

The Self-Examination of Edward Goddard

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OF ALL THE EVENTS transforming pre-Revolutionary New England culture, none were more far-reaching or frightening to established leaders than the Separate movements growing out of the Great Awakening. For the first time in New England history, large groups of ordinary men and women left their local congregations and formed their own churches without benefit of government approval or educated clergymen. The most notorious separation occurred in New London, Connecticut, in March 1743 when the 'fanatical' itinerant James Davenport led a group of zealous 'New Lights' away from the established church, amidst book burnings, demonstrations in the streets, and accusations that the local minister was unconverted.¹ But if New London was the most publicized instance of lay rebellion, it was not the only one. Between 1742 and 1745, Massachusetts witnessed thirteen illegal separations, and Connecticut experienced nineteen. In the next five years, there were forty-five additional separations in the two colonies. By 1750, the high tide of separations receded, but not before giving civil and ecclesiastical authorities an unforgettable lesson in popular power and lay assertiveness.²

In the past decade, a generation of new social and intellectual

1. See Harry S. Stout and Peter Onuf, 'James Davenport and the Great Awakening in New London,' *Journal of American History* 70 (1983): 556-78.

2. In *New England Dissent, 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 1: 345-47, William G. McLoughlin identifies 125 separations between 1743 and 1755.

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historians has turned to these Separate churches with renewed interest. As a movement initiated from beneath, Separatism supplies invaluable clues to the rise of a popular ideology that would culminate in the American Revolution. For the most part, Separates were not politically motivated, but their dissent represented a half-way point between the deferential Puritans of old and the egalitarian rebels of the Revolution. As William G. McLoughlin explained in an essay on the Great Awakening and the American Revolution, 'The roots of the Revolution as a political movement were so deeply imbedded in the soil of the First Great Awakening forty years earlier that it can be truly said that the Revolution was the natural outgrowth of that profound and widespread religious movement.'³

Who were the Separates, and what motivated them to break away from the established Congregational churches? One approach to this question, first suggested in an influential essay by John C. Miller, is to consider the Separates as a class or social movement that found in the religious vocabulary of 'strict Congregationalism' the terms to express their discontent with the Standing Order.⁴ By correlating lists of Separates with other economic and demographic variables, social historians have constructed quantitative models that help to explain which groups of people were most receptive to the rhetoric of revivalism and separation. These microcosmic town studies reveal that economic or class variables were not as significant as Miller assumed. While it is true that hardly any college graduates or provincial civil leaders participated in the separations, neither were the ranks of Separate dissenters comprised solely of the lower classes, the walking poor, women, or the emotionally unstable. Far more important were demographic variables relating to age, gender, family, and childhood experience. While all ages could be found in Separate membership lists, the most heavily represented were young people

3. William G. McLoughlin, "Enthusiasm for Liberty": The Great Awakening as the Key to the Revolution,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 87 (1977): 70.

4. John C. Miller, 'Religion, Finance, and Democracy in Massachusetts,' *New England Quarterly* 6 (1933): 29-58.

below the age of twenty who entered the church at a far younger age than their predecessors in earlier generations. Oftentimes, these young people were themselves the children of church members, confirming the importance of family as the major carrier of religious faith in colonial New England.⁵ Also important were geographic factors. Urban areas, frontier settlements, and second-generation towns established between 1691 and 1715 witnessed the highest rates of separation.⁶ Separate activity, in brief, was most heated in those areas and among those individuals experiencing the greatest change and diversity in their lives.

Clearly, there is much to be learned from a social and quantitative approach to separatism. But there is also much left out in these studies. It is important to remember that data drawn from community studies are statistical generalizations that conceal significant deviations and diversity within their numerical means. While youth were the most conspicuous additions to church membership rolls in the 1740s, they still amounted to less than 40 percent of new converts. Nor were youthful converts always the children of church members, as the New London Separates illustrate. Similarly, many frontier towns did not experience separations, nor was every old town immune to religious divisions, as can be seen in the case of Concord, Massachusetts.⁷ All of these exceptions and

5. For general descriptions of the Separates' social backgrounds, see C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800* (New Haven, 1962), pp. 188-93; McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 1: 340-76; Christopher Jedrey, *The World of John Cleave-land: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New York, 1979), pp. 46-57; Peter Onuf, 'New Lights in New London: A Group Portrait of the Separatists,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 37 (1980): 627-43; J. M. Bumsted, 'Revivalism and Separatism in New England: The First Society of Norwich, Connecticut, as a Case Study,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 24 (1967): 588-612; and John W. Jeffries, 'The Separation in the Canterbury Congregational Church: Religion, Family, and Politics in a Connecticut Town,' *New England Quarterly* 52 (1979): 522-49.

