The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole

Michael J. Crawford

IN 1765 Nathan Cole (1711-1783), a carpenter and farmer of Kensington, Connecticut, set down in unschooled prose his spiritual joys and sorrows of the preceding twenty-five years. Cole's "Spiritual Travels," here printed in full for the first time, provides a rare opportunity to study the impact of the Great Awakening on the life and thought of a New England layman. It illustrates the emotional response to the preaching of George Whitefield; it contains a classic account of an eighteenth-century conversion; and it offers an intimate insight into the experience of the Separates in Connecticut, among whom Cole was prominent. In 1950 Leonard W. Labaree remarked that much of the "Spiritual Travels" is "to introspective . . . to merit publication." More recently, Alan Heimert has called Cole's memoir "one of the more remarkable documents of the intellectual life of eighteenth-century America."2 The difference between these two appraisals measures a major change in historical styles and interests over the past quarter-century.

Mr. Crawford is a graduate student at Boston University. He wishes to thank Professor John M. Murrin of Princeton University and Professor Richard L. Bushman of Boston University for their encouragement and guidance.

1 At that time Kensington was an outlying parish of Farmington. Today it is a part of the town of Berlin.

The stages of Cole’s spiritual journey may be briefly traced from his account. Whitefield’s preaching at Middletown in 1740 jolted Cole out of his complacent “Arminian” trust in the efficacy of good works for salvation and convinced him of the inability to be saved without God’s election. Nearly two years elapsed before he completed the familiar pattern of conversion: pre-occupation with guilt, despair of grace—which at one point drove him to the brink of suicide—and finally the great bliss that follows forgiveness. In 1747, in protest against the admission of the unconverted to membership and the use of the Lord’s Supper as a converting ordinance, Cole withdrew from the church at Kensington, where he had been a member for about fourteen years. At first he found fellowship with the Separates of nearby Wethersfield. Later he made a promising start at organizing a Separate congregation in Kensington, and by 1750 twenty to thirty persons were meeting at his house each Sabbath. But in a little time, failing to settle a minister, this fellowship disbanded, and Cole remained without spiritual companionship for a number of years. Even his wife Anne (1724?-1780), who regressed into a helpless mental condition in 1763, did not share his Separatist convictions. Several times Cole’s neighbors voted to abate his tax for the support of Kensington’s established minister out of regard for his conscience, despite some resentment of his Separatism. In 1764 Cole joined Ebenezer Frothingham’s Separate congregation at Middletown, known today as the South Congregational Church. In 1778 he became a Baptist, explaining in a published dialogue between himself and a Separate minister why, after so many years as a Separate, he had become convinced that the scriptures enjoined the immersion of adult believers. In the same pamphlet is a tract in which Cole attempted to demonstrate to the Seventh Day Baptists the error of observing Saturday as the Sabbath.

The "Spiritual Travels" apparently resulted from Cole’s rededication to the Separate cause in 1764. Upon joining Frothingham’s church he became an active Separate polemicist. In "An Appeal to the Bible," a manuscript supporting the practices of the Separates and denouncing those churches that adhered to the Saybrook Platform, Cole recorded that he often publicly defended the tenets of Separatism against the Saybrook ministers. He chose

3 The Coles were childless. The story of how, late in life, Cole adopted Gideon Williams (1739?-1821), an orphan whom Cole and his wife had raised since he was four years old, can be found in the Nathan Cole Book of Writings, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford. The major portion of this account is printed in Roswell A. Moore, "Memoirs of Nathan Cole of Berlin, Conn.,” Old Time New England: Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, XXV (1933), 136-140

4 Nathan Cole, Dialogue between a Separate Minister and some of his People and Cole; what was said to me and my Answers, and On the Change of the Sabbath (Hartford, Conn., 1779?). The latter exists also in manuscript in Cole’s hand in the Nathan Cole MSS, Conn. Hist. Soc. The biographical data on Cole come largely from the "Spiritual Travels" and other items in the two bound volumes of his manuscripts in the possession of the Conn. Hist. Soc.
"to talk before a number of people Men and women that they may all Judge for themselves." In the "Travels" Cole acknowledges his duty "to pray and exhort and speak often to the Saints." By writing the "Travels" he may have sought to supplement his public speaking, for, he said, "I have an impediment in my speech and my gift is such when I try to exhort; I can only give out A few blundering hints; and Jump from one thing to another."

"The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole" is the first item in a bound volume of approximately two-hundred manuscript pages in the possession of the Connecticut Historical Society, and is printed here by permission. Most of this volume is in Cole's hand, which is characterized by great vagaries of spelling and punctuation. The "Spiritual Travels," however, is in a copyist's hand which is much more literate than Cole's. The volume also contains a copy of the account of Whitefield's visit to Middletown (covered in this document on pages [1-5]) in Cole's hand, very badly spelled and capitalized, with directions for inserting it in the "Spiritual Travels" at the proper place. Cole's editing is evidenced in the "Spiritual Travels" by interlineations and corrections in his own hand. I have placed these additions in italics. Cole's corrections were probably made in 1768, for an interlineation on page [50] states that his wife's mental collapse of 1763 "hath continued now this five years."

At three points Cole suggests that the reader skip ahead a number of pages. These places I have indicated thus: [*]; and the places at which Cole indicated that the reading should be resumed I have marked thus: [#]. The pages are numbered consecutively from [2] to [70], with these exceptions: three pages are numbered [56], which I have designated as [56], [56a], and [56b]; two pages are numbered [58], which I have designated as [58] and [58a]; and two pages are numbered [65], which I have designated as [65] and [65a]. Leaf [52-53] is torn out and leaf [68-69] cut out; these are missing. On pages [7-26] the running title is "The Spiritual Tryals of Nathan Cole"

8 "An Appeal to the Bible," Cole MSS. This exists both in Cole's hand and in an incomplete transcription by a more educated hand. In it Cole argues for separation of church and state and for free-will offerings, denounces the "hireling ministers" who preach from notes rather than by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, denies the need of a college education for ordination, and fondly recalls the zeal abundant during the Great Awakening.

6 In a second bound volume of Cole's manuscripts, the major item is Cole's guide to success, entitled "A Scriptural line drawn between wisdom and folly through a man's life in the things of this world also shewing what causeth a blessing on a mans labour and what causeth a curs on a mans labour in this world," Cole Book of Writings, Conn. Hist. Soc. Cole wrote this in 1781, probably for the edification of his adopted son, who had not been prudent in his financial affairs.

That version was printed as early as 1897 in George Leon Walker, Some Aspects of the Religious Life of New England . . . (Boston, 1897), 82-92, and most recently in J. M. Bumsted, ed., The Great Awakening: The Beginnings of Evangelical Piety in America (Waltham, Mass., 1970), 79-81. The two versions are identical in content and vary only in spelling, punctuation, and occasionally in phraseology.
Cole." Dates in running heads extend from 1741 to 1765. These I have inserted in brackets where they will help keep the chronology clear. The document is signed on page [70] in Cole's hand: "Nov Kensington in Farmingtown 1765: Nathan Cole." I have retained spelling and punctuation as they appear in the manuscript, with the exception of Cole's ampersand, which has been converted to "and." I have also added headings and have broken the text into paragraphs.

The Nathan Cole Manuscript Volume contains a three-and-a-half page item in Cole's hand, headed "in ye spiritual travels of Nathan Cole etc." In it Cole refers to "this year 1771." Apparently he intended this to be an addendum to his autobiography written six years earlier, and accordingly it has been appended to the work here.

The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole

I was born Feb 15th 1711 and born again octo 1741—

When I was young I had very early Convictions; but after I grew up I was an Arminian until I was near 30 years of age; I intended to be saved by my own works such as prayers and good deeds.

[George Whitefield at Middletown]

Now it pleased God to send Mr Whitefield into this land; and my hearing of his preaching at Philadelphia, like one of the Old apostles, and many thousands flocking to hear him preach the Gospel; and great numbers were converted to Christ; I felt the Spirit of God drawing me by conviction; I longed to see and hear him, and wished he would come this way. I heard he was come to New York and the Jerseys and great multitudes flocking after him under great concern for their Souls which brought on my Concern more and more hoping soon to see him but next I heard he was at long Island; then at Boston and next at Northampton.

Then on a Sudden, in the morning about 8 or 9 of the Clock there came a messenger and said Mr Whitfield preached at Hartford and Weathersfield yesterday and is to preach at Middletown this morning at ten of the Clock, I was in my field at Work, I dropt my [3] tool that I had in my hand and ran home to my wife telling her to make ready quickly to go and hear Mr Whitfield preach at Middletown, then run to my pasture for my horse with all my might; fearing that I should be too late; having my horse I with my wife soon mounted the horse and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear, and when my horse got much out of breath I would get down and put my wife on the Saddle and bid her ride as fast as she could and not Stop or Slack for me except I bad her and so I would run untill I was much out of breath; and then mount my horse again, and so I did several times to favour

8 Thursday, Oct. 23, 1740.
my horse; we improved every moment to get along as if we were fleeing for our lives; all the while fearing we should be too late to hear the Sermon, for we had twelve miles to ride double in little more than an hour and we went round by the upper housen parish.9

And when we came within about half a mile or a mile of the Road that comes down from Hartford weathersfield and Stepney to Middletown; on high land I saw before me a Cloud or fogg rising; I first thought it came from the great [4] River,10 but as I came nearer the Road, I heard a noise something like a low rumbling thunder and presently found it was the noise of Horses feet coming down the Road and this Cloud was a Cloud of dust made by the Horses feet; it arose some Rods into the air over the tops of Hills and trees and when I came within about 20 rods of the Road, I could see men and horses Sliping along in the Cloud like shadows and as I drew nearer it seemed like a steady Stream of horses and their riders, scarcely a horse more than his length behind another, all of a Lather and foam with sweat, their breath rolling out of their nostrils every Jump; every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of Souls, it made me tremble to see the Sight, how the world was in a Struggle; I found a Vacance between two horses to Slip in mine and my Wife said law our Cloaths will be all spoiled see how they look, for they were so Covered with dust, that they looked almost all of a Colour Coats, hats, Shirts, and horses.

We went down in the Stream but heard no man [5] speak a word all the way for 3 miles but every one pressing forward in great haste and when we got to Middletown old meeting house there was a great Multitude it was said to be 3 or 4000 of people Assembled together; we dismounted and shook off our Dust; and the ministers were then Coming to the meeting house; I turned and looked towards the Great River and saw the ferry boats Running swift backward and forward bringing over loads of people and the Oars Rowed nimble and quick; every thing men horses and boats seemed to be Struggling for life; The land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses all along the 12 miles I saw no man at work in his field, but all seemed to be gone.

