamb — destitute of all bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamor, Eph 4.31.

Zealous ministers of the gospel, especially, should be clothed with such a spirit as this, and those whom God is pleased to employ as instruments in his hands, to promote his work. They should be thorough in preaching the word of God, without mincing the matter at all. In handling the sword of the Spirit, as ministers of the Lord of Hosts, they should not be mild and gentle. They should not be gentle and moderate in searching and awakening the conscience, but should be sons of thunder. The word of God, which is in itself sharper than any two-edged sword, should not be sheathed by its ministers, but so used that its sharp edges may have their full effect, even to dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow (provided they do it without judging particular people, leaving it to the conscience and the Spirit of God to make the particular application). But all their conversation should savor of nothing but lowliness and good will, love and pity to all mankind. So that such a spirit should be like a sweet aroma diffused around them wherever they go; or like a light shining around them. Their faces should shine with it. They should be like lions to guilty consciences, but like lambs to their persons. This would have no tendency to prevent the awakening of men's consciences, but on the contrary, it would have a very great tendency to awaken them. It would make way for the sharp sword to enter. It would remove the obstacles, and make a naked breast for the arrow.

Yes, the amiable, Christ-like conversation of such ministers, in itself would terrify the consciences of men, as well as their terrifying preaching. Both would cooperate, one with the other, to subdue the hard heart, and bring down the proud one. If such a behavior as this had been constantly and universally observable in itinerant preachers, it would have terrified the consciences of sinners ten times as much as all the invectives and censorious talk there has been concerning particular people, for their opposition, hypocrisy, delusion, pharisaism, etc. These things in general have instead *stupefied* sinners' consciences. They take them up and make use of them as a shield with which to defend themselves from the sharp arrows of the word, that are shot by these preachers. The enemies of the present work have been glad of

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these things with all their hearts. Many of the most bitter of them are probably those who, in the beginning of this work, had their consciences somewhat galled and terrified by it. But these errors by the awakening preachers, are the things they chiefly make use of as bandages to heal the sore that was made in their consciences.

Spiritual pride takes great notice of opposition and injuries that are received. It is apt to speak of them often, and to notice every aggravation of them, either with an air of bitterness, or of contempt. Whereas pure unmixed Christian humility, rather disposes a person to be like his blessed Lord when reviled: *mute*, not opening his mouth, but committing himself in silence to the one who judges righteously. With the eminently humble Christian, the more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still he will be — unless it is in his closet;¹ and there he will *not* be still. Our blessed Lord Jesus never seems to have been as silent as when the world surrounded him, reproaching, beating, and spitting on him with loud and virulent outcries, and horrid cruelties.

There has been a great deal too much talk of late, among many of the true and zealous friends of religion, about opposition and persecution. It becomes the followers of the Lamb of God, when the world is in an uproar about them, and full of clamor against them, not to raise another noise to answer it, but to be still and quiet. It is not beautiful at such a time, to have pulpits and conversations ring with the sound, *Persecution! Persecution!* or with abundant talk about Pharisees, carnal persecutors, and the seed of the serpent.

Meekness and quietness among God's people, when opposed and reviled, would be the surest way to have God remarkably appear for their defence. It is particularly observed about Moses, on the occasion of Aaron and Miriam envying him, and rising up in opposition against him — that *he was very meek, above all men on the face of the earth*, Num 12.3. It was doubtless because he remarkably showed his meekness on that occasion, being wholly silent under the abuse. How remarkable the account is that follows about God's being suddenly roused to appear for Moses' vindication! What high honor he put upon Moses! And how severe His rebukes were of Moses' opposers! The story is very remarkable, and worth observing by all. Nothing is so effectual to bring God down from heaven in the defence of His people, as their patience and meekness under sufferings. When Christ *girds his sword on his thigh, with his glory and majesty, and in his majesty rides prosperously, his right hand teaching him terrible things, it is because of truth and MEEKNESS and righteousness*, Psa 45.3-4.

God will cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth shall fear and be still, and God will arise to judgment, to save all the MEEK of the earth, Psa 76.8-9. *He will lift up the meek, and cast the wicked down to the ground*, Psa 147.6. *He will decide with equity for the meek of the earth, and will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked*, Isa 11.4. The great commendation that Christ gives the church of Philadelphia is that, *You have kept the word of my patience*, Rev 3.10.² And we may see what reward he promises her in the preceding verse, "Behold I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie — behold, I will make them come and worship at your feet, and to know that I have loved you." And thus it is, that we might expect

¹ That is, his prayer closet — a quiet or private room in the house in which to pray and meditate (Mat 6.6).

² NKJ **Rev 3:10** You have kept My command to persevere.

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to have Christ appear for us, if under all the reproaches that we are loaded with, we behave ourselves with a lamb-like meekness and gentleness. But if our spirits are aroused, and we are vehement and noisy with our complaints under the color of “Christian zeal,” this is taking up our own defence, and God will leave it with us to vindicate our cause as well as we can. Yes, if we go on in a way of bitterness, and high censuring, it will be the way to have Him rebuke us, and put us to shame before our enemies.

Here some may be ready to say, “It is not in our own cause that we are so vehement, but it is in the cause of God. And the apostle directed the primitive Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” But *how* did the primitive Christians contend earnestly for the faith? They defended the truth with arguments, and a holy conversation; yet they gave their reasons with meekness and fear. They contended earnestly for the faith by fighting violently against their *own* unbelief, and the corruptions of their hearts. Indeed, they resisted to the point of shedding blood, striving against sin. But the blood that was shed in this earnest strife, was their *own* blood, and not the blood of their enemies. It was *in the cause of God*, that Peter was so fierce, and drew his sword, and began to strike with it. But Christ bids him to put away his sword, telling him that *those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword*. While Peter wounds, Christ heals. The ones who contend most forcefully, and are the greatest conquerors in a time of persecution, are those who bear it with the greatest meekness and patience.

Great humility employs even the reflections and reproaches of enemies, to set about serious self-examination: whether or not there is just cause; whether or not they have in some respect given occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully. Whereas, spiritual pride employs such reflections to make themselves bolder and more confident, and go to greater lengths in the very thing for which they are found at fault. I desire that it may be considered whether there has been nothing amiss of late among the true friends of vital piety in this respect. And to consider whether the words of David, when reviled by Michal, haven’t been misinterpreted and misapplied to justify themselves in it — when he said, *I will be even more vile, and will be abased in my own sight*. (2Sam 6.22) The import of his words is that he would humble himself still more before God, being sensible that he was far from being sufficiently abased. He signifies this to Michal — that he longed to be lower still, and intended to abase himself even more in his behavior. It was *not* that he would go to greater lengths to show his disregard for her revilings. That would be to *exalt* himself, and not to *abase* himself more, as being more vile in his own sight.

Another effect of spiritual pride is a certain unsuitable and self-confident boldness before God and men. Thus, in their great rejoicings before God, some haven’t paid sufficient regard to the rule in Psa 2.11: they haven’t *rejoiced with a reverential trembling* — in a proper sense of the awful majesty of God, and the awful distance between God and them. And there has also been an improper boldness before men, that has been encouraged and defended by misapplying this Scripture: Pro 29.25, “The fear of man brings a snare.” It’s as though it was acceptable for all people, high and low, men, women, and children, in all religious conversation, to wholly divest themselves of all manner of meekness, modesty, or reverence towards man. This is a great error, and quite contrary to Scripture. There is a fear, a *reverence* that is due some men. Rom 12.7, “Fear, to whom fear: honor, to whom honor.” And there is a

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fear of modesty and meekness in inferiors towards superiors, which is amiable and required by Christian rules. 1Pet 3.2, “While they behold your chaste conduct, coupled with fear.” And 1Tim 2.9, “In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.” The apostle means that this virtue should have a place not only in *civil* communication, but also in *spiritual* communication, and in our religious concerns and behavior. This is made evident by what follows in verses 11-12, “Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” I would not infer from this that women’s mouths should be kept from Christian conversation. All I mean by it at this time, is that modesty, or meekness, and reverence towards men, should have some place, even in our *religious* communication with one another. The same is also made evident by 1Pet 3.15, “Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, doing it with meekness and fear.” [Some think] it is good if that very fear and meekness which the apostle recommends, is sometimes condemned under the name of *a cursed fear of man*.¹

It is beautiful for people, when they are at prayer as the mouth of others, to make God alone their fear and their dread, and to be wholly forgetful of any men who are present. Whether great or small, they are nothing in the presence of the great God. It is beautiful for a minister, when he speaks in the name of the Lord of hosts, to be bold, and to put off all fear of men. And it is beautiful in private Christians, even women and children, to be bold in professing the faith of Christ, and in the practice of all religion, and in acknowledging God’s hand in the work of his power and grace, without any fear of men— even if they should be reproached as fools and madmen, and frowned upon by great men, and cast off by parents and all the world. But it is *not* beautiful for private Christians, women and others, to instruct, rebuke, and exhort with a similar sort of boldness as becomes a *minister* when preaching.

Some have been bold in some things that have actually been *errors*. And they have gloried in their boldness in practising them, even though condemned as odd and irregular. Those who have gone to greatest lengths in these things, have been most highly esteemed by some, as those who come out and appear bold for the Lord Jesus Christ, and fully on His side. Others who have professed to be godly, who have condemned such things, have been spoken of by the bold ones as enemies of the cross of Christ, or at least as very cold and dead. Many who themselves were not inclined to such practices, have been driven on by this means, because they were ashamed to be thought inferior, and to be accounted poor soldiers for Christ

Another effect of spiritual pride is *assuming*. It is often natural for people to so act and speak as if, in a special way, it belonged to them to be taken notice of and much regarded. It is very natural for a person who is much under the influence of spiritual pride, to accept all the respect that is paid to him. If others show a disposition to submit to him, and yield to him the deference of a *teacher*, he is open to it, and freely admits it. Indeed, it is natural for him to expect such treatment, and to take much notice of it if he *fails* to receive it; and to have an ill opinion of others who don’t pay him what he sees as his prerogative. He is apt to think that it belongs to him to speak, and to clothe himself with a judicial and dogmatic air in

¹ Originally, “It is well if that very fear and meekness which the apostle recommends, has not sometimes been condemned, under the name of *a cursed fear of man*.”

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conversation, and to take it upon himself as what belongs to him — to pronounce sentence, and to determine and decide. Whereas pure Christian humility *does not vaunt itself, does not behave rudely*, and is apt to *prefer others in honor*. Someone under the influence of spiritual pride is more apt to instruct others than to inquire for himself; and he naturally puts on the airs of a master. Whereas one who is full of pure humility, naturally has the air of a disciple. His voice is, “What shall I do? What shall I do that I may live more to God’s honor? What shall I do with this wicked heart?” He is ready to receive instruction from anybody, as in Jas 1.19, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.” The eminently humble Christian wants help from everybody; whereas someone who is spiritually proud thinks that everybody wants his help. Christian humility, under a sense of others’ misery, entreats and beseeches; but spiritual pride pretends to command and warn with authority.

There ought to be the utmost watchfulness against all such appearances of spiritual pride in all who profess to have been the subjects of this work, and especially in its promoters — but above all, in itinerant preachers. The most eminent gifts, and highest tokens of God’s favor and blessing, will not excuse them. Alas! What is man at his best? What is the most highly favored Christian, or the most eminent and successful minister, that he should now think he is sufficient for something, and somebody to be regarded, and that he should go forth and act among his fellow creatures as if he were wise, and strong, and good?

Ministers have been the principal instruments of carrying on this glorious revival of religion. God has made use of them, as it were, to bring his people out of Egypt, as He used Moses. They should take heed that they do not provoke God as Moses did, by assuming too much to themselves, and by their intemperate zeal, so as to shut themselves out of seeing the good things that God is going to do for his church in this world. The fruits of Moses’ unbelief, which provoked God to shut him out of Canaan, and not allow him to partake of those great things that God was about to do for Israel on earth, were chiefly these two things:

First, mingling bitterness with his zeal. He had a great zeal for God, and he couldn’t bear to see the intolerable stiff-neckedness of the people, that they didn’t acknowledge the work of God, and weren’t convinced by all His wonders they had seen. But human passion was mingled with his zeal. Psa 106.32-33, “They angered Him also at the waters of strife; so that it went badly with Moses for their sakes; because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips.” “Hear now, you rebels,” he says, with bitter language. (Num 20.10)

Secondly, he behaved himself, and spoke with an assuming air. He assumed too much to himself: *Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock?* Spiritual pride was at work in Moses at that time. His temptations to it were great, for he had great revelations from God, and had been privileged with intimate and sweet communion with Him. And God had made him the instrument of great good to His church. Even though Moses was such a humble person, and by God’s own testimony, was meek above all men on the face of the whole earth, his temptations were too strong for him.

This surely should make our young ministers, who have been highly favored of late, and have had great success, exceedingly careful and distrustful of themselves. Alas! how far we are from having the strength of holy, meek, aged Moses! The temptation in this day is exceedingly great to *both* those errors that Moses was guilty of. There is great temptation to bitterness, and to corrupt passion with zeal, for there is so much unreasonable opposition made against this

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glorious work of God. And there is so much stiff-neckedness manifested in multitudes of this generation, notwithstanding all the great and wonderful works in which God has passed before them. This so greatly tends to provoke the spirits of those who have the interest of this work at heart, as to move them to speak rashly with their lips. There is also great temptation in some people to take on an assuming behavior. When a minister has greatly succeeded from time to time, and so draws the eyes of the multitude upon himself, and he sees himself flocked after, and resorted to as an oracle, and people are ready to adore him, and to offer sacrifice to him — as it was with Paul and Barnabas at Lystra (Act 14.11) — it is almost impossible for a man to avoid taking upon himself the airs of a master, or of some extraordinary person. A man needs to have a great stock of humility, and much divine assistance, to resist the temptation. But the greater our dangers are, the more we need watchfulness and prayerfulness, with diffidence towards ourselves, lest we bring ourselves into mischief.

Fishermen who have been very successful, and have caught a great many fish, need to be careful that they don't at length begin to burn incense to their net. We should take warning from Gideon, who after God highly favored and exalted him, and made him the instrument of working a wonderful deliverance for his people, at length made a god of the spoils of his enemies. This became a snare to him and to his house, so as to prove the ruin of his family. (Jdg 8.27)

All young ministers in this day of bringing up the ark of God, should take warning by the example of a young Levite in Israel — namely, Uzza, the son of Abinadab. He seemed to have a real concern for the ark of God, and to be zealous and engaged in his mind on that joyful occasion of bringing up the ark. God made him an instrument to bring the ark out of its long-continued obscurity in Kirjath Jearim. And he was successful in bringing it a considerable way towards mount Zion. But for his lack of humility, reverence, and circumspection, and assuming to himself, or taking too much upon himself, God's wrath broke out upon him, and struck him for his error. So that Uzza never lived to see and partake of the great joy of his church, on the occasion of carrying up the ark into mount Zion, nor the great blessings of heaven upon Israel that were consequent upon it. Ministers who have been employed to carry on this work, have chiefly been of the younger sort. They doubtless have (as Uzza had) a real concern for the ark. And it is evident that they are much animated and engaged in their minds (as he was) in this joyful day of bringing up the ark. And they are afraid about what will become of the ark under the conduct of its ministers (who are sometimes compared to oxen in Scripture). They see that the ark shakes, and they are afraid that these blundering oxen will throw it off. Some of them, it is to be feared, have been overly officious on this occasion, and have assumed too much to themselves, and have been bold to put out their hand to take hold of the ark, as if they were the only fit and worthy people to defend it.

If young ministers had great humility, without mixture, it would dispose them especially to treat aged ministers with respect and reverence, as their fathers; notwithstanding that a sovereign God may have given them greater assistance and success than the aged ones have had. 1Pet 5.5, "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to the elder. Yes, *all* of you, be subject one to another; and be clothed with humility; for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Lev 19.32, "You shall rise up before the gray headed, and honor the presence of the old man, and fear your God; I am the Lord."

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As spiritual pride disposes people to assume much to themselves, it also disposes them to treat others with neglect. But on the contrary, pure Christian humility disposes people to honor all men, agreeable to that rule in 1Pet 2.17.¹

There has been in some, whom I believe are true friends of religion, too great an appearance of this fruit of spiritual pride, in their treatment of those that they looked at as carnal men; and particularly in refusing to enter into any discourse or reasoning with them. Indeed, to spend a great deal of time in arguments and hot debates about religion, is not the way to propagate religion, but to hinder it. Some are so dreadfully set against the work, that it is a dismal task to dispute with them; all that one can say is utterly in vain. I have found it so by experience. Entering into disputes about religion may be quite inappropriate at times, particularly in meetings for religious conference, or in exercises of worship. Yet we ought to be very careful not to refuse discourse with men, with any appearance of superiority, as if we considered them unworthy of our regard. On the contrary, we should condescend to carnal men, as Christ has condescended to us, to bear with our unteachableness and stupidity, and to follow after us with instructions, line upon line, precept upon precept, saying, *Come let us reason together* — setting light before us, and using all manner of arguments with us, and waiting upon such dull scholars, hoping as it were, that we would receive light. We should be ready with meekness and calmness, without heated disputes, to give to carnal men when they ask us, our reasons why we think this work is the work of God, and not push them aside as unworthy to be talked with. The apostle directed the primitive Christians to be ready to give a reason for the Christian faith and hope to the *enemies* of Christianity: 1Pet 3.15, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” And we shouldn’t condemn all reasoning about things of religion under the name of “carnal reason.” For my part, I desire no better than to have those who oppose this work, come to honestly submit to have the cause between us tried by strict reasoning.

One qualification that the Scripture speaks of time and again, as requisite in a minister, is that he should be *διδασκτικον*; *apt to teach*, 1Tim 3.2. And the apostle seems to explain what he means by that, in 2Tim 2.24-25. Or at least, there he expresses one thing that he intends by it: namely, that a minister should be ready to meekly condescend to, and instruct opposers. *And the servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who are opposing, if God perhaps will give them repentance, to acknowledge the truth.*

2. Wrong Principles. *Secondly*, another thing from which errors arise in conduct, that attend such a revival in religion, is *wrong principles*. One erroneous principle that scarcely anyone has proved more mischievous to the present glorious work of God, is the notion that it is God’s way now, in these days, to guide his saints (at least some who are more eminent) by inspiration or immediate revelation, and to make known to them what will come to pass hereafter, or what is His will that they should do. They are led by impressions that He makes on their minds by his Spirit, either with or without texts of Scripture. By this means,

¹ **1Pet 2:17** Honor *all people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

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something is made known to them that is not taught in the Scripture as the words lie in the Bible. By such a notion, the devil has a great door open for him. If this opinion were to be fully yielded to, and established in the church of God, Satan would have an opportunity thereby to set himself up as the guide and oracle of God's people, and to have his word regarded as their infallible rule. Thus he may lead them where he would, and introduce what he pleased, and soon bring the Bible into neglect and contempt. Recent experience in some instance, has shown that the tendency of this notion is to cause people to esteem the Bible as a book that is in large measure useless.

This error will defend and support all errors. As long as a person has a notion that he is guided by immediate direction from heaven, it makes him incorrigible and impregnable in all his misconduct. For what does it signify for poor, blind worms of the dust, to argue with a man, and endeavor to convince him and correct him, if he is guided by the immediate counsels and commands of the great Jehovah?

This great work of God has been exceedingly hindered by this error. Until we have quite taken this handle out of the devil's hands, the work of God will never go on without great clogs and hindrances. Satan will always have a vast advantage in his hands against it. And as he has employed it up to now, so he will continue to do. It is evident that the devil knows the vast advantage he has by it, which makes him exceedingly loth to let go his hold.

It is strange what a disposition there is in many well-disposed and religious people, to fall in with and hold fast to this notion. It is enough to astonish one, that such multiplied and plain instances of the failing of such supposed revelations, doesn't open everyone's eyes. I have seen so many instances of the failing of such impressions, that they would almost furnish a history. I have been acquainted with them when made under all kinds of circumstances, and have seen them fail in the event, even when made with the fairest, and brightest, and most promising circumstances. These impressions have been made on the minds of those who there was every reason to think were true saints, indeed *eminent* saints. They've had great divine revelations made with great strength; and great sweetness accompanies them; and they've been in the high exercise of true communion with God, and I have reason to think, with an excellent heavenly frame of spirit. These continued, made with texts of Scripture that seemed to be exceedingly appropriate. Indeed, many texts followed one after another, extraordinarily and wonderfully brought to mind with great power and majesty. And the impressions repeated over and over, after prayers for direction. Yet all of it has most manifestly come to nothing, as those persons themselves were fully convinced. In so many instances lately, God has in his providence covered such things with darkness, that one would think it should be quite enough to wipe away the expectations of those who have been ready to think highly of such things. It seems to be a testimony of God, that He has no design to revive revelations in his church; and it is a rebuke from Him as to the groundless expectations of it.

It seems to me that Zec 13.5 is a prophecy concerning ministers of the gospel in the latter and glorious day of the Christian church. It is evidently spoken of in this, and in the foregoing chapters. The words are, *I am no prophet; I am a husbandman:¹ for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.* The words, I apprehend, are to be interpreted in a spiritual sense; *I am*

¹ *Husbandman*: broadly, a farmer; a person who raises crops and/or tends livestock (e.g., sheep and cattle).

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a husbandman. The work of ministers in the New Testament, is very often compared to the business of the husbandman. They take care of God's husbandry (His lands). He lets out his vineyard to them, and sends them out to labor in his field, where one plants and another waters, one sows and another reaps. So ministers are called laborers in God's harvest. And as it is added, *Man taught me to keep cattle from my youth*; so the work of a minister is very often in Scripture represented by the business of a shepherd or pastor. Though it says, *I am no prophet; but man taught me from my youth*, it is much like saying, I don't pretend to have received my skill by which I am fitted for the business of a pastor or shepherd in the church of God, by immediate inspiration, but by *education* — by being trained up in the business by human learning. I have received instructions from my youth or childhood, by ordinary means.

Why can't we be contented with the divine oracles, with that holy, pure word of God that we have in such abundance and clearness, now that the canon of Scripture is completed? Why should we desire to have anything added to them by impulses from above? Why shouldn't we rest in that standing rule that God has given to his church, which the apostle teaches us is surer than a voice from heaven? (2Pet 1.19) Why should we desire to make the Scripture speak to us more than it does? Or why should anyone desire any higher kind of intercourse with heaven, than that which comes by having the Holy Spirit given in his sanctifying influences, infusing and exciting grace and holiness, love and joy? This is the highest kind of intercourse that the saints and angels in heaven have with God, and the chief excellency of the glorified man Christ Jesus.

Some who follow impulses and impressions, go away with a notion that they're only following the guidance of God's word. They make the Scripture their rule, because the impression is made with a text of Scripture that comes to their mind. But they take that text as it is impressed on their minds, and for all intents and purposes, employ it as a *new revelation*, or as the revelation of a particular thing that is now *newly made*. But the text in itself, as it is found in the Bible, implies no such thing; and they themselves don't suppose that any such revelation was contained in the Bible before. For instance, suppose this text should come into a person's mind with a strong impression, Act 9.6: "Arise and go into the city; and you will be told what you must do." He would interpret it as an immediate indication of the will of God and as a revelation of that future event — namely, that he should now go immediately into a neighboring town, and that there he will meet with a further revelation of his duty.¹ If such things as these are revealed by the impression of these words, it is for all intents, a *new revelation*; and it is no less so, just because certain words of Scripture are made use of in the case. Here (the person supposes) are entirely new propositions or truths, revealed *now*, which those words do not contain in themselves — and that up to now, there was no such revelation to be found anywhere in heaven or earth. These propositions — that it is God's mind and will that such a person *by name*, should arise at such a time, and go from one place to another, and there meet with additional revelations — are entirely new propositions. They are wholly different from the propositions contained in that text of Scripture. These new propositions are no more contained or consequentially implied in the words themselves, without a new

¹ The person believes that the text of Scripture was written to him directly, not to the author's intended audience when it was first recorded. He removes it from its historical context, and takes it as a personal revelation from God.