6. The effects of the revivals on frontier areas is described in Charles E. Clark, *The Eastern Frontier* (New York, 1970), pp. 271-92. Urban revivals are described in Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 198-232, and second generation towns in J. M. Bumsted, 'Religion, Finance, and Democracy in Massachusetts: The Town of Norton as a Case Study,' *Journal of American History* 57 (1971): 830-31. On the 'coolness' of the oldest towns to the revivals, see Philip J. Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, 1970), p. 279.

7. See Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York, 1976), pp. 19-21.

variations point to the limitations of social variables as final explanations of religious dissent.

If shared social characteristics were not the only glue holding Separate congregations together, it is because separatism was essentially an ideological rather than a social movement. As an ideology or world view, separatism encompassed a diversity of classes, ages, backgrounds, and gender, all bound together by adherence to a common set of ideas. These ideas, moreover, were not radical departures in the history of New England thought but a conservative return to seventeenth-century Congregational principles such as pure church membership and the elimination of the Half-Way Covenant, strong lay elders, the necessity of the 'New Birth,' and the requirement that ministers be converted.⁸ Although the Separates' initiatives signaled a less deferential stance toward established authority, the Separates were not so much social revolutionaries as they were ideological zealots whose immediate goals were to restore the churches of New England to their original purity and simplicity.

In the self-examination of Framingham's Edward Goddard, printed below, we see a good illustration of the ideological commitment that characterized the Separate movement. As a statement of religious faith, the examination registers the distinctive preoccupations with conversion and the New Birth that brought Separates together around a common platform. But Goddard (1671-1754) was neither young nor poor. After teaching school for six years in Boston, he moved to Framingham in 1713 and quickly established himself as one of the pillars of the community. Prior to the revivals, he served the town regularly as town clerk, militia captain, representative to the Massachusetts General Court, and member of the Provincial Council. Beside his active public service, Goddard re-

See also Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts 1690-1750* (New York, 1984), pp. 182-204.

8. For a description of Separatist ideology, see C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England*, pp. 115-58.

mained, in the Reverend Israel Loring's words, an avid reader and an 'Excellent Writer' who distinguished himself as a 'Strenuous defender of the Calvinistical Principles.'⁹ In brief, Goddard was an individual accustomed to leadership and committed to preserving the Calvinistical faith and Congregational practices of his Puritan fathers.

As early as 1732, Goddard publicly voiced opinions that reflected changing lay attitudes toward ministerial authority and social deference. Anticipating the Separatists' positions of the following decade, Goddard became embroiled in a dispute over church doctrine and practice with Framingham pastor Jonathan Swift, insisting that the church elect lay elders and abandon the practice of the 'silentius vote.' The latter procedure left the congregation with no choice but to express its consent to ministerial actions 'by its silence.' Contrary minds, Goddard complained, 'were not called for,' and thus 'no one contradict[ed]' the minister. While Goddard's demand to reinstitute the system of church order outlined in the *Cambridge Platform* hearkened back to an orthodox past, it also called for a degree of lay control in church affairs that clearly exceeded the traditional bounds of deference. Unable to force these reforms, Goddard sought and obtained a dismissal to the First Church of Hopkinton.

By 1745, Goddard and his neighbors were caught up in the contagion of revivals that swept through New England. When Framingham's Pastor Swift died that year, the church quarreled bitterly over his replacement. Sensing an opportunity to rejoin his friends and restore his old church to its original purity, the expatriate Goddard entered the fray as a leading member of the 'New Light' faction in Framingham that opposed the ordination of Matthew Bridge. This faction included members of the community who, like Goddard himself, could not be considered as the inarticulate or downtrodden. In fact, many of the thirty-three churchgoers

9. Quoted in Clifford K. Shipton's continuation of John L. Sibley's multivolume biographical series entitled *Sibley's Harvard Graduates* (Boston, 1873-1975 [vols. 1-3 by Sibley; vols. 4-17 by Shipton], 9:40.

who joined Goddard were distinguished by their high character, and nearly all of them had a stake in society. Included in the group was the highly educated Joshua Hemenway, a deacon, selectman, town clerk, and representative to the General Court; Daniel Stone, deacon, selectman, and church member for at least thirty-six years; and six others who held important town or church offices.¹⁰