When I saw Mr Whitfield come upon the Scaffold he Lookt almost angelical; a young, Slim, slender, youth before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted Countenance, and my hearing how God was with him every where as he came along it Solemnized my mind; and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach; for he looked as if he was Cloathed with authority from the Great God; [6] and a sweet sollome solemnity sat upon his brow And my hearing him preach, gave me a heart wound; By Gods blessing: my old Foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me; then I was convinced of the doctrine of Election: and went right to quarrelling with God about it; because that all I

9 Middletown Upper Houses Parish, the present town of Cromwell.
10 The Connecticut River.
could do would not save me; and he had decreed from Eternity who should be saved and who not.

[Conversion Crisis]

I began to think I was not Elected, and that God made some for heaven and me for hell. And I thought God was not Just in so doing, I thought I did not stand on even Ground with others, if as I thought; I was made to be damned; My heart then rose against God exceedingly, for his making me for hell; Now this distress lasted Almost two years:—Poor—Me—Miserable me.—It pleased God to bring on my Convictions more and more, and I was loaded with the guilt of Sin, I saw I was undone for ever; I carried Such a weight of Sin in my breast or mind, that it seemed to me as if I should sink into the ground every step; and I kept all to my self as much as I could; I went month after month mourning and begging for mercy, I tried every way I could think to help my self but all ways failed:—Poor me it took away most all my Comfort of eating, drinking, Sleeping, or working. Hell fire was most always in my mind; and I have hundreds of times put my fingers into my pipe when I have been smoaking to feel how fire felt: [7] And to see how my Body could bear to lye in Hell fire for ever and ever. Now my countenance was sad so that others took notice of it.

Sometimes I had some secret hope in the mercy of God; that some time or other he would have mercy on me; And so I took some hopes, and thought I would do all that I could do, and remove all things out of the way that might possibly be an hindrance; and I thought I must go to my Honoured Father and Mother and ask their forgiveness for every thing I had done amiss toward them in all my life: if they had any thing against me; I went and when I came near the house one of my Brothers was there, and asked me what was the matter with me: I told him I did not feel well, and passed by; But he followed and asked again what was the matter. I gave him the same answer, but said he something is the matter more than Ordinary for I see it in your Countenance: I refused to tell at present—Poor me—I went to my Father and Mother and told them what I came for: and asked them to forgive me every think [sic] they had against me concerning my disobedience or whatsoever else it might be; they said they had not any thing against me, and both fell aweeping like Children for Joy to see me so concerned for my Soul.

Now when I went away I made great Resolutions that I would forsake every thing that was Sinfull; [8] And do to my uttermost every thing that was good; And at once I felt a calm in my mind, and I had no desire to any thing that was sin as I thought; But here the Devil thought to Catch me on a false hope, for I began to think that I was converted, for I thought I felt a real Change in me. But God in his mercy did not leave me here to perish; but in the space of ten days I was made to see that I was yet in the Gall of bitterness; my Convictions came on again more smart than ever—poor me—Oh then I long'd to be in the Condition of some good Man.
There was then a very Mortal disease in the land, the fever and bloody flux; and I was possesst with a notion that if I had it I should die and goe right to hell, but I presently had it and very hard too: then my heart rose against God again for making me for hell, when he might as well have made me for heaven; or not made me at all:—Poor me—Oh that I could be a Dog or a toad or any Creature but Man: I thought that would be a happy Change for they had no Souls and I had. 11 Oh what will become of me was the language of my mind; for now I was worse than ever, my heart was as hard as a Stone: my Eyes were dry, once I could weep for my Self but now cannot shed one tear; I was as it were in the very mouth of hell. [9] The very flashes of hell fire were in my Mind; Eternity before me, and my time short here. Now when all ways failed me then I longed to be annihilated; or to have my Soul die with my body; but that way failed too. Hell fire hell fire ran Swift in my mind and my distemper grew harder and harder upon me, and my nature was just wore out—Poor me—poor Soul.

One night my brother Elisha came in to see me, and I spake to him and said I should certainly die within two or three days at the out Side for my Nature cannot possibly hold it any longer; and I shall certainly goe right to hell: And do you always remember that your poor brother is in hell; don't you never think that I am in heaven but take care of your self and always remember every day that your poor brother is in hell fire.—Misery—Miserable me; my brother got out of his Chair and went to speak to me, but he could not for weeping and went out of the house; and went away home and told my Father and Mother what I had said to him, and they were greatly distressed for me, and thought in the morning they would come and see me; but their distress grew so great for me that they could not stay but Came in the night.

And when they came into the house Mother seem'd [10] to bring heaven into the house; but there was no heaven for me: She said Oh Nathan will you despair of the mercy of God, do not for a thousand of worlds, don't despair of the mercy of God, for he can have mercy at the very last gasp; I told her there was no mercy for me, I was going right down to hell, for I cannot feel grieved for my self, I can't relent, I can't weep for my self, I cannot shed one tear for my Sins; I am a gone Creature: Oh Nathan says she I have been so my self that I could not shed one tear if I might have had all the world for it; And the next moment I could cry as freely for Joy as ever I could for any thing in the world: Oh said she I know how you feel now, O if God should Shine into your Soul now it would almost take away your life, it would almost part soul and body; I beg of you not to despair of the mercy of God. I told her I could not bear to hear her talk so; for I cannot pray, my

11 Cf. John Bunyan: "Now again I blessed the condition of the Dogge and Toad, ... yea, gladly would I have been in the condition of Dog or Horse, for I knew they had no Soul to perish under the everlasting weights of Hell for sin, as mine was like to do." Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford, 1962), 33.
heart is as hard as a stone, do be gone, let me alone: do go home; you cannot
do me any good, I am past all help of men or means, either for soul or Body,
and after some time I perswaded them to go away; and there I lay all night in
such a Condition untill sometime the next day with pining thoughts in my
mind that my Soul might die with my Body.

And there came some body in [11] with a great Arm full of dry wood and
laid it on the fire, and went out and it burnt up very briskly as I lay on my
Bed with my face toward the fire looking on, with these thoughts in my
mind, Oh that I might creep into that fire and lye there and burn to death
and die for ever Soul and Body; Oh that God would suffer it—Oh that God
would suffer it.—Poor Soul.

And while these thoughts were in my mind God appeared unto me and
made me Skringe: before whose face the heavens and the earth fled away;
and I was Shrinked into nothing; I knew not whether I was in the body or
out,12 I seemed to hang in open Air before God, and he seemed to Speak to
me in an angry and Sovereign way what won't you trust your Soul with God;
My heart answered O yes, yes, yes; before I could stir my tongue or lips,
And then He seemed to speak again, and say, may not God make one Vessel
to honour and an other to dishonour and not let you know it;13 My heart
answered again O yes yes before I cou'd stir my tongue or lips. Now while
my Soul was viewing God, my fleshly part was working imaginations and saw
many things which I will omitt to tell at this time.

When God appeared to me every thing vanished and was gone in the
twinkling of an Eye, as quick as A flash of lightning; But when God
disappeared or in some measure withdrew, every thing was in its place again
and I was on my Bed. [12] My heart was broken; my burden was fallen of[f]
my mind; I was set free, my distress was gone, and I was filled with a pineing
desire to see Christs own words in the bible; and I got up off my bed being
alone; And by the help of Chairs I got along to the window where my bible
was and I opened it and the first place I saw was the 15th Chap: John—on
Christs own words and they spake to my very heart and every doubt and
scruple that rose in my heart about the truth of Gods word was took right
off; and I saw the whole train of Scriptures all in a Connection, and I believe
I felt just as the Apostles felt the truth of the word when they writ it, every
leaf line and letter smiled in my face; I got the bible up under my Chin and
hugged it; it was sweet and lovely; the word was nigh me in my hand, then I
began to pray and to praise God.

I could say Oh my God, and then I could think of no expression good
enough to speak to Him, he was altogether—lovely and then I wou'd fall
down into a muse and look back into my past life to see how I had lived and

12 Cf. 2 Cor. 12:3: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in
the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven."

13 Rom. 9:21.
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it seemed as if my very heart strings would break with sorrow and grief, to see how I had lived in abuse to this God I saw; then I began to pray and to praise God again, and I could say Oh my God and then I could not find words good enough to speak to his praise; then I fell into a muse and look’d back on [13] my past life; and saw what an abominable unbeliever I had been, O now I could weep for joy and Sorrow, now I had true mourning for sin and never before now I saw sin to be right against God; now my heart and Soul were filled as full as they could hold with Joy and sorrow; now I perfectly felt truth: now my heart talked with God; now every thing praised God; the trees, the stone, the walls of the house and every thing I could set my eyes on, they all praised God.

And while I was weeping, Sobing and Sighing, as if my heart wou’d break; there came somebody and opened the Door and spake to me, but I made no answer nor turned to see who it was: but I remember I knew the voice but soon forgat who it was: presently my Wife came into the room and asked me what I cryed for; I gave her little or no answer, she stood a while and went out again; for I was swallowed up in God.

Now I had for some years a bitter prejudice against three scornfull men that had wronged me, but now all that was gone away Clear, and my Soul longed for them and loved them: there was nothing that was sinfull that could any wise abide the presence of God; And all the Air was love, now I saw that every thing that was sin fled from the presence of God: As far as darkness is gone from light or beams of the Sun for where ever the Sun can be seen clear there is no Darkness. I saw that Darkness could as well be in [14] the Clear light of the Sun, as well as Sin in the presence of God; who is so holy and Sovereign.

Now I saw that I must Suffer as well as do for Christ, now I saw that I must forsake all and follow Christ;14 now I saw with new eyes; all things became new, A new God; new thoughts and new heart; Now I began to hope I should be converted some time or other, for I was sure that God had done some great thing for my soul; I knew that God had subdued my stubborn heart: I knew my heart would never rise so against God as it had done; here I saw in the aforesaid 15 Chap: of John where I opened the bible first that Christ says to his disciples if ye love me keep my Commandments and then says he this is my Commandment that ye love one another. Oh I thought I could die A thousand deaths for Christ, I thought I could have been trodden under foot of man, be mocked or any thing for Christ—Glory be to God.

Jesus and I shall never part
For God is greater than my heart15

Now I had in my mind the form of A Gospel Church, and the place

15 1 John 3:20.
where it was settled, and Angels hovering over it, saying, the Glory of the
town, the Glory of the town, and strangers that came pressing by had the
same to say.\textsuperscript{16} 

[Doubt and Assurance]

Now my Doctor came the next day to see me [15] And he opened the
Door and stood and looked me right in the face awhile, then spoke to me and
said are you not easier in your mind than you was yesterday; I told him yes:
he said what makes you easier? I told him a few words of my discovery how
it was; he said that is what I call Conversion: it made me start, what thought
I is this Conversion: what makes the man talk so, and I turned and turned it
in my mind and wondered and wondered; What is this Conversion; I do not
know; this is a new way I never thought of being Converted so; I had laid
out a way in my mind how I should be converted if ever I was, but this is a
way I never though[t] of before; now in a moment I was healed when God
appeared unto me; not only in Soul but in body and I gradually got strength.