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revelation, than it is implied that he should arise and go to any other place, or that any other person should arise and go to that place. The propositions he supposes are now revealed, are as really different from those contained in that Scripture, as they are from the propositions contained in Gen 5.6: “And Seth lived a hundred and five years, and fathered Enos.”

This is quite different from the Spirit’s enlightening the mind to understand the precepts or propositions of the word of God, and to know what is contained and revealed in them, and what consequences may justly be drawn from them, and to see how they are applicable to our current case and circumstances — all of which is done *without* any new revelation, only by enabling the mind to understand and apply a revelation already made.

Those texts of Scripture that speak of the children of God as *led by the Spirit*, have been used by some to defend being guided by such impulses; particularly those in Rom 8.14, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” And Gal 5.18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” But these texts themselves confute those who bring them. For it is evident that the leading of the Spirit that the apostle speaks of, is a *gracious* leading, or what is peculiar to the children of God, which natural men cannot have. For he speaks of it as sure evidence of their being the sons of God, and not under the law. But leading or directing a person by immediately revealing to him where he should go, or what will later come to pass, or what the future consequence will be of his doing this or that — if there is any such thing these days, it is not of the nature of the gracious leading of the Spirit of God, which is peculiar to God’s children. It is no more than a common gift. There is nothing in it except what *natural* men are capable of, and which many of them have had in the days of inspiration. A man may have ten thousand such revelations and directions from the Spirit of God, and yet not have a speck of grace in his heart. It is no more than the gift of prophecy, which immediately reveals what will be, or should later happen. This is only a common gift, as the apostle expressly shows in 1Cor 13.2, 8. If a person has anything revealed to him from God, or is directed to anything by a voice from heaven, or a whisper, or words immediately suggested and put into his mind, there is nothing of the nature of grace in this by itself. It has the nature of a common influence of the Spirit. It is but dross and dung compared to the excellency of that gracious leading of the Spirit that the saints have. Such a way of being directed where one should go, and what he should do, is no more than what *Balaam* had from God. From time to time, God revealed to him what he should do; and when he had done one thing, God then directed him what to do next. So that he was, in *this* sense, led by the Spirit for a considerable time.

There is a more excellent way that the Spirit of God leads the sons of God, that natural men cannot have. And that is by inclining them to do the will of God, and to go in the shining path of truth and Christian holiness, from a holy, heavenly disposition which the Spirit of God gives them, and enlivens in them. This inclines them and leads them to those things that are excellent and agreeable to God’s mind — by which they *are transformed, by the renewing of their minds, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*, as in Rom 12.2. And so the Spirit of God, in a gracious manner, teaches the saints their duty; and teaches them in a higher manner than Balaam, Saul, or Judas were ever taught, or that any natural man is capable of. The Spirit of God enlightens them with respect to their duty, by making their eye single and pure, by which *the whole body is full of light*. The sanctifying

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influences of the Spirit of God rectifies the taste of the soul, by which it savors those things that are of God, and naturally relishes and delights in those things that are holy and agreeable to God's mind. It's like someone with a distinguishing taste, who chooses those things that are good and wholesome, and rejects those things that are evil. For the sanctified ear tests words, and the sanctified heart tests actions, just as the mouth tastes food. Thus the Spirit of God leads and guides the meek in his way, according to His promises. He enables them to understand the commands and counsels of his word, and to rightly apply them. Christ blames the Pharisees for not having this holy distinguishing taste, to discern and distinguish what is right and wrong. Luk 12.57, "Yes, and why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?"

The leading of the Spirit which God gives his children, which is peculiar to them, is teaching them his statutes, and causing them to understand the way of his precepts. This is what the Psalmist so very often prays for, especially in Psalm 119. It is not in giving of them *new statutes* and *new precepts*. He graciously gives them eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand. He causes them to understand the fear of the Lord. And so He *brings the blind by a way they did not know, and leads them in paths they had not known, and makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.* (Isa 42.16)

So the assistance of the Spirit in praying and preaching seems by some to have been greatly misunderstood. They have sought a miraculous assistance of inspiration, by an immediate suggesting of words to them, by such gifts and influences of the Spirit in praying and teaching, as the apostle speaks of in 1Cor 14.14, 26 (which many *natural* men had in those days) — instead of by a gracious holy assistance of the Spirit of God, which is the far *more excellent way*, 1Cor 12.31; 13.1. The gracious and most excellent kind of assistance of the Spirit of God in praying and preaching, is not by immediately suggesting words to the apprehension, which may be done with a cold dead heart. Rather, it is by *warming* the heart, and filling it with a great sense of those things which are to be spoken of, and with holy affections — that sense and those affections may suggest words to us. Thus indeed, the Spirit of God may be said to indirectly and mediately suggest words to us, to compose our petitions for us, and to teach the preacher what to say. The Spirit fills the heart, and *that* fills the mouth. We know that when men are greatly affected in any matter, and their hearts are very full, it fills them with matter for their speech, and it makes them eloquent on that subject. Spiritual affections have this tendency much more, for many reasons that might be given. When a person is in a holy and lively frame in private prayer, it will wonderfully supply him with matter, and with expressions, as every true Christian knows. So it will fill his mouth in Christian conversation; and it has the same tendency to enable a person in public prayer and preaching. If he has these holy influences of the Spirit on his heart in a high degree, nothing else in the world will have so great a tendency to make both the matter and manner of his public performances excellent and profitable. But since there is no immediate suggesting of words from the Spirit of God to be expected or desired, those who neglect and despise study and premeditation, in order to prepare for the pulpit in such an expectation, are guilty of *presumption*. Though doubtless it may be lawful for some people, in some cases (and they may be called to it), to preach with very little study. And the Spirit of God may enable them to do it, to excellent purpose, by the heavenly frame of heart that He gives them.

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Besides this most excellent way of the Spirit of God — his assisting ministers in their public performances, which (considered as the preacher’s privilege) far excels inspiration— there is also a *common* assistance which natural men may have these days, and which the godly may have intermingled with a gracious assistance. This too is very different from inspiration. It is when the Spirit assists our natural principles, such as assisting the natural apprehension, reason, memory, conscience, and natural affection.

But to return to the topic of impressions and immediate revelations, many lay themselves open to a delusion by expecting direction from heaven in this way, and waiting for it. In such a case, it is easy for people to imagine that they have it. They are perhaps at a loss concerning something — undetermined as to what they will do, or what course they should take in some affair — and so they pray to God to direct them, and make known to them His mind and will. But then, instead of expecting to be directed by being assisted in consideration of the rules of God’s Word, and their circumstances, and God’s providence, and enabled to look at things in a true light, and to justly weigh them — they wait for some secret immediate influence on their minds, unaccountably swaying their minds, and turning their thoughts or inclinations the way that God would have them go. They observe their own minds to see what arises there, whether some texts of Scripture may come to mind, or whether some ideas or inward motions and dispositions will arise in a somewhat unaccountable manner, which they may call *divine direction*. By doing so, they are exposed to two things:

First, they lay themselves open to the devil, and give him a fair opportunity to lead them where he pleases. For they stand ready to follow the first extraordinary impulse that they have, groundlessly concluding that it is from God. And,

Secondly, they are greatly exposed to be deceived by their own imaginations. For such an expectation awakens and quickens the imagination. What is often called an *uncommon impression*, is no such thing. They ascribe to the agency of some invisible being, what is only owing to themselves.

Again, another way that many have been deceived, is by drawing false conclusions from true premises. Many true and eminent saints have been led into mistakes and snares by arguing too much from what they have prayed in faith. This is oftentimes when the *premises* are true. They have indeed been greatly assisted in prayer for some particular mercy, and have had the true spirit of prayer exercised in their asking for it from God. But they have concluded more from these premises than is a just consequence from them. What they have thus prayed is a “sure sign” that their prayer is accepted and heard, and that God will give a gracious answer according to His own wisdom. They conclude that the particular thing that was asked for will be given, or some equivalent thing. This is a just consequence from praying. But it is not inferred by any *new revelation* now made. It is by the revelation that is made in God’s word, the promises made in the holy Scriptures to the prayer of faith. But to think that God will answer them in that individual thing which they asked for, is more than can be justly concluded from it — if it is not something promised in God’s word, or they don’t certainly know it will be most for the good of God’s church and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom and glory, nor whether it will be best for themselves. If God remarkably meets with one of His children while he is praying for a particular mercy of great importance for himself, or some other person, or any society of men — and by the influences of His Spirit, God greatly humbles

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him, and empties him of himself in his prayer; and He manifests Himself remarkably in his excellency, sovereignty, and his all-sufficient power and grace in Jesus Christ; and in a remarkable way, He enables the person to come to Him for that mercy, poor in spirit, and with humble resignation to God, and with a great degree of faith in the divine sufficiency, and the sufficiency of Christ's mediation — then that person has indeed a great deal more reason to hope that God will grant that mercy, than he might otherwise have. The greater probability is justly inferred from that, according to the promises of the holy Scripture, that the prayer is accepted and heard. And it is much more probable that a prayer that is heard, will be answered with the particular mercy that is asked for, than a prayer that is not heard. There is no reason at all to doubt that God sometimes especially enables us to exercise faith, when the minds of his saints are engaged in thoughts of, and prayer for, some particular blessing they greatly desire. That is, God is especially pleased to give them a believing frame, a sense of His fulness, and a spirit of humble dependence on Him, at those times when they are thinking of, and praying for *that* mercy, more than for *other* mercies. He gives them a particular sense of His ability to do that thing; a sense of the sufficiency of His power to overcome particular obstacles; and of the sufficiency of His mercy, and of the blood of Christ, to remove the guilt that is in the way of bestowing such a mercy in particular. When this is the case, it makes the probability still much greater, that God intends to bestow the particular mercy sought, in His own time, and in His own way.

There is nothing here of the nature of a revelation in the case, but only drawing rational conclusions from the particular manner and circumstances of the ordinary gracious influences of God's Spirit. God is sometimes pleased to give his saints particular exercises of faith in His sufficiency with regard to particular mercies they seek. So too, He is sometimes pleased to make use of his word to do that. He helps their actings of faith with respect to such a mercy, by using texts of Scripture that especially exhibit the sufficiency of God's power or mercy in a similar case; or texts which speak of the manner of the exercise of God's strength and grace. The strengthening of their faith in God's sufficiency in this case, is therefore a just use of such Scriptures. It is no more than what those Scriptures, as they stand in the Bible, hold out just cause for. But to take them as *new* whispers or revelations from heaven, is not making a just use of them. If people from time to time have a spirit of prayer remarkably given to them concerning a particular mercy, so as to be evidently assisted to exercise faith in God in that particular thing, in a very distinguishing manner, the argument in some cases may be very strong that God designs to grant that mercy — *not* from any revelation now made of it, but from that kind and manner of his Spirit's ordinary influence, with respect to that thing.

But here a great deal of caution and circumspection must be used in drawing inferences of this nature. There are many ways in which people may be misled and deluded. The ground on which some expect to receive the thing they asked for, is a strong imagination rather than any true and humble faith in the divine sufficiency. They have a strong persuasion that the thing asked for will be granted (which they can give no reason for), without any remarkable revelation of that glory and fulness of God and Christ that is the ground of *faith*. The confidence people sometimes have that their prayers will be answered, is only a self-righteous confidence, and not true faith. They have a high conceit of themselves as eminent saints, and special favorites of God. They also have a high conceit of the prayers they have made, because they were greatly enlarged and affected in them. Hence they are positive that the thing will

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come to pass. Sometimes, once they have conceived such a notion in their minds, they grow stronger and stronger in it. They think it's from an immediate divine hand upon their minds to strengthen their confidence — whereas it is only from dwelling on their own excellency, and high experiences, and great assistances, by which they look brighter and brighter in their own eyes. Hence, sound observation and experience show that nothing in the world exposes so much to enthusiasm, as *spiritual pride* and *self-righteousness*.

In order to draw a just inference from the supposed assistance that we have in prayer for a particular mercy, and judging the probability of God's bestowing that individual mercy, many things must be considered. We must consider the importance of the mercy sought, and the principle from which we so earnestly desire it — how far it is good and agreeable to the mind and will of God; the degree of love to God that we exercise in our prayer; the degree of revelation that is made about the divine sufficiency; and the degree in which our assistance is manifestly discerning with respect to that mercy. There is nothing of greater importance in the argument, than the degree of humility and poverty of spirit, self-emptiness, and resignation to the holy will of God which God gives us to exercise in seeking that mercy. Praying for a particular mercy with much of these things, I have often seen blessed with a remarkable bestowment of the particular thing asked for.

From what has been said, we may see which way God may, by the ordinary gracious influences of his Spirit, sometimes give his saints special reason to hope for the bestowment of a particular mercy they desire and have prayed for. And we may suppose He oftentimes gives this to eminent saints, who have great degrees of humility and much communion with God. Here, I humbly conceive, some eminent servants of Jesus Christ, who have appeared in the church of God, and whom we read about in ecclesiastical story, have been led into a mistake. Through a lack of distinguishing things like these from *immediate* revelations, they thought God favored them in some instances, with the same kind of divine influences that the apostles and prophets had of old.

Another erroneous principle that some have embraced, which has been a source of many errors in their conduct, is that people should always do whatever the Spirit of God inclines them to do (even if only indirectly). Indeed, the Spirit of God is infinitely perfect; and all His immediate actings, simply considered, are perfect; there can be nothing wrong in them. Therefore, all that the Spirit of God inclines us to do, directly and immediately, *should* be done — assuming there is no intervention of any other cause that perverts and misuses what is from the Spirit of God. But there may be many things we are disposed to do, that we should *not* do, even if this disposition is indirectly from the Spirit of God. The disposition in general may be good, and indeed it may be from the Spirit of God. But the particular determination of that disposition as to particular actions, objects, and circumstances, may be bad, and *not* from the Spirit of God. It may instead be from the intervention or interposition of some infirmity, blindness, inadvertence, deceit, or corruption of ours. So that, although the disposition in general should be allowed and promoted, and also all those acts which are simply from God's Spirit, the particular ill direction or determination of that disposition which is from some *other* cause, should *not* be followed.

For instance, the Spirit of God may cause a person to have a dear love for another, and so a great desire for and delight in his comfort, ease, and pleasure. This disposition in general is

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good, and ought to be followed. Yet, through the intervention of indiscretion, or some other bad cause, it may be ill-directed, and have a bad determination as to particular acts. The person indirectly – through that real love that he has for his neighbor – may kill him with kindness. Out of sincere good will to a neighbor, he may do what may tend to ruin him. A good disposition may, through some inadvertence or delusion, strongly incline a person to do that which, if he saw all things as they are, would be most *contrary* to that disposition. The true loyalty of a general, and his zeal for the honor of his prince, may exceedingly animate him in war. Yet this same good disposition, through indiscretion and mistake, may push him into those things that give the enemy a great advantage, and may expose him and his army to ruin, and may tend to the ruin of his master's interest.

The apostle evidently supposes that the Spirit of God in his extraordinary, immediate and miraculous influences on men's minds, may in some respect excite inclinations in men, that if gratified, would tend toward confusion. And therefore these must sometimes be restrained, and in their exercise, must be under the government of discretion. 1Cor 14.31-33, "For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." Here, the *spirits of the prophets*, according to the known phraseology of the apostle, means the Spirit of God acting in the prophets, according to those special gifts with which each one was endowed. It is plainly implied that the Spirit of God thus operating in them, may be an occasion sometimes, for having an inclination to do that which, in the exercise of those gifts, it was not proper, decent, or profitable to do. And therefore, the inclination, though indirectly from the Spirit of God, should be restrained, and be subject to the discretion of the prophets as to the particular time and circumstance of its exercise.

I have no doubt that it is possible for a minister to have the Spirit of God give to him such a sense of the importance of eternal things, and of the misery of mankind (that so many are exposed to eternal destruction), together with such a love for souls, that he might find a disposition to spend all his time, day and night, in warning, exhorting, and calling upon men. So that, he must be obliged, as it were, to force himself to refrain, so as to give himself an opportunity to eat, drink, or sleep. So too, I believe there may be a disposition in like manner, indirectly excited in lay people, through the intervention of their infirmity, to do what belongs to ministers only; even to do those things that would not become either ministers or people. Through the influence of the Spirit of God, together with a lack of discretion, and some remaining corruption, women and children might feel themselves inclined to break out and scream aloud to great congregations, warning and exhorting the whole multitude; or to go out and *halloo* and scream in the streets; or to leave the families they belong to, and go from house to house, earnestly exhorting others. Yet it would by no means follow from this, that it was their duty to do these things, or that they would not have a tendency to do ten times as much hurt as good.

Another wrong principle from which errors in conduct have arisen, is that whatever is found to be of present and immediate benefit, may and ought to be practised, without looking forward to future consequences. Some people seem to think it sufficiently justifies anything they say or do, that it is found to be for their present edification, and the edification of those who are with them. It assists and promotes their present affection, and therefore they think

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they shouldn't concern themselves about future consequences, but leave them with God. Indeed, in things that are in themselves our *duty*, being required by moral rules or absolute positive commands of God, they must be done, and future consequences must be left with God. Our choice and discretion has no place here. But in other things, we are to be governed by discretion, and must look not only at the present good, but our view must be extensive; we must look at the consequences of things. It is the duty of ministers especially to exercise this discretion. In things which are not determined by an absolute rule, and are not enjoined by a wisdom superior to their own, Christ has left them to their own discretion, with that general rule that they should exercise the utmost wisdom they can obtain in pursuing that which, on the best view they can get of the consequences of things, will tend most to advance His kingdom. This is implied in those words of Christ to his disciples, when he sent them out to preach the gospel: Mat 10.16: "Be wise as serpents."

The Scripture always represents the work of a gospel minister by those employments that especially require wise foresight and provision for future events and consequences. So the ministry is compared to the business of a steward. It is a business that in an eminent manner requires forecasting, and wise laying in of provisions to supply the needs of the family, according to its future necessities. A good minister is called a *wise steward*. So it is compared to the business of a husbandman, that almost wholly consists in those things that are done with a view to the future fruits and consequences of his labor. The husbandman's discretion and forecast is eloquently set forth in Isa 28.24-26:

"Does the ploughman plough all day to sow? Does he keep turning and breaking up the clods of his ground? When he has levelled the surface of it, doesn't he sow the caraway, and scatter the cummin, and plant the principal wheat, and barley, and rye in their appointed places? For his God instructs him in discretion, and teaches him."

The work of the ministry is compared to that of a wise builder or architect, who has a long reach and a comprehensive view — for whom it is necessary that when he begins a building, he should have at once a view of the whole frame, and all the future parts of the structure, even to the pinnacle, so that all may be fitly framed together. It is also compared to the business of a trader or merchant, who is to gain by trading with the money that he begins with. This too is a business that exceedingly requires forecasting; without it, it is never likely to be followed with any success, for any length of time. So it is represented by the business of a fisherman, who depends on craft and subtlety. It is also compared to the business of a soldier who goes to war, which is a business that perhaps, above any other secular business, requires great foresight, and a wise provision for future events and consequences.

And particularly, ministers should not be careless how much they discompose and ruffle the minds of those whom they consider to be natural men, or how great an uproar they raise in the carnal world, and so lay blocks in the way of the propagation of religion. This certainly is not to follow the example of that zealous Apostle Paul who, though he would not depart from his enjoined duty to please carnal men, yet in those things which he might do with a good conscience, he exceedingly laid himself out to please them, and if possible to avoid raising in the multitude, prejudices, oppositions, and tumults against the gospel. He saw it as something of great consequence, that it should be avoided if possible. 1Cor 10.32-33, "Give no one offence, either to the Jews or to the Gentiles, or to the church of God; just as I please all men

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in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” Yes, he declares that he laid himself out so much for this, that he made himself a kind of a servant to all sorts of men, conforming to their customs and various attitudes in everything in which he might, even in things that were very burdensome to him. His intent was that he might not frighten men away from Christianity, and cause them to stand, as it were, braced and armed against it – but on the contrary, that he might, if possible, with condescension and friendship, win and draw them to it, as you may see in 1Cor 9.19-23.

Agreeable to this are the directions he gives to others, both ministers and people. Thus he directs the Christian Romans not to please themselves, but *to please their neighbor for his good, leading to edification*, Rom 15.1-2; *and to pursue the things that make for peace*, 14.19. He presses it in terms that are exceedingly strong, Rom 12.18: “If it is possible, as much as it lies in you, live peaceably with all men.” And he directs ministers to endeavor if possible to gain opposers by a meek condescending treatment, avoiding all appearance of strife or fierceness, 2Tim 2.24-26. To the same purpose, the apostle directs Christians to *walk in wisdom towards those who are outside*, Col 4.5. And to avoid giving offence to others, if we can, *so that our good may not be spoken of as evil*, Rom 14.16. So that, it is evident that the great and most zealous and most successful propagator of vital religion who ever lived, looked at it as being of great consequence to endeavor, as much as possible, by all the methods of lawful meekness and gentleness, to avoid raising the prejudice and opposition of the world against religion. When we have done our utmost, there will be opposition enough against vital religion, against which the carnal mind of man has such an enmity. We should not, therefore, needlessly increase and raise that enmity, as in the apostle’s days. Even though he took so many pains to please men, persecution was raised against him almost everywhere because he was faithful and thorough in his work.

A fisherman is careful not to needlessly ruffle and disturb the water, lest he drive the fish away from his net. He will rather endeavor, if possible, to draw them into it. Such a fisherman was the Apostle Paul. 2Cor 12.15-16, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. Be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty (you say), I caught you with guile.”

The necessity of suffering persecution in order to be a true Christian, has undoubtedly been carried to an extreme by some, and the doctrine has been abused. It has been looked at as necessary to be persecuted in order to uphold a man’s credit among others as a Christian. I have heard it made an objection against the sincerity of particular people, that they were not more hated and reproached. The manner of glorying in persecution, or in the cross of Christ, has been very *wrong* in some. It has too much of an appearance of exalting themselves in it, that they were very hated and reviled *more than most*, as evidence of excelling others in being good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Such a use of the doctrine of the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and the necessity of persecution, becoming credible and customary, has a direct tendency to cause those who would be accounted true Christians, to behave themselves towards those who are not favorable to religion, in such a way as to *provoke* their hatred, or at least to show little care to avoid it. It is not very studiously and earnestly striving (following the apostle’s example and precepts) to please them to their

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edification, nor to win them by meekness and gentleness, nor by all possible means to live peaceably with them.

I believe that saying of our Saviour, *I did not come to give peace on earth, but division*, has been abused (Luk 12.51). It's as though when we see great strife and division arise about religion — a violent heated spirit against the truly pious, and a loud clamor and uproar against the work of God — it is to be rejoiced in, because that is what Christ came to give. It has been laid down almost as a maxim by some, that the more division and strife, the better the sign. This naturally leads people to seek and provoke it. Or it leads them to, and encourages them in such a manner of behavior, such a roughness and sharpness, or such an affected neglect, that it has a natural tendency to raise prejudice and opposition — rather than striving as the apostle did to his utmost, by all meekness, gentleness, and benevolence of behavior, to prevent or pacify it. Christ came to send a sword on earth, and to cause division in no other way than he came to bring damnation. For Christ, who is set for the glorious restoration of some, is set for the fall of others, and to be a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence to them, and an occasion for their vastly more aggravated and terrible damnation. This is always the consequence of a great outpouring of the Spirit and revival of vital religion. It is the means of salvation for some, and the more aggravated damnation of others. But certainly this is no just argument that men's exposure to damnation is not to be lamented; or that we should not exert ourselves to our utmost in all the methods we can devise, so that others might be saved. We are to avoid all such behavior towards them that might tend to lead them down to hell.