In the view of Goddard and the other New Lights, Matthew Bridge was an 'Old Light' opponent of the revivals and a 'Socinian' who failed to preach the doctrine of original sin. Bridge's understanding of church order was also suspect; his opponents forced him to swear allegiance to the *Cambridge Platform* and disavow the silent vote. Failing in their attempt to block Bridge's ordination, Goddard and his New Light Supporters separated and formed their own church. The courts could not stop Goddard and his followers from separating, but they did deny them legal status, which meant that the Separatists had to pay taxes for the support of Bridge, even though they no longer attended his church. The financial hardship did not stop the Separates from worshiping on their own and ordaining their own minister, Solomon Reed. In a subsequent tract defending the separation, Goddard emphasized the principle that 'every Man has a Right of judging for himself, of trying doctrines by the inspired Scriptures, and of Worshiping according to his Apprehensions of the meaning of them.'¹¹

It was in the midst of church turmoil and contention that Goddard penned his self-examination. The document filled fourteen pages of neat, closely written prose on sheets of paper measuring 4 by 6½ inches. This manuscript is preserved among the Goddard Family Papers at the American Antiquarian Society. In a sentence set off from the rest of the text by dotted lines, Goddard explained the occasion for his meditation and his personal state of mind:

10. The divisions in Framingham are described in Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman 1703-1782*, 2 vols. (Worcester, 1974), 1: 134; and William G. McLoughlin, ed., *The Diary of Isaac Backus*, 3 vols. (Providence, 1979), 1:14, 442. Goddard's supporters are described in J. H. Temple, *History of Framingham, Massachusetts...1640-1880* (Framingham, 1887), p. 210, appendix.

11. The quotation is taken from Edward Goddard, *A Brief Account of the Foundation of the Second Church in Framingham* (Boston, 1750), p. 4.

'On this 25th day of March 1745 early in the Morning I entered the seventy first year of my Age (being the day in which the year begins) and oh what shame, sorrow, and lamentation should I now express on Reflection upon my past barrenness, and how should I admire Divine patience and Study to Improve the short time that may yet remain to the Glory of God.' In this brief aside, appearing midway through the text, we see something of the religious turmoil and solemnity that drove Goddard to this journey into the depths of his soul. We see also how his personal crisis fit with the external crisis of church division going on around him. At stake in both was the ultimate question New Englanders asked of life: What must I do to be saved?

For the historian, Goddard's self-examination is noteworthy both for its sophistication and its theological content. Considered as a literary text, the document is remarkable for its stylistic fluency. Indeed, on the level of style, Goddard's prose is virtually indistinguishable from the prose of educated clergymen whom he no doubt read and studied closely. The literary skills of Separates like Goddard were recognized by friends and foes alike. Even so stalwart an opponent of separatism as Yale's future president Ezra Stiles conceded that the writings of lay Separates represented an impressive 'specimen of the Abilities of the Illiterate Men of New England even in writings as well as Things of Religion.'¹²

Besides its style, Goddard's self-examination is also notable for its theological content. As Stiles observed, a substantive knowledge of the 'things of religion,' set New England's laity apart from ordinary people in other colonies or in the Old World. In church debates, as in private meditations, lay people like Goddard proved they could participate in the same community of discourse as their learned superiors. Clearly there was no drop-off in lay religiosity in the eighteenth century, as this self-examination confirms. Eighteenth-century Separates were as easy with their theological vocabulary of informed debate as they were with the everyday

12. *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D.*, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter, 3 vols. (New York, 1901), 1:68.

language of farming and commerce. Indeed, theological terminology constituted the very stuff of which everyday thought was made in mid-eighteenth-century New England.

If Goddard's self-examination is continuous with seventeenth-century specimens of lay piety in terms of theological understanding, it also registers distinctive emphases and concerns that reveal it to be a product of the eighteenth-century religious thought and the Great Awakening. Most notable here is the presence of an evangelical terminology centered on the sense of the heart. *Experience* is the key to Goddard's meditation. Such an emphasis clearly reflects the influence of Jonathan Edwards, the principal defender of the Great Awakening, and his theology of the heart. Edwardian terms like 'new creation,' 'sensation,' 'affections,' or 'holy ardours' dominate Goddard's language and supply the context in which he judges the state of his soul. While Edwards himself never condoned separatism, he could not prevent his terminology from being absorbed by lay leaders and employed to justify their relentless crusade for pure churches in which the heart took precedence over the head. Ironically, in the same way that Edwards turned the great thinkers of his age to suit his evangelical purposes, Separates like Goddard turned Edwards's writings into a defense of their ecclesiastical rebellion.¹³

In turning to the actual content of Goddard's self-examination, one is struck by the manner in which he instinctively adopts a three-fold organization similar to the text-doctrine-application schema of Puritan sermons. In the same way that ministers moved from general doctrines to particular applications, Goddard begins his analysis with a general consideration of regeneration, and then imposes the lessons taught onto his own spiritual experience. For all his emphasis on the heart and the affections, Goddard could not escape a conceptual framework that was rigidly intellectualist and formal in organization.

