



Part I

*From his birth, to the time when
he began to study for the ministry.*

Mr. David Brainerd was born April 20, 1718, at Haddam, a town of Hartford, in Connecticut, New England. His father was the worshipful Hezekiah Brainerd, Esq. one of his Majesty's council for that colony; who was the son of Daniel Brainerd, Esq. a justice of the peace, and a deacon of the Church of Christ in Haddam. His mother was Mrs. Dorothy Hobart, daughter to the Reverend Mr. Jeremiah Hobart; who preached awhile at Topsfield, then removed to Hempstead on Long Island, and afterwards by reason of numbers turning Quakers, and many others being so irreligious, that they would do nothing towards the support of the gospel settled in the work of the ministry at Haddam; where he died in the 85th year of his age. He went to the public worship in the forenoon, and died in his chair between meetings. This reverend gentleman was a son of the Reverend Peter Hobart; who was, first, minister of the gospel at Hingham, in the county of Norfolk in England; and, by reason of the persecution of the Puritans, removed with his family to New England, and was settled in the ministry at Hingham, in Massachusetts. He had five sons, viz. Joshua, Jeremiah, Gershom,

Japheth, and Nehemiah. His son Joshua was minister at Southold on Long Island. Jeremiah was Mr. David Brainerd's grandfather, minister at Haddam, etc. as before observed; Gershom was minister of Groton in Connecticut; Japheth was a physician; he went in the quality of a doctor of a ship to England, (before the time of taking his second degree at college) and designed to go from thence to the East Indies; but never was heard of more. Nehemiah was [a] sometime fellow of Harvard college, and afterwards minister at Newton in Massachusetts. The mother of Mrs. Dorothy Hobart (who was afterwards Brainerd) was a daughter of the Reverend Samuel Whiting, minister of the gospel, first at Boston in Lincolnshire, and afterwards at Lynn in Massachusetts, New England. He had three sons who were ministers of the gospel.

DAVID BRAINERD WAS the third son of his parents. They had five sons and four daughters. Their eldest son is [was] Hezekiah Brainerd, Esq. a justice of the peace, and for several years past a representative of the town of Haddam, in the general assembly of Connecticut colony; the second was the Reverend Nehemiah Brainerd, a worthy minister at Eastbury in Connecticut, who died of a consumption, November 10, 1742; the fourth is Mr. John Brainerd, who succeeds [succeeded] his brother David as missionary to the Indians, and pastor of the same church of Christian Indians in New Jersey; and the fifth was Israel, lately [a] student at Yale College in New Haven, who died since his brother David. Mrs. Dorothy Brainerd, having lived about five years a widow, died when her son, of whose life I am about to give an account, was about fourteen years of age: so that in his youth he was left both fatherless and motherless. What account he has given of himself, and his own life, may be seen in what follows.¹

I was from my youth somewhat sober, and inclined rather to melancholy than the contrary extreme; but do not remember anything of conviction of sin, worthy of remark, till I was, I believe, about seven or eight years of age. Then I became concerned for my soul, and terrified at the thoughts of death, and was driven to the performance of duties: but it appeared a melancholy business, that destroyed my eagerness for play. And though, alas! this religious concern was but short-lived, I sometimes attended secret prayer; and thus lived at "ease in Zion, without God in the world,"

¹ In Mr. Brainerd's account of himself here, and continued in his *Diary*, the reader will find a growing interest and pleasure as he proceeds; in which is beautifully exemplified what the inspired penman declares, "The path of the just is as the morning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And indeed even his diction and style of writing assume a gradual improvement.

—W. [Cooper, one of the editors of Edwards' original volume.]

and without much concern, as I remember, till I was above thirteen years of age. But some time in the winter 1732, I was roused out of carnal security, by I scarce know what means at first; but was much excited by the prevailing of a mortal sickness in Haddam. I was frequent, constant, and somewhat fervent in duties; and took delight in reading, especially Mr. Janeway's *Token for Children*. I felt sometimes much melted [drowned] in duties, and took great delight in the performance of them; and I sometimes hoped that I was converted, or at least in a good and hopeful way for heaven and happiness, not knowing what conversion was. The Spirit of God at this time proceeded far with me; I was remarkably dead to the world, and my thoughts were almost wholly employed about my soul's concerns; and I may indeed say, "Almost I was persuaded to be a Christian." I was also exceedingly distressed and melancholy at the death of my mother, in March, 1732. But afterwards my religious concern began to decline, and by degrees I fell back into a considerable degree of security, though I still attended secret prayer.