I know there is naturally a great enmity in the heart of man against vital religion. And I believe there would have been a great deal of opposition against this glorious work of God in New England, even if its subjects and promoters had behaved themselves ever so agreeably to Christian rules. I believe that if this work goes on and spreads greatly in the world, so as to begin to shake kingdoms and nations, it will dreadfully stir up the rage of earth and hell, and will put the world into the greatest uproar that ever occurred since it stood. I believe Satan's dying struggles will be most violent. Yet I believe a great deal might be done to restrain this opposition, by good conformity to that saying of the Apostle James, in Jas 3.13: "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge? Let him show his works by good conduct, with meekness of wisdom." I also believe that if the rules of Christian charity, meekness, gentleness, and prudence had been duly observed by most of the zealous promoters of this work, it would have made three times the progress that it has — *i.e.*, if it had pleased God in such a case, to give a blessing to means in proportion to what He has done.

Under this topic of carelessness about the future consequences of things, it may be proper to say something about introducing things that are new and strange, and have a tendency by their novelty, to shock and surprise people. Nothing can be more evident from the New Testament, than that such things should be done with great caution and moderation, to avoid the offence that may be given by it, and the prejudices that might be raised to clog and hinder the progress of religion. Indeed, it ought to be this way in things that are good and excellent in themselves, and of great weight, provided they are not things that are of the nature of absolute duty, which — though they may *appear* to be innovations — cannot be neglected without immorality or disobedience to the commands of God. What great caution and moderation the apostles used in their day, in introducing things that were new, and abolishing

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things that were old! How gradually were the ceremonial performances of the law of Moses removed and abolished among the Christian Jews! And how long did even the Apostle Paul conform to those ceremonies which he calls weak and beggarly elements! He even conformed to the rite of circumcision (Act 16.3) that he speaks so much about in his epistles, as worthless. He did this so that he might not prejudice the Jews against Christianity! So it seems to have been very gradually that the Jewish Sabbath was abolished, and the Christian Sabbath introduced, for the same reason. The apostles avoided teaching the Christians in those early days (at least for a great while) some high and excellent divine truths, because they could not bear them yet (1Cor 3.1-2, and Heb 5.11-14). The apostles thus strictly observed the rule that their blessed master gave them, of not putting new wine into old wineskins, lest they burst the wineskins, and lose the wine.

And why did Christ himself, while on earth, forbear teaching his disciples so plainly the great doctrines of Christianity concerning his satisfaction, the nature and manner of a sinner's justification and reconciliation with God, and the particular benefits of his death, resurrection, and ascension? It was because in that infant state the disciples were then in, their minds were not prepared for such instructions. And therefore the clearer and fuller revelation of these things was reserved for the time when their minds would be further enlightened and strengthened by the outpouring of the Spirit, which was after Christ's ascension. Joh 16.12-13, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." And Mar 4.33, "And with many such parables spoke he the word to them, as they were able to bear it." These things might be enough to convince anyone who doesn't think himself wiser than Christ and his apostles, that great prudence and caution should be used in introducing things into the church of God, that are very uncommon — even though they may be very excellent in themselves — lest by our rashness and imprudent haste, we hinder religion much more than we help it.

People who are influenced by an indiscreet zeal, are always in too much of a hurry. They are impatient with delays, and therefore they are for jumping to the top step first, before they have taken the preceding steps. By doing so, they expose themselves to falling and breaking their bones. They are eager to see the building rise very high; and all their endeavor and strength is employed in advancing the building in height, without taking proportionate care to enlarge the foundation. Thereby the whole is in danger of collapsing to the ground. Or they want to put on the cupola and pinnacle before they have come to it, or before the lower parts of the building are done. This tends at once to put a stop to the building, and to hinder its ever becoming a complete structure. Many who are thus imprudent and hasty with their zeal, have a real eager appetite for what is good. But they are like children, who are impatient to wait for the fruit until its proper season, and therefore they snatch it before it is ripe. In their haste they often overshoot their mark, and frustrate their own end. They put what they want to obtain further out of reach than it was before; and they establish and confirm what they want to remove. Things must have time to ripen. The prudent husbandman waits until he has received the former and latter rain, and until the harvest is ripe, before he reaps. We are now just beginning to recover from a dreadful disease that we have long been under. If a man is recovering from a fever, and you at once feed him strong food, this is the ready way to kill him. The reformation from Popery was greatly hindered by this hasty zeal. Many were for immediately rectifying all disorders by force, which was condemned by Luther, and they were

a great trouble to him. See Sleiden's *History of the Reformation*, page 62, etc., and Book V throughout. It is vain prejudice that some have lately imbibed against such rules of prudence and moderation. They will be forced to come to them at last. They will find out for themselves that they are not able to maintain their cause without them. And if they will not listen before, experience will convince them at last, when it will be too late for them to rectify their mistake.

Another error, of the nature of an erroneous principle, that some have acted upon, is a wrong notion that they have of an attestation of divine Providence to people or things. We go too far when we look at the success that God gives to some people — in making them the instruments of doing much good — as a testimony of God's approval of those people, and of all the courses they take. A main argument that has been made use of to defend the conduct of some of those ministers who have been blamed as imprudent and irregular, is that God has smiled upon them and blessed them, and given them great success. They say that however men may charge them as guilty of many wrong things, it is evident that *God is with them; who then can be against them?* Probably some of those ministers themselves, by this very means, have had their ears stopped against all that has been said to convince them of their misconduct. But there are innumerable ways that people may be misled in forming a judgment about the mind and will of God, from the events of Providence. Even if a person's success is a reward for something that God sees in him, or that He approves of, it is still no argument that He approves of *everything* in him. Who can tell how far the divine grace may go in greatly rewarding some small good that he sees in a person — good intentions, something good in his disposition — while at the same time, in his sovereign mercy, God hides his eyes from a great deal that is bad. It may be His pleasure to forgive and not to mark it against the person, even though in itself, it is very bad. God hasn't told us in what manner he will proceed in this matter; and we proceed on most uncertain grounds when we undertake to determine it. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to know how far love or hatred is exercised towards people or actions, by all that is before us. God was pleased in his sovereignty to give such success to Jacob in what was, from beginning to end, a deceitful, lying contrivance and proceeding, in the way he obtained the blessing. It was worth infinitely more than the riches of the earth and the dew of heaven; more than what was given to Esau in *his* blessing; indeed, worth more than all that the world can afford. God was with Judas for a while, so that by God's power accompanying him, he wrought miracles and cast out devils. But this could not justly be interpreted as God's *approval* of his person, nor of his thievery that he lived in at the same time.

The dispensations and events of Providence, with their reasons, are too little understood by us, to be used by us as our rule, instead of God's word. *God has his way in the sea, and his path in the mighty waters, and his footsteps are not known, and he gives us no account of any of his matters.* And therefore, we cannot safely take the events of his providence as a revelation of his mind concerning a person's conduct and behavior. We have no warrant to do so. God has never appointed those things to be our rule, but something else. We have but one rule to go by, and that is his holy word. When we join anything else with it, as having the force of a rule, we are guilty of what is strictly forbidden, Deu 4.2, Pro 30.6, and Rev 22.18. They *err* who make what they imagine is pointed out to them in Providence, their rule of behavior. So do those who follow impulses and impressions. We should put nothing in the place of the

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word of God. It is to be feared that some have been greatly confirmed and emboldened by the great success that God has given them in some things that have, in reality, been *contrary* to the rules of God's holy word. If it has been so, they have been guilty of presumption, and of abasing God's kindness to them and the great honor He has put upon them. They have seen that God was with them, and He made them victorious in their preaching. It is to be feared that this has been abused by some, to a degree of self-confidence. It has greatly taken away any watchfulness of themselves. They have therefore been bold to go to great lengths in the presumption that God was with them, and would defend them, and finally baffle all who found fault with them.

Indeed, there is a voice of God in his providence, that may be interpreted and well understood by the rule of his word. And Providence may, to our dark minds and weak faith, confirm the word of God as it fulfils it. But to use divine Providence in this way, is quite different from making a *rule* of Providence. A good use may be made of the events of Providence by our own observation and experience, and human histories, and the opinion of the fathers and other eminent men. But in the end, all must be brought to one rule — *namely*, the word of God; and that must be regarded as our *only* rule.

Nor do I think they are on solid ground, who conclude that they haven't been in an error in their conduct, because at the time of their doing something for which they have been blamed and reproached by others, they were favored with the special comforts of God's Spirit. God's bestowing special spiritual mercies on a person at such a time, is no sign that He approves of everything that he sees in him at that time. David had very much of the presence of God while he lived in polygamy. Solomon had some very high favors, and peculiar smiles of heaven, and particularly at the dedication of the temple, while he greatly multiplied wives for himself, and horses, and silver and gold — all contrary to the most express command of God to the king, Deu 17.16-17. We cannot tell how far God may hide his eyes from beholding iniquity in Jacob, and from seeing perverseness in Israel. We cannot tell the reasons for God's actions, any further than He interprets them for Himself. God sometimes gave some of the primitive Christians the extraordinary influence of his Spirit when they were outside their duty. And He continued it while they were abusing it, as plainly implied in 1Cor 14.31-33.

Yes, if a person has done something for which he is reproached, and that reproach is an occasion for his feeling sweet exercises of grace in his soul, and it occurs from time to time, I don't think that this is certain evidence that God approves of the thing the person is blamed for. Undoubtedly a mistake may be the occasion of stirring up the exercise of grace in a man who *has* grace. If a person, through his mistake, thinks he has received some particular great mercy, that mistake may be the occasion for stirring up the sweet exercises of love to God, and true thankfulness and joy in God. For instance, if someone who is full of love to God, hears credible things concerning a remarkable deliverance of a child, or a dear friend, or some glorious thing is done for the city of God, then it is no wonder if, on such an occasion, the sweet actings of love to God, and delight in God, were excited, even if afterwards it proved to be a false report that he heard. So too, if someone who loves God is much maligned and reproached for doing what he thinks God requires and approves, it is no wonder that it is sweet for him to think that God is his friend, even though men are his enemies. It is no wonder at all that this is an occasion for him to leave the world, so to speak, and sweetly turn to God

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as his sure friend, and to find sweet contentment in God — even if he indeed made a mistake concerning what he thought was agreeable to God’s will.

As I showed before, exercising a truly good affection may be the occasion for error, and may indirectly incline a person to do what is wrong. On the other hand, error, or doing what is wrong, may be an occasion for exercising a truly good affection. The reason for this, is that although all exercises of grace are from the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God dwells and acts in the hearts of the saints in some measure, in the manner of a vital, natural principle — the principle of a *new nature* in them.¹ Its exercises are excited by means, in some measure, like other natural principles are. Grace is not present in the saints as a *mere natural principle*, but as a sovereign agent; and so its exercises are not *tied to means* by an immutable law of nature, as in mere natural principles. Yet God has so constituted things, that grace dwells in the hearts of the saints in such a way that its *exercises* have some degree of connection with means, in the manner of a principle of nature.²

Another erroneous principle that there has been something of, and has been an occasion for some mischief and confusion, is that *external order* in matters of religion, and the use of *the means of grace*, is but little regarded. It is spoken of lightly, as being mere *ceremonies* and *dead forms*, etc. It is probably more despised by some, because their opposers insist upon it so much, and because they continually hear from them the cry of *disorder and confusion*. The importance of external order is objected against, by saying that God doesn’t look at the outward form, he looks at the heart. But saying that true godliness doesn’t consist in order, is a weak argument against its importance. That argument may be equally used against *all* the outward means of grace. True godliness doesn’t consist in ink and paper; yet that would be a foolish objection against the importance of ink and paper in religion, when without it we couldn’t have the word of God. Without a doubt, *external order* is necessary if any *external means* are at all necessary — such as outward actions of a public nature, or in which God’s people are jointly concerned in public society.

Without order, the management of any external affair which is *public*, or in which a *multitude* is concerned, would be found impossible in every way. Without order there can be no general direction of a multitude to any particular designed end. Their purposes will cross one another, and they will not help, but instead hinder one another. A multitude cannot sit in union with one another without order. Confusion separates and divides them, so that there can be no concert or agreement. If a multitude wants to help one another in an affair, they must unite themselves to one another in a regular subordination of members in some measure, as it is in the natural body. By this means, they will have some capacity to act with united strength.

¹ *Principle*: A fundamental rule or law of nature that produces certain qualities in us. When we were dead in trespasses and sin, the principle of *death* ruled us; we obeyed the desires of our flesh in bondage to sin, and were at war with God. When we were made new creatures at conversion, we were given a new principle of *life*, a new nature to rule in us; we were then enabled to freely believe in and submit to Christ, who reconciled us to God, and brought us peace.

² That is, grace is given to us by God to act in us as a sovereign agent, independent of our nature. Our nature normally operates by *means*, such our mental faculties (will, understanding, perception, belief, etc.). Grace may be *activated* by these means, but it isn’t *governed* by them. Rather, it acts upon them.

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Christ has appointed that it should be this way in the visible church, as in 1Cor 12.14-31, and Rom 12.4-8.

Zeal without order will do but little good; or at least it will be effectual for only a little while. Let a company who are very zealous against the enemy, go forth to war without any manner of order, everyone rushing forward as his zeal drives him, all in confusion. If they gain something at the onset by surprising the enemy, how soon they will come to nothing, and fall an easy, helpless prey to their adversaries! Order is one of the most necessary of all external means of the spiritual good of God's church. And therefore it is requisite, even in heaven itself, where there is the least need of any external means of grace; order is maintained among the glorious angels there. The necessity of it in order to carry on any design in which a multitude are concerned, is so great, that even the devils in hell are driven to somewhat of order, so that they may carry on the designs of their kingdom. It is very observable that those kinds of irrational creatures for whom it is necessary to act in union, and to join a multitude together to carry on any work for their preservation, do so by a wonderful *instinct* that God has put into them. They observe and maintain a most regular and exact order among themselves, such as bees and some others do. Order in the visible church is not only necessary to carrying on the designs of Christ's glory and the church's prosperity, but it is absolutely necessary to its defence. Without it, it is like a city without walls, having no capacity to defend itself from any kind of mischief. So, despite being an external thing, it is not to be despised on that account. For though it isn't the food of souls, it is in some respect their defence. The people of Holland would be very foolish to despise the dikes that keep the sea from overwhelming them, calling them *dead stones* and *vile earth* because what they are built of is not good to eat.

It seems to be partly on the foundation of this notion of the worthlessness of external order, that some seemed to have acted on the principle that the power of judging, and of openly censuring others, should not be reserved to particular people, or consistories¹ appointed to that end, but ought to be left at large for anybody who pleases to take it upon themselves, or who think themselves fit for it. But more about this afterwards.

On this foundation also, attending to the regular worship of God in families has been treated too lightly. In some places it has been too common and customary a thing to be absent from family worship, and to be abroad late at night at religious meetings, or to attend religious conversation. Not that this shouldn't happen on certain extraordinary occasions. I've thought in many instances, that the case afforded sufficient warrant for people to be absent from family prayer, and to be away from home until very late in the night. But we should take heed that this doesn't become a habit, or a common practice. If it does, we will soon find the consequences are very bad.

It seems to be on the same foundation of the supposed unprofitableness of external order, that some have thought there is no need for particular religious services and performances to be limited to any certain office in the church (more about this afterwards). And also that those offices themselves, particularly that of the gospel ministry, need not be limited as it used to be, to people of a liberal education. Rather, some have lately favored having others that they suppose are people of eminent experience, publicly licensed to preach — yes, and ordained to

¹ *Consistory*: a church tribunal or council; a church court.

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the work of the ministry. Even some ministers seem to have favored such a thing. But how little they seem to look forward, and consider the unavoidable consequences of opening such a door! Once it becomes a custom, or something generally approved and allowed — to admit people to the work of the ministry who have had no education for it, simply because of their remarkable experiences and being people of good understanding — how many lay people would soon appear as candidates for the work of the ministry! I have no doubt that I have been acquainted with scores who would have desired it. And how will we know where to stop? If one is admitted because his experiences are remarkable, another will think his experiences are *also* remarkable. And perhaps we won't be able to deny that they are nearly as great. If one is admitted because he has good natural abilities, besides his experiences, then another may be thought equal to him (by himself and by many of his neighbors). It will be found of absolute necessity that there should be some fixed, certain, visible limits, to avoid bringing odium upon ourselves, and breeding uneasiness and strife among others.

I know of none better, and indeed no other limits that can well be fixed, than those that the prophet Zechariah fixes: namely, that only those should be appointed to be pastors or shepherds in God's church, who *have been taught to keep cattle from their youth*, or who have had an education for that purpose. Those ministers who have a disposition to break these limits, if they should do so and make a practice of it, would break down that fence which they themselves after a while (after they had been wearied with the adverse consequences), would be glad to have somebody else build up for them. There may probably be some people in the land who have had no education at college, who are in themselves better qualified for the work of the ministry than some others who have taken their degrees, and are now ordained. Yet I believe that the consequences of breaking those bounds that were previously set in ordaining such people, would be a greater calamity than missing such people in the work of the ministry. Opening a door for the admission of unlearned men to the work of the ministry, even if they were people of extraordinary experience, would on some accounts be especially prejudicial in such a day as this. That is because such people, for lack of extensive knowledge, are often prone to lead others into those very things which people are in danger of in *these* times above all other times; namely, impulses, vain imaginations, superstition, indiscreet zeal, and similar extremes. Instead, they especially need a knowledgeable shepherd in such an extraordinary season, to defend them from such things.

Another erroneous principle that it seems to me at least some have been in danger of, is that ministers, because they speak as Christ's ambassadors, may assume the same style, and speak as if with the same authority that the prophets of old did — and yes, that Jesus Christ himself did. For example, Mat 23.33, *You serpents, you generation of vipers*, etc., and in other places. And that is not only when they are speaking to the people, but also to their brethren in the ministry. This principle is absurd, because it makes no difference in the different degrees and orders of messengers that God has sent into the world, even though God has made a very great difference between them. For though in some respects, they all come in the name of God, and with something of His authority, yet certainly there is a vast difference in the *degree* of authority with which God has invested them. Jesus Christ was one who was sent into the world as God's messenger; and so he was one of God's apostles. So also is an ordinary pastor of a church. But it doesn't follow, that because Jesus Christ and an

ordinary pastor are both messengers of God, that an ordinary pastor in his office, is therefore vested with an equal degree of authority that Christ had in *His* office. Just as there is a great difference in their *authority*, and just as Christ came as God's messenger in a vastly higher *manner*, so it became Him to have another more authoritative *style* than is proper for us who are worms of the dust. We are *messengers of inferior degree*. It would be strange if God, having made so great a difference in the degree of His authority with which he invested his different messengers, made no difference as to the outward appearance and show of that authority – in the proper style and behavior of such messengers. Though God has put great honor upon ministers, and they may speak as his ambassadors, yet He never intended for them to have the same outward appearance of authority and majesty, either in their behavior or speech, that his Son will have when He comes in judgment at the last day. Though both come in the name of the Lord, in different respects and degrees – alas! what could make it enter into the hearts of worms of the dust, that it is fitting and suitable for them to do so?

Thus I have considered the first two of those three causes of error in conduct that were mentioned. I now come to the third.

3. Ignorance of Satan's Devices. The *third* and last cause of the errors of those who have appeared to be the subjects or zealous promoters of this work, is being ignorant or unobservant of some particular things, by which the devil has a special advantage. Here I would particularly take notice of:

- (1) some things with respect to the *inward* experiences of Christians themselves; and,
- (2) something with regard to the *external* effects of experiences.

(1) There are three things I would take notice of with regard to the INWARD EXPERIENCES of Christians, by which the devil has many advantages against us.

1. The first thing is the mixture often found in the experiences of true Christians. When they have truly gracious experiences, and divine and spiritual revelations and exercises, they also have something else mixed with them, besides what is spiritual. There is a mixture of that which is natural and corrupt, with that which is divine. This is what Christians are liable to in the present exceedingly imperfect state: the great imperfection of grace, the feebleness and infancy of the new nature, and the great remains of corruption, together with our circumstances in this world, where we are surrounded by what tends to pollute us. Indeed, it is not to be supposed that Christians ever have any experiences in this world that are wholly pure, or entirely spiritual, without any mixture of what is natural and carnal. The beam of light, as it comes from the fountain of light upon our hearts, is pure; but as it is reflected from there, it is mixed. The seed, as sent from heaven and planted in the heart, is pure; but as it springs up out of the heart, it is impure. Indeed, there is commonly a much greater mixture than people for the most part seem to imagine. I have often thought the experiences of true Christians are very frequently like it is with some sorts of fruits. They are enveloped in several coverings of thick shells or pods, which are thrown away by the one who gathers the fruit. Only a very small part of the whole bulk is the pure kernel that is good to eat.

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All of the things with which there is frequently some mixture of *gracious* experiences, even very great and high experiences, are these three:

- (1) human or natural affection and passion;
- (2) impressions on the imagination; and
- (3) a degree of self-righteousness or spiritual pride.

(1) There is often a great mixture of *affection or passion*, with that which is *spiritual*. This passion arises from *natural* principles; so that nature has a very great hand in those vehement motions and flights of the passions that appear. Thus the same degrees of divine communications from heaven will have vastly different effects in what outwardly appears in people of different natural tempers. The great mixture of what is *natural*, with what is *spiritual*, is very manifest in the peculiar effects that divine influences have in certain families, or in people of a particular temperament. There is a distinguishing manner in how the passions and affections operate, and how they are outwardly expressed. I know some remarkable instances of this. The same is also evident by the different effects divine communications have on the same person at different times, and in different circumstances. The novelty of things, or the sudden transition from an opposite extreme, and many other things that might be mentioned, greatly contribute to raising the passions.

Sometimes there is not only a mixture of what is common and natural with gracious experience, but even what is *animal* – that which, in great measure, is from the body and is properly the result of the animal frame. All is not always purely holy and divine in what true Christians feel in their affections towards God. Everything that is felt in the affections does not arise from spiritual principles. Common and natural principles have a very great hand in it. An improper self-love may have a great share in the effect. God is not loved for his own sake, or for the excellency and beauty of his own perfections, as he ought to be. Nor do these things in any way have that proportion in the effect that they ought to have. So in that love that true Christians have toward one another, very often there is a great mixture with grace, of what arises from common and natural principles; self-love has a great hand in it. The children of God are not loved purely for Christ's sake, but there may be a great mixture of that *natural* love which many sects of heretics have boasted about. They were united to one another because they were of the same company; they were on their side and against the rest of the world. Indeed, there may be a mixture of natural love toward the opposite sex, with Christian and divine love. So too, there may be a great mixture in that sorrow for sin which the godly have, and also in their joys. Natural principles may in a great many ways, greatly contribute to what is felt. This might easily be shown if it wouldn't make my discourse too lengthy. There is nothing that belongs to Christian experience that is more liable to a corrupt mixture, than zeal. It is an excellent virtue, and a heavenly flame when it is pure. But as it is exercised in those who are so little sanctified and so little humbled, as we are in the present state, it is apt to be mixed with human passion. Indeed, zeal may be mixed with corrupt and hateful affections, like pride and uncharitable bitterness, and other things that are not from heaven, but from hell.

(2) Another thing that is often mixed with what is spiritual in the experiences of Christians, is *impressions on the imagination*. Godly people have external ideas or images of things strongly impressed on their minds by these, together with a spiritual understanding of

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divine things, a conviction of their reality and certainty, and a strong and deep sense of their excellency or great importance on their hearts. A degree of imagination in such a case (as I observed elsewhere) is unavoidable, and necessarily arises from human nature as constituted in our present state. And a degree of imagination is really useful, and often of great benefit. But when it is exercised in too great a degree, it becomes an impure mixture that is prejudicial. This mixture very often arises from the constitution of the body. It usually contributes greatly to the other kind of mixture mentioned before, namely, of natural affections and passions. It helps to raise them to a great height.

(3) Another thing that is often mixed with the experiences of true Christians — and this is the worst mixture of all — is a degree of self-righteousness or spiritual pride. This is often mixed with the joys of Christians. Thus the joy they have is not purely the joy of faith, or a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, but is partly a rejoicing in themselves; for oftentimes in their elevations they look at themselves, and view their own high attainments. They rejoice partly because they are taken with their own experiences and great discoveries which, in their own apprehensions, makes them so excel. And this heightens all their passions, and especially those effects that are more external.