The first two portions of Goddard's self-examination address

13. Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, 1981).

two separate but interrelated questions. First is the question of what constitutes salvation. In typically Edwardian fashion, Goddard defines salvation as the implantation of a 'new creation' or 'new nature,' comprised of transformed 'affections,' 'appetites,' 'inclinations,' and 'habits.' Assurance of salvation—which Goddard regards as 'a thing sensible, feasible, possible, [and] attainable in this Present life'—requires a new sensibility. In studying how this transformation is accomplished, he turns, in the second portion of his self-examination, to a consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit. Here, too, the influence of the revivals is registered in Goddard's emphatic denial of self-will and self-determination in matters of personal salvation. Man's nature is 'carnal' and in 'Enmity against God.' If man is to be saved, Goddard insists, it cannot be laid to the credit of the sinner but solely to the grace of God.

Only after defining salvation in the broadest terms and establishing an experiential criteria for assurance does Goddard proceed in the third stage to the actual self-examination. This final and most important section is handled 'syllogistically,' in two directions. First, Goddard looks to his life for grounds of 'hope' and 'encouragement' that he has indeed taken on the characteristics of a new creation. Especially important here were moments when he could recall being filled with 'reviving and refreshing thoughts of the freeness and riches of Divine grace.' Second, and just as important, Goddard looks to the dark side of his soul and confronts the evidence that he may, in fact, never have been converted. Here, too, experience is the key. In observing saints around him, and reading saints' lives in the Bible, it seemed to him that a direct 'assurance of their personal Interest in Christ . . . was Common and Ordinary.' Yet, Goddard could point to no 'day or season' when he had a conversion experience. This inability to recall a specific moment of conversion did not necessarily mean that he was damned, but it was a 'Dark Symptom' that had to be considered if the examination was to be honest.

Having weighed the hopes and discouragements in the balance

of his experience, Goddard emerged at the end of his journey, like all Puritan saints, with a sense of cautious optimism. If there was a light of grace shining through in his life, Goddard concluded, it was surely 'very weak.' But that was enough. On that basis, Goddard could participate in communion with the saints, and lead them against foes who denied the experiential grounds of supernatural conversion. Nothing in Goddard's outward circumstances would predict such a course of action. But the sense of the heart was a different matter. Here we see the appeal of separatism at its deepest, most fundamental level. In the process, we get a glimpse of the power that later ideologies would exert in a New World environment where 'every Man has a Right of judging for himself.'

*Self Examination Attempted*¹⁴

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES assure us that there is no obtaining Eternal Salvation but by Christ and being found in him, and that if any Man be in Christ, he is a New Creature. Now a new creature necessarily imply's a New Nature, New habits and principles, New affections and appetites, New Inclinations, desires, and delights, hopes and fears suited to the New Nature, and the New objects it converses withal.

And as the New Creature Implies a New Nature So it implies a New creation, which can be the effect of no less than a Divine Almighty power; which neither needs nor Admits the help of any creature as a Co adjutant therewithal.

As natural life is known by Motion, Breathing and pulsation so I conceive the Spiritual life is to be known or discerned by Spiritual Sensation, Motion and breathings, but this not without the Special assistance and Influence of the Spirit of God. The New Nature exerts itself in longing desires after a right knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom

¹⁴. Edward Goddard, 'Self Examination Attempted' (1745), Goddard Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society.

he hath Sent, and to experience the Indwelling of the holy Spirit, as a Well of living Water springing up in holy ardours and affections towards God and goodness, and in groaning after Freedom and deliverance from blindness of mind, hardness of Heart, stupidity, dullness, Deadness, Unbelief and Wherein which hinders and obstructs the Soul in its actings and movings towards God and prevents the exercise of that Faith, Love, Joy and delight which Ariseth from peace and Reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ and a Sense of his love.

It grieves and Mourns for all Sin, both Original and Actual as it defiles and pollutes the Soul, and renders it unfit for, and incapable of glorifying and Enjoying of God (as fain it would) and taking up rest and Satisfaction in him at all times, and especially it mourns on account of the great Gospel Sin of Unbelief, the Root and Complication of all other Sins. It hungers and thirsts after Christ, and that Salvation which in and through him is proposed and offered in the Gospel and is pleased with that Salvation as it contains the renovation of the Soul after the Image of God, the Implantation of every Grace of the Holy Spirit, and particularly of that Radical grace of Faith whereby the Soul is united to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also a property of the New Nature to desire the sincere Milk of the Word of God, Especially the Milk which engenders and nourishes faith in and love to the Great Savior. It loves that Word which begets in the Soul an humbling Sense and feeling of its own emptiness, Impotency, and unworthiness, and brings it to lye low at the foot of Sovereign Grace, and to admiring adoring apprehensions of the Wonderful Work of Redemption Resulting from the free riches and sovereignty of Divine Grace in Election and consumated By the Incarnation and Sufferings of the Son of God as United to the Humane Nature, and the Application thereof to the Souls of the Elect in their effectual vocation.

