

S O M E
A C C O U N T
O F T H E

CONVERSION and EXPERIENCES

Of the late

Rev. *JONATHAN EDWARDS,*

Of *New-England*, PRESIDENT of *NEW-*
JERSEY COLLEGE, &c.

SOME ACCOUNT

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I HAD a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from my childhood ; but had two more remarkable seasons of awakening, before I met with that change, by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had. The first time was when I was a boy, some years before I went to college, at a time of remarkable awakening in my father's congregation. I was then very much affected for many months, and concerned about the things of religion, and my soul's salvation ; and was abundant in duties. I used to pray five times a day in secret, and to spend much time in religious talk with other boys ; and used to meet with them to pray together. I experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion. My mind was much engaged in it, and had much self-righteous pleasure ; and it was my delight to abound in religious duties. I, with some of my school-mates joined together, and built a booth in a swamp, in a very secret and retired place, for a place of prayer. And besides, I had particular secret places of my own in the woods.

woods, where I used to retire alone ; and used to be, from time to time, much affected. My affections seemed to be lively and easily moved, and I seemed to be in my element when engaged in religious Duties. And I am ready to think, many are deceived with such affections, and such a kind of delight as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace.

BUT, in process of time, my convictions and affections wore off ; and I entirely lost all those affections and delights, and left off secret prayer, at least as to any constant performance of it ; and returned like a dog to his vomit, and went on in ways of sin.

INDEED, I was at sometimes very uneasy, especially towards the latter part of the time of my being at college. Till it pleased God, in my last year at college, at a time when I was in the midst of many uneasy thoughts about the state of my soul, to seize me with a pleurisy ; in which he brought me nigh to the grave, and shook me over the pit of hell.

BUT yet, it was not long after my recovery, before I fell again into my old ways of sin. But God would not suffer me to go on with any quietness ; but I had great and violent inward struggles ; till after many conflicts with wicked inclinations, I was brought wholly to break off all former wicked ways, and all ways of known outward sin ; and to apply myself to seek my salvation, and practise the duties of religion : but without that kind of affection and delight, that I had formerly experienced. My concern now wrought more by inward struggle!

gles and conflicts, and self-reflections. I made seeking my salvation the main business of my life. I felt a spirit to part with all things in the world, for an interest in Christ. My concern continued and prevailed, with many exercising things and inward struggles ; but yet it never seemed proper to express the concern I had by the name of terror.

THE first conviction that I remember in which I found any thing of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading these words, 1. Tim. i. 17. " Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen." As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was, as it were, diffused thro' it, a sense of the glory of the divine being ; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a being that was ; and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be wrapt up to God in heaven, and be, as it were, swallowed up in him. I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of scripture to myself ; and went to prayer, to pray to God that I might enjoy him ; and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do ; with a new sort of affection.

FROM about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. I had an inward, sweet sense of these things that at times came into my heart ; and my soul was lead away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. And my mind was greatly engaged

gaged to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ, and the beauty and excellency of his person, and the lovely way of salvation, by free grace in him. I found no books so delightful to me, as those that treated of these subjects. Those words, *Cant. ii. i. used to be abundantly with me: I am the rose of Sharon, the lilly of the valleys.* The words seemed to me sweetly to represent the loveliness and beauty of JESUS CHRIST. And the whole book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it about that time; and found, from time to time, an inward sweetness, that used, as it were, to carry me away in my contemplations; in what I know not how to express otherwise, than by a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of this world; and a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations, of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden, as it were, kindle up a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of soul, that I know not how to express.

Not long after I first began to experience these things, I gave an account to my father of what had passed in my mind. I was pretty much affected by the discourse we had together. And when the conversation was ended, I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind such a sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, as I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction: majesty
and

and meekness joined together : it was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty ; and also a majestic meekness ; an awful sweetness ; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.

