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New Perspectives on the Northampton Communion Controversy II: Relations, Professions, and Experiences, 1748-1760

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*NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE NORTHAMPTON
COMMUNION CONTROVERSY II: RELATIONS,
PROFESSIONS, & EXPERIENCES, 1748-1760*

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Abstract

The second installment of a five-part series presenting documents relating to the “Qualifications Controversy” that led to Edwards’ dismissal at Northampton, this article presents a series of “relations,” or lay spiritual autobiographies presented for church membership. These relations come from other Massachusetts churches, many of whose pastors were aligned with Edwards, and yet reveal some significant differences from the form and content that Edwards came to advocate for such relations.

Scholars typically examine Jonathan Edwards’ 1750 dismissal through the lens of social history. His attempt to implement more restrictive church membership standards in Northampton coincided with a series of local disputes involving his salary, the so-called “Bad Books” controversy, and a failed attempt to discipline one of his parishioners for sexual misconduct. But these issues rarely surfaced during the dismissal proceedings, nor were they cited by Edwards or his opponents as contributing factors. Instead, as historian David Hall has argued, the Northampton communion controversy reignited longstanding tensions over the relative inclusivity of New England’s gathered churches of visible saints.¹ In the wake of the Whitefieldian revivals of the 1740s, moreover, Edwards’ controversial decision to require a “public profession of religion” as a term of communion challenged his parishioners at the fundamental level of religious experience.² Which experiences counted? How could they be known and verified? What vocabularies were available for describing and narrating them? A broader understanding of Edwards’ dismissal thus entails looking beyond the local context of the controversy and considering the ways in which his evolving church

The author wishes to thank Ross Beales Jr., Kenneth Minkema, Mark Valeri, and the members of FLEA, the Fall Line Early Americanists reading group, for commenting on earlier drafts of this essay.

¹ *WJE* 12:1, 17-38; Hall, “‘Between the Times’: Popular Religion in Eighteenth-Century British North America,” in *The World Turned Upside Down: The State of Eighteenth-Century American Studies at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Michael V. Kennedy and William G. Shade (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 2001), 142-63; Hall, “The New England Background,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 61-79. Recent studies that emphasize the social stresses precipitating Edwards’ dismissal include George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 291-305, 341-74; and Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America’s Evangelical* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 135-64.

² Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a Compleat Standing in Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1749), *WJE* 12:203.

membership standards diverged from the expectations of ministers and lay people elsewhere in New England.

This essay presents twelve church admission testimonies—“relations” as they were known during the eighteenth century—from four Massachusetts churches whose ministers maintained strong ties with Edwards during the communion controversy and throughout his Stockbridge years. Dating from the early months of the conflict in 1748, these rare autobiographical narratives open a fascinating window onto the religious lives of ordinary people. They also reveal widening fissures in what had once been a unified religious culture, especially when compared with similar narratives composed elsewhere in New England during the eighteenth century.³ Several of these relations were presented to or penned by the embattled Northampton minister’s staunchest allies, including Thomas Foxcroft and Thomas Prince of Boston’s First and Old South churches, Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough, and Joseph Emerson of Pepperell, who visited Edwards and courted his daughter during the early months of the qualifications crisis. The final group of relations comes from the small Berkshire hamlet of Granville, where zealous parishioners succeeded in implementing Edwardsean church membership standards during the 1750s. And yet all of the relations produced by these ministers and their congregants included narrative elements that Edwards sharply criticized in *An Humble Inquiry*, his published defense of his new measures, as well as in the public lectures that he delivered in Northampton during the conflict. Taken together, they expose the broad gulf that separated Edwards from nearly all of his contemporaries, including his strongest supporters.

³ For published collections of eighteenth-century church admission testimonies, see J. M. Bumsted, ed., “Emotion in Colonial America: Some Relations of Conversion Experience in Freetown, Massachusetts, 1749-1770,” *New England Quarterly* 49 (1976): 97-108; Kenneth P. Minkema, ed., “The East Windsor Conversion Relations, 1700-1725,” *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society* 51 (1986): 7-63; Minkema, ed., “A Great Awakening Conversion: The Relation of Samuel Belcher,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 44 (1987): 121-26; Stephen T. Riley and Edward W. Hanson, eds., *The Papers of Robert Treat Paine*, vol. 87, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), 48-49; Minkema, ed., “The Lynn End ‘Earthquake’ Relations of 1727,” *New England Quarterly* 69 (1996): 473-99; Erik R. Seeman, ed., “Lay Conversion Narratives: Investigating Ministerial Intervention,” *New England Quarterly* 71 (1998): 629-34; Seeman, ed., “‘Justise Must Take Plase’: Three African Americans Speak of Religion in Eighteenth-Century New England,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 56 (1999): 393-414; Douglas Leo Winiarski, “All Manner of Error and Delusion: Josiah Cotton and the Religious Transformation of Southeastern New England, 1700-1770” (Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University, 2000), 394-405; Douglas L. Winiarski, “Gendered ‘Relations’ in Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719-1742,” in *In Our Own Words: New England Diaries, 1600 to the Present*, vol. 1, *Diary Diversity, Coming of Age*, ed. Peter Benes, Annual Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife 2006/2007 (Boston: Boston University Press, 2009), 78; and James F. Cooper Jr., ed., “Cuffee’s ‘Relation’: A Faithful Slave Speaks through the Project for the Preservation of Congregational Church Records,” *New England Quarterly* 86 (2013): 293-310. I sketch the history of this distinctive genre of New England autobiographical literature in Douglas L. Winiarski, “Religious Experiences in New England,” in *Modern Christianity to 1900*, vol. 6, *A People’s History of Christianity*, ed. Amanda Porterfield (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007), 209-32.

The Northampton communion controversy was cloaked from the start with a certain amount of misinformation and outright ignorance on all sides. Although Edwards had grown up listening to the relations presented by the men and women who joined his father's church in East Windsor, Connecticut, other participants in the protracted ecclesiastical dispute acknowledged that they knew little of church admission practices elsewhere in New England. Edwards' opponents in Northampton stubbornly refused to consider any alternatives to Solomon Stoddard's open communion practices. Copies of *An Humble Inquiry* did not receive the wide readership for which Edwards had hoped. Prince and Foxcroft, along with several Boston colleagues, signed the preface to Edwards' treatise before they even had a chance to peruse his argument.⁴

As a result, clergymen in eastern Massachusetts expressed genuine puzzlement over the bitter controversy in Northampton. After corresponding with Edwards and studying *An Humble Inquiry*, Salem Village minister Peter Clark, in particular, was "at a Loss to apprehend, wherein the main ground of the Controversy, between you, and your people lies." To sympathetic outsiders, Edwards' purported "new-modeling of his church" seemed hardly new at all. Most ministers in eastern Massachusetts readily accepted what Clark called the "commonly received and well-grounded distinction" between visible saints, or earnest communicants who nonetheless may have been deceived in their decision to join the church, and invisible saints whom God had truly predestined for salvation. The church of Christ in the world, the Salem Village minister reasoned, would inevitably comprise both "good and bad, sound and unsound Christians." Until the Day of Judgment, true saints and deluded hypocrites alike would necessarily appear side-by-side at the communion table and present their children for baptism. Membership in the visible church nonetheless required a "credible profession," which Clark defined as a "competent measure of Christian knowledge, together with a good conversation joined to a serious and solemn consent to the covenant of the gospel."⁵

At the turn of the eighteenth century, most Congregational churches continued to adhere to the standards outlined in the 1648 Cambridge Platform, which required prospective church members to offer a "personall & publick *confession*" in which they declared "Gods manner of working upon the soul." But the test of a relation had changed in important ways. Candidates no longer stood before the assembled church members to recite their religious experiences orally. Instead, they met in private with local ministers to compose a written relation that was read in public on the day they were promoted to full communion. These carefully composed and edited statements, moreover, bore little

⁴ Jonathan Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, May 24, 1749, *WJE* 16:283; Samuel Kneeland to Joseph Bellamy, Oct. 2, 1749, Peter Clark to Ebenezer Pomeroy, Apr. 4, 1750, *WJEO* 32; Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*, *WJE* 12:172-73. For church admission practices in East Windsor, see Minkema, ed., "East Windsor Conversion Relations," 9-19.

⁵ Peter Clark to Edwards, May 21, 1750, *WJEO* 32; Clark to Ebenezer Pomeroy, Apr. 4, 1750, in Edwards, "Narrative of Communion Controversy," *WJE* 12:613.

resemblance to the oral narratives that Thomas Shepard and a handful of other clergymen recorded during the 1640s.⁶ Indeed, most church membership candidates early in the eighteenth century made little effort to describe their progression beyond the preliminary, or legal, stages of conversion.⁷ Changes in both the content and the practice of recording relations, in turn, mirrored broader transformations in the New England Way: the development of more inclusive church affiliation practices through expanded access to baptism and a renaissance in puritan sacramental theology; the elaboration of liturgical practices ranging from prayer bills to elaborate funeral rites; the feminization and increasingly tribal orientation of local churches; and the emergence of a professional class of the clergymen. By 1740, the meaning of church membership had become closely linked to social maturation within the community and to the rhythms of the family lifecourse; most candidates were married men and women seeking access to the sacrament of baptism for their children.⁸

Composed one month before Edwards unveiled his new church admission requirements, the relation of Benjamin Tainter of Westborough embodied many of the literary conventions that prevailed in eastern Massachusetts during the early decades of the eighteenth century.⁹ Tainter began his narrative with a series of interlocking statements in

⁶ On the process of composing and editing eighteenth-century relations, see Ross W. Beales Jr., “Literacy and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Westborough, Massachusetts,” in *Early American Probate Inventories*, ed. Peter Benes, Annual Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, 1987 (Boston: Boston University Press, 1989) 47-49; and Seeman, “Lay Conversion Narratives,” 629-34.

⁷ Williston Walker, ed., *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (1893; reprint, New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 223. For seventeenth-century relations, see Edmund S. Morgan, ed., *The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth, 1653-1657: The Conscience of a Puritan* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1970), 107-25; *Thomas Shepard's Confessions*, vol. 58, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, eds. George Selement and Bruce C. Wooley (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1981); and Mary Rhinelander McCarl, ed., “Thomas Shepard’s Record of Relations of Religious Experience, 1648-1649,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 48 (1991): 432-66.

⁸ This paragraph summarizes an extensive body of revisionist scholarship on the transformation of New England puritanism during the seventeenth century, including Robert G. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969); David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1972); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974); David E. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); J. William T. Youngs Jr., *God’s Messengers: Religious Leadership in Colonial New England, 1700-1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Gerald F. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis, eds., *Religion, Family and the Life Course: Explorations in the Social History of Early America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

⁹ For a preliminary content analysis of the largest surviving collection of eighteenth-century church admission testimonies, see Winiarski, “Gendered ‘Relations’ in Haverhill, Massachusetts,” 58-78. See also

which he described his religious upbringing and gave thanks to God for living under the means of grace in a New England “land of light.” The Westborough layman, along with his neighbor, Lydia Batherick, and Isaac and Anna Farnsworth of Pepperell, acknowledged that they were joining the church in response to a Christ-commanded sacramental duty that was incumbent upon all Christians.