About the 15th of April, 1733, I removed from my father's house to East Haddam, where I spent four years; but still "without God in the world," though, for the most part, I went a round of secret duty. I was not much addicted to young company, or frolicking, as it is called, but this I know, that when I did go into such company, I never returned with so good a conscience as when I went; it always added new guilt, made me afraid to come to the throne of grace, and spoiled those good frames I was wont sometimes to please myself with. But, alas! all my good frames were but self-righteousness, not founded on a desire for the glory of God.

About the latter end of April, 1737, being full nineteen years of age, I removed to Durham, to work on my farm, and so continued about one year; frequently longing, from a natural inclination, after a liberal education. When about twenty years of age, I applied myself to study; and was now engaged more than ever in the duties of religion. I became very strict, and watchful over my thoughts, words, and actions; and thought I must be sober indeed, because I designed to devote myself to the ministry; and imagined I did dedicate myself to the Lord.

Sometime in April, 1738, I went to Mr. Fiske's,² and lived with him during his life. I remember he advised me wholly to abandon young company, and associate myself with grave elderly people: which counsel I followed.

² Mr. Fiske was the pastor of the church in Haddam.

My manner of life was now exceeding regular, and full of religion, such as it was; for I read my Bible more than twice through in less than a year, spent much time every day in prayer and other secret duties, gave great attention to the word preached, and endeavored to my utmost to retain it. So much concerned was I about religion that I agreed with some young persons to meet privately on Sabbath evenings for religious exercises, and thought myself sincere in these duties; and after our meeting was ended, I used to repeat the discourses of the day to myself; recollecting what I could, though sometimes very late at night. I used sometimes on Monday mornings to recollect the same sermons; had considerable movings of pleasurable affection in duties, and had many thoughts of joining the church. In short, I had a very good outside, and rested entirely on my duties, though not sensible of it.

After Mr. Fiske's death, I proceeded in my learning with my brother; was still very constant in religious duties, and often wondered at the levity of professors; it was a trouble to me, that they were so careless in religious matters. Thus I proceeded a considerable length on a self-righteous foundation; and should have been entirely lost and undone, had not the mere mercy of God prevented.

Sometime in the beginning of winter 1738 it pleased God, on one Sabbath-day morning, as I was walking out for some secret duties, to give me on a sudden such a sense of my danger, and the wrath of God, that I stood amazed, and my former good frames, that I had pleased myself with, all presently vanished. From the view I had of my sin and vileness, I was much distressed all that day, fearing the vengeance of God would soon overtake me. I was much dejected, kept much alone, and sometimes envied the birds and beasts their happiness, because they were not exposed to eternal misery, as I evidently saw I was. And thus I lived from day to day, being frequently in great distress: sometimes there appeared mountains before me to obstruct my hopes of mercy; and the work of conversion appeared so great, that I thought I should never be the subject of it. I used, however, to pray and cry to God, and perform other duties with great earnestness; and thus hoped by some means to make the case better.

And though, hundreds of times, I renounced all pretenses of any *worth* in my duties, as I thought, even while performing them, and often confessed to God that I deserved nothing, for the very best of them, but eternal condemnation; yet still I had a secret hope of recommending myself to God

by my religious duties. When I prayed affectionately, and my heart seemed in some measure to melt, I hoped God would be thereby moved to pity me, my prayers then looked with some appearance of goodness in them, and I seemed to mourn for sin. And then I could in some measure venture on the mercy of God in Christ, as I thought, though the preponderating thought, the foundation of my hope, was some imagination of goodness in my heart-meltings, flowing of affections in duty, extraordinary enlargements, etc. Though at times the gate appeared so very strait that it looked next to impossible to enter, yet, at other times, I flattered myself that it was not so very difficult, and hoped I should by diligence and watchfulness soon gain the point. Sometimes after enlargement in duty and considerable affection, I hoped I had made a good step towards heaven; imagined that God was affected as I was, and that he would hear such sincere cries, as I called them. And so sometimes, when I withdrew for secret duties in great distress, I returned comfortable; and thus healed myself with my duties.