And at the end of 52 days I went out abroad and when I went out every
thing had a new Countenance and seemed to praise God, all things seemed to
be new. Now Christians had heard of my discovery and rejoiced: one was
now sick and sent for me to come and See him the first opportunity. I went
and when I was come into his house he said O Cousin Cole come and Sit
down and tell me what God has done for your Soul—I hear Joyfull news of
you. I gave him a relation of it; he said I never heard a better Scriptural
Conversion in my life; you have reason to bless God: I wondered what made
the man talk so, now I was so ignorant about [16] Conversion in its nature,
that I dared not believe it was Conversion for fear of falling short and resting
on a false hope: for I had been almost in the very mouth of hell and had such
a sense of it that I wanted to be sure of an interest in Christ: now other
Christians called this Conversion but I dared not believe it.

But soon Mr Leavensworth\textsuperscript{17} came here to preach, and in his sermon he
took 4 tracks of experience and went through one and another; and then
another, and every time he came through he wou'd say, if this be your case
you have never found God to this very day. Now I knew I had gone a deal
further than this, but he went on the 4th track and he seemed to strike my
very heart Strings, now I thought if he threw these away I was a gone
Creature for all what I had met with, for I knew it was really my experience:
but when he had gone through he said if this be your case you have really
found God and you are happy Creatures: Well I thought you are but A man
you may be mistaken I dared not believe yet that I was converted for fear of
Coming Short of heaven: for I had been almost in hell and I was afraid of
Coming there again; but I came home and borrowed all the books that I

\textsuperscript{16}See pp. [62-65].

\textsuperscript{17}Mark Leavenworth (1711-1797); A.B. Yale College, 1737; minister at First
Church of Waterbury, Connecticut, 1740-1797.
could find that treated on the nature of Conversion, and with the bible they all built me up more and more, and I lived [17] a heaven upon Earth in my mind, but yet I had not the sealing evidence until about 3 months after.

One day as I went out into my field to work when I went out of my door, I fell into a prayer and continued so until I came to the place of my work and then I had a glorious Sight[.] It seemed as if I really saw the gate of heaven by an Eye of faith, and the way for Sinners to Get to heaven by Jesus Christ; as plain as ever I saw any thing with my bodily eyes in my life, I looked round to see if I could see any poor Creature; I thought that I could almost point and shew them the strait way to heaven by Jesus Christ: I saw what free Grace was; I saw how stubborn and willfull man was; I saw it was nothing but accepting of Christ's Righteousness and the match was made; I saw I was saved by Christ, Here I thought I had the sealings of the Holy Ghost; and here I had evidences clear. what I saw here is unspeakable, I could do no work here but lay down for want of bodily Strength until this view was a little abated, and then I thought of my Fathers Family that I would go and shew them the way to heaven;'8 for I thought I could melt their very hearts as it were; for here I had true mourning and true Joy; I came home and found unexpected people there which hindered me from going to my Fathers.

Now for the most part my heart was with God; I have often [18] thought of the springs of a trap that will keep down no longer than they are held down so were my heart and thoughts for almost a year, I was forced as it were to pull down my thoughts some times to see what was my Duty to do here in this world for the support of my family and then they would fly right up again to God[.] I had abundance of Scripture in my mind: which I do not mention, and within about six months I had a turn of extrem darkness.

The reason was I had such a sense of the misery of the damned in hell; that I began to reason with God thus; why will not less punishment do, why should they eternally suffer such extreme torment will not less do; and while I was reasoning thus, God withdrew and hid his face from me, and left me in Egyptian darkness.19 I went into my parlour and lay there three days and three nights and never set my foot out of the Room. Yet well in body as to any thing else: now I had lost God and I could not find him; and it worked so on my nature that for 2 or 3 minutes great drops of sweat would come through my Skin, and in 2 or 3 minutes more I almost Shiverd with the Cold: And now I knew what Heman meant when he said the pangs of hell got hold of him;20 now I saw the pangs of hell never got hold of any person until they were converted. Once I had a God but now I have lost him; and it is the loss of God [19] that makes hell; Now I knew what David felt when he said all my bones are out of Joynt; them that never had a God know not what it is to

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18 Apparently Cole's father's family was not converted and his mother's was.
19 Ex. 10:21-22. The curse of darkness lasting three days over Egypt.
20 Ps. 116:3.
loose a God. Now I knew what David meant when he said my flesh trembleth for fear of thee; for when I lay on my bed it shook like a popple leaf.  

But on the third day at night I was reading in My Martyr book about Mr Bradfords faith and Mr Philpotts explanation on it where he says if a man wants to know if he be converted or not let him not Climb up to heaven to know, but let him descend into himself to know; and that moment this Cloud went of[f]; and the Clear light of Gods countenance broke into my Soul again, Glory be to God, then I lived about three months very Clear and then I was worried nine days by Satan with blasphemous thoughts, and I was Shut up and could not pray being fill'd with blasphemous thoughts, sometimes I would bite my teeth together to keep my mouth from speaking, but one day as my manner was I was in my barn groaning before God and trying to pray I was set at liberty: Glory be to god

Jesus and me ye ne'er shall part
For God is greater than my heart

Now I lived three months more (very Clear in my Mind) and that made out the first year excepting those 2 turns aforesaid which makes me often think of that Scripture if a man marry a new wife he shall not go out to War the first year. Now I had liv'd so long without much intanglings in the world that I began to think I should always keep the world of[f] at arms end as it were. But as I was talking about it with an Old Christian, he told me he knew the spot of ground I stood upon; says he you stand upon the top of mount pisgah, and you see the promisd land and you think you shall presently be there; but you will find you must come down of[f] of this mount, and must travel through a Rough wilderness yet and have the Sons of Anak to encounter with yet; before you get there. [1743]

Ay thought I you think so but I don't; but presently I found his words true: for hitherto I had lived much by Sight and feeling; but now I was

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21 Ps. 22:14, 119:120.
22 John Foxe, Actes and Monuments . . . (London, 1563). The stories of the martyrdoms of John Philpot and John Bradford under the persecution of Queen Mary in 1555 are in Book 7.
23 Cf. Bunyan: "and in so strong a measure was this temptation upon me, that often I have been ready to clap my hand under my chin, to hold my mouth from opening; and to that end also I have had thoughts at other times to leap with my head downward, into some Muckhil-hole or other, to keep my mouth from speaking." Grace Abounding, 33.
24 Deut. 24:5.
26 Deut. 9:2-4. The Anakim, or Sons of Anak, were a race of giants, settled near Hebron, whom Joshua and the Israelites overcame in their conquest of Canaan. Josh. 11:21,22. They are also mentioned in Josh. 14:12-15; Num. 13:28,33; Deut. 1:28, 2:10,11,21, and 9:2.
called to live by faith; I thought here was a sore struggle, the light of God's Countenance gradually wore off, and the world began to come in again, whereas before the world used to Slide along by me and I hardly knew any thing about it; nor scarcely what was my own in it: My heart used to be much with God when I went to sleep at night; and when I waked in the morning my heart has been as Clear and bright with God as if I had been awake an hour: then Davids words would come sweetly to me—When I awake I am still with thee27—But now I was called forth to war and to live by faith and not by sight; and now I lived a long time I do not hardly know how to tell—some times up and some times down; some times look back and call all into Question, and then hope and try to press forward. [1744]

[Temptation to Suicide]

[21] But my Sins seemed in some measure to reign which made me fear; and Satan was my Enemy and was permitted to tempt me, and he told me I was not converted; and I was afraid I was not; and I fell into great darkness about it thinking I did not live like a Christian, So was much concerned about it; and wanted to know certain.

Well Satan comes upon me and says there is one way to know quick; destroy your self says he and you will soon know; for if you be converted you will certainly be saved; and if not you never will be converted, there fore destroy your self and you will know at once; I told him I will not on no account; but he follow'd me day after day and week after week for about three months with this horrible temptation; and I went groaning about and begging for help of God; and bidding Satan depart and be gone saying to him I won't, I won't, avoid Satan, be gone, but he still followed me very Close and as I was alone here and there about my fields, he would say come this is a good opportunity now; you may do it in a minute and it will be all over, then I wou'd fall down on the ground and groan and try to pray, but I was exceedingly shut up in my Soul and could not pray; yet I wou'd try and groan before God: and begg that he would not Suffer me to be tempted above what he wou'd enable me to bear;28 and I begg'd that he would help me to drive away these evil thoughts as Abraham drove away the [22] fowls from of[f] his sacrifice;29 And I wou'd begg that my heart might yet be as an house of prayer; And that God would help me to drive out these evil thoughts as Christ drove out the thieves out of the temple.30 [1745]

And as these were my daily Sighs and groans before the Lord: Satan brought in a new plea; and told me that it was a certain sign I was not converted because I was tempted to kill my self, for says he there never was one saint in the whole Bible that ever was tempted to this sin: Well, I

27 Ps. 139:18.
28 2 Cor. 12:9.
29 Gen. 15:11.
thought there was none, I did not think of any; and this troubled my mind much and brought in despairing thoughts—Poor me again—Mr Dorr was here then a probationer, and one of his friends was saying let a man be in what case he will Mr Dorr can help him out; Ah thought I he cannot help me out of my Case, but however I will go to him and tell him my difficulty; for he reads much in the bible, and if there be any saint in the bible that was tempted to this sin may be he can tell me.

I went and told him my case, and asked him if there ever was any saint in the bible that was tempted to that Sin; he told me no, but he did not know but there might be, because there were remedies laid down in scripture against it, but the bible don’t tell of any Saint that was tempted to kill himself, and it is an awful temptation said he, and a few other words: there says the Devil I have got one evidence, tis true I told you before, and he is A Man that studies the bible and he knows it is true; it is true; says he; Well, Mr Dorrs landlord sat by and heard, and I thought may be he might know; but he said no not as I know on and he believed there was none in all the bible; there said Satan I have an other evidence, and before two or three evidences all shall be established it is true says the devil, it is true, I told you so before but you woud not believe me; but now you see you are no Christian for there never was any Christian tempted to that Sin.—Poor Me.

Well they put a book into my hand entituled Mr Hookers doubting Christian drawn to Christ, which I brought home and read, but all did not do, but I labour’d under great darkness some time; I thought Oh that it were with me as in months past I looked before and behind, on this side and that and could find nothing but Satan close to my Elbow, and whenever I took my knife out of my pocket to cut a stick, Satan would say now, now, is a good time you may do it in a minute and it will be all over; but I kept begging of God that he would not suffer me to be tempted beyond what I was able to bear; and that he would give me strength against my Spiritual Enemies; my wife bad me leave my knife at home, which I did many a Day.

But after I had been in this Condition about three months, I was praying in a Conference meeting and it came into my mind that I must tell my difficulty to some experienced Christian; and when meeting was done, I knew there was one there so I thought I wou’d tell it to him; who as he went

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31 Probably Edward Dorr (1722-1772); A.B. Yale College, 1742; minister at First Church of Hartford, Connecticut, 1748-1772. A probationer was a candidate for the ministry of a church, one licensed to preach but not yet ordained.