There is a much greater mixture of these external things in the experiences of some Christians, than others. In some, the mixture is so great that it very much obscures and hides the beauty of grace in them, like a thick smoke that blocks the light of a fire. We should be well aware of these things so we won't take all that glistens for gold; and so we may know what to countenance and encourage, and what to discourage. Otherwise Satan will have a vast advantage against us, for he works in the corrupt mixture. Sometimes for lack of people distinguishing the ore from pure metal, those experiences are most admired by the people who are themselves its subjects, and by others who are not the most excellent. The great external effects and vehemence of the passions, and the violent agitations of the animal spirits,¹ are sometimes owing to this corrupt mixture (as very apparent in some instances), though it is not always so.

I observed a great difference among those who are under high affections, and seem disposed to earnestly talk to those who are around them. Some insist much more in their talk, on what they behold in God and Christ, and the glory of the divine perfections — Christ's beauty and excellency, and His wonderful condescension and grace. They also talk about their own unworthiness, and the great and infinite obligations that they and others are under to love and serve God. But some insist almost entirely on their own high privileges, their assurance, God's love and favor; and on the weakness and wickedness of opposers, and how much they are above their reach. The latter may have experienced much of the presence of God, but their experiences do not appear to be as solid and unmixed as the former.

There is a great difference in people's *earnestness* in their talk and behavior. In some, it seems to come from the fulness of their hearts, and from the great sense that they have of truth. There is a deep sense of the certainty and infinite greatness, the excellency and importance of divine and eternal things, attended by the appearance of great humility. In others, their earnestness seems to arise from a great mixture of human passion, and an undue and

¹ *animal spirits*: these refer to instinctual impulses, emotional reactions, or "gut feelings."

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intemperate agitation of the spirits. This appears by their earnestness and vehemence not being proportioned to the nature of the subject they insist on. They are violent in everything they say, as much when they are talking about things of smaller importance, as when speaking of things of greater weight. I have seen this in an instance or two, in which this vehemence at length resulted in mental turmoil. There have been a few instances of a more extraordinary nature still, even of people finding themselves disposed to earnestly talk and cry out from an unaccountable kind of bodily pressure. This is without an extraordinary view of anything in their minds, nor a sense of anything on their hearts; there was probably the immediate hand of the devil in this.

Another thing by which the devil gains great advantage, is the unheeded *defects* there are in the experiences of true Christians sometimes — even in those high affections in which there is much that is truly good.

What I now address is something different from that defect or imperfection of *degree* which is in every holy disposition and exercise in this life, even in the best of saints. What I aim at is experiences being especially defective in some particular thing that *ought* to be in them. It is not an essential defect, nor such a defect as is found in the experiences of hypocrites, which would render them utterly vain, monstrous, and altogether abominable to God. Yet it is such a defect that it maims and deforms the experience. The *essence* of truly Christian experiences is not lacking in them. What is lacking is that which is very needful for the proper beauty of the image of Christ in such a person's experiences. Things are very much out of proportion. There is indeed much of some things, but at the same time there is so little of some other things that ought to have a due proportion to the whole, that the defect very much deforms the Christian, and it is truly odious in the sight of God.

What I observed before was something that deformed the Christian because it was *too much*; it was something *mixed in*; that is, something not belonging to the Christian as such. What I speak of now is something that deforms the Christian the *other way*; namely, there is *not enough* of it; something is lacking that belongs to the Christian as such. The one deforms the Christian as a monstrous protuberance. The other is something by which the new creature is maimed, and some member is lacking in great measure; or it is so small and withering as to be out of due proportion. This is another spiritual calamity that the saints are liable to through the great imperfection of grace in this life. It's like the chicken in the egg, at the beginning of its formation. Though there are indeed the rudiments or lineaments ¹ of all the parts, a few parts are plain to be seen, while others are hidden; so that, without a microscope it appears quite monstrous.

When this deficiency and disproportion is great, as it sometimes is in real saints, it is not only a great deformity in itself, but it has many adverse consequences. It gives the devil great advantage, and leaves a door open for corruption. It exposes us to very deformed and unlovely actions, and often results in the great wounding of the soul.

To better understand this matter, we may observe that in the revelation of what God has made of himself to the world by Jesus Christ, he has taken care to give a proportionate manifestation

¹ *Lineament*: a characteristic property or feature.

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of two kinds of excellencies or perfections of his nature — first, those that especially tend to instill us with awe and reverence, and to search and humble us; and secondly, those that tend to win, draw, and encourage us. *By the one*, he appears as an infinitely great, pure, holy, and heart-searching judge; *by the other*, he appears as a gentle and gracious father, and a loving friend. By the one he is a pure, searching, and burning flame; by the other, he is a sweet refreshing light. These two kinds of attributes are admirably tempered together in the revelation of the gospel. There is a proportionate manifestation of justice and mercy, holiness and grace, majesty and gentleness, authority and condescension. God has thus ordered that his diverse excellencies, as he reveals himself in the face of Jesus Christ, would have a proportionate manifestation, providing for our necessities in this. He knew it would be of great consequence that our apprehensions of these diverse perfections of his nature be duly proportioned to one another. A defect on the one hand — namely, revealing much of his love and grace, without a proportionate revelation of his awful majesty and his holy and searching purity — would tend toward spiritual pride, carnal confidence, and presumption. And a defect on the other hand — namely, revealing much of his holy majesty, without a proportionate revelation of his grace — tends toward unbelief, a sinful fearfulness, and spirit of bondage. Therefore, that deficiency of experiences that I am now speaking of, chiefly consists in that. The revelation that God has made of himself in his word, and the provision made for our spiritual welfare in the gospel, is perfect. Yet the actual light and communications that we have are *not* perfect; in many ways they are exceedingly imperfect and maimed.

Experience plainly shows that Christians may have high experiences in some respects, and yet their circumstances may be unhappy in *this* regard: that their experiences and discoveries are not more common. There is a great difference among Christians in this respect. Some have much more general discoveries than others, who on many accounts are the most amiable Christians. Christians may have experiences that are very high. And yet there may be very much of *this* deficiency and disproportion: their high experiences are truly from the Spirit of God, but sin comes in by the defect (as indeed all sin is originally from a defective privative cause). And in such a case, high discoveries at the same time that they are enjoyed, may be and sometimes are the occasion, or *causa sine qua non* of sin.¹ Sin may come in at that back door, the gap that is left open, as spiritual pride often does. And many times, the Spirit of God is quenched by this means. God punishes the pride and presumption that arise, by bringing such darkness and suffering, such awful consequences and horrid temptations, that they are enough to make one's hair stand on end to hear them. Christians should therefore diligently observe their own hearts as to this matter. And they should pray to God that he would give us experiences in which one thing is proportional to another, so that God may be honored and their souls be edified by it. Ministers should have an eye to this in their private dealings with the souls of their people.

It is chiefly from such a defect of experiences that some things have arisen which have been pretty common among true Christians of late. Many have supposed they arose from a good cause, such as talking about divine and heavenly things in particular, and expressing divine joys with laughter or light behavior. I believe, in many instances, such things have arisen from

¹ *causa sine qua non*: without it, the thing could not have occurred.

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a good cause, as their *causa sine qua non*, and high discoveries and gracious joyful affections have been the occasion of them. But the *proper* cause has been sin — even that odious defect in their experience, by which a sense has been missing of the awful and holy majesty of God as present with them, and their nothingness and vileness before Him, proportionate to the sense they have of God’s grace and the love of Christ. The same is true in many cases, of people’s unsuitable boldness, their disposition to speak with authority, intemperate zeal, and many other things, that sometimes appear in true Christians under great religious affections.

Sometimes the vehemence of the motion of the animal spirits under great affections, is owing in considerable measure, to experiences being *partial* in this way. I have known in several instances, that people have been greatly affected with the dying love of Christ, and with their consideration of the happiness of enjoying him in heaven, and other things of that nature. At the same time, their animal spirits have been in a great commotion; but in the midst of it, they gave them a deep sense of the awful, holy majesty of God. And that has at once composed them and quieted their animal nature, without diminishing their comfort; it only made it of a better and more solid nature. Once they had a sense of both the majesty and grace of God, the one balanced the other, and caused a happier sedateness and composure of body and mind.

From these things we may learn how to judge experiences, and estimate their goodness. The best experiences are not always the ones attended with the most violent affections, and the most vehement motions of the animal spirits, or that have the greatest effects on the body. Nor are they the ones that most dispose people to abound in talking to others, and speaking in the most vehement manner (though these things often arise from the greatness of spiritual experiences). But those experiences are the most excellent, which are qualified as follows:

1. They have the least mixture, or are the most purely spiritual.
2. They are the least deficient and partial; *i.e.*, the diverse things that pertain to Christian experience, are proportionate to one another. And,
3. They are raised to the highest degree. It doesn’t matter how high they are raised. If they are qualified as mentioned earlier, then the higher the better. Experiences thus qualified will be attended with the most amiable behavior, and they will produce the most solid and sweet fruits, be the most durable, and have the greatest effect on the abiding temper of the soul.

If God is pleased to carry on this work, and it should prove to be the dawning of a general revival of the Christian church, then it may be expected that the time will soon come when the experiences of Christians will be much more generally qualified in this way. We must expect *green* fruits before we have *ripe* ones. It is probable that hereafter, the discoveries which the saints have of divine things, will be in a much higher degree than have yet occurred. But they will be so ordered by an infinitely wise and all sufficient God, that they will not have so great an effect on the body, proportionally, and they will be less oppressive to nature. The outward manifestations will rather be like Stephen’s when he was full of the Holy Ghost, *when all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face, as if it had been the face of an angel*. Their inward fulness of the Spirit of God in his divine, amiable, and sweet influences, will shine forth in a heavenly aspect and manner of speech and behavior.

But there is another thing concerning experiences of Christians, which it is of even greater importance to be aware of, than either of the preceding. And that is the *degenerating of experiences*. What I mean is something different from the mere decay of experiences, or their gradually vanishing by people losing their sense of things. I mean people's experiences are growing worse and worse by degrees, in their kind; more and more partial and deficient; more and more out of due proportion. They also have more and more of a corrupt mixture; the spiritual part decreases, and the other useless and hurtful parts greatly increase. There is such a thing. It is very frequent, as experience abundantly evidences. I've seen it in very many instances, and the mischiefs that have arisen through lack of being more aware of it, are great.

As I observed before, in high experiences, besides what is *spiritual*, there is commonly a mixture of *three things*: natural or common affections; workings of the imagination; and a degree of self-righteousness or spiritual pride. Now it often comes to pass, that by not distinguishing the wheat from the chaff, and for lack of watchfulness and humble jealousy of themselves, and by laying great weight on the natural and imaginary part — yielding to it and indulging it — *that* part grows and increases, and the spiritual part decreases. The devil sets in and works in the corrupt part, and cherishes it to his utmost, until at length the experiences of some people who began well, come to little else than violent motions of carnal affections. They have great heats of the imagination, and a great degree of enthusiasm, and a swelling of spiritual pride. It is very much like some fruits which bud, blossom, and kernel well, but afterwards they are destroyed by excessive moisture. Though the bulk is monstrously great, there is little else in it except what is useless and unwholesome. It appears to me very probable that many of the heresies that have arisen, and the sects that appeared in the Christian world in one age or another, with wild enthusiastic notions and practices, began by this means. The same degenerating of experiences first gave rise to them, or at least it led the way to them.

There is nothing in the world that so much exposes us to this degenerating of experiences, as unheeded spiritual pride and self-confidence, and people being conceited about their own stock — without a humble, daily, and continued dependence on God. This very thing seems to be typified of old, by the corrupting of the manna. Some of the children of Israel, because they had gathered a store of manna, trusted in it. They apprehended that the store which they had gathered and laid up was sufficient, without humbly looking to heaven, and stooping to the earth for daily supplies. The consequence was that their manna bred worms and stank, Exo 16.20. Pride, above all things, promotes this degeneracy of experiences, because it grieves and quenches the Spirit of the Lamb of God. And so it kills the spiritual part, and cherishes the natural part; it inflames the carnal affections, and heats the imagination.

The unhappy person who is the subject of such a degeneracy of experiences is not sensible of his own calamity, for the most part. But because he finds himself still violently moved, and has greater heats of zeal, and more vehement motions of his animal spirits, he thinks he is fuller of the Spirit of God than ever. But indeed, he is like the apostle says of the Galatians, Gal 3.3, "Having begun in the Spirit, they are made perfect by the flesh."

By the mixture of common affection with love toward God, the love of true Christians is liable to degenerate. It is liable to be built more and more on the foundation of a supposition of being His high and peculiar favorites, and less and less on an apprehension of the excellency of God's nature, as He is in himself. So the joy of Christians is liable to degenerate because of

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the mixture of common affection with spiritual joy, coming at last to be little else than *joy in self* — joy in a person's own supposed eminency and distinction from others in the favor of God. So the zeal that at first might be *spiritual* in great part, through long-continued opposition and controversy, may degenerate more and more into proud human passion; it may come to bitterness, and even to a degree of hatred. And so, love for the brethren may by degrees come to little else than fondness, and a zeal for party. Indeed, through a mixture of natural love for the opposite sex, it may degenerate more and more, until it results in what is criminal and gross. I leave it with those who are better acquainted with ecclesiastical history, to inquire whether such a degeneracy of affections as this might not be the first thing that led the way, and gave occasion to the rise of the abominable notion of some sects that have arisen, concerning the community of women. However that may be, certainly the mutual embraces and kisses of people of different sexes, under the notion of Christian love and holy kisses, are utterly to be disallowed and abominated, as having the most direct tendency to quickly turn Christian love into unclean and brutish lust. That will not be better, but ten times worse for being christened with the name of "Christian love."

I should also think it advisable that meetings of young people, of both sexes, in the evening, by themselves, without a minister or any elder people among them, even though for religious exercises, should be avoided. For the present, while their minds are greatly solemnized with lively impressions, and a deep sense of divine things, there may appear no ill consequence. Yet we must look to the further end of things, and guard against future dangers and advantages that Satan might gain against us. As a lively, solemn sense of divine things on the minds of young people may gradually decay, so there will be danger that a bad use of these meetings may gradually prevail. Even if there is no unsuitable behavior while together in the meetings, when they break up to go home, they may naturally consort together in couples, for other than religious purposes. And it may at last come to young people going to such meetings, chiefly for the sake of having an opportunity for company-keeping.

There is sometimes a *defect* in the experiences of Christians, as well as the *mixture* they have, which exposes them to degenerate. Deficient maimed experiences sometimes become more and more so. The mind, being wholly intent upon those things that are in view, and neglecting those that are most lacking, there is less and less of them. And so the gap grows wider and wider for corruption to come in. Commonly, both these causes of the degenerating of experiences, operate together.

We need to be *jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy*, as the apostle was over the Christian Corinthians, *lest somehow, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so our minds might be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* (2Cor 11.2-3) God indeed will never allow his true saints to totally and finally fall away. Yet He may punish their pride and self-confidence by allowing them to be long led by the subtle serpent into a dreadful wilderness, to the great wounding of their own souls, and the interest of religion.

Before I dismiss this topic of the degenerating of experiences, I would mention one thing more that tends to it. And that is people's aiming in their experience, to go beyond the rule of God's word, *i.e.*, aiming at *that which is indeed* beyond the rule in some respect. Thus some people have endeavored to utterly root out and abolish all natural affection, or any special affection or regard for their near relations. They do so under a notion that no other love ought to be

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allowed but spiritual love; and that all other love is to be abolished as carnal; and that it becomes Christians to love no one on account of anything but the image of God. Therefore, they say, love should go out to one another only in that proportion in which the image of God is seen in them. They might as well argue that a man should utterly disallow, and endeavor to abolish all love or appetite for his daily food, under a notion that it is a *carnal* appetite, and no other appetite should be tolerated but *spiritual* appetites. Why should the saints strive for that as a high attainment in holiness? The apostle mentions it in Rom 1.31 as one instance in which the heathen came to that most horrid pass in wickedness: namely, *being without natural affection*.

Some have doubted whether they should pray for the conversion and salvation of the souls of their children, any more than for the souls of others, because the salvation of the souls of others would be as much to God's glory as the salvation of their children. They suppose that praying most for their own would show a selfish disposition. So they have been afraid to tolerate a compassionate grief and concern for their nearest friends, for fear it would argue for a lack of resignation to God.

It is true, there is great danger of people setting their hearts too much on their earthly friends. Our love to earthly friends should be under the government of the love of God, and should be attended with a spirit of submission and resignation to His will, and everything should be subordinated to his glory. But that's no argument for these affections being entirely abolished, which the Creator of the world has put within mankind for the good of mankind. This is because He saw they would be necessary for them, as they must be united in society in the present state, and are of great use when kept in their proper place. To endeavor to totally root them out, would be to reproach and oppose the wisdom of the Creator. These natural inclinations, if well regulated, are not inconsistent with any part of our duty to God, nor any argument for a sinful selfishness — any more than the natural abhorrence in the human nature to pain, and our natural inclination to ease, that was in the man Christ Jesus himself.

It is the duty of parents to be more concerned, and to pray more for the salvation of their children, than for the children of their neighbors. It is as much the duty of a minister to be more concerned for the salvation of the souls of his flock, and to pray more for them, than those of other congregations, because they are committed to his care. So our near friends are more committed to our care than others, and our nearby neighbors, than those who live at a great distance. And the people of our land and nation are in some sense more committed to our care than the people of China. So we ought to pray more for them, and be more concerned that the kingdom of Christ should flourish among them, than those in another country, where it would be as much, and no more for the glory of God. Compassion ought to be *especially* exercised towards friends, Job 6.14.¹ Christ did not frown upon a special affection and compassion for near friends, but countenanced and encouraged it, from time to time, in those who, in the exercise of such an affection and compassion, applied to Him for relief for their friends. Take the instance of the woman of Canaan, Jairus, Mary and Martha, the centurion,

¹ **Job 6:14** "To him who is afflicted, kindness *should be shown* by his friend, Even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

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the widow of Nain,¹ and many others. The Apostle Paul, was a man as much resigned and devoted to God, and under the power of His love, as perhaps any mere man who ever lived. Yet he had a peculiar concern for his countrymen, the Jews, who on that account were *his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh*. He had a very high degree of compassionate grief for them, insomuch that he tells us he had a great heaviness and a continual sorrow of heart for them, and could wish himself *accursed from Christ for them*. (Rom 9.3)

There are many things that are proper for the saints *in heaven*, that are not suitable to the state that God has set us in here *in this world*. For Christians in these and other instances, to affect to go beyond the present state of mankind, and what God has appointed as fit for it, is an instance of what the wise man calls, being *overly righteous*. (Ecc 7.16) It has a tendency to open a door to Satan, and to cause religious affections to degenerate into something very unbecoming of Christians.

Thus, as I proposed, I have taken notice of some things with regard to the INWARD experiences of Christians, by which Satan has an advantage.

(2) I now proceed in the *second place*, to take notice of something with regard to the EXTERNAL effects of experiences, which also give Satan an advantage. What I regard here, is the secret and unaccountable influence that custom has on people, with respect to the external effects and manifestations of the inward affections of the mind. By *custom*, I mean both a person's being accustomed to something in himself — in his own common, allowed, and indulged practice — and also the countenance and approval of others among whom he dwells, by their general voice and practice. It is well known, and it appears sufficiently by what I have said already in this treatise and elsewhere, that I am far from ascribing all the late uncommon effects and outward manifestations of inward experiences to custom and fashion, as some do. I know it to be otherwise, if it is possible for me to know *anything* of this nature by the most critical observation, under all manner of opportunities to observe it. Yet this too is exceedingly evident by experience: that custom has a strange influence in these things. I know it by the different manners and degrees of external effects and manifestations of great affections and high discoveries in different towns, according to what people are gradually led into and insensibly habituated to by example and custom — and also in the same place, at different times, according to the conduct they have.

If some person is among them to conduct them, who greatly countenances and encourages these kinds of outward manifestations of great affections, they naturally and insensibly prevail, and unavoidably grow by degrees. But when afterwards they come under another kind of conduct, the manner of external appearances will strangely alter. Yet it seems to be without any proper design or contrivance by those in whom this alteration occurs. It is not properly affected by them; rather, the influence of example and custom is secret and insensible to the people themselves. These things have a vast influence in the manner of people manifesting their joys, whether with smiles or an air of lightness, or with more solemnity and reverence. And so they have a great influence as to the disposition that people have under high affections,

¹ Luk 7.11-15. Christ raised the widow's son from the dead.

to abound in talk; and also as to the *manner* of their speaking — the loudness and vehemence of their speech. Yet it would be exceedingly unjust, and against all the evidence of fact and experience, and the reason of things, to lay to custom all the dispositions that people have to speak much to others, and to speak in a very earnest manner. It is manifest that example and custom have in some way or other, a secret and unsearchable influence on those actions that are involuntary. This is apparent by the difference that exists in different places, and in the same places at different times, according to the diverse examples and conduct they have.

Therefore, it would be very unreasonable and prejudicial to the interest of religion, to frown upon all these extraordinary external effects and manifestations of great religious affections; for a measure of them is natural, necessary, and beautiful. The effect is in no way disproportioned to the spiritual cause, and it is of great benefit to promote religion. Yet I think they greatly err, who think these things should be wholly unlimited, and that everyone should be encouraged to go to the utmost length in these things, as they feel inclined to do. The consequence of this will be very bad. There ought to be a gentle restraint held upon these things; and prudent care should be taken of people in such extraordinary circumstances. They should be moderately advised, at proper times, not to make more ado than is needed, but rather restrain their inclinations. Otherwise, extraordinary outward effects will grow upon them. They will be more and more *natural* and unavoidable. The extraordinary outward show will increase, without any increase in the internal cause. People will find themselves under a kind of compulsion to make a great ado, with less and less affection of soul, until at length almost any slight emotion will set them off. They will be more and more intense and boisterous, and will grow louder and louder, until their actions and behavior become indeed very absurd. Experience proves these things.

Thus I have taken notice of the more general causes from which the errors that have attended this great revival of religion have risen, and under each head, I have observed some particular errors that have flowed from these fountains.

Secondly. I now proceed as I proposed in the *second place*,¹ to take notice of some particular errors that have risen from several of these causes. In some perhaps they have been chiefly owing to one error, and in others to another, and in others to the influence of several of them, or all of them conjunctly.

1. And here the *first* thing I would take notice of, is censuring others who are professing Christians in good standing in the visible church, as unconverted. I need not repeat what I said elsewhere to show that this is against the plain, frequent, and strict prohibitions of the word of God. It is the worst disease that has attended this work, the most contrary to the spirit and rules of Christianity, and it has worse consequences. There is a most unhappy tincture that the minds of many have received in that way, both ministers and people. The manner of many has been, when they first enter into conversation with anyone who seems to have any show or to make any pretences to religion, to discern or fix a judgment about him from his manner of talking about the things of religion — whether he is converted, or is practically

¹ These two things were laid out shortly after the start of Part IV.

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acquainted with vital piety or not. Then they treat him accordingly, and freely express their thoughts about him to others, especially those whom they have a good opinion about as “true” Christians, and have accepted as brethren and companions in Christ. Or if they don’t declare their minds expressly, yet by their manner of speaking about them, at least to their friends, they plainly show what their thoughts are.

So when they have heard any minister pray or preach, their first work has been to observe him with a design to discern whether he is a converted man or not; whether he prays like someone who feels the saving power of God’s Spirit in his heart; and whether he preaches like someone who knows what he says. It has been so much the way in some places, that many new converts don’t know if it isn’t also *their* duty to do so; they know no other way. And once people yield to such a notion, and give in to such an attitude, they will quickly grow “very discerning” in their own minds. They think they can easily tell a hypocrite; and once they have passed their censure, everything seems to confirm it. They see more and more in the person that they have censured, which seems to *them* to plainly show that he is an unconverted man.