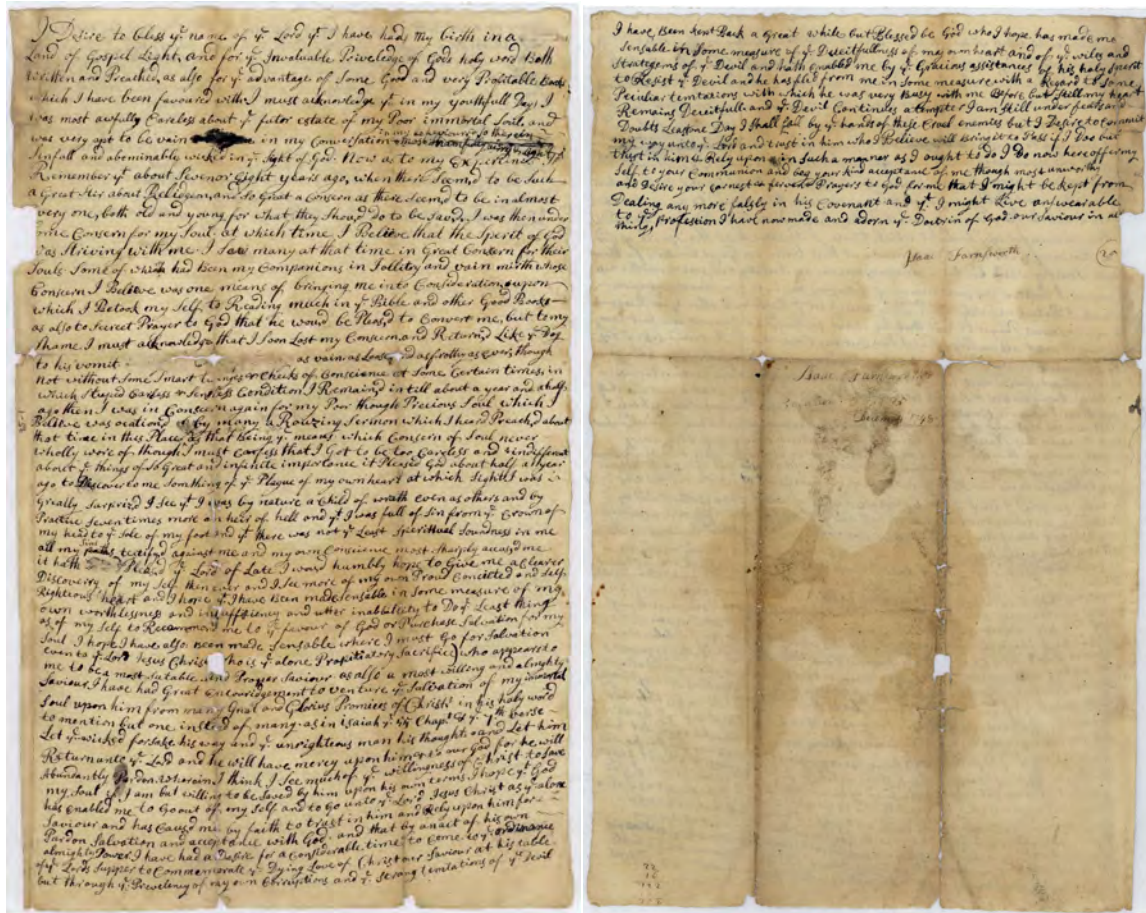


Figure 1

Relation of Isaac Farnsworth, December 4, 1748. Courtesy, Ipswich Historical Society.

At the same time, Tainter and his contemporaries remained fearful that they might, in the terrifying words of 1 Corinthians 11:29, eat and drink their own damnation by participating in the Lord’s Supper unworthily. Torn between sacramental imperatives and

Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics & Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 53-57.

fears of unworthiness, most people elected to wait until the “providences of God,” in the apt words of Hephzibah Crosby of Westborough, convinced them of the greater dangers of delay and neglect. Tainter, for example, believed that God had subjected him to captivity in Canada during King George’s War in order to “stur me up to my Duty.” Other candidates joined the church after witnessing the deaths of family members or attending the “Rouzing” sermons that marked the Whitefieldian revivals of the 1740s. A few, including Crosby, uttered vows to God during acute moments of illness and bodily pain in which they pledged to perform their duties at the Lord’s Supper if God raised them to health. It was at this point that most candidates turned to their bibles for confirming evidence. Tainter, Batherick, Crosby, and the Farnsworths drew encouragement from a small group of well-known scriptural “Invitations,” including Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 55:1-7, Matthew 11:28, John 6:37, and Revelation 22:17. They closed their relations with requests for the prayers of their neighbors that they might “walk agreeable” to the high calling of their church membership professions.

The generic conventions and stock phrases that figure prominently in the Westborough relations dominated churches in eastern Massachusetts throughout the first four decades of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Ebenezer Parkman’s parishioners continued to compose similar relations as late as the 1780s.¹⁰ During the decades leading up to the American Revolution, however, other churches began modifying their admission criteria to emphasize the proper understanding of basic Reformed theological doctrines rather than the recitation of religious experiences. Even as Edwards moved to impose church membership professions in Northampton, two of his closest allies during the communion controversy were leading their congregations in the opposite direction. In 1756, Thomas Foxcroft’s parishioners in Boston’s First Church voted to allow candidates who “have a Scruple upon their Minds” to exhibit a written statement of their religious beliefs instead of “making a Relation as usual.” Members of the Old South Church made similar changes the following decade.¹¹ As a result, the Boston relations below reveal a marked shift away from experiential disclosures. Harvard student John Fairfield’s relation, for example, consisted entirely of creedal affirmations and supporting scriptural passages. Hannah Blake omitted nearly all of the traditional conventions of the genre in her 1751 profession of beliefs, which may explain why Thomas Prince placed a line through her unusually florid introduction and replaced it with more conventional language that emphasized her “lost perishing Condition as a child of the 1st Adam.”

¹⁰ For one example, see Heman Packard DeForest and Edward Craig Bates, *The History of Westborough, Massachusetts* (Westborough: Published by the Town, 1891), 205-6.

¹¹ Richard D. Pierce, ed., *The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868*, vols. 39-41, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1961), 39:213-14 (hereafter *RFCB*); Hamilton Andrews Hill, *History of the Old South Church (Third Church) Boston, 1669-1884*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1890), 2:95-96, 112.



Figure 2

Portrait of Hannah (Blake) Dawes illustrated in Henry W. Holland, *William Dawes and His Ride with Paul*

Revere (Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1878).

By 1760, obedience to God's laws, or what Elizabeth Stephenson called a "well Ordered Conversation," combined with a concise statement of the candidate's doctrinal knowledge, had emerged as the primary criteria for admission to the sacraments in two of Boston's oldest churches.

None of the relations from Boston, Pepperell, or Westborough would have passed muster with Edwards. Lay men and women in these churches seldom addressed what the Northampton minister called the "essentials of true piety." Had colleagues in eastern Massachusetts paused to scrutinize *An Humble Inquiry* with greater care, they would have realized immediately that Edwards' narrow definition of a "credible profession" of "vital piety" diverged in important ways from their more inclusive concept of a church admission relation. For Edwards, the mere desire to perform Christ-commanded religious duties at the Lord's Table was an insufficient reason for closing with the church. In fact, candidates who pledged to give themselves up to God and "obey all his commands" engaged in acts of "mere evasion." Those who relied upon their family upbringing, baptismal obligations, or healing vows were mere spectators to salvation, rather than those "immediately concerned in the affair." Edwards reserved his harshest criticism for candidates, such as those in Boston's First and Old South churches, who professed only an "historical" knowledge of

the “doctrines of religion.” He even went so far as to assert that the “practice of promiscuous admission” observed elsewhere in New England was “superficial” and “lukewarm”—even “abominable” and “hateful to Christ.” To outside observers, including Edwards’ former student, Samuel Hopkins, the division between the Northampton minister and his opponents seemed stark. “He look’d upon it to be the Duty of none, but only such as were visibly truly gracious Persons to enter into full Communion,” Hopkins summarized in a 1750 letter, while his critics presumed that “all Persons of Sober Life” and “Competante Knowledge” had a “Right to enter into full Communion and that it was their Duty.” Edwards’ position, to be fair, was more nuanced; and yet the uncompromising rhetoric of his hastily written communion treatises and lectures put him at odds not only with his parishioners and colleagues in the Connecticut Valley but also with his closest supporters in eastern Massachusetts.¹²

Influenced by the more radical aspects of the Whitefieldian revivals of the 1740s, a few churches appear to have warmly embraced Edwards’ scheme. One parish that succeeded where the Northampton minister had failed was the tiny Berkshire hamlet of Granville. The town’s first minister, Edwards’ brother-in-law Moses Tuttle, embraced the same open communion practices that had governed Northampton during Solomon Stoddard’s pastorate. But Tuttle’s unexpected departure in 1752 provided an opportunity for reassessment. Two years later, the Granville church members drafted a new covenant in which they repudiated the “Stodarian principal.” Henceforth, all candidates for church membership would be required to meet with a committee of lay leaders, draft a suitable relation in which they detailed their religious experiences, and consent to having the document read in public. To cement their restrictive new standards, the Granville church offered their vacant pulpit to Jedediah Smith, a young Yale firebrand who hailed from the neighboring village of Suffield, Connecticut, the scene of Edwards’ greatest revival triumph more than a decade earlier.¹³

Edwards monitored religious developments in Granville from his mission outpost at Stockbridge, and he praised Smith as a “pious young minister.” Although he approved of Granville’s bold decision to embrace his controversial position on church membership qualifications, he would have been horrified by the results. More than a dozen relations

¹² Jonathan Edwards to William Hobby, n.d. [June 1751], *WJE* 16:371; Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*, *WJE* 12:190, 192, 206, 210, 221, 320, 323; Edwards, “Lectures on the Qualifications for Full Communion in the Church of Christ,” *WJE* 25:359; *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Miscellanies of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D.*, 1755-1794, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter (New Haven, Conn., 1916), 501-2.

¹³ “Church Constitution,” June 14, 1754, Granville, Mass., First Congregational Church Papers, Granville Public Library, Granville, Mass. On the early history of Granville, see Albion B. Wilson, *History of Granville, Massachusetts* (n.p., 1954), 3-50, 163-75. For Smith, see Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History*, vol. 2 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1896), 240-41. On Edwards’ role in sparking the Suffield revival, see Douglas L. Winiarski, “Jonathan Edwards, Enthusiast? Radical Revivalism and the Great Awakening in the Connecticut Valley,” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 74 (2005): 683-739.

survive from the tumultuous early years of the Granville church, during which Smith struggled to corral the burgeoning sectarian leanings of his zealous and fractious congregation. The relations of Martha Benjamin, Timothy Robinson, and Joseph Sweatman date to the “very remarkable awakening and revival of religion” in Granville that Edwards reported in a 1757 letter to a Scottish colleague.¹⁴ And yet these narratives, ironically, were riven with many of the errors that the former Northampton clergyman had spent more than a decade condemning in his revival treatises, sermons, and personal correspondence.

From their opening lines, the Granville relations tilted toward the kinds of dramatic conversion reports that circulated in print and manuscript during the peak months of the Whitefieldian revivals. Smith’s parishioners eschewed the standard litany of family upbringing, providential events, sacramental duties, and creedal affirmations that dominated church admission testimonies in eastern Massachusetts. Instead, they scanned their experiences for evidence of the precise moment when Christ began “Courting my Backward Soul,” as Martha Benjamin explained. The prominent magistrate and future Revolutionary War colonel Timothy Robinson, for example, was converted during a dramatic vision in which “all Nater Semd to vanish” and his soul was carried into the “World of Spirets.” After gazing upon an “Ecseding Lovley” Jesus for nearly half an hour, he awoke in great bodily pain. Later that night, Robinson saw the Devil standing before the gates of hell during a second vision. Finally, he heard a voice, calling to him in words from Jeremiah and the Psalms, which dispelled all his fears.¹⁵

Robinson’s unusual relation reveals the critical role of revelatory words from scripture in the Granville relations. The testimonies submitted by Jedediah Smith’s parishioners were longer than relations composed in eastern Massachusetts, and they included nearly three times as many biblical quotations and allusions. Nearly all of these scriptural references, moreover, assumed the form of “those words” that leapt to the candidates’ minds and sounded in their ears as if they were direct communications from the Holy Spirit. Such biblical “impressions,” as Benjamin called them, dominated the Granville relations to such an extent that a few prospective church members began stringing them together into composite statements. The booming voice that Robinson heard following his vision of heaven and hell, for example, spoke in a jumble of words from Psalm 2:7, Jeremiah 31:3, and Micah 6:8. To many Granville candidates, these darting scriptural words were the voice of God that “Spak unto me,” as Joseph Sweatman candidly admitted.

These were precisely the type of conversion narratives that Edwards had come to despise and for which his opponents unfairly tarred him during the Northampton communion controversy. By the mid-1750s, he had been struggling for more than a decade to convince his former parishioners and transatlantic reading audience of the dangers of

¹⁴ Jonathan Edwards to John Erskine, Apr. 12, 1757, *WJE* 16:705.