Sometime in February, 1739, I set apart a day for secret fasting and prayer, and spent the day in almost incessant cries to God for mercy, that he would open my eyes to see the evil of sin, and the way of life by Jesus Christ. And God was pleased that day to make considerable discoveries of my heart to me. But still I trusted in all the duties I performed; though there was no manner of goodness in them, there being in them no respect to the glory of God, nor any such principle in my heart. Yet, God was pleased to make my endeavors that day a means to show me my helplessness in some measure.

Sometimes I was greatly encouraged, and imagined that God loved me, and was pleased with me; and thought I should soon be fully reconciled to God. But the whole was founded on mere presumption, arising from enlargement in duty, or flowing of affections, or some good resolutions, and the like. And when, at times, great distress began to arise, on a sight of my vileness, nakedness, and inability to deliver myself from a sovereign God, I used to put off the discovery, as what I could not bear. Once, I remember, a terrible pang of distress seized me, and the thoughts of renouncing myself, and standing naked before God, stripped of all goodness, were so dreadful to me, that I was ready to say to them as Felix to Paul, "Go thy way for this time." Thus, though I daily longed for greater conviction of sin, supposing that I must see more of my dreadful state in order to a remedy; yet when the discoveries of my vile, hellish heart, were made to me,

the sight was so dreadful, and showed me so plainly my exposedness to damnation, that I could not endure it. I constantly strove after whatever qualifications I imagined others obtained before the reception of Christ, in order to recommend me to his favor. Sometimes I felt the power of a hard heart, and supposed it must be softened before Christ would accept of me; and when I felt any meltings of heart, I hoped now the work was almost done. Hence, when my distress still remained, I was wont to murmur at God's dealings with me; and thought, when others felt their hearts softened, God showed them mercy; but my distress remained still.

Sometimes I grew remiss and sluggish, without any great convictions of sin, for a considerable time together; but after such a season, convictions seized me more violently. One night I remember in particular, when I was walking solitarily abroad, I had opened to me such a view of my sin, that I feared the ground would cleave asunder under my feet, and become my grave; and would send my soul quick into hell, before I could get home. And though I was forced to go to bed, lest my distress should be discovered by others, which I much feared; yet I scarcely durst sleep at all, for I thought it would be a great wonder if I should be out of hell in the morning. And though my distress was sometimes thus great, yet I greatly dreaded the loss of convictions, and returning back to a state of carnal security, and to my former insensibility of impending wrath; which made me exceeding exact in my behavior, lest I should stifle the motions of God's Holy Spirit. When at any time I took a view of my convictions, and thought the degree of them to be considerable, I was wont to trust in them; but this confidence, and the hopes of soon making some notable advances towards deliverance, would ease my mind, and I soon became more senseless and remiss: but then again, when I discerned my convictions to grow languid, and I thought them about to leave me, this immediately alarmed and distressed me. Sometimes I expected to take a large step, and get very far towards conversion, by some particular opportunity or means I had in view.

The many disappointments, great distresses, and perplexity I met with, put me into a most horrible frame of contesting with the Almighty; with an inward vehemence and virulence finding fault with his ways of dealing with mankind. I found great fault with the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity; and my wicked heart often wished for some other way of salvation, than by Jesus Christ. Being like the troubled sea, my thoughts confused, I used to contrive to escape the wrath of God

by some other means. I had strange projects, full of atheism, contriving to disappoint God's designs and decrees concerning me, or to escape his notice, and hide myself from him. But when, upon reflection, I saw these projects were vain, and would not serve me, and that I could contrive nothing for my own relief; this would throw my mind into the most horrid frame, to wish there was no God, or to wish there were some other God that could control him, etc. These thoughts and desires were the secret inclinations of my heart, frequently acting before I was aware; but, alas! they were *mine*, although I was affrighted when I came to reflect on them. When I considered, it distressed me to think that my heart was so full of enmity against God; and it made me tremble, lest his vengeance should suddenly fall upon me. I used before to imagine, that my heart was not so bad as the Scriptures and some other books represented it. Sometimes I used to take much pains to work it up into a good frame, an humble submissive disposition; and hoped there was then some goodness in me. But, on a sudden, the thoughts of the strictness of the law, or the sovereignty of God, would so irritate the corruption of my heart, that I had so watched over, and hoped I had brought to a good frame, that it would break over all bounds, and burst forth on all sides, like floods of water when they break down their dam.