It chooseth the Righteousness of Christ for Cloathing, Relies on his Sacrifice for Atonement and cleansing, and on his Divine teaching for Instruction. Submits to his Government as Supream Lord and Lawgiver, and the grace of the Gospel Renders both it self and the Law too, in its purity and Spiritually delightful and eligible to the New Nature. And it never feels better or more in its Element than when it feels the love of God shed abroad in the Heart prompting and Exciting to Evangelical obedience.

The whole Salvation of the Gospel and That Way of Obtaining it which Infinite Wisdom has contrived and prescribed, where in the Glory of all the Divine Attributes is Secured and Illustrated, the Law magnified and made honorable, and the Creature made happy by being emptied of it Self and assimilated into the Divine Image, in every way Suited to

the Cravings of the New Nature. And if it were possible that any part of that Salvation which the New Creature Aspires after could be Attributed to Works of Righteousness of its own it would be Very Disagreeable to its new nature.

Wherever the New Nature is Implanted there is a War or Combate with Indwelling Corruption. The New nature is an Abiding permanent Active gracious and God-like principle, quite the Reverse to the Corrupt principles of Depraved Nature in all its Views Aims and designs, whence ensues a constant Combate not only against more open and Scandalous Sins, but also against Secret and heart Sins— Vain thoughts, foolish Imaginations, pride, Earthiness, Sensuality, hypocrisie, Low Mean and unworthy thoughts of God. Slighty thoughts of the Souls Eternal Concernments and of the Wonders of Redeeming love and grace and innumerable other Spiritual enemies which War against the Soul.

In this warfare Christ the Captain of their Salvation appears precious in all his offices to believers, as a Savior suited to the wants and cravings of their New Nature; in his priestly office, as a propitiary sacrifice to take Away Sin, make reconciliation for transgressions to bring in Everlasting Righteousness, In his prophetic Office, to open and unfold the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and to remove the vail of Ignorance and Spiritual blindness. And in his Kingly office to overcome Satan and Subdue Conquer and Overthrow all their formidable Enemies from Without and from within. Among which they esteem a self righteous principle none of the least as being a close Inward and Inbred enemy, under Innumerable specious pretences drawing the Soul off from the Only way of life (by believing in Christ and closing with him) to seek Righteousness and life by the Law as a Covenant of life, or by an Intermixture of Self righteousness with the Righteousness of Christ, for Justification.

This principle the New Nature abhors, as being most contrary to it self, derogatory to the Glory of Divine Grace and the honour of the Redeemer and a Reflection upon the Whole Scheme of Infinite Wisdom in the work of Redemption and hence the Soul abasing humbling and emptying Doctrines of the Word, and Operations of the holy Spirit, Suit the New Nature as being Exceedingly helpful to it, in its War and Combate with this self Righteous principle. These are some of the parts and lineaments of the New Creature, and Whereever they are found in Truth and Reality it will Infer (as I believe) a Saving change and Christ formed in the Soul. But then it Remains to Enquire 1) how or by what means this New Nature, so qualified is formed in the Soul 2) how a man may come to know whether himself be a Partaker of this new nature, and

have these qualifications wrought in him in Truth and Reality, or only a shew and Semblance thereof?

Now as to the first of these Inquiries, it is Easy to Conclude from the Excellent Nature of these qualifications, That they must be of an Heavenly Extract and Divine Original and the Effect of Creating power; there being nothing supposeable remaining in corrupt depraved Nature, which can so much as Really Will or desire this New Nature, which is so directly opposite to, and destructive of its own Darling principles. The Scriptures moreover Assures us That the carnal mind is in Enmity against God. Consequently it must be at enmity with the New Nature which is the Renovation of the Soul after the Image of God. The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause and the Word the ordinary Instrumental cause of [salvation].

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on this 25th day of March 1745 early in the Morning I entered the seventy first year of my Age (being the day in which the year begins) and oh what shame, sorrow, and Lamentation should I now express on Reflection upon my past barrenness, and how should I admire Divine patience and Study to Improve the short time that may yet remain to the Glory of God. and to obtain a Resolution of the second question and clear evidence of the New Nature Imploring Divine Assistance therein.