If the person censured is a minister, everything in his public performances seems dead and sapless, and to do them no good at all. On the contrary, it seems to have a deadening influence, and is poisonous to the soul. Indeed, it seems worse and worse to them; his preaching grows more and more intolerable. This is owing to a secret, strong prejudice that steals in more and more upon the mind, as experience plainly and certainly shows. When the Spirit of God was wonderfully poured out in this place more than seven years ago, on nearly thirty souls a week, for five or six weeks together, to all appearance they were brought home to Christ. The whole town seemed to be alive and full of God. There was no such notion or attitude prevailing here. When ministers preached here, as very many did at that time, young and old, our people didn’t try to discern whether they were men of experience or not; they didn’t know that they should. Mr. Stoddard never brought them up in that way. It didn’t seem natural to them to go about anything of that nature, nor did any such thing stir in their hearts. Rather, when any minister preached, the business of everyone was to listen and attend to what he said, and apply it to his own heart, and make the utmost use of it. It is remarkable that there never appeared such a disposition in the people to relish, approve of, and admire ministers’ preaching, as there was at that time. Such expressions as these were frequent in the mouths of one and another, on the occasion of strangers preaching here — *they rejoiced that there were so many such eminent ministers in the country; they wondered that they had never heard the fame of them before; and they were thankful that other towns had such good means*; and the like. Scarcely did any minister ever preach here, that his preaching did not do some remarkable service. I had good opportunity to know this, because at that time I was particularly acquainted with most of the people in town, in the concerns of their soul. The fact that it has been so much otherwise lately, in many places in the land, is another instance of the secret and powerful influence of custom and example.

There has been an unhappy disposition in some ministers toward their brethren in the ministry in this respect, which has encouraged and greatly promoted such a negative spirit among some of their people. A wrong use has been made of Christ’s scourging the buyers and sellers out of the temple. It has been expected by some, that Christ was now about to purge his house of unconverted ministers in this way, and this has made it more natural for them to

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think that they should do Christ a service,¹ and act as co-workers with him, to put to their hand and endeavor by all means, to cashier ² those ministers that they thought were unconverted. It appears to me probable that the time is indeed coming when awful judgments will be executed on unfaithful ministers, and that no sort of men in the world will be so exposed to divine judgments as they will be. But then, *we should leave that work to Christ*, who is the searcher of hearts, and to whom vengeance belongs — and not without warrant, take the scourge out of His hand and place it in our own. There has been too much of a disposition in some, to give ministers over as reprobates, who have been looked at as wolves in sheep's clothing. This has tended to promote and encourage a spirit of bitterness towards them, and to make it natural to treat them too much as if their accusers knew God hated them. If God's children *knew* that others were reprobates, it would not be required of them to love them — we may hate those that we know are reprobates. God hates them. It is lawful to hate the devil; and the saints at the Day of Judgment will hate the wicked. But some have been too apt to look for fire from heaven upon particular ministers. And this has naturally excited that disposition to *call* for it, which Christ rebuked in his disciples at Samaria. (Luk 9.54)

For my part, though I believe no sort of men on earth are so exposed to spiritual judgments as wicked ministers, I feel no disposition to treat any minister as if I supposed he was finally rejected by God. For I cannot help but hope that there is coming a day of such great grace, a time so appointed for magnifying the riches and sovereignty of divine mercy, beyond what ever was, that a great number of unconverted ministers will obtain mercy. There was no sort of people in Christ's time who were so guilty, and so hardened, and towards whom Christ manifested such great indignation, as the Priests and Scribes — and there were no such persecutors of Christ and his disciples as them. And yet in that great outpouring of the Spirit that began on the day of Pentecost, though it began with the common people, in the progress of the work, after a while, *a great company of priests in Jerusalem were obedient to the faith*, Act 6.7. And Saul, one of the most violent of all the persecuting Pharisees, later became the greatest promoter of the work of God, who ever was. I hope we will yet see in many instances a fulfilment of Isa 29.24, "They too who erred in spirit, will come to understanding. And those who murmured, will learn doctrine."

Nothing has been gained by this practice of censuring. The end that some have aimed at in it has not been obtained, nor is ever likely to be. Possibly some have openly censured ministers, and encouraged their people's uneasiness under them, in hopes that it would soon come to this: that the uneasiness would be so general, and so great, that unconverted ministers in general would be cast off, and then things would go on happily. But there is no likelihood of it. Instead, the devil has indeed obtained his end: this practice has bred a great deal of unhappiness among ministers and people. It has spoiled Christians' enjoyment of sabbaths, and made them their most uneasy, uncomfortable, and unprofitable days. And it has stirred up great contention, and set all aflame. In one place and another, where a glorious work of God's Spirit had begun, it has in a great measure knocked them all in the head, and their ministers hold their places.

¹ **Joh 16:2** ... the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

² *Cashier*: discard or do away with; discharge with dishonor.

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Some have aimed at a better end in censuring ministers. They suppose it to be a likely means to *awaken* them; but in fact, nothing has had so great a tendency to *prevent* the awakening of disaffected ministers in general. And nothing has actually had such an influence to lock up the minds of ministers *against* any good effect of this great work of God in the land. I have known instances of some who seemed to be greatly moved by the first appearance of this work of revival. But since then, they seem to be greatly deadened by what has appeared of this nature. If there are one or two instances of ministers who have been awakened by it, there are ten times as many on whom it has had a *contrary* influence. The worst enemies of this work have been inwardly eased by this practice of censuring. They have made a shield of it to defend their consciences. They are glad that it has been carried to so great an extent. For at the same time, they looked at it and employed it as a door opened for them to be bolder in opposing the work of revival in general.

There is no such dreadful danger of *natural men* being undone by our forbearing to censure them, and treating them as *visible Christians*. It will be no bloody, hell-peopling charity, as some suppose it is, once it is known that we are not treating them as Christians, because we've taken it upon ourselves to pass judgment on their eternal state, on any trial or exercise of our skill in examining and discerning them. It is only allowing them to be worthy of public charity, upon their profession and good external behavior. Judas was not in danger of being deceived by Christ's treating him for a long time as a disciple, and sending him out as an apostle. Christ did not then take it upon Himself to act as the Judge and Searcher of hearts, but only as the Head of the visible church. Indeed, such charity as this may be abused by some, as everything else is, and will be — even though it is proper in its own nature, and no matter how good a tendency it has. I'm not saying anything against dealing thoroughly with the conscience, by the most convincing and searching dispensation of the word of God. I don't want this sword to be sheathed, or gently handled by ministers. Let it be used *as a two-edged sword to pierce, even to dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow*. Let conscience be dealt with, without any compliments. Let ministers handle it in flaming fire, without having any more mercy on it than the furnace has on those metals that are tested in it. But leave a man's *person* alone. Let the word of God judge him; but let's not take it upon ourselves to do that, until we have warrant for it.

Some have been ready to censure ministers because they seem, in comparison to some other ministers, to be very cold and lifeless in their ministerial performances. But consider that for all we know, God may later raise up ministers of so much more excellent and heavenly qualifications. They may be so much more spiritual and divine in their performances, that there may be as great a difference between them and those who now seem the liveliest, as there is now between the liveliest and others who are called "dead and sapless." Those who are now called *lively* ministers may appear to their hearers as wretchedly mean, and their performances poor, dead, dry things, when they compare them with others who excel them. Many may be prejudiced against them, considering them good for nothings, perhaps calling them soul-murderers. What a poor figure the liveliest of us make, and those who are most admired by the people, when seen in the eyes of one of the saints of heaven — other than as our deadness, deformity, and rottenness is hidden by the veil of Christ's righteousness.

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Another thing that is supposed to be sufficient warrant for openly censuring ministers as unconverted, is their opposing this work of God that has lately been carried on in the land. There can be no doubt with me, that opposition against this work may render either ministers or people truly scandalous, and expose them to public ecclesiastical censure. As I observed before, ministers may utterly defeat the design of the ministry by this, and so give their people just cause for uneasiness. I shouldn't think that any person has power to oblige me to constantly attend the ministry of someone who, from time to time, plainly prayed and preached against this work, or frequently spoke of it reproachfully in his public performances – not after all Christian methods had been used for a remedy, but to no purpose.

As experience shows, it is a very difficult thing to determine how far opposition to this work is consistent with a state of grace, or how far it may go, and for how long a time. Some people of good experience in their own souls, have been prejudiced through the errors that have been mixed with this work, or through some peculiar disadvantages they are under to behold things in a right view of them, because of the people they converse with, or because of their own cold and dead frames. I have seen things which abundantly convince me that the business is too high for me. I am glad that God has not committed such a difficult affair to me. I can joyfully leave it entirely in the hands of the One who is infinitely fit for it, without meddling at all with it myself. We may represent it as exceedingly dangerous to oppose this work, for we have good warrant for this in the word of God. But we are not under any necessity that I know of, to determine whether it is possible for those who are guilty of it, to be in a state of grace or not.

God seems to have so strictly forbidden this practice of judging our brethren in the visible church, not only because He knew that we are too much like babes – too infinitely weak, fallible, and blind, to be well capacitated for it – but also because He knew that it wasn't a work suited to our proud hearts. It would set us too vastly high, and make us too much like lords over our fellow creatures. Judging our brethren and passing a condemnatory sentence upon them, seems to carry in it an act of authority (especially in so great a case) to sentence them with respect to that state of their hearts, on which their liableness to eternal damnation depends. This is made evident by such questions as the two which follow. Hearing them from God's mouth, is enough to make us shrink into nothing with shame and confusion, and a sense of our own blindness and worthlessness. Rom 14.4, "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stand or falls." Jas 4.12, "There is one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy; who are you to judge another?" Our wise and merciful Shepherd has graciously taken care *not* to lay in our way such a temptation to pride. He has cut all such poison out of our pasture. Therefore, we should not desire to have it restored. Blessed be His name, that he has not laid such a temptation in the way of my pride! I know that in order to be fit for this business, I must not only be vastly more knowing, but humbler than I am.

I believe some of God's own children have lately been guilty in this matter. Yet, by what is said about it in the Scripture, it appears to me very likely that before these things which God has recently begun, have an end, God will awfully rebuke that practice. May it be prevented in sovereign and infinite mercy, by the deep and open humiliation of those who have openly practised it.

Just as this practice ought to be avoided, so should all open, visible marks of distinction and separation that imply it. For example, particularly distinguishing those we have judged to be

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in a converted state, by calling them *brother* or *sister*. This should be done no further than there is a visible *ecclesiastical* distinction. In those places where it is the manner to receive only those persons to the communion of the visible church, who recommend themselves by giving a satisfying account of their inward experiences, *there* Christians may openly distinguish such people in their speech and ordinary behavior, with a visible separation, without being inconsistent with themselves. I won't pretend to meddle with that controversy now, whether such an account of a personal experience is requisite to church fellowship. But certainly, to admit people to communion with us as brethren in the visible church, and then to visibly reject them, and to make an open distinction between them and others by using different names or appellations, is to be inconsistent with ourselves. It is to make a visible church *within* a visible church, and to visibly divide between sheep and goats, setting one on the right hand, and the other on the left. (Mat 25.32-33)

This bitter root of censoriousness must be totally rooted out, if we would prepare the way of the Lord. It has nourished and upheld many other things contrary to humility, meekness, and the love of the gospel. The minds of many have received an unhappy turn, in some respects, with their religion. There is a certain point or sharpness, a disposition to a kind of vehemence, that doesn't savor of that meek, lamblike, sweet disposition that becomes Christians. Many have now been habituated to it for so long, that they don't know how to get out of it. But we *must* get out of it. The pointedness and sharpness must be blunted, and we must learn another way to manifest our zeal for God.

Some have a way of reflecting on others, and censuring them in open prayer, which even if it has a fair show of love, it is indeed the boldest way imaginable of reproaching others, because there is implied in it an appeal to the most high God, concerning the truth of their censures and reflections.

Here I would also observe, by the way, that some have a way of joining a sort of imprecation with their petitions for others, even if conditional ones. These appear to me wholly needless and improper. They pray that others may either be converted or removed. I never heard nor read of any such thing practised in the church of God until now, unless it is with respect to some of the most visibly and notoriously abandoned enemies of the church of God. This is a kind of cursing men in our prayers, and adding a curse with our blessing; whereas the rule is, *bless and curse not*. (Rom 12.14) To pray that God would kill another, is to curse him with the same curse with which Elisha cursed the children who came out of Bethel. And the case must be very great and extraordinary indeed to warrant it, unless we were prophets, and didn't speak our own words, but words penned by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God. It is pleaded that if God has no design to convert others, it is best for them, as well as best for others, that they be immediately taken away and sent to hell before they have contracted more guilt. To this I would say, that it was best that those children who met Elisha, seeing that God had no design to convert them, should die immediately as they did. Yet Elisha's imprecating that sudden death upon them, was *cursing* them. And therefore, it would not have been lawful for someone who did not speak in the name of the Lord, as a prophet.

And then, if we give way to such things as these, where will we stop? A child who suspects he has an unconverted father and mother, may pray openly that his father and mother may either be converted, or taken away and sent to hell quickly, before their guilt is greater. (For

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unconverted parents are as likely to poison the souls of their family in their manner of training them up, as unconverted ministers are to poison their people.) So it might become a common thing all over the country, for children to pray in this manner concerning their parents, and brothers and sisters concerning one another, and husbands concerning their wives, and wives concerning their husbands, and for people to pray concerning all their unconverted friends and neighbors. And not only so, but we may also pray concerning all those saints who are not “lively” Christians, that they may either be enlivened or taken away. If what is often said by some these days is true, that these cold dead saints do more hurt than natural men, and lead more souls to hell, then would it be well for mankind if they were all dead?

How needless are such petitions or imprecations as these? What benefit is there by them? Why isn't it sufficient for us to pray that God would provide for his church, and the good of souls, and take care of His own flock, and give it needed means and advantages for its spiritual prosperity? Does God need to be directed by us in what way He should do it? Why do we need to ask God to do it by killing such and such people, if he doesn't convert them? — *unless* we delight in the thought of God's answering us in such terrible ways, and with such awful manifestations of his wrath to our fellow creatures.

And why don't ministers direct sinners to pray for themselves, that God would either convert them or kill them, and send them to hell now, before their guilt is greater? In this way we would lead people in the next place to self murder; for many probably would soon begin to think that what they may pray for, they may *seek*, and use the *means* for it.

Some with whom I have discoursed about this way of praying, have said that the Spirit of God, as it were, *forces* such words out of their mouths, when otherwise they wouldn't dare to utter them. But such an impulse doesn't look like the influence of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God sometimes strongly inclines men to utter words, but not by putting expressions into the mouth, and urging them to utter them. Rather, it's by filling the heart with a sense of divine things, and holy affections; and those affections, and that sense, incline the mouth to speak. That other way of men's being urged to use certain expressions by an unaccountable force, is very probably from the influence of the spirit of the devil.

2. Another thing I would take notice of is *lay exhorting*. There has been a great deal of error and misconduct in the management of this, and an abundance of disputing, wrangling, and contention about it. In the midst of all the disputes that have occurred, I suppose that all are agreed as to these two things:

1. That all exhorting of one another by laymen is not unlawful or improper; but on the contrary, that some exhorting is a Christian *duty*. And,
2. I also suppose that all will allow there is something that is proper only for ministers; that there is some kind, or way, or other, of exhorting and teaching, that belongs only to the *office of teachers*.

All will allow that God has appointed such an office as that of *teachers* in the Christian church. And therefore, doubtless all will allow that something or other is proper and peculiar to that

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office; or that some business of *teaching* belongs to it, that does not belong to others as much as it does to them.

If there is any way of teaching that is peculiar to that office, then for others to take that upon themselves, is to invade the office of a minister. Doubtless this is very sinful, and is often so represented in Scripture. But the great difficulty is to settle the *bounds*, and to tell exactly how far laymen may go, and when they exceed their limits. This is a matter of so much difficulty, that I don't wonder if many in their zeal have transgressed it. The two ways of teaching and exhorting — the one which ordinarily ought to be left to ministers, and the other which may and ought to be practised by the people — may be expressed by the two names of *preaching*, and *exhorting* in a way of *Christian conversation*. But then a great deal of difficulty and controversy arises to determine what is *preaching*, and what is *Christian conversation*. However, I will humbly offer my thoughts concerning this subject of lay exhorting, as follows.

1. The common people in exhorting one another should not clothe themselves with the same authority which is proper for ministers. There is a certain authority that ministers have, and should exercise in teaching as well as governing the flock. *Teaching* is spoken of in Scripture as an act of authority, 1Tim 2.12.¹ In order for a man to *preach*, special authority must be committed to him. Rom 10.15, “How shall they preach unless they are *sent*?” Ministers in this work of teaching and exhorting are clothed with authority, as Christ's messengers (Mal 2.7), and as representing him; and so they speak in His name, and in His stead, 2Cor 5.18-20. And it seems to be the most honorable thing that belongs to the office of a minister of the gospel, that the word of reconciliation is committed to him, and that he has power to preach the gospel as Christ's messenger, and to speak in His name. The apostle seems to speak of it as such in 1Cor 1.15-17. Therefore, in the exercise of this power, ministers may clothe themselves with authority in speaking, or they may teach others *in an authoritative manner*. Tit 2.15, “Speak these things, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” But the common people in exhorting one another, should not exhort in this authoritative manner. There is a great deal of difference between teaching as a *father* among a company of children, and counselling in a *brotherly* way (as the children may kindly counsel and admonish one another). Those who are mere brethren, should not assume authority in exhorting, even if one may be better, and have more experience than another. Laymen should not exhort as though they are the ambassadors or messengers of Christ, as ministers do. Nor should they exhort and warn and charge *in His name*, according to the ordinary import of such an expression, when it is applied to teaching. In one sense, a Christian should do everything he does in religion, in the name of Christ; *i.e.*, he ought to act in dependence on Christ as his Head and Mediator, and do all for His glory. But the expression as it is usually understood when applied to teaching or exhorting, is speaking in Christ's *stead*, and as having a message *from Him*.

People may clothe themselves with authority in speaking, either by the authoritative words they use, or in the manner and authoritative air of their speaking. Though some may think that this second one is a matter of indifference, or at least of small importance, there is indeed *a great deal* in it. A person may greatly depart from his place, and be guilty of a great degree

¹ **1Tim 2:12** “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” Edwards will explain this at length below.

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of assuming, in the manner of his speaking those same words which, if said differently, might be proper for him. The same words spoken in a different manner, may express what is very different. Doubtless there may be as much hurt in the manner of a person's speaking, as there may be in his looks. But the wise man tells us that *a haughty look is an abomination to the Lord*, Pro 21.4. Again, a man may clothe himself with authority, in the circumstances under which he speaks; for instance, if he sets himself up as a *public teacher*. Here I would have it observed that I do not suppose a person is guilty of this, merely because he speaks in the hearing of many people. Someone may speak, and speak only in a conversational way, and yet speak in the hearing of a great number. People often do this in their common conversation about temporal things, at feasts and entertainments, where women as well as others converse freely together about worldly things in the hearing of a considerable number of people. It may happen to be in the hearing of a *great* number, and yet it is done without offence. And if their conversation on such occasions should turn to spiritual things, and if they were to speak freely and openly, I don't see why it wouldn't be just as harmless.

Nor do I think that if, besides a great number of people being present, they speak with a very earnest and loud voice, they are setting themselves up as public teachers — not if it is without any contrivance or premeditated design; nor purposely directed to a congregation or multitude; nor speaking to any who are composed in the solemnity of a public service. But if they speak during a conversation, or at a time when all are freely conversing with one another, and they express what they then feel, directing themselves to none but those who are nearby them, or come across them in their way — if they speak in that earnest and passionate manner to which the subject they are speaking about, and the affecting sense of their souls naturally leads them and constrains them, even if many others happen to hear them — then I say, it doesn't appear to me to be setting themselves up as public teachers. Indeed, if we add other circumstances — say that that all this happens to be in a meeting-house — I don't think that merely being in such a place alters the case much. This is provided that the solemnity of public service and divine ordinances are over, and the solemn assembly has broken up, and some stay in the house for mutual religious conversation. And also provided that they don't speak in any authoritative way, but in a humble manner, becoming their degree and station, even if they speak very earnestly and passionately.

Indeed modesty might, in ordinary cases, restrain some people, such as women and those who are young, from speaking at all when a great number are present; at least when some of those present are far their superiors,¹ unless they are spoken to. And yet the case may be so extraordinary as to fully warrant it. If something very extraordinary happens to people, or if they are in extraordinary circumstances — if a person is struck with lightning in the midst of a great company, or if he lies dying — none would think it a violation of modesty for him to speak freely in front of those who are far his superiors. I have seen some women and children in such circumstances, on *religious* accounts, when it appeared to me no more a transgressing of the laws of humility and modesty for them to speak freely, than if they were dying, whoever might be present.

¹ These were British citizens, at a time when such class distinctions were prominent in society.

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But then, a man may be said to set up himself as a *public teacher*, when in a set speech, by design, he directs himself to a multitude, either in the meeting-house or elsewhere, looking to have them attend to what he has to say. Much more when it is contrived and premeditated, without anything like constraint, nor under any extraordinary sense or affection. And still more, when meetings are appointed on purpose to hear lay people exhort, and they take it as their business to be speakers, expecting that others should come and compose themselves, and attend as hearers. When private Christians take it upon themselves in private meetings, to act like the masters or presidents of the assembly,¹ and accordingly, from time to time to teach and exhort the rest, *this* has the appearance of authoritative teaching.

When private Christians, who are no more than mere brethren, exhort and admonish one another, it ought to be in a humble manner, by way of entreaty rather than with authority; and even more if the station of people is lower. Thus it ordinarily becomes women, and those who are young, to be at a greater distance than others, from any appearance of authority in speaking. This much at least is made evident by 1Tim 2.9-12.

It is a general rule that lay people should not exhort one another as if clothed with authority; but it cannot justly be supposed to extend to heads of families in their own families. Every Christian family is a little church, and the heads of it are its authoritative teachers and governors. Nor can it extend to schoolmasters among their scholars. Some other cases might perhaps be mentioned, that ordinary discretion will distinguish, where a man's circumstances properly clothe him with authority, and render it fit and suitable for him to counsel and admonish others in an authoritative manner.

2. No man except a minister who is duly appointed to that sacred calling, ought to follow teaching and exhorting *as a calling*, or so as to neglect that which is his *proper calling*.² Occupying the *office of a teacher* in the church of God implies two things:

- (1) Being invested with the *authority* of a teacher; and,
- (2) Being called to the *business* of a teacher, to make it the business of his life.

Therefore, that man who is not a minister, who takes either of these upon himself, invades the office of a minister. I have already spoken about assuming the authority of a minister. But if a layman does not assume authority in his teaching, yet he forsakes his proper calling, or does so at least in a great measure, and spends his time going about from house to house to counsel and exhort, he crosses the line, and violates Christian rules. Those who have the office of teacher or exhorter, have it for their calling, and should make it their business, as a business proper to their *office*. And none but them should make it their business.

Rom 12.3-8, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to every man who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, as God has dealt to every man a proportion of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members do not have the same office, so we being many, are one body in Christ... He who teaches, let him wait on teaching, or he who exhorts, on exhortation."

¹ The *master* or *president of the assembly* is the ordained minister's role in ordering and directing the congregation in worship; for example, giving the invocation, sermon, and benediction.

² Edwards implies here that the ministry is a full-time calling.

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1Cor 12.29, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?” 1Cor 7.20, “Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called.” 1The 4.11, “And that you study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.”

It would be a very dangerous thing for laymen, in either of these respects, to invade the office of a minister. If this is common among us, we will be in danger of having a stop put to the word of God; of the ark’s turning aside from us before it comes to mount Zion; and of God’s making a breach upon us. For of old there was an unhappy stop put to the joy of the congregation of Israel in bringing up the ark of God, because *others* carried it, besides the Levites. And therefore David, when the error was discovered, says in 1Chr 15.2, “None should carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God, and to minister to Him forever.” And because one presumed to touch the ark, who was not of the sons of Aaron, the Lord therefore made a breach upon them, and covered their day of rejoicing with a cloud in His anger.