¹⁵ For controversies involving dreams, trances, and visions during the Whitefieldian revivals, see Douglas L. Winiarski, “Souls Filled with Ravishing Transport: Heavenly Visions and the Radical Awakening in New England,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 61 (2004): 3-46.

visions and biblical impulses. Indeed, these two errors figured prominently in his major revival-era treatises: *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Holy Spirit*, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England*, and *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. As the initial euphoria of the Whitefieldian revivals gave way to ecclesiastical schism, Edwards grew increasingly frustrated by what he derided in his private theological notebooks as the “superabundant talk of experiences.” Prideful conversion stories such as those produced by church membership candidates in Granville were like “suckers at the root of a tree” that drew nourishment away from the true fruits of grace. Throughout the Northampton communion controversy, Edwards emphatically denied that he advocated the practice of “relating, or giving an account of experiences, or what is so commonly called, as a term of communion.” But he walked a knife’s edge. On the one hand, Edwards had rejected the traditional relation of faith formula practiced in towns such as Westborough and Pepperell, as well as the creedal professions that had emerged in Boston’s First and Old South churches; and yet he also condemned the boastful experiences described by the men and women of Granville, who brazenly proclaimed that they had passed through the new birth.¹⁶

So what did Edwards expect? “I should content myself with a few words” in which candidates briefly professed the “great things wherein godliness consists,” he explained in a letter to a colleague, rather than heady accounts of their “good estate.” Edwards refused to limit the length or content of the professions that he advocated. He even acknowledged that qualified candidates might question whether they had been converted at all. The sample statements that he shared with prospective church members in Northampton prior to the controversy were unusually terse by contemporary standards. “I hope, I do truly find a heart to give up myself wholly to God, according to the tenor of that covenant of grace which was sealed in my baptism,” read the shortest version, “and to walk in that way of obedience to all the commandments of God, which the covenant of grace requires, as long as I live.”¹⁷

A handful of relations composed during the decades following the communion controversy conformed, at least in small ways, to Edwards’ new qualifications; and several may have been directly influenced by his published writings on the subject. “I think it not Sufficient to obtain Salvation to give a bare assent to the gospel that Christ is the redeemer of mankind,” explained Charles Brigham, “but it is necessary I Should have Such a Faith as will bring me into Obedience and Subjection to himself.”

¹⁶ Jonathan Edwards, Miscellany 951, *WJE* 20:210; Edwards, *Misrepresentations Corrected, and Truth Vindicated* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1752), *WJE* 12:367. For his arguments against visions and biblical impulses, see Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1741), *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1742), *WJE* 4:236-37, 278, 432-33; Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (Boston, 1746), *WJE* 2:173-74, 216-17, 219-23, 266-68; and Edwards, “Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit Are Inferior to Graces of the Spirit,” *WJE* 25:303-9.

¹⁷ Edwards, *Misrepresentations Corrected*, *WJE* 12:360-61. Cf. Edwards, “Drafts of Professions of Faith,” *WJE* 0 39.



Figure 3

Detail of the Charles Brigham stone, 1781, Grafton, Mass. Farber Gravestone Collection, HF0136.

Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Composing his unusually long relation only a few weeks after Edwards' apologetic *An Humble Inquiry* issued from the Boston press, Brigham declined to comment on his beliefs or to narrate a string of revelatory experiences. Instead, he prayed for God to "Discover to me the Beauties & excelencies of the Lord Jesus Christ." Other candidates, including Hephzibah Crosby of Westborough and Anna Farnsworth of Pepperell, expressed concerns about hypocrisy and self-deception—crucial theological issues that surfaced in Edwards' writings during the late 1740s.¹⁸ These seemingly "Edwardsean" elements were unusual by eighteenth-century standards. Of the more than eighty relations that survive from Ebenezer Parkman six-decade pastorate in Westborough, fewer than ten percent employed similar language, a figure roughly equivalent to the total percentage of Edwards' supporters during the communion controversy.

¹⁸ Ava Chamberlain, "Self-Deception as a Theological Problem in Jonathan Edwards's 'Treatise Concerning Religious Affections,'" *Church History* 63 (1994): 541-56.

In the end, Jonathan Edwards' ministry in Northampton foundered when he attempted to fix with precision an experience that had roiled families, neighborhoods, towns, and ministerial associations. In 1750, what did it mean to be a professor, a new convert, a visible saint, or an experienced Christian? Which experiences counted? A historical knowledge of Reformed theological doctrines? Baptismal obligations and a religious education? Extraordinary dreams and visions? Seeing the excellences of Christ? After a decade of close observation, pastoral counseling, theological speculation, and published polemic, Edwards was confident that he knew. Recoiling from his earlier revival radicalism, he came to believe that only a "profession of true saintship" would insulate his parish from the centrifugal threats of Arminian formalism and antinomian enthusiasm. But in a religious culture that had lost its center, the "stingy principles" that he attributed to New England's puritan "forefathers" further eroded any remaining consensus. "All are agreed that a publick profession of religion is necessary in order to persons being admitted into the church," acknowledged one of his many critics. "But then we Shall differ as to this profession."¹⁹

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The twelve edited relations below are published by permission of the American Antiquarian Society, the Granville Public Library, the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University, the Ipswich Museum, and the Massachusetts Historical Society. The transcriptions follow the expanded method described in Mary-Jo Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 157-58, 161-64, and Samuel Eliot Morison, "Care and Editing of Manuscripts," in Frank Freidel, ed., *The Harvard Guide to American History*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 28-31. I have attempted to reproduce the initial draft of each relation. The accompanying notes identify subsequent textual modifications made by clerical editors and provide biographical sketches for each candidate. Conjectural readings, missing words, and scriptural references appear in square brackets.

¹⁹ Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*, *WJE* 12:191; Edwards, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer* (Boston: Daniel Henchman, 1747), *WJE* 5:359; anonymous, "Discourse on the Theology of Jonathan Edwards," n.d. [ca. 1750], Eleazer Williams Papers, 1634-1964, microfilm, reel 7, frame 124, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

WESTBOROUGH, MASS.

Relation of Benjamin Tainter, November [6], 1748²⁰

I Desire to bless god that I was born in A land of light and of godly parance that they gave me up to god in my infinci by babtissim²¹ and that I have had many Early instruchons About god and Eternity. And I hope that god hath shown me my condission by nature how I was born in Sin and brouhgt forth in iniquity and how I Lay Lyable to the Rarth of God in this Life and that which is to Come.²² But not withstanding my Transgressions the Lord has Still bin waiting To be greatious unto me and has (as I humbly hope) by his word and by sum very Remarkable providences awakened me to a sence of my miserable and Undon Estate and condision whilst in a Estate of nature for he hes by his allmighty power apeared for me in a most wonderful maner when²³ he was plesed to Deliver me when I was²⁴ in grait Danger of being kiled by the Indins. But God in his infinite mercy apeared for me and delivered me from Death. As²⁵ God was plesed to²⁶ led [two words illeg.] into captivity by the Indins,

²⁰ On June 20, 1746, Westborough minister Ebenezer Parkman reported the “Sorrowfull News” that Benjamin Tainter had been captured and carried to Canada during an attack on Fort Massachusetts by French soldiers and Abenaki warriors. Son of Simon and Rebecca (Harrington) Tainter, Benjamin was born in Watertown, Mass., on May 25, 1725, and baptized in Westborough two years later. Returning from captivity in 1747, he married Hannah Wood of Somers, Conn.; they presented their seven children for baptism between 1753 and 1769. Tainter sold his farm in 1780 to help finance the American Revolution. He spent his remaining years in Somers, Amherst, Mass., and Newfane, Vt., where he died in 1810. Tainter’s grandson described the former Indian captive as “stern” in his physical appearance but “very pleasant and even in his ways and a devoted Christian.” *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782*, ed. Francis G. Walett (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1974), 138, 159; Dean W. Tainter, comp., *A History and Genealogy of the Descendants of Joseph Taynter, Who Sailed from England April, A.D. 1638, and Settled in Watertown, Mass.* (Boston: David Clapp, 1859), 36-37; Westborough, Mass., Congregational Church Records, 1724-1808, microfilm, Westborough Town Library, Westborough, Mass., 83, 96, 102, 108, 117, 124, 131, 146; S. Ingersoll Briant, “The Simon Tainter House,” in *Some Old Houses in Westborough, Mass., and Their Occupants* ([Westborough, Mass.]: Westborough Historical Society, 1906), 14-15.

²¹ Tainter was baptized in Westborough on June 5, 1727. Westborough Congregational Church Records, 6.

²² Tainter added the phrase “and how I Lay Lyable to the Rarth of God in this Life and that which is to Come” at the bottom of the manuscript, and Parkman marked the passage for inclusion with an insertion mark.

²³ Parkman interlineated “when” over “in that.”

²⁴ Parkman interlineated “at the Time of my being” over the words “when I was.”

²⁵ Parkman interlineated “However” over “As.”

²⁶ Parkman interlineated “order it that I was.”

which God was plesed to make as I humbly hope²⁷ to me a mens to stur me up to my Duty. And God [was]²⁸ pleased to visit me with sickness whilst in captivity but He was plesed to Appear for me in my sickness and Raised me To helth Again and Returned me home in safty which put me upon considering of my duty to God which I have thought my duty to [illeg.] come to Him²⁹ and obey his commandments. I have had a grate desire To come to his holy ordinance³⁰ but thinking myself unfit I was afraid lest coming unworthly³¹ I Eat and drink Judgement to myselfe [cf. 1 Cor. 11:29]. But Readin sum plases of scripturs I have taken incorigment to come: such plases as these, marthew 11 and 28 come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy Laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meak and Lowly in heart and ye shall find Rest unto your souls for my yoke is Easy and my burden is light and Solomons songs 5 and 1 Eat O frinds drink ye drink abundantly o beloved. Isaiah the 1 & 18 come now and let us Reason Together saith the Lord thoug your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow thoug they be Read Like crimson they shall be as wooll. John 7, and 37, in the last day that grate day of the feast Jesus stood and cried saying if any man thust [thirst] let him come unto me and drink. And Reverlation 3 and 18, I counsel the[e] to buy of me Gold Tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich and white Raimnt that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see. And many others places of scripturs I have Read which hes givn me incorrigement to come. [Two words illeg.] this he shews me how Redy and willing he is to save all that Come unto him in and through Christ. And I hope I have Reseaved Christ as he is offrid in the gospil unto me for my prophet, prest and king, and I desire To walke acording to the profession which I make.³² And I beg your prayers for me that I may be a welcom gesce [guest] unto this table of the Lord.

Benjamin Tainter³³

²⁷ Parkman inserted parentheses around the phrase “as I humbly hope.”

²⁸ Parkman interlineated “was” and “also” one word later.

²⁹ Parkman interlineated “be to” over [illeg.] and “to Him” after “Come.”

³⁰ Parkman interlineated “of the Supper.”

³¹ Parkman corrected the spelling of “unworthily” and interlineated “should” one word later.

³² Tainter added the previous two sentences at the bottom of the manuscript. Parkman cancelled the first two words, which are now illegible, replaced them with the phrase “For by all,” and marked the passage for inclusion with a double insertion mark. Although there is no corresponding mark in the body of the text, I have placed the passage here, as Tainter’s additions include stock phrases that typically appear in the closing lines of eighteenth-century relations.

³³ Relation of Benjamin Tainter, November [6] 1748, box 2, Parkman Family Papers, 1707-1879, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Tainter appears to have composed and signed his own relation on the recto side of a single leaf of paper measuring 26.5 by 19.5 cm. The manuscript contains several minor corrections in Parkman’s hand. His notation on the verso side reads “Benjamin Tainters Relation, November 1748.”

Relation of Hephzibah Crosby, April 9, 1749³⁴

I believe that there is but one God over all, who made and governs all Things according to his own Will; and that this one God is in 3 Persons, Father, son & holy Ghost. I believe that as I was born, so I must dye, and that I shall rise again at the last Day to Judgment. I bless God I was born in this Land of Gospel Light, & of religious Parents that gave me up to God in Baptism, while I was young & that they taught me the true Religion: that I have had the word of God to read, and that I have had the word preachd to me from Time to Time; that by these Means there has been shewn to me the lost Condition I am in by nature, and that the only way for me who am a sinner to become Justified and righteous before God is only by the Merits of Christ's Blood. If I shall not be found pardond and justifyd throught Christ in the great Day I must perish forever. Therefore I desire to accept of Him as He is offered in the Gospel to be my prophet to teach, my Priest to atone Divine Justice for me, my King to rule in & reign over me.³⁵

³⁴ Parkman met with Hephzibah Crosby to compose her relation on Apr. 5, 1749, one day before received a "long Letter" from Edwards containing news from Scotland and "Good Tokens respecting Religion in some very eminent Persons in Great Britain" and Holland. Crosby had contemplated "making a profession" and "joining with the Church" on several occasions earlier that winter while she worked in the Westborough parsonage spinning. Parkman's notation at the top of the manuscript stated that her narrative had been "received from her partly in writing, & partly from her own mouth." Crosby, who signed her relation in a shaky hand, was twenty-one and single at the time of her admission to full communion. Born in Billerica, Mass., on Oct. 17, 1727, she moved with her parents, David and Sarah (Foster) Crosby, to Shrewsbury as a young child. Four months after joining the Westborough church, Crosby married Benjamin Whipple and moved again, this time to the frontier settlement at Lambstown (now Hardwick), Mass. Hephzibah was dismissed to the Hardwick church in 1750, and she and her husband presented the first three of their ten children for baptism during the next several years. By 1755, however, the Whipples had grown dissatisfied with Hardwick minister David White and withdrawn from communion. They eventually joined a group of New Light dissenters that migrated to Bennington, Vt., with other separatist families from Newent (now Lisbon), Conn., and Sunderland, Mass., where they merged to form town's First Church in 1762. Crosby died in West Rutland, Vt., on May 16, 1797. *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, 192-93, 297; Westborough Congregational Church Records, 84, 87; *Vital Records of Billerica, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston, 1908), 48; *Vital Records of Westborough, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (Worcester, Mass.: Franklin P. Rice, 1903), 141; Thomas W. Baldwin, comp., *Vital Records of Hardwick, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1917), 122-23; Hardwick, Mass., Congregational Church Records, 1736-1786, microfilm no. 868519 (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1971), 12, 23, 25; Lucius R. Paige, *History of Hardwick, Massachusetts, with a Genealogical Register* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1883), 228, 534; Bennington, Vt., First Church Records, 1762-1820, vol. 1, typescript, Bennington Museum, Bennington, Vt., 10, 74-75; Vermont Vital Records, 1760-1954, www.familysearch.org (accessed Feb. 22, 2014). On the formation of the Bennington church, see C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800: Strict Congregationalists and Separate Baptists in the Great Awakening*, 2nd ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 108-9.