32 Thomas Hooker, The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ. Wherein the Main Hindrances Which Keep Men From Coming to Christ Are Discovered (Boston, 1743).

33 A conference meeting was an assembly of ministers or laymen for discussion of matters of church business or theology. In Kensington early in the 18th century such conferences consisted of gatherings of church members with their pastor where questions of scripture were propounded and answered. Catherine M. North, History of Berlin, Connecticut (New Haven, Conn., 1916), 150-151.
out I followed him a little way and told him all; and when I had done he told me that Satan tempted our blessed Lord to destroy his most Sacred body, and if he might tempt him much more may he tempt his followers.—A ray of divine light broke into my Soul that moment; and the Devil lear’d away ashamed and I seemed to feel him go off as plain as I cou’d feel my Cloathes taken off my back; And this Christian told me he had been so himself that he thought he shou’d run distracted, for when he was agoing into a room to pray he thought the Devil wou’d appear to him and run him out of his witts and he should kill himself but that he had not been in the room above two or three minutes before he felt no fear had all the devils in hell been there; So I came home rejoicing, it was a very dark misty night, but I had such light in my soul that it seemed that it would take away the darkness of the night, and when I got home I took the bible to read and I found that when the tempter left Christ, Angels came and ministered unto him, this seemed to double my joy, for I knew then that they ministred to me and came home with me.

Jesus and me ye ne’er shall part
For God is greater than my heart

[Separation]

Now I began to see the Old Standing Churches were not in a gospel order. I was called a member of this old Church for 14 or 15 years; but now I saw Ichabod was written upon it, the Glory of the Lord was departed, for they held several things contrary to the Gospel; I will mention one Viz—that unconverted men had a divine right to come to the ordinance of the Lords supper; and to give themselves up in Covenant to the Lord: whereas the Lord says to the wicked what hast thou to do to take my Covenant into thy mouth? I saw here that every unconverted person that came there to give themselves up did solemnly lye unto God; and my mind run thus, that the person in owning the Covenant did as much as to say and ye Chh [Church] too that he was a Child of God, when many times there was no room for such a belief: So according to the true sence and meaning of the thing, there was lying on both sides; I tryed a long time to have these things mended but all in vain: Then I came out and separated or dissented from them, for I could not see them to be a Gospel Church, or Christs spouse, Christs bride, Christs beloved one Or Christs garden well enclosed.

Now I was called to give up what the world calls a fine reputation, and to become the offscouring of the Earth, and to lose my own life as it were in

34 Cf. Bunyan: "and methought I saw as if the Tempter did lear and steal away from me, as being ashamed of what he had done." Grace Abounding, 44.
35 Matt. 4:1-11.
36 Ps. 50:16.
37 Cant. 4:12.
the world, for my religion. Oh this was hard to nature; this was like death to
the flesh; but God gave me grace according to my day: and in a little time he
made every bitter thing sweet: I was many times loaded with Scoffs, re-
proaches, and mockeries; but the light of Gods countenance sweetned all,
now many of my old friends grew Shy of me and forsook me: my being ac-
quainted and having Conversation with the weathersfield and eastern breth-
ren was A great help to me in my Taravels [travails, travels?], and I often
saw and felt the movings of Gods spirit among them in their religious
meetings All in love seemingly with Christ. [*]

[Wife's Crisis]

[1748] But one that was very near and dear to me, seeing these other
Christians so much before us even just out of sight as it were, it caused Great
darkness and distress in her mind, and great fears that she had never entered
that strait gate of Conversion, and one day as she was so far borne down with
it that she was at her wits end while she was talking about it, so that she
screamed out three or four times as loud as she could which surpriz'd me, and
she said it will fall on me, I said what will fall, she said a great Cloud, I said
it won't, She screamed out and said it will, it will, it is close to my head now,
a great black Cloud; I said it was not, She said where be I. I told her she was
here in the house; she said Oh I am raving distracted what shall I do, I told
her i hope not; She said I never shall have my reason again; I told her she
wou'd i hope, She said Oh I shall faint away, I said no you wont i hope but I
[26] helped her unto the bed as fast as I cou'd and gave her some water.

Now no body can tell how my heart sunk down for fear Satan should get
the victory and drive her into total despair; or clear out of her witts, Oh my
heart went up to God for her with all my might, for I saw that Satan worked
strongly upon her imaginations, but after she was composed again I told her
to give me a relation of all her experience, which she did, and I told her that
She told a very Clear gospel Conversion, for I thought it my duty to lift up
the hands that hung down, and to strengthen the feeble knees, She brought
in some objections, but I took them of[f] with Scriptures, but while I was
gone out a few hours Satan came with many temptations to her, as his
manner is to young Christians in the wilderness they are lead into, and he
told her not to tell me of them; for I should throw her away at once as to
being a Christian, if I were to know what thoughts and temptations she had.

But I had Charged her before to tell me all her troubles from time to
time, and so she thought she wou'd, but was afraid; thinking that I shou'd
say at once she was no convert, and so she concluded with her self that she
was not, but yet she thought she wou'd tell me but when she had told me, I
told her these were blessed evidences of heaven, these words came so
unexpected that she almost fainted away, and the love of God broke Clearly
into her Soul.

* At this point Cole advises the reader to "Stop and move to page 33."
But after a few weeks Satan comes again with a drove of temptations and horrible thoughts, and threw them into her mind, and then told her she was a dreadfull Sinner to have such thoughts and blasphemous temptations against [27] God, they are dreadfull Sins says he; and you are no Christian because you have such temptations; she labour'd under these things some time and at length she told me; and here I had a very Close dispute with Satan; I knew his voice and knew his run pretty well for I was not altogether ignorant of his devices; here I had 3 or 4 hours dispute with satan, for as he put these things into her mind so she spake them to me; And as he tempted by Scripture, I answered by Scripture, and he strove to make the Scriptures Clash one against another, Satan all the while said they were her Sins, and strove to prove it by Scripture; but I proved by Scripture they were not hers; I asked her if they were a burden to her or a delight, She said Oh. a burden I would give all the world to be sett at liberty from them said she, I told her if her heart acted freely in them then it left a guilt upon her Conscience; but if her heart strove against them then they were not her Sins; but Satan labourd hard to make her think they were her sins, My heart trembled for fear he would get the Victory, but I thought there was no better weapon to fight the Devil with than the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God; and I told her it was no sin to be tempted, but it was sin to yeild to the temptation, So that the Sin of temptation was not hers but ye Devils sin; for if it were a sin to be tempted then Christ must be a Sinner, for Christ was tempted and yet without Sin; The Devil fled and She seemed to feel him go away as plain as she could feel a burden taken from of[f] her back; for he was fairly worsted. And a Ray of Divine light broke into her Soul, and she was set at liberty "Glory be to God." [28] But I will return and leave this; yet I told her she never honoured God so much in all her life as she did in this War.

[Separate Fellowship]

Now I learned more by discoursing with Weathersfield Brethren a little time, than I learnt in all my Life before by discoursing with any in the world, Concerning the true Worship of God. And I have had many sweet meetings with them; I was glad of all opportunity of being with them and so I am to this day; for my soul is much knit to some of them. Dear Children of God.

Now I was very steady at Conference meetings for the space of Seven years past, once a week steadily in a general way and great part of the time twice a week, and sometimes we had our religious meetings three times a week. Now I saw that nothing was acceptable to God in worship, but what was done by the help of his spirit; and I believe that when God designs to do any thing for his poor Creatures, he first gives some of his saints a spirit of prayer for that very thing that he intends speedily to do: there has been some persons that lay at the point of Death and the Doctors have given them over to die, and at my hearing of it I have carried their case to the Lord; and he has given to me to pray in spirit for their recovery and I had real satisfaction that it wou'd be so; and them persons did get well again beyond their
expectation. At other times I have had freedom to pray for other some persons Souls and not for their recovery; and at other times I have had no freedom at all to pray for some.

But here some may mistake and take the Natural flowing of affections to be the assistance of the Spirit of God. But if the Spirit of God prays with a Saint that prayer is not in Vain; and every Creature that Christ pray'd for will certainly be saved, for Christ never pray'd in vain; Christians know much by prayers: Christ says I will send the Comforter and when he is come he will teach you all things, that is the Spirit of truth. The Saints have meat to eat that the world knows not of; I am not a Stranger to such things as these, the Saints feeling one another when they are together or when they are some miles apart. I was once with A Christian that was on a Journey and after he was gone some hours from me I told a man that was at work with me, that such A man was then at thinking of me and was then aweeping: for I was then in the same posture about him and felt his Tryals and burden; And 3 days after I saw the same Christian again and told him that I felt him after he had been gone from me some hours. And I had told a man that he was thinking on me and weeping and he said it was very true.

At another time I seemed to feel that a number of Saints some miles from me were distresd and in the dark about some things, and wanted to converse with other certain Saints; and while I was plowing in the field my mind ran so upon them that at unawares I broke out into a prayer with a loud voice not thinking but that I was in the midst of them, and I believe they were then praying that I might be sent to them. I finished my days work, and went and found them together: I had not been there long before there came an other from nine or ten miles off on the same Errand. And said that the saints in that town felt the Distress of the saints in this Town: and sent him to see how it was; and I believe that Saints have been fetched from town to town many a time by the strength of prayer.

At another time I was at a house talking with a Christian and after I was gone about half a mile, I felt a strong desire in my heart to go back again so that I could hardly bear to go along and afterwards I heard there was a number of saints came in there after I was gone but a few minutes; I am no stranger to the saints having Communion one with another when they are some miles apart: the saints know more by prayer than Sinners think for; and have meat to eat that Sinners know not of; The Saints have that Joy that sinners meddle not with.

I have often thought of those two disciples that were going to Emmaus when Christ came to them by the way and opened the Scriptures: and they thought nothing of that being Christ for a while: but upon a turn of thought that it was Christ he vanished out of their sight. Just so it is some times

38 1 John 2:27.
39 John 4:32.
when I have had a Discovery and think nothing what it is for a while but when I come to turn my thoughts to think wether it be Christ he is gone out of my Sight at once, but then my heart burns. [1749].

[Problem of Hypocrisy]

Now I saw the Dreadfull estate that hypocrites were in. [31] I strove to break up their old foundation; and that Christians had a war between nature and Grace: and hypocrites thought they had that war, when it was nothing but a war between nature and Conscience or between Sin and Conscience and so I did untill I had almost broke up my own foundation; for I saw myself as I thought Just like them in many things: so I fell into great darkness about it, and was greatly distress'd not only for my self but for the cause of God also; now my mind run thus, that I came out from the Old standing Churches as we call them, to Witness for God: and was now like to turn out an hypocrite, and so bring A reproach upon the Cause of God; I knew the Cause was Good, but I could not bear to think the cause of God should be ronged because of me; and I thought it would dishearten other Christians to see me turn out an hypocrite, I thought it would be best for Religion if I was gone into some other part of the world where I never should be heard of again, for I thought I would never then call my self a Christian again for fear of bringing a Scandall upon religion.