.....
As to the second Inquiry Viz. how a man may come to know whether he has experienced that great change which imparts a New Nature, or has only had a semblance of it? I conceive that as on the One hand where there may be no true principle of Grace wrought in the Soul by the Special Operations of the Spirit of God, there may yet be a great resemblance of many Actings of that principle, which are only the effects of the Common Operations and Illuminations of the Spirit of God, Rational Convictions and a Natural thirst after freedom from Misery and the enjoyment of a Rational Good, so on the other hand, altho' wherever There is a Real principle or habit of grace there will be all the parts and properties of the New Creature, with all the Motions, Appetites, and Tendencies proper to its new nature and life, yet there is also in the Same Soul a Body of Sin and Death, the Old Man, the principle of Corrupt Nature retaining all its Old Parts properties and lustings, and with mighty force and Influence on the Understanding Will and Affections, and every faculty of the Soul. Maintaining a constant War and Combate Against the New Creature and neither the Combate it self nor the success of it lyes open or obvious to sensitive view and Observation (as in other Combates), but is discernable only to an eye of Faith and

Spiritual senses exercised to discern Good and evil. From these and such like considerations I conclude, That not only true grace itself, but also the knowledge or Assurance of it, is the free Gift of God, and is sovereignly dispensed, and so much I think is implied in that expression of Elihu, When he giveth quietness who then can cause trouble and when he hideth his face who then can behold him [?]

Yet since it is required of all to Examine themselves Whether they be in the Faith, to prove their own selves and to give all diligence to make their calling and Election sure it must needs be the Duty of all to improve their rational powers and faculties, in the work of Self Examination as an Instituted means to the obtainment of this knowledge, and the Command Obliging thereto is a pregnant proof of it. Assurance is a thing sensible feasible, possible, or attainable in this Present life.

Neither can I doubt but that it is of Vast concernment and importance to my Self that I come to a clear knowledge what my State of Standing is, for if bad, the knowledge of it might be an happy means of such an Awakening as so might issue in saving conversion, and if on the other hand a principle Seed or Spark of true Grace may be found, how Wonderfully would the clear knowledge of it animate Invigorate and quicken my (now dull and stupid) Soul and Render it lively active and chearful in all Duties, both of Active and passive obedience and Evangelical in the performance of them, how would it fill my Soul with humble praise and holy Admiration and how sweetly should I glory in him in whom all the Seed of Israel are Justified and in whom they glory and aspire after high degrees of Conformity to him. This Surely would make Christ to appear Exceeding precious, Sin and especially the Sin of unbelief vile and odious, and the thought of returning again to folly or of growing cold remiss slightly and Negligent in Duties, As well as a sense of the praises of the Heart to Rest in a bare attendance on them, and taking some contentment therein (as if Justification were partly of Grace and partly by Works) will be grievous and distressing to a soul that has but a Glimmering Sight of these things and But a feeble hope of its personal interest in them, much more, etc. Interest therefore as well as Duty Obliges me to Endeavor to make my own calling and Election Sure. And in the prosecution hereof I have thought it might be helpful to me if I note down (that I may Easier reflect upon) such considerations as have Encouraged me to hope, and then such other considerations as excite fears as to my Spiritual State.

But first I premise that whatsoever light there may be in my Understanding or whatsoever movings may be in my Will or Affections, Yet if they terminate in anything Short of a Saving closure with and Union to the Lord Jesus Christ, by a Faith of this Operation of God and working