³⁵ Parkman deleted the words "I acknowledge it," drew a line across the page, and inserted the following paragraph, which begins at the bottom of the first side of the manuscript.

I have for Some Time had a Desire to come to the Table of the Lord for He has Said do This in Remembrance of me [cf. Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24], but knowing my own unworthiness I was afraid. But then being awakend by the word and providences of God, I am resolved humbly to come & give up myself to God and his people. It pleased God to visit me of late with a fit of Sickness and I was brought low, but He helped me.³⁶ In my Distress I cryed unto³⁷ the Lord and He heard my Cry and He deliverd me from going down to the pit [cf. Job 33:24]. What Shall I render unto the Lord for all His Benefits towards Me? I will take the Cup of Salvation & call upon the Name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the Presence of all his people. And by reading the holy Scriptures. Psalm 116:12, 13, 14.³⁸ And by reading the holy Scriptures especially that part of it that setts forth the Humiliations of Christ his afflicted Life, his bitter Death and suffering, and all to make Satisfaction to divine Justice for sinners, has been very awakening to me and for my Encouragement. I have also found by reading his word in other parts of it very gracious Invitations to come as Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 11:28 & onward, Revelation 22:17, John 6:37, and many other places by which I have been induced to come.

But tho I have experiencd much Enlightening & humbling and been sometimes encourag'd yet I have had great Concern & been in great Trouble questioning myself³⁹ whether I had been thorowly humbled before God, whether I have accepted Christ aright, and whether my Hope was not a vain Hope.⁴⁰

I acknowledge, it is one Thing to say what one has heard or read or got by rote, & another thing what a person has really felt and experiencd. Therefore I would not offer anything but what I hope I have really found. For, not only has God been pleasd to awaken me, & his holy Spirit has been Striving with me, but I have considerd the End God had in making me, that I might glorify Him whatever I can; and that God had such love to us as to send his son to dye for us when he had no need of us or anything we could do to make him anything more Glorious or happy. These having deeply affected me,⁴¹ I hope it is not Merely from Fear of Misery, or Desire of Happiness, but I hope out of a sense of Duty and Gratitude, from an hatred of sin & regard to Holiness, that I would come to Him. And I hope I have been brought to see that no Dutys or Goodness of mine can justifie me before

³⁶ Parkman noted in his diary on Sept. 9, 1748 that Crosby and several other townspeople in Westborough were suffering from an unspecified illness. *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, 182.

³⁷ Deleted: “called upon.”

³⁸ Marginal notation.

³⁹ Parkman wrote the phrase “questioning myself” in the margin, replacing the original phrase “to know.”

⁴⁰ Parkman drew a line across the manuscript, above which he wrote “[See the middle of the foregoing page, and add what is here underneath.]” This notation marks the place where he intended to return to original text of the narrative on the first side of the manuscript.

⁴¹ Parkman deleted “Therefore” and inserted “These having deeply affected me” in the margin.

God. And having Seen the readiness & willingness of Christ to receive them that come to Him, I hope I find myself willing to come and accept of Him.

There is a great Difference between giving the Hand (in Profession) and giving the Heart to the Lord. I think I have a Willingness to give up myself wholly to the Lord, there being no better way of disposing of myself than to devote myself, soul and Body to Him the remainder of my Days here; to bind myself, and to Seal my Bonds to him. I have considered my Baptism also and the very solemn Bonds thereof, and that it is a throwing away my Baptism if I do not come to this. I desire to be truly humbled for my Neglects of the Duty of giving myself up to God, in time past. Indeed I have often thought I did do this; tho not without fear whether I was Sincere. But I find there must be a full & intire Resolution, and ought to be able to appeal to God that knows all Things that it is in Uprightness of Heart. I have also often thought how strict those ought to walk who so solemnly bind themselves. But I trust the Thought of binding myself to do what in me lyes will be no sufficient pull-back to Me; for tho I can do nothing of myself, yet by the Help of God's Grace I would humbly Engage, not without fear lest if I be left to myself, I should dishonor God and bring a Scandal to this high & holy Profession.

Upon the whole, I humbly ask admittance among You, and whatsoever anybody hath at any Time seen amiss in Me, I earnestly ask their forgiveness of, and I desire humbly to put myself under the Government of this Church requesting your kind and faithfull Watch over Me at all Times; and I ask your Prayers for me that I may walk agreeable to these solemn Engagements; and that I may not only be a Member of the visible Church here, but that I may at last sit down with Abraham, Isaac & Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, and drink of that Wine that is ever New with God in Glory.

Hepzibah Crosby⁴²

⁴² Relation of Hephzibah Crosby, April 9, 1749, box 2, Parkman Family Papers. Ebenezer Parkman drafted Crosby's relation on three sides of a folded sheet of paper measuring 19.5 by 16 cm. He made a number of corrections to his original draft, the most significant of which are discussed in the notes above. Crosby's signature appears to be in her own hand. Parkman inscribed the following notation at the beginning of the relation: "*The Relation of Hephzibah Crosby*, received from her partly in writing, & partly from her own mouth." After docketing the manuscript, Parkman wrote the words "The Relation of Hephzibah Crosby" along the fold on the blank fourth side.

Relation of Charles Brigham, August 6, 1749⁴³

I Believe there is one God the Being, of all Beings, & So the Creator, Preserver, Governour & Disposer of all things in the world and I believe as there is one God, So this one God is Three persons Father Son and Holy Ghost. One in Essence Yet three In Subsistence but one Nature Yet three Persons. Though it is what I a finite Creature am not able to apprehend of the Infinite Creator but it is what the Great God hath avouched of himself in his word 1 John 5:7, there are Three that bare Record In Heaven the Father the Word & the Holy Ghost, & these three are one So that I am oblinded to believe it, & I believe that the Son of God In the fullness of time [Gal. 4:4] became the Son of Man by Takeing to himself a True Body & a reasonable Soul & So was & Continues to be God and man In Two Entire distinct natures. And So Christ being both God and man is made perfectly fit to Suffer for man, & to make Satisfaction unto God to reconcile Man to God & God to man & thus Christ Having assum'd the Humain Nature into his Person, & So Satisfied Divine Justice for Sin they that believe in him may be Received Into Grace & favour with the most High God & I hope I have reason to bless God that I was born where the way to Eternal Life & Salvation is So fully powerfully & plainly made known & Exhibited to me by Jesus Christ though I have reason to be ashamed that I have Improved my advantages no better. I Confess though Light is Come Into the world I have Loved darkness rather then Light [John 3:19] & I believe there is but few but what have Sinned at a

⁴³ The religious biography of Charles Brigham Esq. presents an intriguing case study of the instabilities that plagued established Congregational churches in the wake of the Whitefieldian revivals of the 1740s. Born on Dec. 30, 1700, Charles was the son Samuel and Elizabeth (Howe) Brigham of Marlborough, Mass. He married Mary Peters of Newport, R.I., and settled in Grafton, Mass., sometime before the birth of their first child in 1732. Brigham witnessed extraordinary religious commotions in Grafton during the 1740s. Although minister Solomon Prentice aggressively promoted the Whitefieldian revivals through innovative outdoor meetings, his pastorate had nearly collapsed in scandal and schism by 1747. Brigham was one of several disaffected townspeople who requested permission to join the neighboring church in Westborough. After two years of cautious deliberations, Ebenezer Parkman communicated Brigham's "very long relation" to his parishioners on Aug. 6, 1749. In a troubling turn of events, Brigham failed to present his six children for baptism during the ensuing months, which precipitated a series of tense exchanges with Parkman. Following Prentice's dismissal and the ordination of his more temperate successor, Aaron Hutchinson, in 1750, Brigham transferred his membership back to Grafton and eventually brought most of his children to the baptismal font. Brigham ranked among Grafton's most prominent residents. He served as a justice of the peace and representative to the Massachusetts General Court. Brigham died on Mar. 17, 1781 and was interred in the Grafton burial ground beneath an elaborate face-decorated gravestone. Frederick Clifton Pierce, *History of Grafton, Worcester County, Massachusetts, from Its Earliest Settlement by the Indians in 1647 to the Present Time*, 1879 (Worcester, Mass.: Charles Hamilton, 1879), 463-64; *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, 154, 197, 199-200, 217, 227; Grafton, Mass., Congregational Church Records, 1731-1774, Congregational Library, Boston, 39, 84, 86, 91 (available online at New England's Hidden Histories: Colonial-Era Church Records, accessed Feb. 22, 2014, www.congregationallibrary.org/nehb/main). For revival irregularities in Grafton, see Ross W. Beales Jr., "The Ecstasy of Sarah Prentice: Death, Re-Birth and the Great Awakening in Grafton, Massachusetts," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 25 (1997): 101-23.

Cheeper rate then I have Done for when I was Young God was pleas'd to awaken me & give me a Sight of Sin & a Sence of misery & to make me Sensible that I must be Born again or I Could not Expect to enter into the Kingdome of Heaven [cf. John 3:3; Matt. 18:3] & Escape the damnation of hell [Matt. 23:33], which made me Inquire what I Should do that I might Inherit Eternal Life [cf. Mark 10:17, Luke 10:25, Luke 18:18]. I thought I must be Solicitus for Heaven and must Strive to Enter Into the Strait Gate for Christ declared that Strait is the Gate & narrow is the way that Leads to Life & few there be that find it [Matt. 7:14] & that many were Called but few Chosen [Matt. 20:16, 22:14]. I begged of God to Cast the Eye of his Electing Love upon me & Look⁴⁴ me into repentance & give me a True & Saving Faith in Jesus Christ & I thought God gave me Some Tokens of his Love & reconciliation In & through Christ & Some Discoveries of the Glories of the Invisible world and of the Happiness of the Saints & I Took pleasure in reading of his word & I heard it Dispenced with Joy and delight, & I was Convinced that those that believe In Christ Should come to the Sacrement of the Lords Supper. I Examined myself as to my knowledge Faith Repentance Love & Obedience Least I Should Eat & drink my own Damnation [cf. 1 Cor. 11:29] & I See So much aversion To all good & Such an Inward apt Inclination to all Evill & So many Strong and powerfull enimies warring against me I was afraid I Should vow & not perform & I thought I had better not vow then vow and not perform [cf. Is. 19:21] & I even thought it was Time Enough to be Religious & the Language of my heart to the Spirit of God was go thy way for this Time when I have a more Convenient Season I will be Religious [cf. Acts 24:25], when I am Settled in the world I Shall not meet with So much Opposition & so I have put it of[f] from one year after another & have allowed myself in that which my Conscience hath Condemned me In. And I have reason to admire God hath not Cast me out of his Sight and presents [presence] & Taken his Holy Spirit from me but I hope he is Still upholding of me by his free Spirit. For Some years ago God was pleased to again awaken me by his word & providences & give me Some realizing thoughts of his Purity & Majestie & of his Just Indignation and Vangeance against Sin, and a sence of my own blindness Inward filthiness & natural Corruption & I Look'd back upon my past Life with grief & sorrow for I thought I had sinned willfully after I had received knowledge of the truth & I was afraid there remained no more Sacrefice for my Sins, but a fearful Looking for of Judgment & fiery Indignation, for he that dispised Moses Law Died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment I thought myself worthy who had Troden under foot the Son of God & Counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith I was Sanctified an unholy Thing & done dispite To the Spirit of grace [cf. Heb. 10:27-29]. I was afraid the Harvest was past & the Summer was Ended [Jer. 8:20] & I was not Saved & now the Gate is Shut & it is Too Late to Enter. I wished for the Golden Years I have seen & had neglected & I wish'd I had never been born or had been made the most Despicable Creature in the world or that I could be annihilated & not appear before an Incenced God. The