Now I lived in the dark a long time and was exceedingly shut up in my Soul, had little or no freedom in prayer; but I went to see a sick person that was then upon a death bed; and I was desired to pray with the Sick, the Sick person said to me I want the prayers of all Christians; and I want to have you pray with me now, and be a mouth unto God for me for I cannot pray my self I am so confused in my head; and Satan is very busy and I am so weak I have not strength to resist him, do you pray and carry my Case to God: and my heart will pray with your words; I prayed but was still greatly shutt up, but the next day I was desired to pray with the same person again; and while I was praying at this time I was set at liberty and had freedom in my Soul; when I had done the person said to me, O if I might have had a thousand worlds [sic] for it I could not express my Case to God as you have done; Now I felt free to leave the person resign'd to the will of God either in Life or Death; and the next night the person died. [1750]

Now I was yet at times in the dark about my own estate, for one thing much troubl'd me when I was in the dark; as thus; once an opposer was talking to me about the knowledge of Christians and said do you know that you are Converted your self and I said yes; but I was then in darkness; since which it has been much on my mind whether I said right or not in that answer; I told it to Mr G-y-m and asked him what I should have said at that time; he said I should have told Just as it was I should have told him I was then in the dark but that I have had good Reason to think I was converted.

Now I have been very steady at Conference meetings once or twice a week for 9 or ten years together in a general way, and I have found much good by them: but none but Christians will keep them up very long; for
hypocrites will not always call upon God; now I found some that call’d
dthemselves Christian that would not receive the things of the Spirit of God
for they are foolishness to them, 41 but natural [33] men would receive the
letter of the word of God but not the spirit of God; Now God says they that
are lead by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, now God don’t say them
that are lead by the letter of the word of God are the Sons of God: No: but
only those that are lead by the Spirit are Sons; Now I saw that some natural
men that were lead by the letter, did deny the spirits leading; but a true
Christian is lead both by the word and Spirit of God; He knows what the
leadings and teachings of Gods Spirit be; but the natural man does not, for
they are foolishness to him.

[Trouble with the Standing Church]

[1756] Now I have for many years refused to pay rates to the hireling
Ministers and am often threatened by them to be carried to prison and time
has been set by Collectors when they wou’d do it. 42[#] Once a Collector [in]
1756 which I had no reason to expect any mercy from set a time for to take
me at a Society meeting and carry me right to prison, and I believe he did
really intend to do it; and I found my flesh to Shrink at the Cross; and I had
some thoughts of not going to the meeting, but after a little consideration I
concluded I would not forsake the Cause of Christ for a Cross which I should
take up, so gave my self and case up to God that I might submit to his will in
the matter, and went to the meeting praying all the way as I went that I
might by no means be left to Dishonour the Cause of Christ, and that my
corrup nature might not rise [34] against any person, and that I might have
a loving Christian temper; and that I might humbly Submit to Gods will in
the matter; So I continued praying untill I came near the meeting house with
all my might, and some standing at the door saw me coming and one man
came and met me a few steps from the Door. I asked him if the meeting was
begun; he said yes; I asked him what they had done, he said nothing but
trying my Case about my rate, and that they had abated it Tor this year; I
asked him if he spake true, he said yes, soon came another friend to me and
told me the same, so I was set free at that time—All Glory be to God.

[1758] At another time—1758 4 Collectors threatened hard to carry me to
prison, I told them I was in their hands as to Mans law and lay at their
mercy; but not according to Gods law; I told them if they carried me to

41 1 Cor. 2:14-16.
42 The ministers of the standing churches of Connecticut were supported by a tax
levied by the government. Some protection existed for members of such recognized
dissenting groups as Baptists and Anglicans, but this protection was not extended to
Separates until after 1770. See Williston Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of
* At this point Cole indicates that the reader should begin reading again, as
referred from page [25].
prison I must suffer as patiently as I could; and hoped God would keep down my Corrupt nature, and not to seek revenge upon them; and many other Soft words; but one of them was very resolute and told some of my friends he would have carried me to prison long ago, if it had not been for my Morals, but I hate (said he) to carry such a moral Man to [35] prison, as I heard afterwards from a friend, but they urged me to go to the Society meeting and ask them to abate my rates.

I went and asked and gave my reasons supported by Scripture. the Moderator desired the people to speak their minds about it: and then Deacon T. H. Esqr [Esquire] rose up and said as to Brother Cole his morals are lovely, and I love them but as to his rates we have a law, and by our law I do not know why he ought not pay as well as We then up riseth another man and said as to what the Esqr. has said Concerning brother Cole is true, for I have lived near him some years—and he is not only a man of good Morals but a faithfull man that may be depended on, but as to his rate the Law obliges him to pay here as much as it does me; then another A Capt. [militia officer] rose up and says in as much as part of brother Coles family come here to meeting I do not see why he may not pay part of his rate here, but I am quite willing to abate as much as his head in the list or rate—and to him they agreed and Voted it So for the time past.

God made their Cheif men [36] or speakers confess in the open meeting my morals; this was contrary to my expectation and my heart was drawn out with love and thankfulness to God for his Goodness to me in keeping me from many great and open Sins; which would be stains and blots to my life before the World: I felt my self to be a poor unworthy weak helpless creature; and saw it was all Gods goodness to me, I rejoyce to stand a witness for the Cause of God: all the Glory be to God: Blessed be his name.

[A Dream]

One morning I awaked at break of the day, and while I was musing I drowsed again, and dreamed that I was going to a meeting of the Saints, and that when I came near the house I heard such melodious singing that it ravished my Soul, I called to one that was coming and said meeting is begun make hast; their Musick was so sweet that my spirit seemed to outgo my body; and I was immediately in the house, and there was a multitude of people Circled in with great glory all their faces one way hundreds or thousands and they sang so gloriously that no tongue can any way express it to man; their voice was with great power and Strength: but not

43 Thomas Hart (1680-1773), appointed deacon 1719, six times a member of the General Assembly for Farmington, justice of the peace, and described as "the most influential man in Kensington." North, History of Berlin, 65-66.

44 Probably a reference to Cole's wife.

45 Scratched out: "some that had been dead some years, and some that are now living."
louder than common; their voice was as strong at the beginning and end of a note as it was in the middle of the note—I could hear every voice Clear and distinct at the same time; and yet hear them all at once and no hindrance at all, every tongue begins the note as one and Ends as one; for there was no stop or pause to take breath every one had a cheerfull voice and countenance; Great Glory and joy sat upon their brow; it was impossible for any sorrow to be there; and whilst I was trying to learn their song I awaked and remembered their last words which were these—And in the name of Jesus Christ Jerusalem shall stand for ever, Stand for ever, stand for ever.

My heart and soul was in a sweet frame, and I seemed to hear their sound of praise for many days; when I was with them I seemed to feel perfectly their feeling, they felt all as one as if they had been made up all into one man, all dranked into one Spirit and oneness, and whatever trouble or [38] affliction they went through in this world and they had borne it patiently as Coming from the hand of God it turned into sound joy in their heart. but that that was not borne with such patience they had no reward for; and those Relations and friends of theirs that were dead and in hell was no grief to them, for they were so sweetly conformed to Gods will that his will was theirs and they rejoiced in it; for there was no room for sorrow or grief in such a state; here they saw how the Cause of Christ was continually going on without Cessation in some part of the world or other, for when it was decaying in some part of the world, it was at the same time rising in another part of the world; And when there is a Great Saint building up the Cause of Christ with all his might; but when he is taken away by Death there is another provided to do the same work in some part of the world; Just as if a farmer shou'd hire a man to mow a day on his farm, and when the man has done his work he knows not who will rake that hay up, but the farmer knows best who he hath appointed to take Care of the hay that it be not lost. [39]

But to return; it is impossible for me to tell the thousandth part of what I saw and felt; for it is unspeakable.

My bright Example and my Guide
I would be walking near thy Side
O let me never run astray
Nor follow the forbidden way.

Watt's 149 hymn—5th verse—Book 1st: 46

Jesus and me you ne'er shall part
For God is greater than my hart [*]

[Sanctification]

[1760] Soon after this I became dead dry and barren in my heart and

* At this point Cole advises the reader to "Stop here and move to page 41."
mind near 2 years; my mind was rambling vain worldly and wanton: and I became almost like a man of this World; almost a Sleep in Security but now it was time for God to work—1760 he began to Chastize and correct me again very Sore yet in mercy: which was in the End sweeter than honey and better to me than a thousand worlds[.] He gave me a wound on my legg; it seemed little at first, but soon became very dangerous; and the Doctors for a time seemed to do little or no good, and I began to think I must die with it.

Now I began to wake up and look about for God but he was gone; I found my self back slidden and gone astray from him as it were into a far Country; and was now like to perish; I soon began to Consider and look back; and saw that I forsook him before he forsook me; and I saw that he did right; Now I began to mourn and to seek after him with all my might but found him not; I began to have a great fear and trembling in my mind that I was an hypocrite and was afraid to die: sometimes in my Mind I realized death as if it was near; but it did almost fright me to death; I began very carefully to look into the bible to search for sure marks of an interest in Christ, but laboured under difficulty; yet I could not throw away my hope; I was now brought to a pinching necessity to seek after God with all my might; and was resolved to take up my Cross with a great Resolution to Conquer Or to die in the cause.

And as I laboured from day to day with all my heart might and Strength; and whole soul to seek God; with great fear and trembling in my Mind; Resolving to die at Christs feet; and to let my heart have no rest but in God: and as I was in this Condition some months, I was reading about the prodigal Son in Luke and came to these words, but yet while he was a great way of[f] the Father Saw him and had compassion on him; these words sounded in my heart greater than all the world; for I felt my self in that Condition a great way of[f]; I knew now how he felt; this gave me some refreshment and hope that one so great way off should have a look from the Father; on the next day as I was reading in an other book I came on the same words again, and my heart broke and melted like was; I wept aloud in my house for some time; by reason of the love of God that broke into my Soul I know how the prodigal Son felt at that time Now I wanted to live so long as to prove my Love or Conversion to God: by my Sanctification.