Being sensible of the necessity of a deep humiliation in order to [obtain] a saving close[ness] with Christ, I used to set myself to work [create] in my own heart those convictions that were requisite in such an humiliation; as a conviction that God would be just, if he cast me off forever—[I believed] that if ever God should bestow mercy on me, it would be mere grace. [Even] though I should be in distress many years first, and be never so much engaged in duty; that [still] God was not in the least obliged to pity me the more for all past duties, cries, and tears, etc. I strove to my utmost to bring myself to a firm belief of these things and a hearty assent to them; and hoped that now I was brought off from myself, truly humbled, and that I bowed to the divine sovereignty. I was wont to tell God in my prayers, that now I had those very dispositions of soul that he required, and on which he showed mercy to others, and thereupon to beg and plead for mercy to me. But when I found no relief, and was still oppressed with guilt, and fears of wrath, my soul was in a tumult, and my heart rose against God, as dealing hardly with me. Yet then my conscience flew in my face, putting me in mind of my late confession to God of his justice in my condemnation, etc. And this giving me a sight of the badness of my heart, threw me

again into distress, and I wished I had watched my heart more narrowly, to keep it from breaking out against God's dealings with me; and I even wished I had not pleaded for mercy on account of my humiliation, because thereby I had lost all my seeming goodness. Thus, scores of times, I vainly imagined myself humbled and prepared for saving mercy. And while I was in this distressed, bewildered, and tumultuous state of mind, the corruption of my heart was especially irritated with the following things.

1. *The strictness of the divine law.* For I found it was impossible for me, after my utmost pains, to answer its demands. I often made new resolutions, and as often broke them. I imputed the whole to carelessness and the want of being more watchful, and used to call myself a fool for my negligence. But when, upon a stronger resolution, and greater endeavors, and close application to fasting and prayer, I found all attempts fail; then I quarreled with the law of God, as unreasonably rigid. I thought, if it extended only to my outward actions and behaviors, I could bear with it; but I found it condemned me for my evil thoughts, and sins of my heart, which I could not possibly prevent. I was extremely loath to own my utter helplessness in this matter: but after repeated disappointments, thought that, rather than perish, I could do a little more still; especially if such and such circumstances might but attend my endeavors and strivings. I hoped that I should strive more earnestly than ever, if the matter came to extremity—though I never could find the time to do my utmost in the manner I intended, and this hope of future more favorable circumstances, and of doing something great hereafter, kept me from utter despair in myself, and from seeing myself fallen into the hands of a sovereign God, and dependent on nothing but free and boundless grace.

2. Another thing was that *faith alone was the condition of salvation*; that God would not come down to lower terms, and that he would not promise life and salvation upon my sincere and hearty prayers and endeavors. That word, (Mark 16:16) "He that believed not, shall be damned," cut off all hope there: and I found, faith was the sovereign gift of God; that I could not get it as of myself, and could not oblige God to bestow it upon me, by any of my performances (Eph. 2:1, 8). "This," I was ready to say, "is a hard saying, who can bear it?" I could not bear, that all I had done should stand for mere nothing, who had been very conscientious in duty, had been exceeding religious a great while,

and had, as I thought, done much more than many others who had obtained mercy. I confessed indeed the vileness of my duties; but then, what made them at that time seem vile was my wandering thoughts in them; not because I was all-over defiled like a devil, and the principle corrupt from whence they flowed, so that I could not possibly do anything that was good. And therefore I called what I did, by the name of honest faithful endeavors; and could not bear it, that God had made no promises of salvation to them.

3. Another thing was that *I could not find out what faith was*; or what it was to believe, and come to Christ. I read the calls of Christ to the weary and heavy laden; but could find no way that he directed them to come in. I thought I would gladly come, if I knew how, though the path of duty were never so difficult. I read Mr. Stoddard's *Guide to Christ* (which I trust was, in the hand of God, the happy means of my conversion), and my heart rose against the author; for though he told me my very heart all along under convictions, and seemed to be very beneficial to me in his directions. Yet here he failed—he did not tell me anything I could *do* that would bring me to Christ, but left me, as it were, with a great gulf between, without any direction to get through. For I was not yet effectually and experimentally taught that there could be *no way* prescribed, whereby a *natural man could*, of his own strength, *obtain that which is supernatural*, and which the highest angel cannot give.