by love. These cannot be an Evidence of a good Estate. And on the other hand those operations of the Spirit of God upon the Understanding Will and Affections which are never found in my unregenerate soul will infer and Evidence an Interest in Christ and so a good and safe Estate. As where Christ is there the New creature is, and where the New Creature is, there Christ is. Now the principle Grounds of my hope are such as these viz. When I contemplate the frame and contexture of the New Nature and how it Derives from the free riches and Sovereign Grace of God, and is the product of the Eternal counsel and compact between the Father and the Son in the Covenant of Redemption, pursuant to the Eternal decree of Election and brought about by the mysterious union of the Divine and Humane Nature in the person of Christ, and by his Sufferings and meditation, as also by the powerful operations of the blessed Spirit in effectual vocation, and when I also consider the nature, uses, and End of the grace of Faith, as it unites the Soul to Christ (whereby it becomes one Spirit with him) and derives Righteousness and Strength from Christ, and Inclines and Capacitates the believing soul to close with him in all his offices, and to ascribe the whole glory of that Salvation which it desires and hopes for, to the sovereign Author of it. As also the nature of gospel salvation as containing in it all the quickening enlivening and Sanctifying Influences of the spirit, and in general all his Blessed operations in and upon the soul whereby it is enlightened humbled emptied and brought to the foot of sovereign grace, carried to and through the pangs of the New-birth wrought up to a mistress for communion with God in this life, and the everlasting enjoyment of him in the life to come. And when I further consider that the great end and design of God in the Work of mans Redemption and Salvation, and of the Death of Christ and of the Mission of the holy Spirit, as also in all the subordinate means of Salvation is the advancement and illustration of all the Divine Attributes his holiness justice and Righteousness as well as Grace Mercy and Goodness, and in this way to promote the high happiness of his Redeemed ones, and when I find or am perswaded that both this Salvation it self, the ends for which it is proposed, and the conditions thereof or rather the qualifications requisite thereto, the way in which and the end for which it is accomplished and brought about are all suited to answer the Wants and Satisfy the desires of my Soul (could I but obtain the same) I am then ready to hope that such desires are the Breathings of a New Nature. Again when (after many conflicts under a sense of blindness hardness dreadful Stupidity unbelief and atheism long continued bareness, Trifling Sloth and Negligence under Gospel calls and invitations, frequent strivings of the holy spirit and checks of con-

science) I have had some Reviving and refreshing thoughts of the freeness and riches of Divine grace, the fullness and all sufficiency of Christ, the suitability of his mediatorial offices, the wonderful things he has done and will do for the elect in the discharge of those offices, the stability of the New Covenant and the absoluteness of the promises, wherein Divine almighty power stands Engaged for them to give the New Heart, to give faith, repentance and every other Grace of the Spirit, and even the spirit itself to begin and carry on a Work of Sanctification and to mold them for the inheritance of the saints in life and meditations herein breed longings desires and those desires do as it were Insensibly breed an hope of personal interest. And that hope (tho mixt with fears lest they are not built upon Unfailing premises) causes a more humble sense of my own vileness and unworthiness, more fervent desires after Christ and a conformity to him And that the glimmering views I then have of Christ and of the great blessings of the everlasting covenant might be more clear and full. And I make more powerful and abiding impressions upon my soul, and together herewithal also find that my desires after clear discoveries and manifestations of the spiral love of God to my soul are excited and heightened from the consideration of the Tendency of Spiritual joy to empty a Soul of all its own Rightousness to Incline it to Ascribe the glory of its Salvation to the free Mercy and Grace of God. Such [?] or rather Intervals of these Conflicts which I sometimes experienced have been a further Encouragement to me to hope that Sovereign Grace may have implanted an Immortal Seed of Grace (more Worth than Millions of Worlds) in my poor Soul, tho through my sinful and shameful supineness and negligence I miss the comfort of it, and (which is worse) am Indisposed to give to God the glory of it.

Oh! what a pleasure and hapiness if I could sing with a sensible feeling application the first 3 verses in the 40th psalms and others in Davids psalm and Solomon's song. But so far as self examination is to be Managed Syllogistically, so far is it proper that I also consider the grounds of Fear as well as of hope concerning the state of my soul. And therefore I firstly premise that Inasmuch as a saving closure with Christ is the only thing which can Denominate Any ones state to be good and he that hath the son hath life And he that believeth (and none other) shall be saved. And this believing Implies an hearty consent of the soul upon a spiritual and supernatural discovery of Christ in his personal and Mediatorial Excellencies to be Ruled taught and saved by him, as he proposes and offers himself in the Gospel, I can therefore have no further grounds to hope that my state is good, than as I can discover that by an almighty power of the Spirit of God I have been persuaded and enabled to go out

of my self and to Receive Christ on Gospel terms. Now we have in Scripture an account of two sorts of believers in Christ and accordingly of Two sorts of Faith, one called a Dead faith and so Denominated because it is without works the other is called a Faith of the operation of God and is said to work by love: The first sort I conceive to be wrought by the Spirit of God in his common Illuminations and operations in and upon the rational faculties where the understanding cannot but conceive something of the Reasonableness, equitableness, and excellency of Gospel proposals, and of the happy State and condition of such who are Interested in the gospel salvation; and cannot but Say with Balaam How goodly are thy Tents O Jacob and thy Tabernacles O Israel, and desire (as far as Wishes will go) not only to Dye the Death, but also to live the life of the Righteous, and as the Understanding is thus Enlightened so there must be some sort of Inclination of the Will and Affections to close with the good which is so far discovered. The other sort of Faith (which from the excellent effects of it is called saving or Justifying Faith) I conceive to be also wrought, by the operations of the same spirit, and on the same Faculties, the Understanding Will and Affections (in which respects both sorts bear a Resemblance) but with a specifick as well as a gradual difference, this last being the working of that same almighty power which brought from the Dead our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby a dead soul is quickened together with him, an Immortal seed a divine principle of spiritual life is infused into the soul, which according to Scripture phrases is the New Man, the New Creature, and Christ formed in the Soul.