⁴⁴ Brigham may have intended to write the word "lead" here.

thoughts of my hastning to an Eternity of wo of wo unspeakable wo where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched [cf. Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:44, 46, 48] filled me with amazement & in my distress I thought of the Infinitness of Gods Love to poor fallen man that he So Loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, to the End that all that would believe in him Should not perish but have everlasting Life. God Sent not his Son into the world that he Should Condemn the world, but that the world through him might be Saved [John 3:16-17] & if any man Sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous [1 John 2:1]. These texts with many others gave me Some hopes that God would magnifie his grace & Mercy in Shewing mercy to me. I prayed to God that he would give me the Spirit of Wisdome & Revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and enlighten the Eyes of my understanding, that I might know what is the hope of his calling, & the riches of the glory of his Inheritance in the Saints & that he would Discover to me the Beauties & excelencies of the Lord Jesus Christ that So I might hunger & thirst after the most Sovereign & Soul Saving fountain opened to the House of David & for the Inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin & for uncleanness [Zech. 13:1] & I think I have been made to See the want of Christ & the worth of Christ & that I prise Him above all my Injoyments & do rely upon him alone for Life & Salvation and it is my desire & prayer that I may yeild an Obedience to his Commandments. I think I have been made Sencible of the Indispensable Obligations I ly under to a Life of Holy Obedience to this precious Saviour whome the Father hath Sanctified Sent Into the world & declared to be his beloved Son, in whome he is well pleased [cf. Matt. 3:17, 17:5], & I believe he Came to Save his people from there Sins [Matt. 1:21], & not in them, to redeem sinners from all iniquity & to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works [Titus 2:14] to turn Sinners from darkness unto Light, & from the Power of Satan unto God [Acts 26:18] & I think it not Sufficient to obtain Salvation to give a bare assent to the gospel that Christ is the redeemer of mankind but it is necessary I Should have Such a Faith as will bring me into Obedience and Subjection to himself. And as I now name the name of Christ by the grace of God I Shall depart from iniquity [cf. 2 Tim. 2:19] hoping his Throne is Set up in my heart & that I have Choose him for my portion & depend upon him as the Lord my Rightousness⁴⁵ & Shall Live to him with my whole heart and make it my Chief Care & busness to please God & Labour to make sure of a True & Lively Faith in Jesus Christ, for It is my great Concern to Fly to the Blood of Christ for cleansing for Christ Blood is a purefying cleansing blood, & to his righteousness for Justification & I Lie at the footstool of his Grace with a humble sence of my own nothingness & with importunate Suits for the Sanctifying Influences of his Holy Spirit whereby I may receive Christ Jesus the Lord & walk in him and Live as becomes the Gospel of Christ & Shall be Carefull & Studious to cleanse myself from all filthiness of flesh & Spirit & perfect holiness, in the fear of God. And as I hope to find acceptance with the Lord Jesus Christ I come to Him with an Impressed sence that I am poor & miserable, & wretched

⁴⁵ Jer. 23:6 was the subject of a popular sermon, *The Lord Our Righteousness* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1742), that George Whitefield preached on several occasions during his 1740 tour of New England.

and blind & naked that I deserve nothing but wrath & can do nothing that will entitle me to His favour. I come to Him both for power to Serve Him & for a gracious acceptance of my Services, for His own Sake, & not for mine. My whole dependance is upon Christ, to do all in me & for me To be of God unto me wisdom, Righteousness Sanctification & Redemption. I do not depend upon works of Righteousness that I have done or can do but Count all as Loss and dung, that I may win Christ [cf. Phil. 3:8], & be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ the Righteousness which is of God by Faith, hoping to be justified freely by Gods Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And I am resolv'd by the Grace of God To Religiously attend all the Ordinances and Institutions of Christ and take his word to be my Rule of worship and Shall make it my Care to keep the Ordinances as they have been delivered to me in the Holy Scriptures & Shall endeavour to walk in all the Commandments & Ordinances of the Lord, blameless [Luke 1:6], & as I hope to Inherit the blessing I would watch daily at Christs gates, & wait at the posts of His doors [cf. Prov. 8:34] & Seek him in the paths of his Ordinances Seek him where He walks in the midst of His golden Candlesticks [cf. Rev. 2:1], & that I may So Live I fervently Commit my Soul to the keeping & Conduct of my Lord Jesus Christ for I know I am liable to mistakes to deceive myself to think I am Somthing when I am nothing to think I am rich when I am poor. But Christ is a Safe & Sure Pilot which I may boldly depend upon, if I Commit my way to him. He will bring it to pass unless my Sin put me out of his protection & I earnestly implore the Directions of His Holy Spirit. And it is my earnest Prayer that he will Search me & try me & See if there be any wicked way in me, & Lead me in the way Everlasting [cf. Ps. 139:23-24] That He will guide me by his Counsel & afterward bring me to Glory. Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus that great Sheperd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make me perfect in every good work to do his will, working in me that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever & ever Amen.

Charles Brigham⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Relation of Charles Brigham, August 6, 1749, box 2, Parkman Family Papers. Charles Brigham wrote and signed his relation on three sides of a large, folded sheet of paper measuring 31.5 by 19.5 cm. Parkman docketed Brigham's narrative and wrote the words "The Relation of Charles Brigham of Grafton" along the fold on the fourth side.

Relation of Lydia Batherick, n.d. [August 27, 1749]⁴⁷

I Desire to Bless god that I was Born in a Land of Light where I Recevid Christian Babtism in my Infinsy and since I have Injoyed the privilides of the gospel Both in publick And privet and when I have Been Reading the word of god in many places of it and Especiely that text in Isaiah the 55th and the first varce ho Everyone that Thirsteth Com ye to the waters and he that hath no money Com ye Buy and Eat ye Com Buy wine and Milk without money and without price and that place in Matthew the 11 and the 28th, Com unto me all ye that Labour and are heavy Laden and I will give you Reast. By Reading of these texts and many other to the same purpose I thought myself invited to Com to the Lords table for which I have had a Desire for som Considerable time. But then Reading sum other texts of scripture Especiely that in the 1 of Corinthians 11 and 29 for he that Eateth and Drinketh unworthely Eateth and Drinketh Damnation to himself not discerning the Lord Body. This Last text and sum other of the Like Import made me afraid to Com Least I should Be Guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord [1 Cor. 11:27]. But then god visited me with his sore and hevvy providence and Took away one of our Children by Deth, which made me Consider whether it was not taken away in Anger Because I had neglected my Duty towards our Children in not Renewing the Covenant Ingagment which I was under myself and having them Baptised.⁴⁸ And then god was pleased further to Awaken me by the Repeated Deths of my Nearest Naighbours about a year ago⁴⁹ which made me think if it should Be my turn next how i should Appear at the Bar of Crist having Neglected my Duty so much But Especialy in Not obeying the Command of Crist where he saieth Do this in Rememberence of me [cf. Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24]. Therefore⁵⁰ in obidance to the

⁴⁷ Lydia Maynard, whose parentage remains uncertain, married David Batherick in Westborough on May 12, 1742. The Bathericks lived near Ebenezer Parkman, who recorded their frequent encounters in his diary. On Aug. 26, 1749, Parkman noted that “Mrs. Batherick” was “here with her Relation.” He admitted both spouses to full communion the next day and baptized three of their children the following week. The Bathericks presented five more children for baptism between 1750 and 1759. Lydia outlived her husband and died in Westborough on Feb. 26, 1802. *Vital Records of Westborough*, 14-15, 120, 228; *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, 201; Westborough Congregational Church Records, 85, 93, 100, 107, 111.

⁴⁸ Lydia and David Batherick’s first son, Benjamin, died unbaptized on Oct. 14, 1746. *Vital Records of Westborough*, 227.

⁴⁹ One of these neighbors was undoubtedly Sarah, the wife of Jacob Amsden, who died on Sept. 14, 1748. Later that day, Parkman noted in his diary that David Batherick was unexpectedly called away from working at his parsonage to “make a Coffin for Mrs. Amsden.” *Vital Records of Westborough*, 227; *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, 183.

⁵⁰ Parkman appended several lines at the bottom of the manuscript and marked the passage for insertion here. The emended text reads “I have indeed heretofore thought that if I performd Such & such Things it would do. But I am Sensible this was for Self-Ends & depending on Self Righteousness, whereas the best of our Services are but sin. Especially it has pleasd God to Shew me of late my Sad State & Condition but that He has provided Help in Christ; and I think I have been brought to receive Christ, in all his offices, willing by his Grace to Submitt to Him *wholly*. And by hearing a Sermon on those words 1 *Samuel* 16:5, Sanctifie yourself &

Command of Christ I offer myself to joyn with this Church, Desiring your prayers for me and your Acceptence of me.⁵¹

PEPPERELL, MASS.

Relation of Isaac Farnsworth, December 4, 1748⁵²

I Desire to bless the name of the Lord that I have had my birth in a Land of Gospel Light, and for the Invaluable Priveledge of Gods holy word Both written and Preached, as also for the advantage of Some Good and very Profitable Books which I have been favoured with. I must acknowledge that in my youthfull Days I was most awfully Careless about the futer estate of my Poor immortal Soul, and was very apt to be vain in my Conversation & in my behavior most shamfully airry & Light, & so therein Sinfull and abominably wicked in the Sight of God. Now as to my Experiences I Remember that about Seven or Eight years ago, when there Seem'd to be Such a Great Stir about Relidgeon, and So Great a Consern as there seem'd to be in almost Everyone, both old and young for what they Shou'd do to be Sav'd [cf. Acts 16:30], I was then under some Consern for my Soul, at which time I Believe that the Sperit of God was Striving with me. I Saw many at that time in Great Consern for their Souls Some of whom had Been my Companions in Jollity and vain mirth whose

come with me to the Sacrifice I was much movd to come & cast myself upon Christ and join myself to his Church & people. And now.” Parkman preached the sacramental sermons on 1 Sam. 16:5 cited by Batherick on Apr. 16 and May 28, 1749. *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, 194, 196.

⁵¹ Relation of Lydia Batherick, n.d. [August 27, 1749], box 2, Parkman Family Papers. Batherick’s relation appears to have been composed on her behalf by someone other than Parkman. The Westborough minister altered the original text by appending several sentences at the bottom of the manuscript, creating a space for “Lydia her + mark Bathrick,” and inscribing the words “The Relation of Lydia (the wife of David) Batherick” on the verso side. The manuscript measures 23.5 by 16.5 cm.

⁵² Isaac, son of Isaac and Sarah (Page) Farnsworth, was born in Groton, Mass., on Nov. 30, 1723, and he married Anna Green on Dec. 4, 1744. Anna, whose relation follows, was the daughter of Eleazar and Anna (Tarbell) Green. She was born in Groton on July 23, 1725. The young couple joined the west parish church in Groton (now Pepperell), Mass., on Dec. 4, 1748, three days after minister Joseph Emerson noted in his diary that he “went in the Evening to Mr. Isaac Farnsworths and wrote the greater part of a Relation for his wife.” In 1761, they transferred their membership to Groton’s First Church. The Farnsworths presented at least five of their eight children for baptism in Pepperell and Groton between 1748 and 1767. Anna died before 1800, when Isaac married Lydia Nutting, the widow of Timothy Moors. Elected deacon in 1773, Isaac served the Groton church in a variety of capacities until his death on Oct. 1, 1812. *Vital Records of Groton, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849*, 2 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1926-1927), 1:72-74, 76-78, 100, 2:61, 219; *Vital Records of Pepperell, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850*, ed. George A. Rice (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1985), 34; Pepperell, Mass., Congregational Church Records, 1742-1822, ms. copy, microfilm no. 868604 (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1971), 19, 27, 33, 35, 36, 39; “Joseph Emerson’s Diary, 1748-1749,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 44 (1911): 272; Samuel A. Green, *Early Church Records of Groton, Massachusetts, 1761-1830* (Groton, Mass.: J. Wilson and Son, 1896), 13-14, 17, 28-31, 64, 118.