AFTER this my sense of divine things gradually encreased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered : there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity, and love, seemed to appear in every thing ; in the sun, moon, and stars ; in the clouds and blue sky ; in the grass, flowers, trees ; in the water, and all nature ; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon, for a long time ; and so in the day time, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things ; in the mean time singing forth, with a low voice, my contemplations of the creator and redeemer. And scarcely any thing, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning. Formerly nothing had been so terrible to me. I used to be a person uncommonly terrified with thunder : and it used to strike me with terror when I saw a thunder-storm rising. But now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God at the first appearance of a thunder storm ; and used to take the opportunity, at such times, to fix myself to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder ; which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God : and while I viewed, I used to spend my time, and it always seemed natural to me, in singing or chaunting

chaunting forth my meditations ; in speaking my thoughts in soliloquies, with a singing voice.

I felt a great satisfaction as to my good estate. But *that* did not *content* me. I had vehement Longings of soul after God and Christ, and after more HOLINESS ; wherewith my heart seemed to be Full, and ready to break : which often brought to my mind the words of the psalmist, *Psal. cxix. 28. My soul breaketh for the longing it hath* I often felt a mourning and lamenting in my heart, that I had not turned to God sooner, that I might have had more time to grow in grace. My mind was greatly fixed on divine things ; I was almost perpetually in the contemplation of them, and the most of my time was spent in thinking of them, year after year. And I used to spend abundance of my time in walking alone in the woods and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy and prayer, and converse with God. And it was always my manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations. I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent.

THE delights which I now felt in things of religion, were of a very different kind, from those before mentioned, which I had when I was a boy. They were totally of another kind ; and what I then had no more notion or idea of, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colors. They were of a more inward, pure, soul-animating, and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart, and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God, or any taste

of the soul-satisfying and life-giving good there is in them.

My sense of divine things seemed gradually to encrease, till I went to preach at *New-York*. While I was there, my longings after God and holiness were much encreased. Pure and humble, holy and heavenly christianity appeared exceedingly amiable to me. I felt in me a burning desire to be in every thing a complete christian, and conformed to the blessed image of Christ; and that I might live in all things according to the pure, sweet, and blessed rules of the gospel. I had an eager thirsting after progress in these things. My longings after it, put me upon pursuing and pressing after them. It was my continual strife day and night, and constant enquiry, how I should be more holy, and live more holily, and more becoming a child of God, and a disciple of Christ.—I NOW SOUGHT AN ENCREASE OF GRACE AND HOLINESS, AND THAT I MIGHT LIVE AN HOLY LIFE, WITH VASTLY MORE EARNESTNESS, THAN EVER I SOUGHT GRACE BEFORE I HAD IT.—I used to be continually examining myself, and studying and contriving for likely ways and means, how I should live holily, with far greater diligence and earnestness than ever I ever pursued any thing in my life.

THE heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness; to be with God, and to spend my eternity in divine love, and holy communion with Christ. My mind was very much taken up with contemplations on heaven, and the enjoyments of those there; and living there in perfect holiness, humility, and love. And it used at that time to appear a great part of the happiness of heaven, that there the saints could express

express their love to Christ. It appeared to me a great clog and hindrance and burden to me, that what I felt within, I could not express to God, and give vent to, as I desired. The inward ardor of my soul, seemed to be hindered and pent up, and could not freely flame out as it would. I used often to think, how, in heaven, this sweet principle should freely and fully vent and express itself. Heaven appeared to me exceedingly delightful as a world of love. It appeared to me, that all happiness consisted in living in pure, humble, heavenly, divine love.

I remember the thoughts I used then to have of holiness. I remember I then said sometimes to myself, I do certainly know that I love holiness, such as the gospel prescribes. It appeared to me, there was nothing in it but what was ravishingly lovely. It appeared to me, to be the highest beauty and amiableness, above all other beauties : that it was a *divine* beauty ; far purer than any thing here upon earth ; and that every thing else was like mire, filth and defilement, in comparison of it.