4. Another thing to which I found a great inward opposition, was *the sovereignty of God*. I could not bear that it should be wholly at God's pleasure to save or damn me, just as he would. That passage, Rom. 9:11–23, was a constant vexation to me, especially verse 21. Reading or meditating on this always destroyed my seeming good frames: for when I thought I was almost humbled, and almost resigned, this passage would make my enmity against the sovereignty of God appear. When I came to reflect on my inward enmity and blasphemy which arose on this occasion, I was the more afraid of God, and driven further from any hopes of reconciliation with him. It gave me such a dreadful view of myself, that I dreaded more than ever to see myself in God's hands, at his sovereign disposal, and it made me more opposite than ever to submit to his sovereignty; for I thought God designed my damnation.

All this time the Spirit of God was powerfully at work with me; and I was inwardly pressed to relinquish all self-confidence, all hopes of ever

helping myself by any means whatsoever: and the conviction of my lost estate was sometimes so clear and manifest before my eyes, that it was as if it had been declared to me in so many words, "It is done, it is done: forever impossible to deliver yourself." For about three or four days my soul was thus greatly distressed. At some turns, for a few moments, I seemed to myself lost and undone; but then would shrink back immediately from the sight, because I dared not venture myself into the hands of God, as wholly helpless, and at the disposal of his sovereign pleasure. I dared not see that important truth concerning myself, that I was dead in trespasses and sins. But when I had, as it were, thrust away these views of myself at any time, I felt distressed to have the same discoveries of myself again; for I greatly feared being given over of God to final stupidity. When I thought of putting it off to a more convenient season, the conviction was so close and powerful, with regard to the present time, that it was the best, and probably the only time, that I dared not put it off.

It was the sight of truth concerning myself, truth respecting my state, as a creature fallen and alienated from God, and that consequently could make no demands on God for mercy, but must subscribe to the absolute sovereignty of the Divine Being; the sight of the truth, I say, my soul shrank away from and trembled to think of beholding. Thus, he that doth evil, as all unregenerate men continually do, hates the light of truth, neither cares to come to it, because it will reprove his deeds, and show him his just deserts, John 3:20. And though, some time before, I had taken much pains, as I thought, to submit to the sovereignty of God, yet I mistook the thing; and did not once imagine that seeing and being made experimentally sensible of this truth, which my soul now so much dreaded and trembled at, was the frame of soul that I had been so earnest in pursuit of heretofore. For I had ever hoped, that when I had attained to that humiliation, which I supposed necessary to go before faith, then it would not be fair for God to cast me off; but now I saw it was so far from any goodness in me, to own myself spiritually dead, and destitute of all goodness, that, on the contrary, my mouth would be forever stopped by it; and it looked as dreadful to me to see myself, and the relation I stood in to God—I a sinner and criminal, and he a great Judge and Sovereign—as it would be to a poor trembling creature, to venture off some high precipice. And hence I put it off for a minute or two, and tried for better circumstances to do it in; either I must read a passage or two, or pray first, or something of the like

nature; or else put off my submission to God's sovereignty, with an objection, that I did not know how to submit. But the truth was, I could see no safety in owning myself in the hands of a sovereign God, and that I could lay no claim to anything better than damnation.

But after a considerable time spent in such like exercises and distresses, one morning while I was walking in a solitary place, as usual, I at once saw that all my contrivances and projects to effect or procure deliverance and salvation for myself, were utterly in vain; I was brought quite to a stand, as finding myself totally lost. I had thought many times before, that the difficulties in my way were very great; but now I saw, in another and very different light, that it was forever impossible for me to do anything towards helping or delivering myself. I then thought of blaming myself, that I had not done more, and been more engaged, while I had opportunity for it seemed now as if the season of doing was forever over and gone but I instantly saw, that let me have done what I would, it would no more have tended to my helping myself, than what I had done; that I had made all the pleas I ever could have made to all eternity; and that all my pleas were vain. The tumult that had been before in my mind, was now quieted; and I was something eased of that distress, which I felt, while struggling against a sight of myself, and of the divine sovereignty. I had the greatest certainty that my state was forever miserable, for all that I could do; and wondered that I had never been sensible of it before.