Concern I Believe was one means of bringing me into Consideration, upon which I Betook myself to Reading much in the Bible and other Good Books, as also to Secret Prayer to God that he wou'd be Pleas'd to Convert me.⁵³ But to my Shame I must acknowledge that I Soon Lost my Concern, and Return'd Like the Dog to his vomit [cf. Prov. 26:11] as vain, as Loose, and as frothy as Ever, though not without Some Smart twinges & checks of Conscience at Some Certain times, in which Stuped Careless & Senseless Condition I remain'd intill about a year and a half ago. Then I was in Concern again for my Poor though Precious Soul which I Believe was ocaion'd by many a Rouzing Sermon which I heard Preach'd about that time in this Place by our Reverend Pastor⁵⁴ as that Being the means which Conserrn of Soul never wholly wore off though I must Confess that I Got to be too Careless and indifferent about the things of So Great and infinite importance. It Pleased God about half a year ago to Discover to me something of the Plague of my own heart [cf. 1 Kings 8:38] at which Sight I was Greatly surpriz'd. I see that I was by nature a Child of wrath even as others [cf. Eph. 2:3] and by Practice Seven times more an heir of hell and that I was full of Sin from the Crown of my head to the Sole of my foot and that there was not the Least Sperittual Soundness in me. All my sins⁵⁵ testify'd against me and my own Conscience most Sharply accus'd me. It hath Pleas'd the Lord of Late I wou'd humbly hope to Give me a Clearer Discovery of myself then ever and I See more of my own Proud Concieted and Self Righteous heart and I hope that I have Been made Sensable in Some measure of my own worthlessness and insufficiency and utter inabbility to Do the Least thing as of myself to Recommend me to the favour of God or Purchase Salvation for my Soul. I hope I have also Been made Sensable where I must Go for Salvation even to the Lord Jesus Christ (who is the alone Propitiatory Sacrifice) who appears to me to be a most Sutable and Proper Saviour as also a most willing and almighty Saviour. I have had Great Encouridgement to venture the Salvation of my immortal Soul upon him from many Great and Glorius Promices of Christ's in his holy word. To mention but one instead of many, as in isaiah the 55 Chapter the 7th verse, Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and Let him Return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him & to our God for he will Abundantly Pardon. Wherein I think I see much of the willingness of Christ to Save my Soul if I am but willing to be Saved by him upon his own terms. I hope that God has Enabled me to Go out of myself and to Go unto the Lord Jesus Christ as the alone Saviour and has Caus'd me by faith to trust in him and Rely upon him for Pardon Salvation and acceptance with God, and that by an act of his own almighty Power. I have had a Desire for a Considerable time to Come to the Ordinance of the Lords Supper to Commemorate the Dying Love of Christ our Saviour at his table but through the Prevelency of my own

⁵³ Farnsworth alluded to events associated with the Whitefieldian revivals of the early 1740s.

⁵⁴ Joseph Emerson was ordained as the first minister of Groton's Second Congregational Church (now Pepperell) on Feb. 25, 1747. He remained in Pepperell until his death in 1775. *SHG*, 11:217-20.

⁵⁵ Emerson interlined "sins" over "paths."

Corruptions and the Strang temptations of the Devil I have Been kept Back a Great while. But Blessed be God who I hope has made me Sensable in Some measure of the Deceitfullness of my own heart and of the wiles and Strategems of the Devil and hath Enabled me by the Gracious assistances of his holy Sperit to Resist the Devil and he has fled from me in Some measure with a Regard to some Peculiar temptations with which he was very Busy with me Before. But Still my heart Remains Deceitfull, and the Devil Continues atemptes. I am Still under fears and Doubts Least one Day I Shall fall by the hands of these Cruel enemies. But I Desire to Commit my way unto the Lord and trust in him who I Believe will Bring it to Pass if I Doo but trust in him & Rely upon in such a manner as I ought to do. I Do now here offer myself to your Communion and beg your kind acceptance of me though most unworthy and Desire your Earnest & fervent Prayers to God for me that I might be kept from Dealing any more falsly in his Covenant and that I might Live answeareable to the Profession I have now made and adorn the Doctrin of God our savior in all things [Titus 2:10].

Isaac Farnsworth⁵⁶

Relation of Anna Farnsworth, n.d. [December 4, 1748]

I Desire to Bless the name of God that he has in his holy Providence allotted unto me to be born in a Chrisian land, and that I have heard of a Savior Provided for Some of the fallen Race of Adam, as also for the mercyfull Restraints of his Grace which he was Pleas'd to Lay upon me in my youthfull days that I was Kept from the more open Grose acts of sins of Commission which otherways I Believe I shou'd have fell into. Though I acknowledge that I am a Great Sinner, & that by nature I stand Justly Charg'd with the Guilt of Adams first Sin and I must also Confess that I have Been amazeingly Careless about the futer Salvation of my soul. And now with Regard to what I have experienc't of the influences of Gods holy Sperit upon my heart at one time and another. I Desire to bless Gods holy name that I have had ever Since I arriv'd to years of thought or have Been Capable of Distinguishing in any measure, Between Good and evil Something of a Dread of the Sacred majesty of heaven & earth upon me & I Remember in my younger Days when I was about thirteen or fourteen years of age that I was und[er] Some Consern for my Soul which I Believe was ocation'd in a Great measure by the affectionate Counsels, warning Reproofs & Admonitions which I had from my honour'd Parrents, & [a]bout Seven or eight years ago I was under Greater

⁵⁶ Relation of Isaac Farnsworth, December 4, 1748, Ipswich Museum, Ipswich, Mass. Pepperell minister Joseph Emerson composed Isaac Farnsworth's relation on both sides of a folio-sized leaf of paper. He inscribed the following information on the verso side just below the fold: "Isaac Farnsworth's Relation," the number "25" (Farnsworth's age), and the date of his admission to full communion in the Pepperell church, "December 4, 1748."

Concern for my Soul than ever I was Before about which time⁵⁷ God was pleased to pour out his Spirit upon many who were bro't into concern about their precious Souls. God in his providence was then pleased to come near to me in the Death of a Brother tho' but an Infant which I tho't was a loud Call to me, when I saw one was taken away who was so much younger than I.⁵⁸ This put me upon secret prayer to God for converting Grace. This Concern that I was under lasted for Some Time and tho' I grew less concernd about my soul yet it did not wholly ware of[f]. About 3 Years ago I was visited with a sore fit of Sickness and bro't to the Gates of the Grave and even despair'd of Life. I was then in great Distress about my soul. I was afraid I Should go to Hell, and if [I] had died I see no Reason I had to think I Should have been saved for I fear I had not Interest in Christ.⁵⁹ I then sought the Lord earnestly, and made Promises that I would do better if the Lord would spare my Life, which I have not been so careful of fulfilling since as I Should have been. I never yet lost that concern, but it has abided with me, and at some Times I have been much awakened and stirred up, at other Times less effected. I cannot say that I am in a state of Grace, but I hope the Lord hath begun a good Work in me [cf. Phil. 1:6]. I have a great sense of the evil of sin, and it appears to me the most odious Thing in the world. I have seen Christ to be a most suitable savior and most willing to save all who come to him. I desire to come. I would devout myself wholly to him. I desire he would make me just as he would have me. I desire to have my Heart made holy, and my Life conformed to the Life of my savior. I have had a desire for some Time to come up to the Lords Table but I tho't I was not fit, and imagined I could fit myself if I tarried a little longer. But I see now if the Lord doth not fit me I never shall be fit. I have seen I have trusted too much to myself, which I now desire wholly to renounce and rest upon Christ for Righteousness and strength. It is with great Fear and Trembling I now come lest I should do it all out of Hypocrisy. I desire your Acceptance of me, and earnest Prayers to God for me, that I may My⁶⁰ Faith feed upon the Body & Blood of Christ and not eat and drink Judgment to myself [cf. 1 Cor. 11:29].

Anna Farnsworth⁶¹

⁵⁷ Here, the ink changes to a lighter brown, perhaps indicating the place where minister Joseph Emerson stopped writing during his meeting with the Farnsworths on the evening of Dec. 1, 1748. "Joseph Emerson's Diary," 272.

⁵⁸ Nehemiah, the youngest son of Eleazar and Anna Green, was born in Groton on Jan. 25, 1742, during the peak months of the Whitefieldian revivals. *Vital Records of Groton*, 102.

⁵⁹ Emerson interlineated: "Christ" over "~~Grace~~."

⁶⁰ A likely slip of the pen that should read "by Faith."

⁶¹ Relation of Anna Farnsworth, n.d. [December 4, 1748], Ipswich Museum. Joseph Emerson composed Anna Farnsworth's relation on the recto side of a folio-sized leaf of paper. There are no notations on the verso side.

BOSTON

Relation of Hannah Blake, Old South Church, October 27, 1751⁶²

As it was the pleasure, of the Most Holy wise Creator, & Merciful Father of Spirits, to form fashion, & so Curiously mould, So Exact an Elegant a Creature as man out of the dust of the Earth, in which that Enestamable Jewell the Soul, was to take its Lodging in; and as the Soul is not of an Earthly Extract, But a Spiritual and Substantial Being, God has Commanded us in his Sacred word that it should be our Constant Care as it is our highest End, And, in the Spiritual Welfare of which, Depends our Eternal Happiness and pleasure in a future State. And in a Sense of this I would Desire to bless my Great Creator, & Sovereign Disposer of all things,⁶³ that I was born in a Land of Gospel Light, where his Son Jesus Christ, the Once Crucified, but now Risen & Ascended Saviour, is Revealed to me in So Glorious a way, as Appearing to be the Compassionate meadiator, & Representative for Lost & Undone fallen Man, who Lost [h]is perfect State of Innocence, by the fall of our Original parents,⁶⁴ And that he has the Brightness of his fathers Glory, & the Express Image of his person [cf. Heb. 1:3], and [is] not Only Able but willing to Save to the Uttermost, all that Come to God in & through Him [cf. Heb. 7:25].⁶⁵ And being Sensible in some measure,

⁶² Born on Sept. 9, 1733 and baptized in the Old South meetinghouse one week later, Hannah was the daughter of Increase and Hannah (Gray) Blake. Her father was an innkeeper and a town magistrate, while her mother hailed from a prominent merchant clan. In 1752, Blake married Thomas Dawes, an accomplished mason who laid the foundation for the Massachusetts State House in 1772. Brother of Paul Revere's less famous co-rider, Dawes participated in various political protests during the years leading up to the American Revolution. He was elected deacon of the Old South Church in 1786. Hannah and Thomas Dawes presented all but one of their seven children for baptism between 1753 and 1758. She died in Boston on Nov. 10, 1815. Henry W. Holland, *William Dawes and His Ride with Paul Revere* (Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1878), 60-67; *A Volume of Records Relating to the Early History of Boston, Containing Boston Marriages from 1752 to 1809* (Boston: Municipal Print Office, 1903), 3; Robert J. Dunkle and Ann S. Lainhart, trans., *The Records of the Churches of Boston and the First Church, Second Parish, and Third Parish of Roxbury, Including Baptisms, Marriages, Deaths, Admissions and Dismissals*, CD-ROM (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2001).

⁶³ Old South minister Thomas Prince placed a diagonal line cancelling the first nine lines of Blake's narrative, with the exception of the words "I," and "Desire to bless." Thus, when Prince read this relation to his parishioners, he likely began with the standard refrain "I...Desire to bless [God]...that I was born in a Land of Gospel Light."