HOLINESS, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature. It seemed to me, it brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness, and ravishment to the soul : and that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers ; that is all pleasant, delightful, and undisturbed ; enjoying a sweet calm, and the gentle vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of a true christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared like such a little white flower, as we see in the spring of the year.

year ; low and humble on the ground ; opening its bosom, to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory ; rejoicing, as it were, in a calm rapture ; diffusing around a sweet fragrancy ; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about ; all in like manner opening their bosoms, to drink in the light of the sun.

THERE was no part of creature-holiness, that I then, and at other times, had so great a sense of the loveliness of, as humility, brokenness of heart, and poverty of spirit : and there was nothing that I had such a spirit to long for. My heart, as it were, panted after this, to lie low before God, and in the dust ; that I might be nothing, and that God might be All ; that I might become as a little child.

WHILE I was there at *New-York*, I sometimes was much affected with reflections on my past life, considering how late it was before I began to be truly religious, and how wickedly I had lived till then ; and once so as to weep abundantly, and for a considerable time together.

ON *Jan. 12, 1722*, I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, and wrote it down ; giving up myself, and all that I had, to God ; to be, for the future, in no respect my own ; to act as one that had no right to himself in any respect. And solemnly vowed to take God for my whole portion and felicity ; looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if it were : and His law for the constant rule of my obedience : engaging to fight, with all my might, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life. But have reason to be infinitely humbled, when I consider

how

How much I have failed of answering my obligation.

I had then abundance of sweet religious conversation, in the Family where I lived. My heart was knit in affection to those, in whom were appearances of true piety ; and I could bear the thoughts of no other companions, but such as were holy, and the disciples of the blessed Jesus.

I had great longings for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. My secret prayer used to be in great part taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint of any thing that appeared to me, in some respect or other, to have a favourable aspect on the interest of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it ; and it would much animate and refresh me. I used to be earnest to read public news-letters, principally for that end ; to see if I could not find some news favourable to the interest of religion in the world.

I very frequently used to retire into a solitary place, on the banks of *Hudson's* river, at some distance from the city, for contemplation on divine things, and secret converse with God ; and had many sweet hours there. Sometimes Mr. S— and I walked together, to converse of the things of God ; and our conversation used much to turn on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and the glorious things that God would accomplish for his church in the latter days.

I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the holy Scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt an harmony between some-
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thing in my heart and those sweet and powerful words. I seemed often to see much light, exhibited in every sentence, and such refreshing ravishing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading. I used oftentimes to dwell long on one sentence, to see the wonders contained in it ; and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.

I came away from *New-York* in the month of *April*, 1723, and had a most bitter parting with Mrs. S— and her son. My heart seemed to sink within me, at leaving the family and city, where I had enjoyed so many sweet and pleasant days. I went from *New-York* to *Weathersfield* by Water. As I sailed away, I kept sight of the city as long as I could ; and when I was out of sight of it, it would affect me much to look that way, with a kind of melancholy mixed with sweetness. However, that night after this sorrowful parting, I was greatly comforted in God at *West-Chester*, where we went ashore to lodge : and I had a pleasant time of it all the voyage to *Saybrook*. It was sweet to me to think of meeting dear christians in heaven, where we should never part more. At *Saybrook* we went ashore to lodge on Saturday, and there kept Sabbath ; where I had a sweet and refreshing season.

AFTER I came home to *Windsor*, I remained much in a like frame of mind, as I had been in at *New-York* ; but only sometimes felt my heart ready to sink, with the thoughts of my friends at *New-York*. And my refuge and support was in contemplations on the heavenly state ; as I find in my diary of *May* 1, 1723. It was my comfort to think of that state, where there is fulness of joy ; where
reigns

reigns heavenly, sweet, calm, and delightful love, without alloy ; where there are continually the dearest expressions of this love ; where is the enjoyment of the persons loved, without ever parting ; where these persons, that appear so lovely in this world, will really be inexpressibly more lovely, and full of love to us. And how sweetly will the mutual lovers join together to sing the praises of God and the Lamb ! How full will it fill us with joy, to think, that this enjoyment, these sweet exercises will never cease or come to an end ; but will last to all eternity !