Before I dismiss this topic of *lay exhorting*, I would take notice of three things relating to it, on which there ought to be a restraint.

1. Speaking out (*i.e.*, interrupting) during the solemn worship of God, such as during public prayer, singing, or preaching, or administration of the sacrament of the holy supper; or any duty of social worship. This should not be allowed. I know it will be said that in some cases, when people are exceedingly affected, they cannot help it; and I believe so too. But then I also believe, and I know by experience, that there are several things that contribute to that inability, besides merely and absolutely the sense of divine things they have on their hearts. Custom and example, or the thing being allowed, have such an influence that they actually help to make it impossible for people under strong affections to avoid speaking. If it was disallowed, and people at the time they were disposed to break out, had this apprehension that it would be a very unbecoming and shocking thing for them to do so, it would be a help to them, as to their ability to avoid it. Their inability arises from their strong and vehement disposition; and so far as that disposition proceeds from a good principle, it would be weakened by this thought coming into their minds: “What I am going to do, will be to the dishonor of Christ and religion.” And so that inward vehemence that pushed them forward to speak, would *fall*, and they would be enabled to avoid it. Experience confirms this.

2. There ought to be a moderate restraint on *how loud* people talk under high affections. For if there isn’t, it will become natural and unavoidable for people to grow louder and louder, without any increase of their inward sense — until in the end, it becomes natural for them to scream and halloo to almost everyone they see in the streets, when they are greatly affected. But this is certainly a very improper thing, and it has no tendency to promote religion. The man Christ Jesus, when he was on earth, doubtless had as great a sense of the infinite greatness and importance of eternal things, and the worth of souls, as any have now-a-days. But there is not the least appearance in his history, of his taking any such course or manner of exhorting others.

3. There should also be some restraint on the *abundance* of a person’s talk under strong affections. For if people give themselves unbounded liberty to talk as much as they feel inclined to, they will increase and abound more and more in talk, beyond the proportion of

their sense or affection — until at length it becomes ineffectual on those who are near them. By the commonness of their abundant talk, they will defeat their own end.

One more thing I would take notice of before I conclude this part, is the mismanagement in some places, of the duty of *singing praises to God*. I believe it has been one fruit of the extraordinary degrees of the sweet and joyful influences of the Spirit of God lately given, that there has appeared such a disposition to *abound* in that duty, and to frequently fall into this divine exercise — not only in appointed solemn meetings, but when Christians occasionally meet together at each other's houses. But the mismanagement I speak of, is getting into a way of performing it, that is without almost any appearance of that reverence and solemnity with which all visible, open acts of divine worship ought to be attended. It may be two or three in a room singing hymns of praise to God — others who are present, are talking at the same time; or others are going about their work, with little more regard to what is going on, than if some were only singing a common song for their amusement and diversion. There is danger, if such things are continued, of its coming by degrees, to the point that nothing is made of this duty, to the great violation of the third commandment [taking God's name in vain]. Let Christians abound as much as they will in this holy, heavenly exercise, in God's house and in their own houses. But when it is performed, let it be performed as a *holy act*, in which they directly and visibly deal with God. When any open social act of devotion or solemn worship of God is performed, God should be revered as *visibly present*, by those who are present. Just as we would not have the ark of God depart from us, nor provoke God to make a breach upon us, we should take heed that we handle the ark with reverence.

With respect to companies *singing in the streets*, going to or coming from the place of public worship, I would humbly offer my thoughts in the following particulars.

1. **The rule of Christ** concerning *putting new wine into old wineskins*, undoubtedly takes place in things of this nature, supposing it to be something good in itself, but not essential, and not specifically enjoined or forbidden. These things are very new and uncommon, and of an open and public nature. To suddenly introduce, set up, and practise them in many parts of the country, without so much as proposing them for public consideration first, or giving an opportunity for the people of God to weigh the matter, or to consider any reasons that might be offered to support it, is like putting new wine into old wineskins, with no other design than to burst them directly. Nothing else can be expected to be the consequence of this, than uproar and confusion, great offence, and unhappy mischievous disputes, even among the children of God themselves. It's not that what is good in itself, and new, ought to be forborne until there is nobody who dislikes it. But it ought to be forborne until the visible church of God is so prepared for it, at least, that the probability is that it will not do more hurt than good, nor hinder the work of God more than promote it. This is most evident from Christ's rule, and the apostles' practice. If it is brought in when the country is so unprepared, that the shock and surprise on people's minds, and the contention and prejudice against religion that it is likely to occasion, will do more to hinder religion than the practice of it is likely to do to promote it. The fruit is then picked before it is ripe. And indeed, such a hasty endeavor to introduce such an innovation, supposing it to be good in itself, is the likeliest way to retard the effectual introduction of it. It will hinder its being extensively introduced, much more than it will promote it, and so it will defeat its own end.

2. But as to the thing itself, if a considerable part of a congregation has occasion to go in company together to a place of public worship, and they should join together in singing praises to God as they go, I confess that after long consideration, and endeavoring to view the thing in every way, with the utmost diligence and impartiality that I am capable of, I cannot find any valid objection against it. As to the common objection from Mat 6.5, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites: for they love to pray standing in the *synagogues*, and on the *street corners*, that they may be seen by men.” So it is strongly against a solitary person singing in the streets or in the meeting-house by himself, as offering personal worship to God. But as it is brought against a considerable company, thus publicly worshipping God, it appears to me to have no weight at all. To be sure, it is of no more force against a company of worshippers thus praising God in the streets, than against their praising Him in the synagogue or meeting-house. For the streets and the synagogues are both put together in these words of our Saviour, as equivalent in the case he referred to. It is evident that Christ speaks of *personal* and not *public* worship. If singing in the streets is ostentatious, then it must be because it is a public place, and it cannot be done there without being very open; but it is no more public than the synagogue or meeting-house when full of people. Some worship is private in nature, such as what is proper to particular people, families, or private societies; it respects their particular concerns. But what I now speak of, is performed under no other notion than being a part of God’s public worship, without relation to any private or separate society, or any chosen or picked number. It is such that every visible Christian has an equal liberty to join in, if it is convenient for him, and if he is so disposed — just as it is in the worship that is performed in the meeting-house.

When people are going to a public house of worship to serve God there with the assembly of His people, they have no other design than to publicly honor God. That is the business they go from home upon. Even in walking the streets on this errand, they appear in a public act of respect to God. And therefore, if they go in company with public praise, it is not being public when they ought to be in private. It is one part of the beauty of public worship, that it ought to be *very public*. The more public it is, the more open the honor it puts upon God. And it is especially beautiful in that part of public worship which is *public praise*. For the very notion of publicly praising God, is to declare abroad His glory, to publish His praise, to make it known and proclaim it aloud, which is made evident by innumerable expressions of Scripture. It is fitting that God’s honor should not be concealed, but made known in the great congregation, and proclaimed before the sun, and on the housetops, and before kings and all nations, and that His praises should be heard to the utmost ends of the earth.

I suppose that none will condemn singing God’s praises, merely because it is performed in the open air, and not in a closed place. And if it may be performed by a company in the open air, then doubtless they may do it when moving, as well as standing still. So the children of Israel praised God, when they went to mount Zion with the ark of God; and so the multitude praised Christ when they entered with him into Jerusalem a little before his passion. So the children of Israel were in the habit of going up to Jerusalem from year to year; when they went in companies from all parts of the land, three times a year; when they often manifested the eagerness of their minds by travelling all night; and manifested their joy and gladness by singing praises with great decency and beauty as they went towards God’s holy mountain. This is evident by Isa 30.29: “You shall have a song, as in the night when a holy festival is

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kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goes with a flute, to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel.” And Psa 42.4, “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude who kept a holy day.” Psa 100.4, “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.” When God’s people are going to His house, the occasion is so joyful to a Christian in a lively frame, that the language of their heart is, *Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord*. And He is glad when it is so said to him, that the duty of singing praises seems to be peculiarly beautiful on such an occasion. So that if the state of the country is ripe for it, there should be frequent occasion for a considerable part of the congregation to go together to the places of public worship; and there was in other respects, a proportionate appearance of fervency of devotion. It appears to me that it would be ravishingly beautiful if such things were practised all over the land. It would have a great tendency to enliven, animate, and rejoice the souls of God’s saints, and to greatly propagate vital religion. I believe the time is coming when the world will be full of such things.

3. It seems to me to be requisite that there should be the *consent of the governing part* of the worshipping societies to which people have joined themselves, and of which they own a part, in order to introduce things into public worship that are so new and uncommon, and not essential nor specifically commanded, into the places where those worshipping societies belong. The peace and union of such societies seem to require it, seeing that they have voluntarily united themselves to these worshipping societies to that end. Thus they might be unified in the affairs of God’s public worship, and oblige themselves in covenant to act as brethren and mutual assistants, and members of one body in those affairs. All are hereby naturally and necessarily led to be concerned with one another in matters of religion and God’s worship, seeing that this is a part of public worship. It is worship that must be performed from time to time in the view of the whole, and performed at a time when they are meeting together for mutual assistance in worship. Therefore, all must unavoidably be concerned with it, in some measure, so as to at least show their approval and consent, or else their open dislike and separation from others in it. It being this way, I say charity and a regard for the union and peace of such societies, seems to require a consent of the governing part, in order to introduce anything of this nature. That is, unless they think it is unworthy for them to be joined to those societies any longer. If so, then they must first renounce them as the worshipping societies of which they are members. Certainly, if we are of the spirit of the Apostle Paul, and have his discretion, we won’t set up any such practice without it. For the sake of peace when among them, Paul conformed to the Jews in things in which he was not specifically forbidden. And so, when he was among those who were without the law, he conformed to them as he might. To be sure, those who come from abroad into a foreign place, go beyond proper limits if their own heads immediately set up such a new and uncommon practice among a people.

In introducing anything of this nature among a people, their minister especially should be consulted, and his voice followed, as long as he is accepted as their minister. Ministers are pastors of worshipping societies, and they are their heads and guides in the affairs of public worship. They are called in Scripture, *those who rule over them*. Their people are commanded *to obey them, because they watch for their souls as those who must give account*. (Heb 13.17)

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If it belongs to these shepherds and rulers to direct and guide the flock in anything at all, it belongs to them to do so in the circumstances of their public worship.

Thus I have taken particular notice of many of those things that have appeared to me to be amiss, in the management of our religious concerns, relating to the present revival of religion. And I have taken the liberty to freely express my thoughts on them. On the whole, it appears manifest to me, that things have not yet been set to flow in their right channel. If they had, and means had been blessed in proportion to what they have been now, this work would have so prevailed, as it did before this time, to have carried all before it, and triumphed over New England as its conquest.

I believe that the devil, in driving things to these extremes, besides the present hindrance of the work of God, has in view a **twofold mischief** in the outcome of things. **One mischief** is with respect to those who are colder in religion, to carry things to such an extreme that people in general and at length — having their eyes opened by the great excess, and seeing that things must be wrong — he might take advantage by tempting them to entirely reject the whole work as nothing but delusion and distraction. **Another mischief** is with respect to those who have been very heated and zealous, those of God's own children who have been wayward, to sink them down into unbelief and darkness. The time is coming, I have no doubt, when most of them will be convinced of their errors. And then the devil will probably take advantage to lead them into a dreadful wilderness, and to bewilder and confound them about their own experiences, and the experiences of others. He would make them doubt many things that they should not doubt, and even tempt them with atheistic thoughts. I believe that if all true Christians, all over the land, were now at once to have their eyes opened to fully see all their errors, it would seem for the present to dampen religion. The dark thoughts that would be occasioned at first, and the inward doubts, difficulties, and conflicts that would rise in their souls, would deaden their lively affections and joys. It would cause the appearance of a quick decay of religion. Yet it would do God's saints great good in the end. It would fit them for more spiritual and excellent experiences, more humble and heavenly love, and unmixed joys; and it would greatly tend to a more powerful, extensive, and durable prevalence of vital piety.

I don't know that we won't be in danger, by and by, of going to contrary extremes, after our eyes are fully opened to see our errors. The devil has driven the pendulum far beyond its proper point of rest. And when he has carried it to the utmost length he can, and it begins to swing back by its own weight, he will probably set in, and drive it the other way with the utmost fury. And so he will give us no rest. If possible, he will prevent us from settling into a proper balance. What a poor, blind, weak, and miserable creature man is, at his best estate! We are like poor helpless sheep; the devil is too subtle for us. Our own strength! Our own wisdom! How ready we are to go astray! How easily we are drawn into countless snares, while in the meantime, we are bold and confident, and have no doubt that we are right and safe! We are foolish sheep in the midst of subtle serpents and cruel wolves — and we don't know it. Oh! how unfit we are to be left to ourselves! And how much we stand in need of the wisdom, power, condescension, patience, forgiveness, and gentleness of our Good Shepherd.

PART V.

Showing positively, what ought to be done to promote this Work.

In considering means and methods for promoting this glorious work of God, I have already observed some instances in which there has been needless objecting and complaining. And I have also noted many things amiss that ought to be amended.

I now proceed in the *third* and last place, to show positively, what ought to be done, or what courses (according to my humble opinion) ought to be taken to promote this work. It was earlier observed the obligations that all are under with one consent, to do their utmost; and also the great danger of neglecting it. I hope that some, upon reading what was said under that topic, will be ready to say, *What shall we do?* To such readers I would now offer my thoughts, in answer to such an inquiry.

What I think we should set ourselves about doing in the first place, is to remove any stumbling blocks. When God is revealed as about to come to gloriously set up his kingdom in the world, *this* is proclaimed: *Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God*, Isa 40.3. — And again, Isa 57.14, “Heap it up! Heap it up! Prepare the way; take the stumbling-block out of the way of My people.” And 62.10, “Go through, go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, Build up the highway; take out the stones.”

In order to do this, a great deal must be done with confessing our faults on both sides. For undoubtedly many and great are the faults that have been committed in the wrangling, confusions, and mixtures of light and darkness that have occurred lately. There is hardly any duty more contrary to our corrupt dispositions, and mortifying to the pride of man; but it must be done. Repentance of faults is, in a peculiar manner, a proper duty when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, or when we especially expect or desire it to come, as appears by John the Baptist’s preaching. And if God now loudly calls upon us to repent, then he also calls upon us to make proper manifestations of our repentance. I am persuaded that those who have openly opposed this work, or have from time to time spoken lightly of it, cannot be excused in the sight of God, without openly confessing their fault in it, especially if they are ministers. If they have opposed the work in any way, either directly or indirectly, or have so behaved in their public performances or private conversation, so as to prejudice the minds of their people *against* the work, or if they are hereafter convinced of the goodness and divinity of what they have opposed — then they should by no means minimize the matter, and excuse themselves, and pretend that they always thought so, or that it was only this or that imprudence which they objected to. Rather, they ought to openly declare their conviction, and condemn themselves for what they have done. For it is *Christ* that they have spoken against in speaking lightly of, and prejudicing others against this work; indeed, worse than that, it is the Holy Ghost. And even if they have done it ignorantly and in unbelief, yet when they find out who it is that they have opposed, undoubtedly God will hold them bound to publicly confess it.

On the other side, if those who have been zealous to promote the work, have in any of the forementioned instances, openly gone out of their way and done what is contrary to Christian rules, by which course they have openly injured others, or greatly violated good order, and so wounded religion, they must publicly confess it and humble themselves, if they would take away the stones and prepare the way for God’s people. Those who have laid great stumbling-

blocks in others' way by their *open transgression*, are bound to remove them by their *open repentance*.

Some, probably, will be ready to object that their opposers will take advantage by this to behave themselves insolently, and to insult both them and religion. To the shame of some, they have indeed taken advantage by such things — such as taking advantage of the good spirit that Mr. Whitefield showed in his retractions,¹ and some others. But if some embittered enemies of religion stand ready to employ everything to its disadvantage, that should not keep others from doing an enjoined Christian duty — even though in the manifestation of humility and repentance after a fault is openly committed. To stand this up as an excuse for visible impenitence of a real fault, in order to avoid such an inconvenience, is to do evil in order to prevent evil. And besides, the danger of an evil consequence is much greater on the other side. To commit a sin, and then stand in it, is what gives the enemy the greatest advantage. For Christians to act like Christians, in openly humbling themselves when they have openly offended, in the end brings the greatest honor to Christ and religion. And in this way, people are most likely to have God appear on their behalf.

Again, in such a day as this, God especially calls his people to exercise extraordinary meekness and mutual forbearance. For at such a time, Christ appears, as it were, coming in his kingdom. This calls for great moderation in our behavior towards all men; as evident in Phi 4.5, “Let your moderation be known to all men: the Lord is at hand.” The awe of the divine majesty that appears present or approaching, should dispose us to it, and deter us from the contrary. It is exceedingly unsuitable for us to judge one another, and behave with fierceness and bitterness towards one another, when He who is the searcher of all hearts, to whom we must all give an account, appears so remarkably present. Our business at such a time should be at home, searching ourselves, and condemning ourselves, and taking heed to our own behavior. If there is glorious prosperity approaching for the church of God, then those who are most meek, will have the largest share in it. For when Christ rides forth in his glory and his majesty, it is *because of truth, meekness, and righteousness*, Psa 45.3-4. When God remarkably *arises to execute judgment, it is to save all the meek of the earth*, Psa 76.9. It is *the meek who will increase their joy in the Lord*, Isa 29.19. And when the time comes that God gives this lower world into the hands of his saints, it is *the meek who shall inherit the earth*, Psa 37.11. By contrast, Mat 5.5, “But with the devious, God will show himself opposed.” (Psa 18.26)

Therefore, those who have been zealous for this work, and have greatly erred, and been injurious with their zeal, should not be treated with bitterness. There is abundant reason to think that most of them are the dear children of God, those for whom Christ died; and therefore that they will see their error. As for those things in which we see they are in error, we have reason to say about them as the apostle did in Phi 3.15, “If any think otherwise, God will reveal this to them.” Their errors should not be used by us to excite indignation towards them. Rather, it should influence all of us who hope that we are the children of God, to humble ourselves, and become more fully dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ, when we see those who

¹ George Whitefield (1714-1770) — one of the greatest evangelists of his day; thousands would come to hear him preach in the open fields. He was just 26 when Edwards wrote this. Later in life, Whitefield confessed, “Alas! Alas! In how many things have I judged and acted wrong. I have been too rash and hasty in characterizing both places and people....”

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are God's own people, go so readily astray. And those ministers who have been judged and injuriously dealt with, will do the part of Christ's disciples *not* to judge and revile in return; but rather, to receive such injuries with meekness and forbearance, and make good use of them – more strictly examining their hearts and ways, and committing themselves to God. This will be the way to have God vindicate them in His providence, if they belong to him. We have not yet seen the end of things, nor do we know who will be most vindicated and honored by God in the outcome. Ecc 7.8, "Better is the end of a thing, than the beginning of it; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."

Contrary to this mutual meekness, is each party's stigmatizing of one another with odious names, which is being done in many parts of New England. This tends to greatly widen and perpetuate the breach. Such terms of reproach, as it were, divide us into two armies, separated and drawn up in battle array, ready to fight one another. This greatly hinders the work of God.

Such an extraordinary time as this especially requires us to exercise a great deal of forbearance *towards one another*. So too, the exercise of great patience in waiting on God is particularly required of God's people, who may be under special difficulties and disadvantages as to the means of grace. The beginning of a revival of religion will naturally and necessarily be attended with a great many difficulties of this nature. Many parts of the reviving church will be under great disadvantages for a while, because of what remains of the old disease, of a general corruption of the visible church. We cannot expect that after a long time of degeneracy and depravity in the state of things in the church, things should all come to rights ¹ at once; it *must* be a work of time. And so, for God's people to be overly hasty and forceful in such a case, resolved to have everything rectified at once, or else to forcibly deliver themselves by breaches and separations, is the way to *hinder* things from coming to rights (as they otherwise would), and hold them back, and break it all into pieces. The case may be such, and the difficulty may be so intolerable, as to allow no delay. God's people cannot continue in the state they're in, without violating the absolute commands of God.

But otherwise, even if the difficulty is very great, another course should be taken. God's people should have their recourse directly to the throne of grace, to represent their difficulties before the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who has the care of all the affairs of His church. And when they are done, they should wait patiently upon Him. If they do so, they may expect that in his time he will appear for their deliverance. But if *instead of that*, they are impatient, and take the work into their own hands, they will betray their lack of faith, and dishonor God. They cannot have reason to hope that Christ will appear for them, as they desired Him to, but will have reason to fear that He will leave them to manage their affairs for themselves, as best as they can. If they had waited on Christ patiently, *continuing steadfastly in prayer*, they might have had him appear for them, to much more effectually deliver them. Isa 28.16, *Whoever believes will not act hastily*. It is for those who are found patiently waiting on the Lord under difficulties, that he will especially appear when he comes to do great things for His church. This is made evident by Isa 30.18, and 40.31, and 49.23, and Psa 37.9, and many other places.

Somewhere, not long ago, I met with an exposition of these words of the Spouse, which are repeated several times in the Song of Solomon: *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that*

¹ *Come to rights*: to be restored to the right path.

you not stir up nor awake my love until he pleases. It is the only satisfying exposition I ever encountered. It was to this purpose: namely, that when the church of God is under great difficulties, and in distress, and Christ doesn't appear for her help, but seems to neglect her as though he were asleep, God's people (*the daughters of Jerusalem*) should not show a hasty spirit. Not having the patience to wait for Christ to awake for their help until His time comes, they take indirect courses for their own deliverance, and use forced means for their escape, *before* Christ appears to open the door for them. And so, as it were, they stir up and awaken Christ before his time. When the church is in distress, and God doesn't seem to appear for her in His providence, he is very often represented in Scripture as being asleep — as Christ was asleep in the ship when his disciples were tossed by the storm, and the ship was covered with waves. God's appearing afterwards for his people's help, is represented as his awaking out of sleep: Psa 7.6, 35.23, 44.23, 59.4, and 73.20.

Christ has an appointed time for awaking out of sleep, and his people ought to wait for Him. They should not, in an impatient fit, stir him before his time. It is worthy to observe how strict the charge is, which is given to the daughters of Jerusalem. It is repeated three times in the Song of Solomon: 2.7, 3.5, and 8.4. In Song 2.1-6, the support that Christ gives his church while she is in a suffering state, is represented *as the Lily among thorns*. In the 7th verse, it is represented as her patience in waiting for Christ to appear for her deliverance, when she charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up nor awake her love until he pleases, *by the gazelles or hinds of the field*. These are creatures of a gentle, harmless nature. They are not beasts of prey; do not devour one another; do not fight with their enemies but flee from them; and are of a pleasant, loving nature, Pro 5.19. In the next verse, we see the church's success in this way of waiting under her sufferings, with meekness and patience. Christ soon awakes, speedily appears, and swiftly comes: *The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills!* (Song 2.8)

What has been mentioned up to this point, relates to the behavior we are obliged to show if we would prevent *hindrances* to the work. But besides these, there are things that must be done to more directly *advance* it. And here, it concerns everyone, in the first place, to look into his own heart and see to it that he is a partaker of the benefits of the work himself, and that it is promoted in his own soul. Now is a most glorious opportunity for the good of souls. It is obviously with respect to a time of great revival of religion in the world, that we have that gracious, earnest, and moving invitation proclaimed in Isaiah 55.1: *Ho, everyone who thirsts!* This is evident by what precedes in the foregoing chapter, and what follows at the close of this one. In the 6th verse, it says, "Seek the Lord, while He may be found; call upon Him while he is near." And it is with special reference to such a time, that Christ proclaims as he does in Rev 21.6, "I will give from the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts." And chapter 22.17, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come; and whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." The Feast of Tabernacles seems to typify such a time. We have an account of Jesus referring to that feast in Joh 7.37-38: "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water." And it is with special reference to God's freeness and readiness to bestow grace at such a time, that it is said in Isa 60.11, about spiritual Jerusalem, *Your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night.*

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I don't judge those who have opposed this work, and I would not have others judge them if any of them happen to read this treatise. I would take the liberty to entreat them to stop concerning themselves so much about others, and look into their own souls; see to it that they are the subjects of a true, saving work of the Spirit of God. If they have reason to think they never have been, or they have only a very doubtful hope, then how can they have any heart to be busily and fiercely engaged about the mistakes and supposed false hopes of *others*? I would now beseech those who have up to now been somewhat inclined to Arminian principles, to seriously weigh the matter with respect to this work, and consider whether, if the Scriptures are the word of God, the substance of the work that has been described in the first part of this treatise is not the work of God, and the flourishing of that religion which is taught by Christ and his apostles. Consider whether any good middle ground can be found, where a man can rest with any stability between owning this work, and being a Deist.¹ And also consider if this is indeed the work of God, whether it entirely overthrows their scheme of religion or not — and therefore whether it infinitely concerns them (if they would be partakers of eternal salvation) to relinquish their scheme. Now is a good time for Arminians to change their principles. I would now, as one of the friends of this work, humbly invite them to come and join us, and be on our side. If I had the authority of Moses, I would say to them, as Moses said to Hobab, Num 10.29, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, *I will give it to you*. Come with us; and we will do you good: for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel."