While I remained in this state, my notions respecting my duties were quite different from what I had ever entertained in times past. Before this, the more I did in duty, the more hard I thought it would be for God to cast me off; though at the same time I confessed, and thought I saw, that there was no goodness or merit in my duties; but now the more I did in prayer or any other duty, the more I saw I was indebted to God for allowing me to ask for mercy; for I saw it was self-interest had led me to pray, and that I had never once prayed from any respect to the glory of God. Now I saw there was no necessary connection between my prayers and the bestowment of divine mercy; that they laid not the least obligation upon God to bestow his grace upon me; and that there was no more virtue or goodness in them, than there would be in my paddling with my hand in the water, (which was the comparison I had then in my mind), and this because they were not performed from any love or regard to God. I saw that I had been heaping up my devotions

before God, fasting, praying, etc. pretending, and indeed really thinking sometimes, that I was aiming at the glory of God; whereas I never once truly intended it, but only my own happiness. I saw, that as I had never done anything for God, I had no claim on anything from him, but perdition, on account of my hypocrisy and mockery. Oh, how different did my duties now appear from what they used to do! I used to charge them with sin and imperfection; but this was only on account of the wanderings and vain thoughts attending them, and not because I had no regard to God in them; for this I thought I had. But when I saw evidently that I had regard to nothing but self-interest, then they appeared a vile mockery of God, self-worship, and a continual course of lies; so that I now saw that something worse had attended my duties, than barely a few wanderings, etc.; for the whole was nothing but self-worship, and a horrid abuse of God.

I continued, as I remember, in this state of mind, from Friday morning till the Sabbath evening following, (July 12, 1739), when I was walking again in the same solitary place, where I was brought to see myself lost and helpless, as before mentioned. Here, in a mournful melancholy state, I was attempting to pray; but found no heart to engage in that or any other duty; my former concern, exercise, and religious affections were now gone. I thought the Spirit of God had quite left me; but still was not distressed: yet disconsolate, as if there was nothing in heaven or earth could make me happy. Having been thus endeavoring to pray though, as I thought, very stupid and senseless for near half an hour, then, as I was walking in a dark thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to the view and apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any external brightness, for I saw no such thing; nor do I intend any imagination of a body of light, somewhere in the third heavens, or anything of that nature; but it was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of God, such as I never had before, nor anything which had the least resemblance of it. I stood still, wondered, and admired! I knew that I never had seen before anything comparable to it for excellency and beauty; it was widely different from all the conceptions that ever I had of God, or things divine. I had no particular apprehension of any one person in the Trinity, either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost; but it appeared to be divine glory. My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable, to see such a God, such a glorious Divine Being; and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that he should be God over all forever and ever. My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness,

greatness, and other perfections of God, that I was even swallowed up in him; at least to that degree, that I had no thought (as I remember) at first about my own salvation, and scarce reflected there was such a creature as myself.

Thus God, I trust, brought me to a hearty disposition to exalt him, and set him on the throne, and principally and ultimately to aim at his honor and glory, as King of the universe. I continued in this state of inward joy, peace, and astonishment, till near dark, without any sensible abatement; and then began to think and examine what I had seen; and felt sweetly composed in my mind all the evening following. I felt myself in a new world, and every thing about me appeared with a different aspect from what it was wont to do. At this time, the way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and excellency, that I wondered [if] I should ever think of any other way of salvation; was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances, and complied with this lovely, blessed, and excellent way before. If I could have been saved by my own duties, or any other way that I had formerly contrived, my whole soul would now have refused it. I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation, entirely by the righteousness of Christ.

The sweet relish of what I then felt, continued with me for several days, almost constantly, in a greater or less degree; I could not but sweetly rejoice in God, lying down and rising up. The next Lord's day I felt something of the same kind, though not so powerful as before. But not long after I was again involved in thick darkness, and under great distress; yet not of the same kind with my distress under convictions. I was guilty, afraid, and ashamed to come before God; was exceedingly pressed with a sense of guilt: but it was not long before I felt, I trust, true repentance and joy in God. About the latter end of August, I again fell under great darkness; it seemed as if the presence of God was clean gone forever; though I was not so much distressed about my spiritual state, as I was at my being shut out from God's presence, as I then sensibly was. But it pleased the Lord to return graciously to me, not long after.

In the beginning of September I went to college³ and entered there; but with some degree of reluctancy, fearing lest I should not be able to lead a life of strict religion, in the midst of so many temptations. After this,

³ Yale College, in New Haven, [Connecticut].

in the vacancy, before I went to tarry at college, it pleased God to visit my soul with clearer manifestations of himself and his grace. I was spending some time in prayer, and self-examination, when the Lord by his grace so shined into my heart, that I enjoyed full assurance of his favor, for that time; and my soul was unspeakably refreshed with divine and heavenly enjoyments. At this time especially, as well as some others, sundry passages of God's word opened to my soul with divine clearness, power, and sweetness, so as to appear exceeding precious, and with clear and certain evidence of its being the word of God. I enjoyed considerable sweetness in religion all the winter following.