[一号] Now God sweetly humbled me down to his feet I humbly hope; and gave me to see my own unworthiness; and nothingness before him, he gave me to see the wretchedness and vileness of my own Nature in a great degree; and my mind was summoned up before the Judgement seat, there I stood three days and three night [sic]; and Scarcely had any thought about any thing here below; but I was viewing the time when my Soul must come

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47 This "wound," which at first seems to have been single and later multiple, could have been a carbuncle, which would have had multiple lesions in the leg.
* At this point Cole indicates that the reader should begin reading again, as referred from page [39].
up before God: and viewing my own Wickedness not having the least good in my Self; So that if Christ should take me into his favour it would be all free grace; undeserved grace, he would be a whole Saviour, all the Glory is due unto him. I saw I could have no good frame or temper of heart but what he gave me: he must do all for me, he must work in me both to will and to do according to his own good pleasure, for I can do nothing without him: He Still continued his Chastisements for many Months, which were made exceeding sweet to my Soul; he did every thing right and sweetly sanctified all his dealings towards me; which caused my heart and Soul to go out abundantly in Love and thankfulness unto him; It seemed as if I could not be thankfull enough for his Fatherly Corrections: He gave me to see that I not only deserved them but needed them; he gave me to see every thing he did was right; and then he gave me a Sanctified Mind which ran Sweetly in the way of Gods commands and his law was the delight of my Soul; when I read it I eat it into my very heart and Soul; and my heart and Soul makes hast to obey; I had wound after wound and lay week after week on my bed not able to walk but little; I felt a great deal of patience and Submission to Gods Will; with my heart full of thankfulness to God, for his great goodness to me in dealing with me in mercy; almost all my leisure hours and minutes were filled up with blessing and praising God: Some weeks and months these words Dear Lord blessed be thy name, blessed be thy name ran in a stream in my mind; it flowed into every vacant moment almost. I thought I knew what Christ meant when he said; He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said; out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, it was like a fountain springing up in my heart and Soul; and the happiest place I could find on this side of heaven was to be humbled down at Gods feet, and be wholly resigned to his will, then all things turn right; then Christs yoke of the Law is easy and the burden of his commands are light.

Now God gave me to see many plagues that Mankind were plagued with; as pride and prejudice is a real plague to the Man that hath it, it is more plague to him than to the Man he is prejudiced against: I saw anger was a plague to a man, for when he is so he feels basely he cannot feel happy; I saw honour plagued some men; and some were plagued with pride; and some with riches others with Covetousness, Selfishness, malice, and envy. I saw such a hateful nature in these evil tempers, that I thought my heart and Soul did hate them perfectly; so that I was not willing they should live in my breast, but that I would immediately make war with them and cast them out with all my might; I will not lose my happiness of my mind for these evil tempers for I never can feel happy with them in me, I will conquer or die in the cause is my mind.

I was talking with A Christian about these things, and he asked me how I lived now, are you not plagued with these evil tempers and with a rambling.

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49 John 7:38.
50 Matt. 11:30.
* At this point Cole advises the reader to "Stop here and move to page 45."
mind; I told him yes, but I have found out a new way to get rid of them for once I used to stand and fight them, and the more I fought the more they plagued me, but now I get rid of them by turning my mind into the ways of Gods Commands, and so walk as well I can, and thus I leave them or they me, for they cannot walk in Gods Ways: therefore I find the best way to get rid of them is to live by rule, even the rule of Gods word, for they cannot harm any man in that way; but when A man is out of the Rule, they are after him at once, Now I have had I think more sound and Solid Satisfaction in the love of God these two years past by my Sanctification than I have had in all my former flights and flows of affection as some call them. [1761]

[一号] Now my heart and Soul eats Gods word: and fears and trembles at it: my heart and Soul eat goodness, truth, Righteousness, Justice and love, with all the Attributes of God; All these are spiritual food and my soul lives upon them, they shine so gloriously in my mind; that I think my mind abhors every thing that is contrary to them; I know now what it is for to grow from one degree of Grace to another; and to grow in Sanctification more and more; and to be more and more conformed to the Image of Christ, and to live on the bread of life, when God sweetly humbles me down at his feet then all things are right; what he gives me is exceeding good; and what he denies I do not deserve or desire: he gives me an humble contentedness with such things as I have; for it is in him that I live, move, and have my being: I have no happiness but in God; and in him I am out of the reach of all Curses from man: for their Curses will turn upon themselves, if they Curse me without a Cause; neither can they harm me any more than he permitts them to do, for I know that God over rules all things; So that If men do good to me I receive it as from the hand of God, and if evil I receive it as permitted by God: so that I look beyond man and receive all things from God; All Glory be to him.

[Parable of Conversion]

Natural men do not understand the things of Gods spirit; so that when I tell my Conversion to them, many times I tell it in the following form; [*]—— Suppose that I had a Captains commission and a band of Soldiers under me or with me, and I went with my Soldiers (or Sins) to fight against a great Good General (or God) and I had a bitter enmity against this general, and hated him, trying with all my might to kill him, and he looks me right in the face, and sees me shoot right at him in order to kill him with all my might, and he sees and knows my own Soldiers (or Sins) fall right upon me and bind

* At this point Cole indicates that the reader should resume reading, as referred from page [43].
* At this point Cole originally advised the reader to skip ahead to page [48], but then changed his mind.
me hand and foot before his face and eyes; and then flee and leave me so bound on the ground in his Sight, there lying hopeless [47] and helpless; and I know that if I had him in such a Condition I would soon kill him; but he seeth me so and comes right up with his Sword drawn in his hand; and as I so view him I have no reason to expect mercy from him; for I would have been glad of the like opportunity to have killed him; and he knew it; so coming up he looks me right in the face, I cringe and expect nothing but death in a moment; knowing that I deserve it and have no heart to ask for mercy because undeserved; with angry countenance he puts the Sword to my breast; and says will you yield, I say yes, yes, yes, with all my heart, and I am glad I may yeild before the sword goes thro me; now this great General immediately cutts off all my bands and sets me at liberty; and never hurts me; and all enmity I ever had against him is gone, and pure love fills the place now I have found the best friend ever man had; now I shall never be afraid of him to hurt me again; now I can lye and sleep securely in his bosom; now I will never trust my own Soldiers (or Sins) any more now I have found such a friend which I once hated [48] and though I highly deserved death yet he slew me not.—So remarkable was my conversion and change from enmity to love—Finis next a dialogue.62

[Assurance]

[1762] I would here cite two Questions in the larger Catechism58—Question 80th Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in a state of grace; and that they shall persevere therein unto Salvation—Answer—Such as truly believe in Christ and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before him may without extraordinary Revelation by faith grounded upon the truth of Gods promises; and by the spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the Children of God; be infallibly assured that they are in a state of grace and shall persevere therein unto Salvation.—Question 81—Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in an estate of Grace and that they shall be saved.—Answer—Assurance of Grace and salvation not being of the Essence of faith; true believers may wait long before they obtain it; and after the enjoyment thereof may have it weakened [49] And intermittend through manifold distempers, Sins, temptations and desertions; yet are they never left with out such a presence and Support of the spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair.

These two answers of the Assembly of divines larger Catechism when I read them I ate them into my heart and soul because I find them true. And also the 119th psalm [sic] hath heavenly breath in every verse, when I read it my heart and soul doth some times eat it, whosoever hath the graces mentioned in this 119th psalm living and reigning in them may be assured of 62 Cole here notes that this parable "might have been inserted sooner. —1741." 58 Larger Westminster Catechism, 1648.
everlasting life, because the promises of life are made to them heavenly graces as was in David when he wrote this 119th psalm.

The Saint that reads it may judge for himself; the true saint is a king and Jesus Christ himself hath crowned him, for the kingdom of heaven is within him; and Christ doth so help, and rule, and govern, and command all his inward lust and evil tempers and outward senses, that all the affections and powers of the old man in his soul are conquered and in submission to the new man in him, which kingdom is better than all the kingdoms, sceptres, crowns and glories of this world.—[50] Luke 23:28:29:30th verses—Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me: but weep for yourselves, and for your children; For behold the days are coming etc.—Where I say in the 20th page past that I was called to live by faith and not by sight I find now I had not got so far as to know how to live by faith then.

[Contentment Amidst Trials]

[1763] Again June 1763 my wife being grieved by her friends; and the loss [loss] of a brother; caused her to fall into a melancholy way; and she was in great darkness so as at last to border hard upon despair, and then lost the use of her reason and understanding; as Nebuchadnezer did,54 and so hath continued now this five years and no alteration; and in December following the dropsy and scurvy humours fell down again into my legs;55 and the doctors used many means; but all seemed to be in vain, so that about the mid of winter the doctor yielded to let it have its course; only to try things that were thought likely to kill or cure; which things did help me some; my friends and neighbours would come to see me, and say they thought I had not long to stay here; and others would say they thought I never should do any more work; Now all this was the Lord's doings; and proved a great blessing to me, he brought me into a fiery furnace; the pain in my legs was exceeding great for two or three [51] months they swelled, burnt, ached, and smarted continually and scarce was there any sound skin from my knees to my toes, so I kept house 3 months and was laid by in all six months from labour, excepting a few chores.

Now all this time my wife was by me crying out in her distress Oh dreadfull Oh dreadfull Oh dreadfull, and I was sitting three months or thereabouts in the furnace of purification and the sound of dreadfull from my wife continually in my ears night and day Almost: Now all this time God gave me a sweet submission to his will, and a sweet measure of patience; I had not the least hard thought of God's dealings with me; he laid on his rod very smart but yet in mercy: he let me know I had need of it; and why and wherefore he did it; and let me know he did not

54 Dan. 4:33-37.
55 Possibly beriberi, a vitamin B deficiency that results in the swelling and burning of legs. The symptoms do not seem to relate this ailment to the earlier problems with his legs.
chastise and correct me in anger nor wrath, but in mercy: and in covenant faithfullness; He gave me a sweet Gospel frame and temper of mind, heart, and Soul; I had not the least hard thought or any thing of that nature, as I could discern in me; he gave me them sweet tempers of Soul, that the promises of life are made too [sic]; for weeks together, if not months; All in me that belong’d to the Old Adam seemed to be wholly slain; all sinfull nature seemed to lye [52 and 53 torn out] [54] If I can live near to God in a way of honest obedience, being prudent, and saving and diligent then I am not concerned what will become of me here in this world, God knows what things I have need of; and my duty is to do his will; which some times seems to be the delight of my Soul; God gave me such a measure of a sweet Gospel Spirit; that I had not the least inclination to hurt any person, no more than my self; I had a tender love to all mankind; and I endeavour dayly to treasure up a measure of patience and submission to Gods will; that I may be ready to meet God in a way of judgment or mercy.

[1764] Now one came and asked me what was the odds between the afflictions of the righteous and the wicked; I told him the righteous received both mercys and afflictions from God either sent or permitted but the wicked seem to have such things by chance[,] They will say when any affliction comes on them it happens to them but see not the hand of God in it; and so are apt to murmur and think God deals hard with them etc.

But to return—God brought me through fire and thro water; and the lord was with me and suffered neither to overwhelm me.—[55] although black despairing fears of Death; but he kept the waters Calm, and made me see that he would bear me up as to the things of the world; if I did but trust in him for them: and that I could not keep my head out of water without him; I freely gave up my self and all he had given me, again to him; to keep for me; and to dispose of as he pleased; for I design to look to him for all that I want.—Dear Lord blessed be thy name for ever etc.