⁶⁴ Prince placed a diagonal line cancelling all of the text from "~~in so Glorious a way~~" to "~~by the fall our Original parents.~~"

⁶⁵ Prince placed an insertion mark at this point in the manuscript and wrote a series of terse emendations in the margin: "I hope God made me sensible of my lost perishing Condition as a child of the 1st Adam & that I see that [Need] of Jesus only [*two words illeg.*] for that I am willing to [receive] & accept of X & Submit to him, and that looking unto Jesus I am [Enabled] to [*illeg.*] my sins, & put them away & that I am willing to give up myself to God's Everlasting Covenant to be [*several words illeg.*]. I hope [long & desire] after [*two words illeg.*] with X at his Table & accordingly [*two words illeg.*] humbly offer myself to your Communion, desiring your prayers that I may have Grace to walk [agreeable to the Profession] I now make."

of the duty I owe to God, as well as the Command of my Saviour, I am Sensible that in this Institution my Eternal Happiness depends. I have had for a very Considerable Time, the frequent Influence of Gods Spirit Striving with me, Showing of me my Sinful Neglect, of my not making myself a Guest at his Table. But upon Serious Examination of my Own Judgment in the method of the Supper, I had a great many doubts & fears as to my being an Unworthy person, for this Communion. But thanks be to God through the Compassionate Regard of my Saviour that I have these Stumbling Blocks Removed out my way And am Sensible that in this Ordinance & holy Institution that the worthy partakers Enjoy that Cummunion with God & Christ that the world knows Nothing of, which Cannot Give Neither take Away, & that in it depends my future & Everlasting Safety. And in the presence of god & his holy Angels, I find myself heartily willing as I trust I know myself, to take upon me this great & Solemn Oath, & to be a Guest at his Table, And in a Belief of these things through the mercies of God in Christ, I offer myself to this Cummunion, And Beg Your Acceptance of me & prayers to God for me, that I may be Seeking After, An Increase of Divine Love to God & Christ, in a Resignation to his wise & holy will, & that I may Grow in patience & fortitude of Soul, in Humility & Zeal, in Spirituality And a Heavily Dispo[sition] of mind, And in a Concern, that wether present or Absent I may be Accepted of the Lord.

Hannah Blake⁶⁶

Relation of Elizabeth Stephenson, First Church, n.d. [May 22, 1759]⁶⁷

I desire to bless God, that I was Born in a Land of light whare I Enjoy the Gospell & that I was Earely Given up to God in Baptism,⁶⁸ & I hoope I am in Some measure Sensible of my undone State by nature and of the Abundent provision there is made for me in the word of God, & do Resolve by his Grace that I will make it my rule of Faith & Life, Desireing hartily to repent of all my Sins & to Accept of Jesus Christ for my Prophet Priest

⁶⁶ Relation of Hannah Blake, Old South Church, October 27, 1751, Miscellaneous Bound, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. Blake composed her relation on the recto side of a single leaf of paper measuring 31 by 20.5 cm. Thomas Prince inscribed the date upon which she was admitted to full communion in the lower left corner, "October 27, 1741," and noted her age, "æt. 19," next to Blake's signature. The phrase "Writing of Hanah Blak 1751" appears on the verso side in a nineteenth-century hand.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth, daughter of Briant Parrott and his third wife, Ruth Wadsworth, was born in Boston on Jan. 10, 1732. She married Hingham, Mass., mariner Reuben Stephenson in 1757. The young couple presented their only child, Briant, for baptism less than one month after Elizabeth's admission to full communion and shortly before her husband's untimely death at sea. Stephenson later moved with her son and his family to Lyme, N.H., where she died in 1796. *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Containing Boston Births from A.D. 1700 to A.D. 1800* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1894), 209; *Boston Marriages from 1752 to 1809*, 27; George Lincoln, *History of the Town of Hingham, Massachusetts*, vol. 3 (Hingham, Mass.: Town of Hingham, 1893), 185-86; *RFCB*, 39:116, 40:420; *Oracle of the Day* (Portsmouth, N.H.), Jan. 27, 1796.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Parrott was baptized in the First Church meetinghouse on June 11, 1732. *RFCB*, 40:400.

& King, who is able to Save to the utmost all that come unto God in & by him [cf. Heb. 7:25]. I beleive there is one God in three persons, the Father Son & Holy Gost. I believe that God made the World & that he Created man upright and Enter'd into a Covenant of Life with him upon Condition of perfect Obedience, that man broke that Covenant & ruined himself and all his posterity, and that God Did promise the Seed of the Woman Should Bruise the Serpents head [cf. Gen. 3:15], and in fullness of time Sent his only begoten Son into the world that whosoever believeth on him Should not perish but have Eternal Life [John 3:15]. I Desire to be Humbled under a sence of my Sins, and no Longer Slight his Love who hath Loved me and Gave himself for me [Gal. 2:20]. I Desire to be found Walking in all the Ordinances and Covenants of the Lord Blameless and to come to this Ordinance of the Lords Supper, in Obediance to Christ my Head. I Desire Your Acceptance of me into your holy Communion, & your prayers to God for me that I may Glorify him by a well Ordered Conversation and Finally be Admitted into his presence whare there is fullness of Joy and pleasures for Ever more [cf. Ps. 16:11].

Elizabeth Stephenson⁶⁹

Relation of John Fairfield, First Church, September 6, 1760⁷⁰

I believe, that God is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him; And that there is but One God, tho' there are Three Persons in the God-head, The Father, the Son, and the holy Ghost, that these Three are One, the Same in Substance and equal in all divine Perfections. I believe, that God created the World and all Things in it, and upholds them by the Exertion of the Same Power, by which he created them. I believe that he created Man in his own Image, made him Upright, but he sought out many Inventions. He fell from the holy and happy State in which he was created into a sinfull and miserable One. By One Man, Sin entred into the World and Death by Sin and So Death passed upon all Men for that all have sinned [Rom. 5:12]. All Men are by Nature dead in Trespasses and Sins

⁶⁹ Relation of Elizabeth Stephenson, n.d. [May 22, 1759], Thomas Foxcroft Papers, 1690-1770, Bortman Collection of Americana, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, Boston. Stephenson's relation fills the right half of a folded leaf of paper measuring 22.5 by 19 cm. No text appears on the verso side of the document.

⁷⁰ John, son of William and Elizabeth (Minot) Fairfield, was born in Boston on Dec. 26, 1737, and baptized in the First Church less than one week later. A 1757 graduate of Harvard College, Fairfield spent the next several years working as a schoolmaster and filling vacant pulpits in towns scattered across New England. Two years after joining the First Church, he married Mary Goodwin, the widow of Foxwell Cutts, in South Berwick, Me. The Fairfields had two children prior to Mary's death in 1774. Ordained in 1762, Fairfield served the church in Pepperellborough (now Saco), Me., for nearly forty years before resigning during a salary dispute. In 1798, he unsuccessfully ran for a seat in Congress. Fairfield remarried twice and died in Biddeford, Me., on Dec. 19, 1819. *Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College in the Classes of 1756-1760, with Bibliographical and Other Notes*, vol. 14, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, ed. Clifford K. Shipton (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 157-60 (hereafter *SHG*).

[Eph. 2:1], liable to Gods Wrath and Curse and an eternal Privation of the Enjoyment of his blissful Presence in Heaven. But God So loved the World, that he gave his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting Life [John 3:16]; And that he who by Faith worketh Righteousness is accepted with him in Christ his beloved Son [cf. Acts 10:35]; For no Man cometh to the Father but by him [cf. John 14:6]. I Believe and Acknowledge my Obligations to honour, to serve, to fear and Obey God, and that in this Way Acceptance may be had with him in Christ, and for the Sake of what he has done and suffered. For he is the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that Obey him [Heb. 5:9]; Neither is there Salvation in any other. For there is no other Name under heaven given among Men whereby we must be saved [Acts 4:12]. I Believe that Jesus Christ, the only Saviour is God and Man in one Person and two distinct Natures. I believe, that when the fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a Woman, made under the Law [Gal. 4:4]. For as much as the Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself took part of the Same [Heb. 2:14]. I believe that Christ was delivered for the Offences of his People and rose again for their Justification, that he ascended up to heaven and there ever lives to make Intercession for them. I see and am sensible of my undone and perishing Condition by Reason of Sin and desire to repair to Christ as my only Refuge. I desire to accept of Christ in all the Characters that he Sustains as the Mediator between God and Man And I desire that he may be made of God to me, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption [cf. 1 Cor. 1:30]. For the Lord alone have I Righteousness and Strength [Is. 45:24]. I Believe the holy Scriptures to be the word of God, And desire and resolve to take them for the Rule of my Life. I desire to come to the holy Supper of the Lord out of Love and Obedience to him and would keep that sacred Feast in Remembrance of a once Suffering dying Saviour. I desire your Prayers, that I may be a worthy Communicant, and that my after Life may be conformed to the Engagements of this holy Institution.

John Fairfield
September 6, 1760⁷¹

GRANVILLE, MASS.

⁷¹ Relation of John Fairfield, Sept. 6, 1760, Foxcroft Papers. Fairfield composed and signed his own relation on the recto side of a single leaf of paper measuring 30.5 by 9.5 cm. The verso side is blank, except for the word "Relations," which appears across the top and is underlined twice, and the phrase "Good papers," which was added in a nineteenth-century hand.

Relation of Martha Benjamin, n.d. [ca. 1757]⁷²

I would hereby Signify my Desire to Come to the ordinances of God in obedience to his Great Commands & for your Better Satisfaction I would offer the following relation. For many years together I have Been Loudly Called upon to return from a sinful Corse to serve the living god but turning a Deef Ear to all the Calls of the Gospel & the invitations of his holy Spirit till at Last I was obliged to give Ears to its heavenly Calls. One night the Last Spring God was Pleased to Lay open my Sinful Case in a Cleare Veiw by these words Canticles 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for his Love is Better than wine. It appeared to me that there was Great Joye & happiness for them that had an interest in Christ. The Load & Burden of sin Lay heavy on my Conscience for Some time till at Last I Conseived Some hope that my Case was not yet Quite Lost from those words 2 Corri[nthians] 12:9 my Grace is Sufficient for the[e]. My Strength is made Perfect in weakness. But before Long I began to Question fearing I had outstood the Day of Grace till at Last by those words acts 8:36 what doth hinder the[e] I did Plainly See it was for want of faith in Christ that hinderd me from Coming to him. After which I found Great incorigment from those words Canticles 5:1 Drink ye Drink abundantly & also Psalms 34:8 tast & see that the Lord is Good. But these impressions wore of[f] again Leaboring many Days under Great Loads of Guit on my mind almost yealding to Dispare until Being at a Neighbours house I took up a Psalm Book & opened to the 51 Psalm & read as follows:

Shew Pity Lord o lord forgive
 Let a repenting rebel Live
 are not thy mercies Learge & free
 & may not a Siner trust in the[e]
 my Cries are Great but not surpass

⁷² The family history of Martha, wife of Samuel Benjamin, remains uncertain. Some genealogical evidence suggests that she grew up in Cambridge, Mass., or she may have been the daughter Samuel Dix who was baptized in Watertown, Mass., on Aug. 1, 1731. By 1752, Martha had married Samuel Benjamin and moved to Durham, Conn. That year, the Benjamins owned the covenant and had their first child baptized. Fragmentary church records from Granville indicate that they presented at least six of their next nine children for baptism between 1755 and 1770. In 1775, the Benjamins were dismissed to the Congregational church in the neighboring town of West Hartland, Conn., where Samuel owned a saw mill. He served in the Revolutionary War and died in 1781; Martha lived until 1800. Gloria Wall Bicha and Helen Benjamin Brown, comp., "The Benjamin Family in America," typescript, 1977, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, 95-96; *Watertown Records*, vol. 4, *East Congregational and Precinct Affairs, 1697 to 1737, also Record Book of the Pastors, 1686 to 1819* (Boston: David Clapp and Son, 1906), 138; William Chauncey Fowler, *History of Durham, Connecticut, from the First Grant of Land in 1662 to 1866* (Hartford, Conn.: Wiley, Waterman and Eaton, 1866), 294; *Vital Records of Granville, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1914), 22; "Records of the First Church of Granville," 1747-1861, Granville Public Library, 33-37; Albion, *History of Granville*, 27-28, 35; Helen Elizabeth Keep, ed., "Hartland, Conn., Church Records," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 60 (1906): 398.

the Power & Glory of thy Grace
 Great God thy nature hath no bound
 so Let thy Pardonig Love be found
 awash my soul from Every sin
 & make my Guilty Conscience Clean
 here on my heart the Burden Lies
 & Past offences Pains my Eyes
 my Lips with Shame my Sins Confess
 against thy Law against thy Grace
 Lord Should thy Judgments Grow severe
 I am Condemned but thou art Clear
 Should Sudden Vengeance seize my Breath
 I must Pronounce the[e] Just in Death
 & if my Soul were Sent to hell
 thy righteous Law approves it well
 yet Save a trembling sinner Lord
 whose hope Still hovering rond thy word
 would Light on some sweet Promises there
 Some sure support against Dispare⁷³