Because the benefit and advantage of the good employment of such a season is extraordinarily great, the danger of neglecting and misemploying it is proportionately great. It is abundantly evident by the Scripture, that as a time of great outpouring of the Spirit is a time of great favor to those who are partakers of the blessing, it is also a time of remarkable vengeance to others. Thus in Isa 61.2, what is called *the acceptable year of the Lord*, is also called *the day of vengeance of our God*. So it was among the Jews in the apostles' days. In 2Cor 6.2, Paul says about that time, that it was the accepted time and day of salvation. Christ says of the same time, in Luk 21.22, "These are the days of vengeance." At the same time that the blessings of the kingdom of heaven were given to some, an *axe was laid at the root of the trees, so that those which did not bear fruit might be hewn down and cast into the fire*, Mat 3.9-10. Then, both *the goodness and severity of God* was glorified in a remarkable manner, Rom 11.22. The harvest and the vintage go together. At the same time that the earth is reaped, and God's elect are gathered into the garner of God, *the angel who has power over fire, thrusts in his sickle and gathers the clusters of the vine of the earth, and casts it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God*, Rev 14.19. It is foretold that at the beginning of the glorious times of the Christian church, at the same time that *the hand of the Lord is known to his servants, so His indignation is shown to his enemies*, Isa 66.14. So when that glorious morning appears, in which *the sun of righteousness shall arise for the elect, with healing in his wings, the day shall burn like an oven for the wicked*, Mal 4.1-3. There is no time like such a time, for the increase of guilt, and treasuring up wrath, and a desperate hardening of the heart if men stand against it. This is the most awful judgment, and fruit of divine wrath, that can be inflicted on any mortal. So that a time of great grace, and pouring out of the Spirit, and the fruits of divine

¹ *Deist*: someone who believes in a Creator who made the universe, but is not actively involved in it.

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mercy, is also evermore a time of great outpouring of something else: *namely*, divine vengeance on those who neglect and misemploy such a season.

The state of the present revival of religion, provokes an awful reaction by those who are advanced in years. The work has chiefly been among those who are young; comparatively few others have been made partakers of it. Indeed, it has commonly been so, that when God has begun any great work for the revival of his church, He has taken the young-people, and cast aside the old and stiff-necked generation. There was a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God on the children of Israel in the wilderness, on the younger generation, on *their little ones that they said would become victims* (Num 14.3) — the generation that entered into Canaan with Joshua. This is evident by many things in Scripture. That generation seems to have been the most excellent generation that was ever in the church of Israel. There is no generation of which there is so much good, and so little hurt spoken of in Scripture. This might be shown if it wouldn't be too long. In that generation, who were under twenty years old when they left Egypt, was that *kindness of youth, and love of betrothal*, spoken of in Jer 2.2-3.¹ But the old generation was bypassed. They remained obstinate and stiff-necked, always murmuring, and wouldn't be convinced by all of God's wondrous works that they beheld.

God, by his awful judgments that he executed in the wilderness, and the affliction that the people suffered there, convinced and humbled the younger generation, and fitted them for great mercy, as evidenced by Deu 2.14-16. But He destroyed the old generation. *He swore in his wrath, that they would not enter into his rest, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness.* (Num 14.31-32; Heb 3.11) When it was a time of great mercy, and pouring out of God's Spirit on their children, it was remarkably a day of vengeance to them — as it appears in Psalm 90. Let the old generation in *this* land take their warning from this; and take heed that they do not refuse to be convinced by all God's wonders that he works before their eyes; and that they do not continue forever objecting, and murmuring, and cavilling against the work of God — lest, while God is bringing their children into a land flowing with milk and honey, He swear in his wrath concerning them, that their carcasses will fall in the wilderness.

So when God has a design of great mercy to the Jews, in bringing them out of the Babylonian captivity, and returning them to their own land, there was a blessed outpouring of the Spirit on them in Babylon, to bring them to a deep conviction and repentance, and to a spirit of prayer to cry earnestly to God for mercy. This is often spoken of by the prophets; but it was not poured out on the old generation who were carried captive. The captivity continued just long enough for that perverse generation to waste away and die in their captivity — at least those who were adults when carried captive. The old generation, and heads of families were exceedingly obstinate, and would not listen to the earnest, repeated warnings of the prophet Jeremiah. But he had greater success among the young people, as it appears by Jer 6.10-11,

“To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. Therefore, I am full of the fury of the Lord. I am weary with

¹ **Jer 2:2** Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, “Thus says the LORD: ‘I remember you, The kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness to the LORD, the firstfruits of His increase. All who devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them,’ says the LORD.”

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holding it in; I will pour it out on the children abroad, and on the assembly of the young men together; for even the husband with the wife (*i.e.*, the heads of families, and parents of these children) shall be taken, the aged with him who is full of days.”

Blessed be God! Some of the older people have been made partakers in *this* work. And those who are most awakened by these warnings of God’s word, and the awful frown of His providence, are most likely to be made partakers afterward. It infinitely concerns them to take heed to themselves, so that they may be partakers of it. For how dreadful it will be to go to hell after having spent so many years doing nothing but treasure up wrath.

But above all others whatsoever, it concerns those of us who are *ministers*, to see to it that we are partakers of this work, or that we experience the saving operations of the same Spirit who is now poured out on the land. How sorrowful and melancholy is the case when it is otherwise! It is torturous for someone to stand at the head of a congregation of God’s people, as representing Christ and speaking in His stead, and to act the part of a shepherd and guide to a people in such a state of things — when many are under great awakenings, and many are converted, and many of God’s saints are filled with divine light, love, and joy — and to undertake to instruct and lead them all, in all these various circumstances. What sorrowful work it is to continually play the hypocrite, and to force the airs of a saint in preaching, and from time to time in private conversation. And particularly in dealing with souls, to undertake to judge their circumstances, trying to talk with those who come to him, as if he knew what they were saying; or trying to talk with people of experience, as if he knew how to converse with them, and had those same experiences. And to make others believe that he rejoices when others are converted, and to force a pleased and joyful countenance and manner of speech, when there is nothing here in the heart! Oh! how miserable such a person must feel! What a wretched bondage and slavery this is! What pains and how much art such a minister must use to conceal himself! And how weak are his hands! This is beside the infinite provocation of the most high God, and the displeasure of his Lord and Master, which he incurs by continuing to be a secret enemy to Him in his heart, in such circumstances. I think there is a great deal of reason from the Scripture, to conclude that no sort of men in the world will be so low in hell, as ungodly ministers. Everything that is spoken of in Scripture, as that which aggravates guilt and heightens divine wrath, applies to them — no matter that particular people of other sorts may be guiltier than some of these.

What great disadvantages unconverted ministers are under, to oppose any irregularities, or imprudence, or intemperate zeal that they may see in those who are the children of God, when they’re conscious that they themselves have no zeal at all! If enthusiasm and wildness come in like a flood, what poor, weak instruments such ministers are to withstand it! With what courage can they open their mouths, when they look inward and consider how it is with them?

We who are ministers not only need some true experience of the saving influence of the Spirit of God on our heart, but we need a double portion of the Spirit of God at such a time as this. We need to be as full of light as a mirror held out in the sun. And with respect to love and zeal at this day, we need to be like the angels who are a flame of fire. The state of the times requires an extreme fulness of the divine Spirit in ministers, and we should give ourselves no rest until we have obtained it. In order for this, I think ministers, above all people, ought to be much in private prayer and fasting, and also much in praying and fasting with one another. It seems

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to me that it would suit the circumstances of the present day, if ministers in a neighborhood would often meet together, and spend days in fasting and fervent prayer among themselves, earnestly seeking those extraordinary supplies of divine grace from heaven that we need at this day. And also, if on their occasional visits to one another, instead of spending their time in sitting and smoking, and diverting, or in worldly and unprofitable conversation, sharing the news, and making their remarks on this and the other trifling subject — they spent their time praying together, singing praises, and in religious conference. In these respects, how much do many of the common people shame many of us who are in the work of the ministry? Surely we don't behave ourselves much like Christian ministers, and like the disciples and ambassadors of Christ, as we should. While we condemn zealous people for censuring ministers these days, it should not be without deep reflections upon, and great condemnation of ourselves. For indeed, we do very much to *provoke* censoriousness; and we lay a great temptation before others to sinful judging. Even if we can prove that those who are guilty of it transgress the Scripture rule, our indignation should chiefly be against ourselves.

Ministers these days, in a special manner, should act as fellow-helpers in their great work. It should be seen that they are animated and engaged, and exert themselves with one heart and soul, and with united strength, to promote the present glorious revival of religion. And to that end, they should often meet together, and act in concert. If it were a common thing in the country, for ministers to join in public exercises, and to second one another in their preaching, I believe it would be of great service. I mean that ministers should consult with one another as to the subjects of their discourses, before they go to the house of God. They should speak there with two or three of them going in short discourses, seconding each other, and earnestly enforcing each other's warnings and counsels. Only such an appearance of united zeal in ministers would have a great tendency to awaken attention, and to greatly impress and animate the hearers — as found by experience in some parts of the country.

Ministers should carefully avoid weakening one another's hands. And therefore everything should be avoided by which their interest with their people might be diminished, or their union with them broken. On the contrary, if ministers haven't forfeited their acceptance in that character in the visible church, by their doctrine or behavior, then their brethren in the ministry should studiously endeavor to heighten the esteem and affection of their people towards them, so that they may have no temptation to repent of allowing other ministers to come and preach in their pulpits.

Two things that are exceedingly necessary in ministers, if they would do any great things to advance the kingdom of Christ, are *zeal* and *resolve*. The influence and power of these things to bring to pass great effects, is greater than can well be imagined. A man of only ordinary capacity will do more with these two things, than someone of ten times the parts and learning will do without them. More may be done with them in a few days, or at least weeks, than can be done without them in many years. Those who are possessed of these qualities, commonly carry the day in almost all affairs. Most of the great things that have been done in the world of mankind, the great revolutions that have been accomplished in the kingdoms and empires of the earth, have been chiefly owing to these two things. The very sight or appearance of a thoroughly engaged spirit, together with fearless courage and unyielding resolution in any person who has undertaken to manage any affair among mankind, goes a great way towards

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accomplishing the effect aimed at. It is evident that the appearance of these things in Alexander, did three times as much towards his conquering the world, as all the blows that he struck. How much were the great things that Oliver Cromwell did, owing to these things! The great things that Mr. Whitefield has done everywhere, as he ran through the British dominions (so far as they are owing to means), are very much owed to the appearance of these things which he is eminently possessed of.

When the people see these things are apparent in a person, and to a great degree, it awes them, and it has a commanding influence on their minds. It seems to them that they must yield. They naturally fall before them, without standing to contest or dispute the matter. They are conquered as if by surprise. But while we are cold and heartless, going on in a dull manner, in an old formal round, we will never achieve anything great. In our attempts, the appearance of such coldness and irresolution will not make people even *think* of yielding. They will hardly be sufficient to put it into their minds. And if it is put into their minds, the appearance of such indifference and cowardice, calls for and provokes opposition.

Our misery is lack of *zeal* and *courage*. For not only through lack of them does all that we attempt fail, but it prevents our even *attempting* anything very remarkable for the kingdom of Christ. Hence, it has often been true that when anything very considerable that is new, is proposed to be done for the advancement of religion, or for the public good, many difficulties are discovered that are in the way. A great many objections are raised; and it may be, it is put off from one person to another; but nobody does anything. And in this way, good designs or proposals have often failed, and have sunk as soon as proposed. But if we had Mr. Whitefield's zeal and courage, what could we *not* do with such a blessing as we might expect?

Zeal and *courage* will do much in people with only an ordinary capacity; but they would especially do great things, if joined with great abilities. If some great men who have appeared in our nation, had been as eminent in *divinity*, as they were in *philosophy*, and had engaged in the Christian cause with as much zeal and fervor as some others have done, and with a proportionate blessing from heaven, they would have conquered all Christendom, and turned the world upside down. We have many ministers in the land who do not lack abilities. They are people of bright parts and learning. They should consider how much is expected, and will be *required* of them by their Lord and Master; and how much they might do for Christ; and what a great honor and how glorious a reward they might receive, if they had in their hearts a heavenly warmth and divine heat, proportionate to their light.

With respect to candidates for the ministry, I will not undertake to particularly determine what kind of examination or trial they should pass under, in order for their admission to that sacred work. But I think this is evident from the Scripture, that another sort of trial is requisite with regard to their virtue and piety, than is required for people being admitted into the visible church. The apostle directs that *hands not be laid on any man hastily; but that they first be tested* before they are admitted to the work of the ministry. But it is evident that people were hastily admitted by baptism into the visible church from time to time, upon their profession of their faith in Christ, without such caution and strictness in their probation. It seems to me that men would act ill advisedly, if they entered on that great and sacred work, before having a comfortable satisfaction concerning themselves, that they had a saving work of God on their souls.

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Though it may be thought that I act outside of my proper sphere, to intermeddle in the affairs of the colleges, yet I will take the liberty of an Englishman (who speaks his mind freely concerning public affairs) and the liberty of a minister of Christ (who doubtless may speak his mind just as freely about things that concern the kingdom of his Lord and master) to give my opinion on some things with respect to those societies. The original and main design of them was to train up people, and fit them for the work of the ministry. I would say in general, that it appears to me that care should be taken, in some way or other, that those societies are so regulated that they would in fact be nurseries of piety. Otherwise, they are fundamentally ruined and undone as to their main design, and their most essential end. They should be so constituted that vice and idleness should not be living there. Such things are intolerable in societies whose main design is to train up youth in Christian knowledge and eminent piety, and to fit them to be pastors of the flock of the blessed Jesus. I have some previous acquaintance with the affairs of a college, and experience of what belonged to its tuition¹ and government. I cannot help but think that it is practicable enough to constitute such societies, so that none should be there without being virtuous, serious, and diligent. It seems to me to be a reproach to the land, that it should ever be so with our colleges, that instead of being places of the greatest advantages for true piety, one cannot send a child there, without great danger of his being infected, as to his morals; as it has certainly been with these societies sometimes. It is perfectly intolerable. Anything should be done, rather than let it be so. If we pretend to have any colleges at all, under any notion of training up youth for the ministry, some way should be found that would certainly prevent its becoming this way. To have societies for bringing people up to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and to lead souls to heaven, and yet to have them be places of so much infection, is the greatest nonsense and absurdity imaginable.

As thorough and effectual care should be taken to ensure that vice and idleness are not tolerated in these societies, so too their design certainly requires that extraordinary means be used in them for training up the students in vital religion, and experimental and practical godliness. So that, these should be *holy* societies; the very place should be *sacred*, as it were. They should be fountains of piety and holiness in the midst of the land. A great deal of pains are taken to teach the scholars *human* learning. There ought to be as much and more care to thoroughly educate them in religion, and lead them to true and eminent holiness. If the main design of these nurseries is to bring up people to teach Christ, then it is of the greatest importance that there should be care and pains taken to bring those who are educated there, to the knowledge of Christ. It has been common in our public prayers to call these societies, *the schools of the prophets*. If they are indeed schools to train up young men to be *prophets*, then certainly there ought to be extraordinary care taken to train them up to be *Christians*.

I cannot see why it is not on all accounts fitting and convenient for the governors and instructors of the colleges, particularly, singly, and frequently to converse with the students about the state of their souls. The Rev. Dr. Doddridge is one of the most noted of the present dissenting ministers in England. He keeps an academy at Northampton. And he informs the Rev. Mr. Wadsworth of Hartford, in Connecticut of his practice there, in a letter dated at

¹ *Tuition*: the training or instruction provided by a teacher or tutor.

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Northampton, March 6, 1740-41. I have seen the original of this letter, sent to me by Mr. Wadsworth, and I have made an extract of it; which is as follows:

“Through the divine goodness, I have the pleasure every year to see some plants taken out of my nursery, and set in neighboring congregations where they generally settle in with unanimous consent. And that is to a very remarkable degree, in some very large and once divided congregations — a circumstance in which I own and adore the hand of a wise and gracious God. I cannot help but look at it as a token for good. I have at present a greater proportion of pious and ingenious youth under my care, than I ever had before. So that I hope the church may reasonably expect some considerable relief from this, if God spares their lives a few years, and continues those gracious assistances to them, which He has up to now mercifully imparted. I will not, Sir, trouble you at present, with a large account of my method of academic education. Only I would observe that I think it of vast importance to instruct them carefully in the Scriptures; and not only endeavor to establish them in the great truths of Christianity, but to labor to promote the practical influence of them on their hearts. For this purpose I frequently converse with each of them alone, and conclude the conversation with prayer. This does indeed take up a great deal of time; but I bless God that it is amply restored in the pleasure I have in seeing my labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

There are some who are not ministers, nor directly concerned in those things that pertain to their office, or in the education of people for it, who are under great advantages to promote such a glorious work as this. Some laymen, though it is not their business to publicly exhort and teach, yet they are in some respects, under greater advantage to encourage and forward this work than ministers. As particularly great men, or men who are high in honor and influence, how much might such men do to encourage religion, and to open the way for it to have free course, and bear down opposition, if they were but so inclined! There is commonly a certain unhappy shyness in great men with respect to religion, as though they were ashamed of it, or at least ashamed to do very much with it. By this they dishonor and doubtless greatly provoke the King of kings, and very much wound religion among the common people. They are careful of their honor, and seem to be afraid of appearing openly forward and zealous in religion, as though it would debase their character, and expose them to contempt. But in this day of bringing up the ark, they ought to be like David, that great king of Israel, who *made himself vile* before the ark. And as he was the highest in honor and dignity among God’s people, he thought it suited him to appear foremost in the zeal and activity that he manifested on that occasion. Thereby he animated and encouraged the whole congregation to praise the Lord, and rejoice before Him with all their might. And though it diminished David in the eyes of scoffing Michal, it did not at all abate the honor and esteem of the congregation of Israel, but advanced it, as it appears by 2Sam 6.22.

Rich men have a talent in their hands, in the disposal and investment of which they might very much promote such a work as this, if they were so disposed. They are far beyond others in advantage to do good, and to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven. What a thousand pities it is, that for lack of a heart, they usually have no share there at all, and heaven is peopled mostly with the *poor* of this world. One would think that our rich men, who call themselves Christians, might devise some notable things to do with their money to advance the kingdom of their professed Redeemer, and promote the prosperity of the souls of men in this time of

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such extraordinary advantage. It seems to me that in this age, most of us have but very narrow, penurious notions of Christianity, as it respects our use and disposal of our temporal goods.

The primitive Christians did not have such notions. They were trained up by the apostles in another way. God has greatly distinguished some of the inhabitants of New England from others, in the abundance that He has given them of the good things of this life. If they could now be persuaded to lay out some considerable part of what God has given them for the honor of God, and to lay it up in heaven instead of spending it for their own honor, or laying it up for their posterity, they would not regret it afterwards. How liberally the heads of the tribes contributed their wealth when setting up the tabernacle, though it was in a barren wilderness! These are the days of the erecting the tabernacle of God among us. We have a particular account in Neh 3.32, of how the goldsmiths and merchants helped to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. The days are coming that are spoken of in Scripture, and I believe they are not very far off, when *the sons of Zion shall come from far, bringing their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord their God, and to the Holy One of Israel;* and when the merchants of the earth will trade for Christ, more than for themselves, and *their merchandise and hire will be holiness to the Lord, and will not be treasured, or laid up for posterity, but will be for those who dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing;* and when *the ships of Tarshish shall bring the wealth of the distant parts of the earth, to the place of God's sanctuary, to make the place of his feet glorious; and the abundance of the sea shall be converted in the use of God's church, and she will drink the milk of the Gentiles, and milk the breast of kings.* (Isa 60.16) The days are coming, when the great and rich men of the world *will bring their honor and glory into the church,* and will, as it were, strip themselves to spread their garments under Christ's feet as he enters triumphantly into Jerusalem; and when those who will not do so, will have no glory, and their silver and gold will be corrupted, and their garments moth-eaten. For the saints shall then inherit the earth, and they shall reign on earth. And those who honor God, He will honor, and those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

If some of our rich men would give one quarter of their estates to promote this work, they would act a little like they were designed for the kingdom of heaven, and a little like rich men will act by and by, who will partake of the spiritual wealth and glories of that kingdom.

Great things might be done for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in this day, by those who have the ability:

- by establishing funds for the support and propagation of religion;
- by supporting some who are eminently qualified with gifts and grace in preaching the gospel in certain parts of the country, but destitute of the means of grace;
- in searching out children of promising abilities, with their hearts full of love to Christ, but who are from poor families (as doubtless there are many now in the land), and raising them up for the ministry;
- in distributing books that are remarkably fitted to promote vital religion, and have a great tendency to advance this work;
- or if they would only bear the trouble, expense, and loss of sending such books into various parts of the land to be sold, it might be an occasion for ten times as many of those books to be bought, or otherwise used;

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- in establishing and supporting schools in poor towns and villages; this might be done on such a foundation, as not only to bring up children in common learning, but might also very much tend to their conviction and conversion, and being trained up in vital piety; ¹
- and doubtless something might be done this way in old towns, and more populous places, that it might have a great tendency to make religion flourish in the rising generation.

Fasting and Prayer

But I would now proceed to mention some things that ought to be done in such a day as this, which concern everyone in general. And here, the first thing I will mention is *fasting and prayer*. It seems to me that the circumstances of the present work, loudly call God's people to abound in this. Whether,

(1) they consider the experience that God has lately given them of the worth of His presence, and of the blessed fruits of the effusions of his Spirit, to excite them to pray for its continuance and increase, and a greater extent of such blessings; or

(2) they consider the great encouragement that God has lately given them, to pray for the outpourings of his Spirit, and carrying on this work, by the great manifestations which He has recently made of the freeness and riches of His grace. And how much there is, in what we have seen of the glorious works of God's power and grace, to put us in mind of the still greater things of this nature, that He has spoken of in his word, and to excite our longings for those things, and hopes of their approach; or

(3) they consider the great opposition that Satan makes *against* this work, and the many difficulties with which it is clogged, and the distressing circumstances that some parts of God's church in this land are under at this day, on one account or another.

So it is God's will, through this wonderful grace, that the prayers of His saints should be one great and principal means of carrying on the designs of Christ's kingdom in the world. When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is His will that the extraordinary prayers of his people should precede it. This is manifest by Eze 36.37, "I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me, to do this for them;" together with the context.

And it is revealed that when God is about to accomplish great things for his church, he will begin by remarkably *pouring out the Spirit of grace and supplication*, Zec 12.10. If we are not to expect the devil to leave a particular person who is bodily possessed, without extraordinary prayer, or *prayer and fasting* (Mat 17.21), then how much less should we expect to have the devil cast out of the land and the world without it?