Now I had kept house 3 months already this turn; and the Lord began to lay by the rod, and smile upon me, and let me know all that he corrected me for, and gave me wonderfull teachings what I must do for time to come; and here first; he let me know the principal thing he corrected me for was my not living up to what I professed, which was to stand as a witness for the Cause of God; but yet I did not come up to all the ordinances of the Lord, but loiter behind but now the Lord opened the way so that I had no excuse; I could not say the woman thou gavest me she hindred me: for the Lord had laid her aside; and cut of[f] her reason in them things so that I could lay no blame to her etc.

[Joins Separate Church at Middletown]

Now the Lord bid me arise and go forward after the flock; and make

56 Ps. 66:12.
speed to go forth by the footsteps of the flock; now my heart says [56] Dear Lord blessed be thy name I will obey; now my mind looked away into Gods word to find the foot steps of the flock, and as my mind was following the foot steps of the flock in the bible; I came right upon Mr Frothinghams Congregational Church in Middletown; they stood right in the way; with their faces heaven ward I purpose fully if the Lord would give me a measure of healing I would endeavour to Joyn my self with them the first opportunity: Their watchman being a faithfull Servant of Jesus Christ, kept a faithfull watch round about his Church and happened to see me a coming in hast to joyn in their Church, it seemed as if I heard him say, pointing at me

Oh he was once a lump of Sin
But now he's Just A entering in
And here he comes a lovely Soul
I say to you make room for Cole

I joyned to them on fryday the 29th day of June 1764 a fast day, and sat at the Lords table with them the next Sabbath.

Now to return back again and Shew secondly something of the Lords teaching what I must do for the time to [56a] come; Viz that I must Redeem the time because the days were evil; so redeeming it as to get good at all opportunitys: and why; because the days are evil. Stirr so much the more; Rouse up; watch and pray; least you enter into temptation; make use of and stirr up the gift that I have given you; do what good you can to others at all proper seasons and opportunitys according to your Ability: and not hide my Gift in a napkin; or in the earth viz: from men but put forth my talent which I have given you into the bank of the Church: that when I come I may have my talent again with the use of it: and here my mind viewed my talent or the Lords gift to me, two ways, and yet both one way: as coming forth together like twins. Viz—that one branch of the Lords talent which he trusted me with; is to help to support the Ministers of Christ, and the other branch of

57 Cant. 1:8.
58 The Separate church was founded in January 1747 in Wethersfield, where Ebenezer Frothingham (1717-1798) was ordained pastor. Frothingham changed his residence to Middletown about 1754, many of the members in Wethersfield having removed to New York. In 1778 the church split, perhaps in a dispute concerning infant baptism. About this time Frothingham was dismissed. See Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut; prepared under the Direction of the General Association, to commemorate the Completion of One Hundred and Fifty years since its First Annual Assembly (New Haven, Conn., 1861), 258. For more information on Frothingham see Goen, Revivalism and Separatism, 126-136.
59 This is the first stanza of a ten-stanza poem in Cole's hand in the manuscript volume containing "The Spiritual Travels." The poem tells how Cole and other Separates will cut down the "constitutional tree" of the Saybrook Platform.
60 Eph. 5:16.
the Lords talent which he trusteth me with is to pray and exhort and speak often to the Saints; and so cast my talent into the bank or Church: So that by putting it forth to usery, or making use of it, I may be ready when he cometh to reckon with me; to give him his own with [56b] usury; and to say Lord thy one Talent hath gain'd two.

Now when I came to think of putting forth this other branch to usury, which is to pray and exhort at all proper seasons and opportunities; then pride and Shame Rises up and say I have but a mean gift as the men of this world call it, therefore I must hide it from men; but the Lord says look back into the Gospel see what became of him that hid his talent from men; and did no good with it therefore he lost all etc. 61—But suppose your gift be thought mean by man yet is good what you have; because God gave it you; and all that comes from God is good; therefore be not ashamed to make use of it; but my mind says again; I have an impediment in my speech and my gift is such when I try to exhort; I can only give out A few blundering hints; and Jump from one thing to another, as if I could do no good but rather prejudice the people's minds against me: but the Lord says doth A man light a Candle and put under a bushel or bed, or doth he not rather set it up on the Candlestick—or on the mantle peice in a [57] Candlestick that it may give light unto all that are in the house or Church of God; 62 which is the house of the Living God; the piller—and ground of truth and David says come unto me all ye that fear the Lord and I will declare unto you all what the Lord has done for my Soul. 63 The Lord says they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard and a book of Remembrance was written: and what was [sic] their conversation about but of their own souls, and the things of the kingdom and Church of Christ: Mr. Richard Allen, 64 says give the holy fire in you a vent and it will burn the Clearer, Also he sayeth let your wives and families and neighbours and friends, have light from your Candle; keep not your Religion to your Selves, hide it not in a napkin.

But to return—the Lord seemed to press it upon my mind; to look on the Sheep: if they are hungry and one gives them a handful of Coarse hay, they will eat it in hast, and when they have done they will go away to some still place, and lye down and Chew their Cud [58] and bring up this Coarse hay into their mouths again and Chew it more fine; and make it better than it was when they ate it; and more soft in their Stomachs; so the Lord seemed to press it upon my Mind; though I had but a blundering way of uttering my gift; Yet I might at some proper seasons give out a blundering hint; and because they are blundering; they may be more likely to strike the minds of the people and abide; more than a smooth way of speaking; and when the

63 Ps. 66:16.
64 Possibly Richard Alleine (1611-1681), member of Parliament in 1627, rector at Batcombe, Somersetshire, 1641-1661, and author of a number of books of piety.
people are gone away and are got alone, they will it may be bring up these blundering hints into their minds again; and meditate upon them; and make them better than when I gave them out; and by this their minds may be kept from rambling so much after things that are Sinfull etc.—

My heart has been many times Ravished as it were with Love to the dear Saints of God at Middletown; they are very dear to me; and so are all Saints, the Excellent ones of the earth in whom is my delight. The Lord has been shewing me some Christian [58a] Skill, how to make use of the Sheild of faith and the helmet of Salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God— I eat many a feast out of Gods word and Doctor Watts’s Psalms and hymns in this time of affliction and tryal, Also some other books have been pleasant to my taste; I was not afraid of men nor Devils when the Lord was with me.

Soon after this the Lord gave me to see how weak I was without him; for 3 or 4 days when I went to pray in Secret, I could not keep my mind and thought fixed; but they would fly too and fro ten times in a minute as if I was among angry bees one stinging in one place, another in another place which will make the mind fly Quick from one place to another, So I saw I could do nothing without Christ: I saw God was all in all to me; this was as a Choice cordial to me, to help cure Spiritual pride in me.

[Defense of Freewill Offerings]

Now two Collectors came for Ministers rates; which I refused to pay; and told them to get them abated at the next Society meeting; and at the next Society meeting these Collectors told me they tryed four times to have the Committee and Moderator try a vote to abate my rates; but they refused and at last bid them hold their Tongues for they would not hear a word about it; immediately at once there was such a confusion fell upon the people that men would not vote for the very thing they wanted to have voted for as they told me—and that they never saw such a meeting before: they could get no more votes that day; but contended till night; and then adjourned the meeting to another day.

Now the Collectors came and attached to the Value of ten pounds of my Estate; for little more than one pound; which they put to me for a rate and posted over to farmington in order for Sale; but I went to the adjourned meeting; which when the meeting was opened I put in a paper and when it was Read; then the minister desired to speak to the Case and fixing his eyes

65 Eph. 6:17.
66 A copy of this petition in Cole’s hand is contained in the Cole MSS. It reads, "Jan ye 14th—1765 To ye Sosiety of Kensington at your adjurned meeting Nathan Cole Humbly prayeth that you would abate ye Rates that you have set to my name for I honestly Confess that I dare not pay them and I beleave it is a sin for me willingly to do it or for you to demand it for I am a member in full Communion with ye Congregational Church of Christ at middletown and have done ten times more to
on me he said Mr Cole you ought to pay Rates here out of obedience to the Civil Authority; for they have set bounds to Societys and all within them bounds must pay to that Minister for God has placed that order of men as a Civil Authority; and they ought to be obeyed. Even Christ paid tribute to the [60] Civil authority; out of obedience to them etc. Therefore it was duty to do it and many other words which were not to the Case; then I asked liberty to answer the Minister and I said this Law of Society bounds is mans law; not Gods Law; and God says men frame mischief by their laws;67 etc. But God says submit to every ordinance of Man for the Lords sake;68 now mark it is for the Lords sake; therefore when mans law agreeeth with Gods law then submit to mans law; why; because it agreeeth with Gods law; but if mans law disagreeeth with Gods law then disobey mans law for the Lords sake, and why, because it disagreeeth with Gods law, and again the Lord says the powers that be are ordained of God;69 and there is no power but of God; therefore mark; that Law that is contrary to Gods Law, hath no power in it; why, because God never gave man any power to make laws against himself; now Gods law to support the Gospel is free will offerings all over the Bible; and not by a force of law from men; for if men do not help to [61] support the Gospel, God reserves that punishment to himself; And never set men to punish one an other by force of law, for the Gospel is a Gospel of peace, and is not to be forced on any; I also told them, that Gods law is, let every man bare his own burden,70 and where doth God mean but in that Church where he goeth to Worship; and God says let him that is taught minister to him that teacheth in all good things;71 not to one that doth not teach him, and now I have done ten times more to support the Gospel by free will offering this last year than any man in Kensington according to his list; and yet you must fall to Robbing your neighbour Churches by force of law, to get money to pay your ministers; which the Church of Christ never did, in all the whole bible, no nor no saints in all the whole book of God, and yet you call

support ye Gospel by freewill offerings then any man in Kensington according to his List more then to pay ye Rate that you set to me ten times over and you have sent your servants ye collectors and thay have attachted ye value of ten pounds of my esteat and posted it for sale for a lettel more then one pound wich you demand for naught I have no creture upon earth that comes near your meetings sence ye year before last this is not according to Gods Law of justis for God says let every man bear his own burden and where dos God mean but in that Church where he goes to worship and did God ever give men leave to rob their neabour Churches by force of law no not in all ye whole Bible to support ye Gospel nor no saints in all ye whole Bible never did any such thing nor no Church of Christ in all ye Whole Bible never did any such thing but allways supported ye Gospel by freewill offerings all over ye Bible from one end to [incomplete].

67 Ps. 94:20.
69 Rom. 13:1.
70 Gal. 6:5.
71 Gal. 6:6.
**NATHAN COLE**

*your selves a Church of Christ* and as to what your Minister says about Christ paying tribute to Cesar; I told them that Cesar was a king, and it was the kings rate, it was not to Support the Gospel, but it was the kings Rate and I pay the kings rate my country Rate; and that I had rather have my head cut off than brake Gods Law, knowingly and willingly, and now you have sent your Servants the Collectors, and they have taken ten pounds in Value of my estate, to make A merchandize of me; and now I ask for mercy, I am under great afflications at home as to my wife etc.