IN *September* 1725, I was taken ill at *New-Haven* ; and endeavouring to go home to *Windsor*, was so ill at the North village, that I could go no farther : where I lay sick for about a quarter of a year. And in this sickness, God was pleased to visit me again with the sweet influences of His Spirit. My mind was greatly engaged there in divine, pleasant contemplations, and longings of soul. I observed, that those who watched with me, would often be looking out for the morning, and seemed to wish for it : which brought to my mind those words of the psalmist, which my soul, with sweetness, made its own language : *My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning ; I say more than they that watch for the morning.* And when the light of the morning, and the beams of the sun came in at the windows, it refreshed my soul from one morning to another. It seemed to me to be some image of the sweet light of God's glory.

I remember, about that time, I used greatly to long for the conversion of some that I was concerned

cerned with. It seemed to me, I could gladly honour them, and with delight be a servant to them, and lie at their feet, if they were but truly holy.

BUT some time after this, I was greatly diverted in my mind, with some temporal concerns, that exceedingly took up my thoughts, greatly to the wounding of my soul : and went on through various exercises, that it would be tedious to relate, that gave much more experience of my own heart, than ever I had before.

SINCE I came to live at *Northampton*, I have often had complacency in God, in views of His glorious perfections, and the excellency of Jesus Christ. God has appeared to me, a glorious and lovely being, chiefly on account of His holiness. The holiness of God has always appeared to me the most lovely of all His attributes.

I have loved the doctrines of the gospel : they have been to my soul like green pastures. The gospel has seemed to me to be the richest treasure ; the treasure that I have most desired, and longed that it might dwell richly in me. The way of salvation by Christ, has appeared in a general way, glorious and excellent, and most pleasant and beautiful. It has often seemed to me, that it would in a great measure *spoil* heaven, to receive it in any other way. That text has often been affecting and delightful to me, *Isai. xxxii. 2. A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, &c.*

It has often appeared sweet to me, to be united to Christ ; to have Him for my head, and to be a member

member of His body : and also to have Christ for my teacher and prophet. I very often think, with sweetness, and longings, and pantings of soul, of being a little child, taking hold of Christ, to be led by Him through the wildernis of this world. That text in *Matt. xviii.* has often been sweet to me : *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, &c.* I love to think of coming to Christ, and to receive salvation of Him, *poor* in spirit, and quite *empty* of self ; humbly exalting Him alone ; cut entirely off from my own root, and to grow *into*, and *out of* Christ : to have God in Christ to be All in All ; and to live by faith on the Son of God, a life of humble, unfeigned confidence in Him.

SOMETIMES only mentioning a single word, causes my heart to burn within me : or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God. And God has appeared glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists in three persons ; FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.

THE *sweetest* joys and delights I have experienced, have *not* been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate ; *but* in a *direct* view of the glorious things of the gospel. When I enjoy *this sweetness*, it seems to carry me above the thoughts of my own safe estate. It seems at such times *a loss that I cannot bear*, to take off my eye from the glorious, pleasant object I behold *without* me, to turn my eye in upon *myself*, and my own good estate.

My heart has been much on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. The histories

of the past advancement of Christ kingdom, have been sweet to me. When I have read histories of past ages, the pleasantest thing in all my reading has been, to read of the kingdom of Christ being promoted. And when I have expected, in my reading, to come to any such thing, I have reckoned upon it all the way as I read. And my mind has been much entertained and delighted, with the scripture promises and prophecies, of the future glorious advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth.

I have sometimes had a sense of the excellent fullness of Christ, and His meetness and suitableness as a Saviour; whereby He has appeared to me, far above all, the chief of ten thousands. And His blood and atonement has appeared sweet, and His righteousness sweet; which is always accompanied with an ardency of Spirit, and inward strugglings and breathings, and groanings, that cannot be uttered, to be emptied of myself, and swallowed up in Christ.