I am sensible that much has been done in duties of this nature in some places. But I don't think it's as much as God calls for in the present dispensations of His providence. I think it would be in the way of their duty for the people of God in this land, at such a time as this, to do three times as much fasting and prayer as they do. This is not only, nor principally, for the outpouring of the Spirit on those towns or places where they belong; but also that God would appear for his church, and in mercy to miserable men, to carry on His work in the land, and

¹ In 1837, Horace Mann and Thomas Jefferson, seeing this need, worked together to establish a public education system in the newly formed United States, along with teachers colleges to equip those who would serve in them.

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in the world of mankind, and to fulfil the things that he has spoken of in His word, things that His church has been so long wishing, and hoping, and waiting for. *Those who mention the Lord in this day, should not keep silence, and should give God no rest, until He establishes and until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth*, Isa 62.6-7. Before the first great outpouring of the Spirit of God on the Christian church, which began at Jerusalem, the church of God gave themselves to incessant prayer, Act 1.13-14. There is a time spoken of, in which God will remarkably and wonderfully appear for the deliverance of his church from all her enemies; and when He will *avenge his own elect*. And Christ reveals that this will be in answer to their incessant prayers, or *crying out day and night*, Luk 18.7. In Israel, the Day of Atonement was their great day of fasting and prayer. It preceded and made way for the glorious and joyful *Feast of Tabernacles*. When Christ is mystically born into the world, to rule over all nations, it is represented in the 12th chapter of Revelation as a consequence of the church's *crying out, and travailing in birth, and being pained to be delivered*. One thing intended here is doubtless the church's crying and agonizing in prayer.

God seems now, at this very time, to be waiting for this from us. When God is about to bestow some great blessing on his church, it is often His manner in the first place, to so order things in his providence, as to show his church their great need of it, and to bring them into distress for lack of it, and thus put them upon crying earnestly *to Him* to obtain it. And let us consider God's present dispensations towards his church in this land: a glorious work of his grace has begun and is being carried on. And God has, of late, allowed innumerable difficulties to arise, that in a great measure clog and hinder it, and bring many of God's dear children into great distress. Yet He doesn't wholly forsake the work of his hand. There are remarkable tokens of his presence still to be seen here and there. It's as though He was not eager to forsake us, and (if I may say so) as though He had a mind to carry on His work — but was only waiting for something that He expected in us, as requisite for it. We have a great deal of reason to think that *one thing*, at least, is that we should further acknowledge the greatness and necessity of such a mercy, and our dependence on God for it, *in earnest and importunate prayers to Him*. By the many errors that have been run into, the wounds we have thereby given ourselves, the cause we would promote, and the mischief and confusion we have thereby made, God has up to now remarkably shown us our great and universal dependence on Him, and our exceeding need of His help and grace. This should engage our cries to him to obtain it.

There is no way that Christians in a private capacity, can do more to promote the work of God, and to advance the kingdom of Christ, *than by prayer*. By this, even women, children, and servants may have a public influence. Let everyone, however weak they may be, and however lowly, and whatever poor advantages they have, do much for Christ and the souls of men in other ways. Yet, if they have much of the spirit of grace and supplication in *this way*, they may have power with Him who is infinite in power and has the government of the whole world. And so a poor man in his cottage may have a blessed influence all over the world. God is, if I may say so, *at the command of the prayer of faith*; and in this respect He is, as it were, under the power of his people. *As princes, they have power with God, and prevail*.¹ Though they may be private people, their prayers are put in the name of a Mediator, who is a public person,

¹ **Gen 32:28** And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

being the head of the whole church and the Lord of the universe. If they have a great sense of the importance of eternal things, and a concern for the precious sons of men, they need not regret that they are not preachers. They may go in their earnestness and agonies of soul, and pour out their souls before the One who is able to do all things. They may speak before him as freely as ministers. They have a great High Priest through whom they may come boldly at all times, and may vent themselves before a prayer-hearing Father, without any restraint.

If the people of God, in this day, instead of spending time in fruitless disputing, and talking about opposers, and judging them, and sounding off about the unreasonableness of their talk and behavior, and its inconsistency with true experience — if the people of God would be more silent in these things, and open their mouths much more before God, and spend more time in fasting and prayer, then they would be more in line for a *blessing*. And if some Christians in the land who have been complaining about their ministers, and struggling in vain to deliver themselves from the difficulties they have complained about while under their ministry — if they said and acted less before men, and applied themselves with all their might to cry out to God for their ministers — if they had risen and stormed heaven with their humble, fervent, and incessant prayers for them, they would have been much more in line for *success*.

God in his providence, appearing in the present state of things, especially calls upon his people in New England to be very much in prayer to Him for the outpouring of the Spirit upon the ministers in the land. For though it is not for us to determine, concerning particular ministers, how much they have of the Spirit of God, yet in general, it is apparent that there is in this day, need of very great degrees of the presence of God with the ministry in New England — much greater degrees of it than has been granted up to now. They need it for themselves, and the church of God stands in *extreme* need of it.

During days of fasting and prayer in which the whole church or congregation is concerned, if the whole day, besides what is spent in our families, was not spent in the meeting-house, but part of it was spent in particular praying companies or societies, it would have a tendency to animate and engage devotion. It would be more than if the whole day were spent in public, where the people are in no way active themselves in the worship, other than as they join with the minister. The inhabitants of many of our towns are now divided into particular praying societies. Most of the people, young and old, have voluntarily associated themselves in distinct companies in private houses, for mutual assistance in social worship. What I intend, therefore, is that days of prayer should be spent partly in these distinct praying companies.

Such a method as this, of keeping a fast, has been employed at several times during the day. Namely, as early as possible *in the morning*, after the duties of the family and closet. All the people of the congregation have gathered in their particular religious societies — companies of men by themselves, and companies of women by themselves; young men by themselves, and young women by themselves; and companies of children in all parts of the town, by themselves (as many as were capable of social religious exercises); the boys by themselves, and girls by themselves.

About the *middle of the day*, at an appointed hour, all have met together in the house of God to offer up public prayers, and to hear a sermon suitable to the occasion. And then they have retired from the house of God again, into their private societies, and spent the remaining part of the day praying together there — except for what was requisite for the duties of the family

and closet in their own houses. This has been found to be of great benefit to assist and engage the minds of the people in the duties of the day.

A Church-wide Day of Fasting and Prayer

I have often thought it would be a very desirable thing, and very likely to be followed with a great blessing, if there could be some stratagem — that there might be an agreement by all God's people in America who are well inclined to this work, to keep a day of fasting and prayer to God. We would all unite on the same day, in humbling ourselves before God for our past long-continued lukewarmness and unprofitableness; not omitting humiliation for the errors that so many of God's people have run into — those who have been zealously affected towards this work through their infirmity and remaining blindness and corruption — together with thanksgivings to God for so glorious and wonderful a display of his power and grace in the late outpourings of his Spirit. We would address the Father of mercies, with prayers and supplications, and earnest cries that He would guide and direct his own people; that He would continue and still carry on this work, and more abundantly and extensively pour out his Spirit, particularly upon ministers; and that He would bow the heavens and come down, and erect his glorious kingdom throughout the earth.

Some perhaps may think that its being all on the same day is a circumstance of no great consequence; but I cannot be of that mind. Such a circumstance makes the union and agreement of God's people in his worship more visible. It puts greater honor upon God, and it would have a great tendency to assist and enliven the devotions of Christians. It seems to me that it would mightily encourage and animate God's saints in humbly and earnestly seeking out God for such blessings which concern them all. It would do much for the rejoicing of all, to think that at the same time, such multitudes of God's dear children, far and near, were sending up their cries to the same common Father, for the same mercies which Christ speaks of agreement in asking. It would be such that it contributes to the prevalence of the prayers of his people. Mat 18.19, "Again I say to you, that if any two of you agree on earth, concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." If the agreement or united purpose and appointment of but *two* of God's children, would contribute much to the prevalence of their prayers, then how much more the agreement of so many thousands! Christ delights greatly in the union of his people, as it appears by his prayer in the 17th chapter of John. And the appearance of their union in *worship* is especially lovely and attractive to him.

I have no doubt that such a thing as I have now mentioned is practicable, without a great deal of trouble. Some considerable number of ministers might meet together and draw up the proposal, in which a certain day should be set at a sufficient distance, endeavoring in this to avoid any other public day that might interfere with the design in any of the provinces. The business of the day should be particularly mentioned. These proposals should be published and sent abroad into all parts, with a desire that those ministers who are disposed to fall in with them, would propose the matter to their congregations. Upon receiving their consent, they would subscribe their names, together with the places in which they are ministers, and send back the proposals thus subscribed to the printer (the hands of many ministers might be put to one paper). The printer having received from all the provinces the papers thus subscribed, might print the proposals again, with all the names. They might then be sent

abroad again, so that God's people might know who are united with them in the affair. One of the ministers of Boston might be desired to oversee the printing and dispersing the proposals. In such a way, we might perhaps fulfill in some measure, the sort of general mourning and supplication of God's people that is spoken of in Zec 12.12-14, with which the church's glorious day is to be introduced. Such a day might be something like the *Day of Atonement* in Israel, before the joyful *Feast of Tabernacles*.

One thing more I would mention concerning fasting and prayer, in which I think there has been a neglect in ministers. And that is, although they recommend and greatly insist on the duty of *private prayer* in their preaching, little is said about *private fasting*. It is a duty recommended by our Saviour to his followers, in the same manner as prayer. This may be seen by comparing the 5th and 6th verses of the 6th chapter of Matthew with verses 16-18. Though I don't suppose private fasting is to be practised in as fixed and regular manner as private prayer, it seems to me that it is a duty that all professing Christians should practise, and practise frequently. There are many occasions, of both a spiritual and temporal nature, that properly require it. And there are many particular mercies that we desire for ourselves or friends, that it would be proper to seek from God in this manner.

The Lord's Supper

Another thing I would mention, in which it appears to me there has been an omission, is with respect to the external worship of God. Lately, there has been a great increase of preaching the word, and a great increase of social prayer, and a great increase of singing praises. These external duties of religion are attended much more frequently than they used to be. Yet I cannot understand why there isn't any increase in the administration of the Lord's supper, or why God's people don't more frequently commemorate the dying love of their Redeemer in this sacred memorial than they used to do. I don't see why an increase of love to Christ, should not dispose Christians to increase in this as much as in those other duties. Or why it isn't as proper for Christ's disciples to abound in this duty, in this joyful season, which *spiritually* is supper-time — a feast-day with God's saints, in which Christ so abundantly manifests his dying love to souls, and distributes so liberally the precious fruits of his death. It seems plain by the Scripture, that the primitive Christians usually celebrated their memorial of the sufferings of their dear Redeemer *every Lord's day*. And so I believe it will be again in the church of Christ, in days that are approaching. Whether we attend this holy and sweet ordinance so often now or not, I cannot help but think it would become us, at such a time as this, to attend it much often than is commonly done in the land.

Moral Duties

Another thing I would mention, which is of much greater importance, and that we should attend to, is the duty incumbent on God's people at this day, to take heed that while they abound in *external duties of devotion* — such as praying, hearing, singing, and attending religious meetings — there be a proportional care to abound in *moral duties* — such as acts of righteousness, truth, meekness, forgiveness, and love towards our neighbor. These are of much greater importance in the sight of God, than all the externals of His worship. Our Saviour was particularly careful that men be well aware of this. Mat 9.13, "But go and learn what *this* means: *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*" And Mat 12.7, "But if you had known what this means, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, you would not have condemned the

guiltless.” The internal acts and principles of the worship of God, or the worship of the heart — in the love and fear of God, trust in God, and resignation to God, etc. — are the most essential and important of all duties of religion whatsoever. For the essence of all religion consists in this. But there are two sorts of *external* manifestations or expressions of this *inward* religion.

- *One sort* includes outward acts of worship — such as meeting in religious assemblies; attending sacraments and other outward institutions; honoring God with *gestures*, such as bowing, or kneeling before him; or with *words*, in speaking honorably of Him in prayer, praise, or religious conference.
- *The other sort* includes the expressions of our love to God, by obeying his moral commands; expression of self-denial, righteousness, meekness, and Christian love, in our behavior among men.

The latter have vastly greater importance in the Christian life. God takes little account of the former, in comparison to the others. They are abundantly more insisted on by the prophets in the Old Testament, and by Christ and his apostles in the New. When these two kinds of duties are spoken of together, the latter are preferred ever more greatly, as in Isa 1.12-18; Amos 5.21 f.; Mic 6.7-8; Isa 58.5-7; Zec 7.1-10; Jer 2.1-7, and Mat 15.3f. Often, when the times were very corrupt in Israel, the people abounded in the former kind of duties. But at such times, they were always notoriously deficient in the latter, as the prophets complain about in Isa 58.1-4; Jer 6.13 cf. 20. Hypocrites and self-righteous people much more commonly abound in the former kind of duties, than in the latter, as Christ remarks about the Pharisees, Mat 23.14, 25, 34. When the Scripture directs us to show our faith by our works, it is principally the latter sort that are intended. This appears in Jas 2.8-26, and 1John 2.3, 7-11. At the last day, we are to be judged especially by these latter sort of works, which is evident by the account we have of the Day of Judgment in Matthew 25. External acts of worship in words and gestures, in outward forms, are of little use except as signs of something else, or as they are a profession of inward worship. They don't show our religion as properly as our *deeds* do, for they only show our religion by *words*, or by an outward *profession*.

But whoever shows religion in the other sort of duties, shows it is something more than a profession of words; he shows it in deeds. Though deeds may be just as hypocritical as words, in themselves they are of greater importance; for they are much more profitable to ourselves and to our neighbor. We cannot express our love to God by doing anything that is profitable to *God*. God would therefore have us do it in those things that are profitable to our *neighbors*, whom he has constituted His receivers. Our goodness does not extend to God, but to our fellow Christians. The latter sort of duties put greater honor upon God, because there is greater self-denial in them. The external acts of worship, consisting in bodily gestures, words, and sounds, are the cheapest part of religion, and the least contrary to our lusts. The difficulty of thorough, external religion does not lie in those. If we let wicked men enjoy in their behavior among men, their covetousness and pride, their malice, envy, and revenge, their sensuality and voluptuousness, then they will be willing to compound the matter with God. They will submit to whatever forms of worship you please, and as many as you please. This is manifest in the Jews of old — in the days of the prophets, and in the Pharisees in Christ's time — and also in the Papists and Mohammedans in our day.

At a time when we have an appearance of the approach of a glorious revival of God's church, God especially calls his professing people to the practice of moral duties. Isa 56.1, "Thus says the Lord. Keep justice and do righteousness, for my salvation is about to come, and my righteousness about to be revealed." So when John preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and cried to the people, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," as we have an account in Luk 3.4, the people asked him, "What should we do?" John answers, "He who has two coats, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise. The tax collectors said, What shall we do? He said, Collect no more than what is appointed for you. And the soldiers asked him, What shall we do? He replies, Do violence to no man; nor accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." (Luk 3.10-14)

Charitable Giving

God's people, at such a time as this, should especially abound in deeds of charity, or almsgiving. Generally these days, we seem to fall far below the true spirit and practice of Christianity with regard to this duty, and we seem to have little concept of it, so far as I can understand the New Testament. At a time when God is so liberal with spiritual things, we should not be tightfisted¹ towards him, and sparing with our temporal things. So far as I can judge by the Scripture, there is no external duty whatsoever, by which people will be so much in the way not only of receiving temporal benefits, but also spiritual blessings — in the influences of God's holy Spirit in the heart, in divine discoveries, and in spiritual consolations.

I think it would be unreasonable to understand those promises made in Isaiah 58 concerning this duty, in a sense that is exclusive of spiritual discoveries and comforts. Isa 58.7-11:

"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out? When you see the naked, that you cover him, and that you not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He will say, *Here I am*. If you take away the yoke [of slavery] from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness. If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and the darkness be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones. You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail."

So that, giving to the poor is the way to receive spiritual blessings. This is made manifest by Psa 112.4-9:

"Unto the upright, there arises light in the darkness; he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man shows favor and lends; he will guide his affairs with discretion; surely he will never be moved. The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he will not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies. He has dispersed abroad. He has given to the poor; his horn shall be exalted with honor."

¹ Originally, "strait-handed."

Part V. – Positive Things to be Done to Promote the Work

This is one likely means to obtain assurance, as evident in 1Joh 3.18-19: “ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”

We have a remarkable instance in Abraham, of God’s rewarding his deeds of charity with sweet revelations of Himself — when he had been remarkably charitable to his brother Lot, and the people that he had redeemed out of captivity with him, by risking his life to rescue them. He had retaken not only the people, but all the goods, the spoil that had been taken by Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. The king of Sodom offered that if Abraham would give him the people, he might take the goods for himself. But Abraham refused to take any thing, even so much as a thread or a shoe lace, but he returned it all. He might have greatly enriched himself if he had taken the spoils for himself, for it was the spoils of five wealthy kings and their kingdoms. Yet he did not covet it. The king and people of Sodom had now become objects of charity, having been stripped of everything by their enemies. Therefore Abraham generously bestowed it all upon them. We have an account of this in Gen 14.21-24. He was soon rewarded for it, by a blessed revelation that God made of Himself to Abraham in the following words: “After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abraham, I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.” (Gen 15.1) As if to say, I am your shield, to defend you in battle, as I have now done; and though you have charitably refused to take any reward, for exposing your life to rescue this people, fear not, you shall not lose, you shall have a reward. I am your exceeding great reward.

When Christ was on earth he was poor, and an object of charity. During the time of his public ministry, he was supported by the charity of some of his followers, and particularly certain women whom we read about in Luk 8.2-3. These women were rewarded, by being peculiarly favored with gracious manifestations which Christ made of himself to them. He revealed himself first to them after his resurrection, *before* the twelve disciples. They first saw a vision of glorious angels who spoke comfortably to them; and then Christ appeared to them, and spoke peace to them, saying, *Do not be afraid. And they were allowed to come and hold him by the feet, and worship him*, Mat 28.9-10. We cannot now be charitable in this way to Christ in person; for in his exalted state he is infinitely above the need of our charity. Yet we may be as charitable to Christ now, as they were then. For though Christ is not here, he has left others in his place to be his receivers, and they are the poor. Christ is still poor in his members; and *he who gives to them, lends to the Lord*. (Pro 19.17) Christ tells us that he will look at what you have done to them, as done to him. (Mat 25.40)

Rebekah, in her marriage with Isaac, was undoubtedly a remarkable *type* of the church, in her espousals to the Lord Jesus. But she found her husband in doing deeds of charity. This agreed with the prayer of Abraham’s servant, who prayed that this might be the thing that distinguished and marked the virgin who was to be Isaac’s wife. So too, Cornelius was brought to the knowledge of Christ in this way. *He was a devout man, and one who feared God, with all his house; he gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always*. And an angel appeared to him, and said to him, *Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter*, etc. Act 10.2-5. We have an account in the following parts of the chapter, of how God,

by Peter's preaching, revealed Christ to Cornelius and his family, and of the Holy Ghost's descending upon them and filling their hearts with joy, and their mouths with praises.

Some may object that for people to do deeds of charity in the hope of obtaining spiritual blessings and comforts in this way, would seem to show a self-righteous spirit, as though they would offer something to God to purchase these favors. But if this is a good objection, it may be made against every duty whatsoever. All external duties of the first tablet would be excluded by it, as well as those of the second. First tablet duties have as direct a tendency to raise self-righteous people's expectations of receiving something from God on account of them, as second tablet duties do — on some accounts, more so. For those duties are more immediately offered *to God*; and therefore people are more ready to expect something *from God* for them. But no duty is to be neglected for fear of making it a righteousness. I have observed that those professors who are most partial in their duty, who are exact and abundant in the external duties of the first tablet, but slack as to those of the second, are the most self-righteous.

If God's people in this land, were brought to abound in such deeds of love, as much as in deeds of praying, hearing, singing, religious meetings, and conference, it would be a most blessed omen. Nothing would have a greater tendency to bring the God of love down from heaven to the earth. So amiable would be the sight in the eyes of our loving and exalted Redeemer, that it would soon, as it were, fetch Him down from his throne in heaven, to set up His tabernacle with men on the earth, and dwell with them. I don't remember ever reading of any remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, that continued for any length of time, that wasn't attended with abounding in this duty. We know it was so with that great effusion of the Spirit that began at Jerusalem in the apostles' days. So too in the recent remarkable revival of religion in Saxony, which began by the labors of the famous Professor Franck.¹ It has now been carried on for over thirty years. It has spread its happy influences into many parts of the world. It was begun, and has been carried on by a wonderful practice of this duty. And the remarkable blessing that God has given Mr. Whitefield, and the great success with which He has crowned him, may well be thought to be very much owing to his laying himself out so abundantly in charitable designs. It is foretold that God's people will abound in this duty in the time of the great outpouring of the Spirit that will be in the latter days. Isa 32.5, 8, "The foolish person will no longer be called generous, nor the miser said to be bountiful. But the generous man devises generous things, and by generosity he shall stand."

A Public Covenant

One proper means to promote a reformation among a professing people, with respect to all sorts of duties recommended by frequent Scripture examples, is the solemn, public renewing of their covenant with God. Doubtless it would greatly tend to promote this work in the land, if the congregations of God's people could generally be brought to this. A draft of a covenant might be made by their ministers, in which express mention is made of those particular duties the people of the respective congregations have observed are most prone to neglect, and those particular sins that they have especially fallen into up to now, or that they are especially in

¹ August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) – a German pietist. He began an orphanage, schools for boys and girls, a printing house, and a center for missions to Jews.

danger of — sins by which they may prevent or resist the motions of God's Spirit. The matter would then be fully proposed and explained to the people, and they would be given sufficient opportunity for consideration. Then all who are capable of understanding should be led particularly to subscribe to the covenant. All would publicly appear together on a day of prayer and fasting, to own it before God in his house, as their vow to the Lord. Hereby congregations of Christians would do that which would be beautiful, and would put honor upon God, and be very profitable to themselves.

Such a thing as this, was attended with a very wonderful blessing in Scotland, and followed with a great increase of the blessed tokens of the presence of God, and remarkable outpourings of his Spirit — as the author of *The Fulfilling of the Scripture* informs us, p. 186, 5th edition.

The people must be approached when they are in a good mood, and considerable religious impressions are prevailing among them. Otherwise they will hardly be induced to this, and their objections and cavils against it will be innumerable.

One more thing I would mention, which would tend much to promote it, if God still carried on this work. And that is, a **HISTORY** should be published once a month, or once a fortnight, of its progress, by one of the ministers of Boston who are near the press, and are most conveniently situated to receive accounts from all parts. It has been found by experience, that the tidings of remarkable effects of the power and grace of God in any one place, tend greatly to awaken and engage the minds of people in other places. It would be a great pity, therefore, if some means were not used for the speediest, most extensive, and certain giving of information about such things, and the country were not left only to the slow, partial, and doubtful information, and false representations of a common report.

Thus I have (I hope, by the help of God) finished what I proposed. I have taken more pains in it, because it appears to me that God is now giving us the happiest season to attempt a universal reformation, that was ever given in New England. It would be a thousand pities, if we failed in that which would be so glorious, for lack of being sensible of our opportunity; or despite being aware of those things that tend to hinder it, we took improper courses to obtain it; or if we were not sensible of which way God expects us to seek it. If it pleased God to bless any means for convincing the country of His hand in this work, and bringing them to fully and freely acknowledge His glorious power and grace in it, and engage with one heart and soul, and endeavor to promote it by due methods — it would be a dispensation of divine Providence that would have a most glorious aspect. It would happily signify the approach of great and glorious things to the church of God, and it would justly cause us to hope that Christ would speedily come to set up his kingdom of light, holiness, peace, and joy on earth, as foretold in his word. — **Amen:** even so, come LORD JESUS.