Now when I consider the high Encomiums given of this New Creature. The sublime objects which the Renewed understanding is fitted for the contemplation of the heighth depths length and breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus which it contemplates and adores, and which appears the more wonderful and Illustrious by the clear views which the Soul now has of the Exceeding Sinfulness of Sin, the Amazing Wrath of God which it finds, or hopes at least that it is delivered from its own unworthiness of the least smile of Divine favour, and when I consider the Immensity of that good which the New Creature is fitted for, the fruition of and the purity and Spirituality of those Employments and enjoyments which it is fitted for and attempered unto, and at the same time can find little or nothing in my Understanding Will and Affections which will Suit or correspond with the distinguishing principles, Endowments, and Operations of the New Creature, and when I further consider what a Mighty and Marvelous change is wrought in Conversion, how Remarkable a day that must needs be which a day of the New Birth, the day of the Souls

Divorce from Sin, from Self, and from the Law (as it is a Covenant of Works) and of the souls Espousals to Christ as also of those previous and powerful operations of the spirit of God with which this New Birth is ushered in, by conviction, Illumination and humiliation, and yet cannot find that I have ever experienced such a feeling of those previous operations and such a wonderful Change consequent thereupon, as to Render a day or Season so Remarkable as to Enable me to conclude that such a Day, or even such a Year was a time of the New Birth with my soul, and when I also consider how Weak faint and Superficial my thoughts conceptions and pursuits after, and affections towards spiritual and Eternal concerns are from these and such like considerations I cannot but fear lest my faith should prove no better than of the first sort above Mentioned.

Again when I consider That whatever Intimations there may be concerning the Saints conflicts with Soul Troubles, In the time of the Old Testament administration, yet it seems by all the Epistles Inscribed to the saints and faithful Brethren of gospel times That an assurance of their personal Interest in Christ and the great blessings of that Everlasting Covenant was Common and Ordinary to them, and such things are accordingly predicated of them in general as could be applied to (and such duties enjoined on them as could not be performed by, or properly be urged upon) any who had not such Assurance. Our Catechism also speaks of Assurance as of a consequent or concomitant of justification adoption and sanctification, and when I consider how that after more than 40 years continuance in an open and explicit profession of Christ and hopes of salvation by him, I have never been able to say that I have at any time had an assurance of a saving Interest in him and that to this day I find but little more grounds for hope to build upon than I formed for several years together upon my first Entrance upon the Christian profession, and when I also reflect and consider how that not only my hopes but also my desires respecting spiritual things has grievously Intermitted, and a slighty negligent formality been Indulged by me in that part of my life which should have been Employed in most lively and vigorous actings for the glory of God, I cannot but look on these things as Dark Symptoms.

Again when I consider that although I have experienced Something of a Work both of the Law and gospel and repeatedly and frequently been considerably affected with respect to both, yet the Weakness and Inconstancy of the Impressions, and the great disproportion between those Impressions and when I also consider the important Doctrines to which they relate, as also between those Doctrines themselves in their

certainty and Reality, and the discovery I have of them, and my practice upon them, and together herewithal consider what is Implied or Comprehended in that Renovation after the Image of God which is wrought in true conversion, conforming the whole man to the Holy nature and Law of God. The purity and Spirituality of the Law and the Extent of it and the Enforcement added thereto by the grace of the Gospel. And its perpetual obligation (as a rule of obedience tho not as a Covenant of life) and then reflect on the course of my life, how much my thoughts words and actions are employed about sensitive and how little about spiritual objects and Employments, on these and such like considerations I am not only ready to conclude without Hesitancy that if I have any true Grace at all, it is certainly Very Weak and in a low degree, but also to fear, That all that I have experienced amounts to nothing more than a imperfect work of the law followed with an Imperfect work of the Gospel.

But above all Unbelief, as it is the greatest sin and carries in it the greatest neglect and contempt of all the divine attributes and operations, so I find by sad experience that it Renders my soul Weak Dead and Unactive, as to a due Attendance on all those Christian Duties and Exercises which are the Instituted means of relief, and indeed here lyes the very quintessence of Sin and Misery. Unbelief being that which cuts off from the only Remedy that Infinite Wisdom and goodness has provided, and keeps the Soul as in chains and fetters, under an Incapacity of doing any thing pleasing or acceptable to God.

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