ONCE, as I rode out into the woods for my health, *Anno* 1737, and having got from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer; I had a view, that *for me* was *extraordinary*, of the glory of the Son of God; as mediator between God and man; and His wonderful, great, full, pure, and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace, that appeared to me so calm and sweet, appeared great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception. Which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me, the bigger part of the time, in a flood of tears, and weep-
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ing aloud. I felt withal, an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, than to be emptied and annihilated ; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone ; to love Him with a holy and pure love ; to trust in Him ; to live upon Him ; to serve and follow Him, and to be totally wrapt up in the fulness of Christ ; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity.—I have several other times had views very much of the same nature, and that have had the same effects.

I have many times had a sense of the glory of the third person in the Trinity, in his office of Sanctifier ; in his Holy operations communicating divine light and life to the soul. God, in the communications of His Holy Spirit, has appeared as an infinite fountain of divine glory and sweetness ; being full, and sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul : pouring forth itself in sweet communications, like the sun in its glory, sweetly and pleasantly diffusing light and life.

I have greatly longed of late, for a broken heart and to lie low before God. And when I ask for humility of God, I cannot bear the thoughts of being no more humbled, than other christians. It seems to me, that, though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them ; yet it would be a *vile* self-exaltation in *me*, not to be the *lowest* in humility of all mankind. Others speak of their longing to be humbled *to the dust*. Tho' that may be a proper expression for *them*, I always think for *myself*, that I ought to be humbled down *below hell*

On one Saturday night, I had such a sense, how
sweet

sweet and blessed a thing it was to walk in the way of duty, to do that which was right and meet to be done, and agreeable to the holy mind of God ; that it caused me to break forth into a kind of loud weeping, which held me some time ; so that I was forced to shut myself up, and fasten the doors. I could not but, as it were, cry out, “ How happy are they which do that which is right in the sight of God ! They are blessed indeed, they are the happy ones ! ”



An extract from Mr. E D W A R D's PRIVATE DIARY.—written about the 20th year of his age.

Saturday Jan. 12, 1723. I this day solemnly renewed my self-dedication to God. I have been before God ; and have given myself, all that I am and have, to God ; so that I am not, in any respect, my own : I can challenge no right in myself ; I can challenge no right in this understanding, this will these affections that are in me ; neither have I right to this body, or any of its members : not to this tongue, these hands, nor feet : not to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this heart. I have given myself clear away, and retained any thing as my own. I have been to God this morning, and told Him that I gave myself *wholly* to Him. I have given every power to Him ; so that, for the future, I will challenge no right in myself, in any respect. I have expressly promised Him, and do now promise Almighty God, that *by His grace* I will not. I have this morning told Him, that I did take him for my whole portion and felicity, looking on nothing else

as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if I were ; and His law for the constant rule of my obedience : and would fight with all my might against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life. And did believe in Jesus Christ, and receive Him as a prince and a saviour ; and would adhere to the faith and obedience of the gospel, how hazardous and difficult soever the profession and practice of it may be. That I did receive the blessed Spirit as my teacher, sanctifier, and comforter ; and cherish all his motions to enlighten, purify, confirm, comfort, and assist me. This I have done. And I pray God, for the sake of Christ, to look upon it as a self-dedication ; and to receive me now as entirely His own, and deal with me in all respects as such ; whether he afflicts me or prospers me, or whatever He pleases to do with me, who am His. Now, henceforth, I am not to act in any respect as my own. I shall act as my own, if ever I make use of any of my powers to any thing that is not to the glory of God, and don't make the glorifying Him my whole and entire business ; if I murmur in the least at afflictions ; if I grieve at the prosperity of others ; if I am any way charitable ; if I am angry because of injuries or revenge ; if I do any thing, purely to please myself ; or if I avoid any thing for the sake of my self. I omit any thing because it is great self-love. I trust to myself ; if I take any of the praise of a good that I do, or rather God does by me ; or if I am any way proud.

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