Now it was put to vote to abate my rates that were past and they were abated by a great Majority Blessed be the Lord; Now one says the Minister lookt pale; and others say it killed the minister stone dead; but a Certain Esqr. said I wonder he would come to us in such a spirit as he doth; to reflect so hard upon us.—One asked him if Mr Cole made any reflections but what was according to Scripture, he made no answer; others say they never heard them Scriptures and laws opened before, and seemed much pleased at it but I came away, and as I came round in the Ally [aisle] to come at the door, the faces and eyes of the Assembly turned as I went round, with a sober amaze in the Countenance; as if I had been some strange Creature, from some other nation or World.

**[A Vision Fulfilled]**

*In page 14th where I hinted about the form of a Gospel Church, more than twenty years past I now have seen in many things exactly come to [63] pass; it was thus; the same day that I was Converted my heart and mind were flowing out after God: I had a visionary discovery of A Gospel Church: of the house they met in and the place where it stood; and the behaviour of the people in the house; as clear and real as if I had seen it with my bodily eyes almost the house was built about 4 square; the Chimney at the west end; the lower part divided into Several rooms; and the minister and his family dwelt there, and the whole Chamber was the meeting house; the fore front stood towards the South, and Sun Shined bright in at the windows down on the floor by the Ministers feet, who stood in a praying posture, with his face and his hands lifted up towr'ds heaven and every way the Shape and bigness of Elder Frothingham, there was a small Church in the house with a Solemn sweet Countenance sat upon their Faces; and one that now is my brother in this Church stood next or near to me in a praying posture; who when I saw [64] him in this Church twenty years after with my bodily eyes, I think I knew him to be the Man.

I had also a view of the Shape of the Land some distance round aforesaid house, of the hills, Valleys highways and brooks, and of the Angels hovering over the house in a light white glimmering Air; Crying the Glory of the Town, the glory of the Town; and strangers that came by had the same saying: Now more than 20 years afterward I saw that every think [sic] answered to my discovery, as exactly as face answers to face in the water
almost; I never saw, or was in this house personally until more than twenty
years after this discovery and now the house is but newly built; and a few
days past I was telling this to a Brother that lives near said house; and he
told me that in ye night when asleep many years ago among the trees in that
very Spot where the meeting house now stands, he had a discovery of a
glorious brightness among the trees where said house now stands, long before
there was any separates in the Town, or ever thought of building a house
[65] there; And he said he could not compare that brightness to any thing
more than the Sun's Shining on a body of clear ice some distance off; which
will dazzle the eyes of men etc. Now all these things are come to pass—

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

[A Resting Spell for the Separates]

[1765] Now the Lord has given me to keep a careful eye upon his works
and providences some years and to see how exactly they fulfill his word to a
tittle; for the works and providences of God open and unravel the scriptures,
to us, and that Christian that doth not mind the works of God as well as his
word, or with his word; they lose [sic] half the sweetness of a Christian life
in the World; the Lord now in these days has wonderfully fulfilled his word
by his works, so exactly that he that runs may read if he doe but look on,72
and see how the Lord makes out his word by his works to be a perfect truth;
every jot or tittle in these days.

Now near twenty years past the Lord saw new England was ripened for
Judgments; and when a people are so Wicked; then as [65a] he is God; he
must bring on Judgments; and I see how exactly he does it according to his
word For his word says that Judgment shall first begin at the house of God,73
and the Apostle says if it first begin at us where will the end be of them that
obey not the Gospel of Christ; Now Judgment must begin at the Saints;
therefore the Lord some years past, called out a number to stand as witnesses
for the cause of Christ; and on whom he would place his name and then he
suffered the men of the world to lay their rod upon us, and afflict us, and rob
us by force of a law, to get our money to pay their Ministers; Not God's Law,
but Man's law; so they went on dragging us to prison, and tearing our Estates
to pieces and made merchandise of us at the post by force of Law, which the
Church of Christ never did in all the whole Bible; And now the Lord says to
us, be still, quiet and patient; don't you revenge for vengeance is mine I will
repay it:74 I rule, I see all that they do, I will repay I will reward a people
according to their own ways, and then the Lord put that Lamb like temper
into us, that we had no desire to revenge; but the Lord let us know; we must
be Chastized for our Sins, and to keep us humble and make us pray, and fear

72 Hab. 2:2.
73 1 Pet. 4:17.
74 Rom. 12:19.
him; Now the Lord let them whip us Just as much as he pleased, near [66] twenty years; Then he set us by as it were for a resting spell, and turned the Rod back upon them that afflicted us; and set them to dragg one another to prison; and to tear one anothers estates to peices, Just as they did by us. Only it was for their own debts that they had made; But they had been robbing us, for that we never had any thing for; And now the Lord is rewarding them according to their own ways; Also the wanton spirit came in upon the Land like a flood; Again the Lord seemed to double their punishment in rewarding them according to their own ways; for as they robbed us to get money to pay their Ministers, now the Lord suffers their ministers to Rob them: for their ministers not being satisfy'd with their Sallery, they keep crying to the people more money more money from time to time and the people meet together and vote them more money; Some times a Sheeps fleece, and some times a lambs fleece: and so they are fleecing their flocks, and their Ministers Rob them more than they robbed us; But their ministers mony seemeth soon to be gone. As an Eagle towards heaven; Again they cry more mony from year to year. Thus the Lord has rained down snares upon the people; and there is a dreadfull Storm of vengeance on the Land; all being in a Confusion, like the troubled sea; Writts and [67] Executions flying about the Country after Men.\textsuperscript{75} Such a time as never was known before in the Land; nor no Comparison to it; and now the Lord says where, where, will the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of Christ.

Now we have nothing to do in the Cause, but stand and look on, and the men of the World tear one another to peices, Just as they did us; for the Lord has certainly set us for a resting Spell; and Shelters us from the dreadfull storm that is come down upon the land for I have kept a Carefull watch, by enquiring a year and a half of men that travel the Country, if they have heard of any Seperate or Congregationalist that is a Church member in all this land, that has had one touch of all these writts and executions that fly about the Land; and they say no; And several of our brethren I have askd that went on Journeys of two or three weeks preaching and visiting the Saints; and they say no, and it is concluded that there is none of them taken in this Snare; that is rained down upon the land; for the Lord seems to have taken us into the Secret Chambers of his promises; and hide us untill the indignation be over past etc. Now some of the Say Brook Churches\textsuperscript{76} have fell to robbing some of their neighbour Constitutions in the land; Viz—Church of England, Baptist,
Quakers, seventh day men, Congregationalists and Separates; and are so Quarrelsome that their Constitution begins to Stink in the Land: whilst the other Constitutions live neighbourly and friendly one with an other and do not want [68 and 69 cut out].

[70] The Snares of Satan lye so low and are so smoothly plac'd
I'll softly tread where e'er I go and never act in haste.

Jesus and me ye ne'er shall part
For God is greater than my heart.

Nov Kensington in Farmington 1765:
Nathan Cole.

[Addendum]

[1771, in Cole's hand.]

in ye spiritual travels of Nathan Cole etc

I Nathan Cole separated from the saybrook Churches in ye year 1747 and keepet metings in my own house on ye sabbeth with a few others that came to me and some times we had preachers came to us: and Isaac Hurlbut[77] after some time began to preach and continued about 2 years and our number increased and in the year 1750 we sent for mr John Fuller[78] and he came from Lime to us and preached to us six months and now in our meetings on ye sabbeth there was about 20 or 30 persons but when mr Fuller left us then the people began to fall away thinking we never could set up a church hear and some went back to the old meeting house again and some moved away to new towns and some of the best ware taken away by death all gone but sister pack wife to samuel pack[79] and she came hear on the sabbeth so long as she lived

izing the Congregational churches of each county into consociations. See Walker, Creeds and Platforms, 502-507.

77 I have not been able to identify this preacher.


79 Either Samuel Peck, who came to Kensington from Hartford about 1718, or his son, Samuel Peck, Jr. (b. 1701). Both their names appear with Cole's and forty-seven others on an unsuccessful petition to the General Assembly in 1745, requesting to be set off as a parish. The petitioners complained that distance and bad roads kept them from the Kensington meetinghouse in winter. Alfred Andrews, Genealogy, and Ecclesiastical History [of First Church, New Britain, Conn.] (Chicago, 1867), 43-44.
and she and i kept meetings together some years and she died and i was left alone some years.

But one thing was remarkable concerning her death which is this: one morning as i lay in bed my wife came and awaked me out of sleep and said (why you) sister peck is dead certain; i said how do you know; she said because i have no more freedom to pray for her then if she was not in the world and i dont believe she is in the world and some body will come presently i believe to bring us word and to have you make her coffin; then i get up and did dispatch family duties and soon came a man from three 3 mils and came into my house and said i came to bring you bad news mrs peck is dead she sat at supper with the family at the table last night in the evening and by bedtime she was dead; they supposed an ulcer had broke in her haveing had a consumption some years.

And then i was quite alone; only when my wife staid at home then i kept a meeting on the sabbeth and in the year 1763 my wife was laid by almost as helpless as a child and hath been so now more then seven years already—but i have stood in the separation now steadfast 24 years this year 1771; but in the year 1770 they began to come out too me one hear and another there and the Lord seemed to convert them into the separation sweetly and now others keep coming to us and our meeting keeps increasing so that some times we have a considerable number.

And now i will venter to tell what i have kept secret more than 7 years pondering it in my mind but now providence seems to open the way for the accomplishment of it and it looks likely to come to pass as follows, viz: that in the year 1763 sister sybel shepard kept house for me and she went to viset a poor family liveing in a rich mans house and while she was there the rich man came in and asked her who she was and where she lived and she told him she kept house for Nathan Cole—and he asked how they did; she says he and his wife were both laid by, his wife an object of pity and he is lame with his legs dropsy humers fell down into them; aye says the man this is a judgement upon him for leaveing our Church and other words as if he rejoised that the separates was all gone out of the society but one poor old Cole and he will not be hear long and then we shall gett red of all the separates fire (as they call it) but she came home and told me what the reach man said and soon after one day as i was thinking about it and i had a sort of a visionary trance as i set alone and the Lord seemed to shew what yet should be so clear that i laid it up in my hart until now, viz: that it was so i was left alone and i was as a poor old coal buryed up in the ashes as if there was no fire to be seen but the Lord seemed to shew that in time a little spark of

80 Sybil Shepard (b. 1712?), of Wethersfield, Connecticut, appears among the original ten members of the Wethersfield-Middletown Separate church in 1747. "A Copy of the Church Records," Cole MSS.
fire would come out of these ashes from that coal and cat[c]h fire to a brand that was neer and that brand catches fire to some brands that lay hear and there and the fire began to burn more and more and keept increasing until it arose to a much greater height then ever it was before in Kensington etc:—