This Psalm Gave me Great hope that my Case was not yet Beyond all hope of recovery. But it Continued not many Days before I began to Question all again till at Last them words was set home upon my mind Isaiah 55:3 I will make an Everlasting Covenant the Sure Mercies of David. These words Gave me Great hope of Mercy for they Let Great Light into my understanding hope in the Lord for ye Shall yet Praise him [cf. Psalm 42:5, 43:5] and also the 55 Ch[apter] of Isaiah was a Great Support to me under my troubles. But before Long I began to think that God had Brought me to se my Lost undone Estate by nature & that God was about to Leave me in that aughfull Condition from those words Luke 13:7 behold these thre years I Came Seeking fruit on this fig tree & find none Cut it down why Cumbereth it the ground. I found myself to be this Barran fig tree for I had been unfruitfull under the Calls & invitations of the gospel had turned a Deef ear to them. This made me Greatly fear there was no Mercy for me & went a Morning all the Day Long under my Lod of Guilt but at Last found releife from those word romans 8:38, 39 for I am Perswaded that neither Death nor Life nor angels nor Principalities nor Powers nor things Present nor things to Come nor heighth nor Debth nor any other Creture Shall be able to Saparate me from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord & So Isaiah 55:1[2] ho Every one that thirsteth Come ye to the warters & he that hath no money Come buy & Eat yea Come by wine & milk without mony & without Price. Wherefore do ye Spend your

⁷³ Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, and Apply'd to the Christian State and Worship* (London: Printed for J. Clark, R. Ford, and R. Cruttenden, 1719), 141.

money for that which is not Bread & your Labour for that which Satisfieth not & again Isaiah 63:1 who is this that Cometh from Edom with Died Garments from Bozra. In these texts I Saw Christ Courting my Backward Soul wherefore now I saw what was ment by that word Exodus 14:13 Stand Still & See the Salvation of the Lord & also the Strength of hope from that word hebrews 6:19 which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure & Stedfast which Entereth into that within the Vail & also the assurance of the [Promise] from those words revelations 2:17, Isaiah 62:2 to him that overcometh I will Give a white Stone & in it a new name which the mouth of the Lord Shall name. I also Saw that there was no Strength nor Power in me to overcome but the work was Gods from those words romans 9:16 it is not in him that willeth nor in him that runeth but in God that Sheweth Mercy & many Such Like texts of Scripture hath Given me Great hope in the Mercy of but am not without fear & yet do so hope that I am resolved to follow him through Christ Strengthening of me in all his ordinances waring his youke [cf. Matt. 11:29] Bearing his Cross [cf. Luke 14:27] in obedience to all his Commands asking your Prayers that I may So abound in Love that Perfect Love might Cast out all fear [cf. 1 John 4:18] & your Spetial watch and Care that I may adorn the Doctring of our Lord & Saviour by an humble Christian walk according to his word. Amen. Amen.⁷⁴

Relation of Timothy Robinson, n.d. [ca. 1757]⁷⁵

In a Sarmint Preacht at Granville by Reverend mr Jadidiah smith in Witch he Compaired our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to a Grate General Teling the mighty acts that he don and Teling the grat Ned wee Stood in of his help as a Nation and So on, the Thoughts of [illeg.] genral Cept in my mind often Wondring that he Want [wasn't] Implid for This

⁷⁴ Relation of Martha Benjamin, n.d. [ca. 1757], "Experiences Relating to Joining the Church: Undated," Granville Congregational Church Papers, Mabel Root Historical Room, Granville Public Library, Granville, Mass. Granville minister Jedediah Smith wrote Benjamin's long relation on four sides of a full sheet of paper that was folded in half. He docketed the manuscript with the words "Martha Samuel Benjamin his Wives Relation." A later hand, most likely that of Smith's successor, Timothy Mather Cooley, wrote the word "Experiences" with a double underline below this notation.

⁷⁵ Timothy, son of David and Rebecca (Miller) Robinson, was born in Durham, Conn., on Apr. 29, 1728. He lived briefly in Litchfield before moving to Granville early in the 1750s. He married Catherine Rose in 1755. They had nine children during the next three decades. Robinson emerged as Granville's most prominent resident: representative to the Massachusetts General Court, judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Hampshire County, and deacon of the Granville church. Active in the patriot cause, he served as a lieutenant colonel in the Massachusetts militia, fought at Fort Ticonderoga, and participated in quelling Shays Rebellion during the 1780s. Robinson died in Granville on Apr. 1, 1805. *Vital Records of Granville*, 67-69, 149, 216; *Genealogical and Family History of the State of Connecticut: A Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of a Commonwealth and the Founding of a Nation*, ed. William Richard Cutter, et al., vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911), 821.

Nation.⁷⁶ I had a Grate mind he Should be but i Putting it of[f] to maney Ranks of men. At Length i veued my one [own] Case Whitch Troubeld me very much. And I New no Liklyer way to ingage him then to Pray and meditate, Whitch i Practist very Constantly but i Soon found the things that i Pubblshed [published] the first Saboth in march Lay very hevey upon my mind.⁷⁷ Sum time before i Was Willing to Goo and make Satisfation and When I Was Willing these thoughts Came into my mind that is al God Requier of me and that the Blood of Christ Was as Sofitiant [sufficient] to Wash away that Sin a[nd] aney other at Whitch i Semd to be incoridged and Son [soon] had a Promis to See Christ but doubted Whather I Should. And for Conformation their Was others to See him at the Same time, Whitch Promis i told Rver. mr. Smith. He told me he Was afrad it was from the Divel, Whitch Troubld me very much alltho Sence [since] i am Preswaded it Was. Blesed be God that he Put it into the harts of Sum of my Chrstian frinds to Cum and Talk with me, to Whitch i Confest the Truth of the Case. And then i Semd to be more Calm and my Desiers alterd. I Wanted to be made Conformabe [conformable] to Gods Will in all Things. One Evening after I Was Siting in my hous I thought of the oreginal State of man, how he had brok gods Command and Want [wasn't] abel to mak Satisfaction, and how that Jesus Christ undertook to and had mad Satisfaction. Then he Was the Way the dore and the Portor [porter] [cf. John 10:3, 7, 14:6] at Whitch i Wonderd I had Never though[t] on it before and it Was to him, that must Speak, and for his Sake that i Might [illeg.] to the throne of Grase. After Whitch, I Went to Prayer and I Could Speak the forementioned Words With all my hart and Jest before i had Dun, I Semd to Trembel. When I had don all Nater Semd to vanish at Whitch i though i Should be in the World of Spirets in a moment. I found myself Willing in Whitch Position I was about half an ower [hour] vewing Jesus Christ in all his offienses [offices]. After Whitch I went to Bed Easey and Content in that the Will of God Should be don. And about midnight i Waked and vewed Jesus Christ Ecseding Lovley but seen [seeing] my Sins Ware Set in order before me. Soon I heard the Word Set him by [Luke 9:47] att Whitch I Was Seased With a Pain in bodey and Lims beyond acount and Could See the Divel or hills [hell's] Gait att Whitch i Was afraid and Not Willing to Goo. And So I Lay vewing Jesus Christ my Sins and those Awfull Sits [sights] Sum owers in Grate pain part of the time. After Whitch i Could vew Jesus Christ but Soon my thoughts Would be in the Ends of the Earth. Thinking all maner of Evill in that Position I Lay about an ower after Whitch I vewed Jesus Christ Exceding Lovly indeed and heard a voice Whitch Said Thou art my son. This Day have i begotten the[e] [Ps. 2:7]. I have Loved the[e] With an Everlasting Love [Jer. 31:3] and all that i Require of the[e] is to Do Justly Love marcy Wolk humbly With thy God [cf. Micah 6:8] [illeg.] till i Com. I Doubt Whether or no it

⁷⁶ Many New England ministers preached similar sermons during the Seven Years' War. See Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 233-55.

⁷⁷ The context of this statement is unclear. By "Pubblshed" (published), Robinson may have been referring to an earlier draft of his relation, which he later found wanting.

Want my one Eemagination but Soon heard a Word this Do i in token of my Love.⁷⁸ The inward Joy and Love that i felt arise in my hart I Shall Not Expes for I be Not abel. So I Conclude Beging an intrest in the Prayers of this Church and Congregation to Almyghty God that I may be Cept from Every Sin and from Eney fols [false] way. Unto God the father God the Son and God the holy Gost be Given all honnour Glory and Prais Now and forever more. Amen.

Timothy Robinson⁷⁹

Relation of Joseph Sweatman, 1759⁸⁰

I admire all the Rich free and Soverane grace of god w[h]o of infinat marcy as i trust hath bestoed his marcy upon my Sole whoo am a Sinfull grace abusing god provoking Creater as by this Relation I Shall Shew. For when i was about twelve years of age i was under Something of as i Sepose the moofing [movings] of the Sperit of god in a way of Conviction by the Reverend mr ashlye⁸¹ preaching which was as I Remember the first Conviction that Ever i had in which i had a grate Consarn about hell and was afraid that I Should Dy and be Damd and thought that i must do Somthing to appeze the anger of god and betook myself to Secreat praor. But this Convicttion quick wore of[f] and i was allmost parfactly hardened and gave myself to Sinning without Restrant. Yet i usd my praiers by turns when I had Committed Som Sins which appered very hanous. And in this temper of Sole I Remained unteil about two years ago when the Curses of the Law Came in upon my

⁷⁸ Scriptural allusion unclear.

⁷⁹ Relation of Timothy Robinson, n.d. [ca. 1757], "Confessions of Sin and Complaints: Undated through 1765," Granville Congregational Church Papers. Robinson recorded his relation on both sides of a folio-sized leaf of paper. Minister Jedediah Smith folded and docketed the manuscript, writing the words "Timothy Roinson's Relation" along the edge of the verso side. A later hand inscribed the word "Granville" twice next to Smith's notation.

⁸⁰ Little is known about the life of Joseph Sweatman. His name appears on a 1750 roster of early Granville settlers, along with that of his father, Thomas, and his brother, Ezekiel. Sweatman died in Granville on Jan. 24, 1802, at the age of 78, which places the year of his birth around 1724. Genealogical sources indicate that he may have been born in Chelmsford, Mass., where his father married Mary Proctor in 1721 and where his brother was born in 1725. Sweatman may have married at some point. His name appears on the federal census of 1790 as the head of a household consisting of one male and one female over the age of sixteen. But the name of Sweatman's wife remains unknown and no evidence indicates that they had children. Albion, *History of Granville*, 35; *Vital Records of Granville*, 229; Phyllis Holmes, comp., "Here begins the village of Delta: A History of the Sweatman, Sweetman & Swetman Families of America, 1687-2000," typescript, 2000; *Vital Records of Chelmsford, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1914), 156, 333; *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Massachusetts* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 111.

⁸¹ Most likely a reference to Jonathan Ashley, minister of Deerfield, Mass., a well-known opponent of the Whitefieldian revivals and one of Edwards' principal antagonists during the communion controversy. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College*, 1:406-8.

Sole like thunder bolts and i thought there was No marcy for me and Strang apprahentions Came into my Sole. Somtims i thought i Se grate flams of fier and it Semd as though i was agoing Now down to hell and So in this Case i Continued Sometime untell att Length Concluding if I Could Not find help Somewhere Else but in my prayrs or in aneything that I Could do I was undon forever. And then this text of Scriptur Came into my mind jesus Saieth unto him i am the way and the truth and the Life. No man Cometh to the father but by me [John 14:6] whic Semed to giv me Som hope. And though i had a mind to Com to god through Crist butt Coud not. And then this text Came into my mind and the Lord direct youre hart into the Love of god [2 Thess. 3:5]. O I thought if the Lord would do it. And then after Som time this vers Came into my mind which i Can Say Came with poure [power] into my Sole but he giveth more grace wherefore he Saieth god Resisteth the proude but giveth grace to the humble [James 4:6]. Here i felt myself as i thought humbled att the foot of Crist and was wiling to be aneything that he woold have me to be. And i think i felt my Sole Drawed forth in Love to god and Christ and his word apared to me in a Differing form from what I Ever Saw it before. And then this text Came unto me if ye then be Risen with Crist Seek those thing[s] which are above where Christ Sitteth on the Right hand of god [Col. 3:1] in which i Saw that holyness of hart and holyness of Life was the desiar of my Sole if it Never had aney influence into my future hapeness. And then my grace Shall be Sofisant [sufficient] for you [cf. 2 Cor. 12:9] in whic i thought that word to be Spak unto me. And here i think i was brought intirely to depend upon the grace of god through Jesus Crist for whooll [whole] Salvation to whom be glory and honor for Ever. Amen.

Joseph Swetman⁸²

⁸² Relation of Joseph Sweatman, n.d. [ca. 1759], "Experiences Relating to Joining the Church: Undated," Granville Congregational Church Records. Sweatman's relation was composed for him on both sides of a folio-sized leaf of paper. He signed the relation in ragged hand on the verso side. Jedediah Smith docketed the manuscript and inscribed the words "Joseph Swetmans Relation" in the bottom corner.