In January, 1740, the measles spread much in college; and I having taken the distemper, went home to Haddam. But some days before I was taken sick, I seemed to be greatly deserted, and my soul mourned the absence of the Comforter exceedingly. It seemed to me all comfort was forever gone; I prayed and cried to God for help, yet found no present comfort or relief. But through divine goodness, a night or two before I was taken ill, while I was walking alone in a very retired place, and engaged in meditation and prayer, I enjoyed a sweet refreshing visit, as I trust, from above; so that my soul was raised far above the fears of death. Indeed I rather longed for death, than feared it. O how much more refreshing this one season was, than all the pleasures and delights that earth can afford! After a day or two I was taken with the measles, and was very ill indeed, so that I almost despaired of life; but had no distressing fears of death at all. However, through divine goodness I soon recovered; yet, by reason of hard and close studies, and being much exposed on account of my freshmanhip, I had but little time for spiritual duties: my soul often mourned for want of more time and opportunity to be alone with God. In the spring and summer following, I had better advantages for retirement, and enjoyed more comfort in religion. Though indeed my ambition in my studies greatly wronged the activity and vigor of my spiritual life; yet this was usually the case with me, that "in the multitude of my thoughts within me, God's comforts principally delighted my soul;" these were my greatest consolations day by day.

One day I remember, in particular, (I think it was in June, 1740) I walked to a considerable distance from the college, in the fields alone at noon, and in prayer found such unspeakable sweetness and delight in God, that I thought, if I must continue still in this evil world, I wanted always

to be there, to behold God's glory. My soul dearly loved all mankind, and longed exceedingly that they should enjoy what I enjoyed. It seemed to be a little resemblance of heaven. On Lord's day, July 6 (being sacrament-day), I found some divine life and spiritual refreshment in that holy ordinance. When I came from the Lord's table, I wondered how my fellow-students could live as I was sensible most did. Next Lord's day, July 13, I had some special sweetness in religion. Again, Lord's day, July 20, my soul was in a sweet and precious frame.

Some time in August following, I became so weakly and disordered, by too close application to my studies, that I was advised by my tutor to go home, and disengage my mind from study, as much as I could; for I was grown so weak, that I began to spit blood. I took his advice, and endeavored to lay aside my studies. But being brought very low, I looked death in the face more steadfastly; and the Lord was pleased to give me renewedly a sweet sense and relish of divine things; and particularly, October 13, I found divine help and consolation in the precious duties of secret prayer and self-examination, and my soul took delight in the blessed God: so likewise on the 17th of October.

Saturday, October 18. In my morning devotions, my soul was exceedingly melted, and bitterly mourned over my exceeding sinfulness and vileness. I never before had felt so pungent and deep a sense of the odious nature of sin, as at this time. My soul was then unusually carried forth in love to God, and had a lively sense of God's love to me. And this love and hope, at that time, cast out fear. Both morning and evening I spent some time in self-examination, to find the truth of grace, as also my fitness to approach to God at his table the next day; and through infinite grace, found the Holy Spirit influencing my soul with love to God, as a witness within myself.

Lord's day, October 19. In the morning I felt my soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness. In the forenoon, while I was looking on the sacramental elements, and thinking that Jesus Christ would soon be "set forth crucified before me," my soul was filled with light and love, so that I was almost in an ecstasy; my body was so weak, I could scarcely stand. I felt at the same time an exceeding tenderness and most fervent love towards all mankind; so that my soul and all the powers of it seemed, as it were, to melt into softness and sweetness. But during the communion, there was some abatement of this life and fervor. This love and joy cast out fear; and my soul longed for perfect grace and

glory. This frame continued till the evening, when my soul was sweetly spiritual in secret duties.

Monday, October 20. I again found the assistance of the Holy Spirit in secret duties, both morning and evening, and life and comfort in religion through the whole day.

Tuesday, October 21. I had likewise experience of the goodness of God in “shedding abroad his love in my heart,” and giving me delight and consolation in religious duties; and all the remaining part of the week, my soul seemed to be taken up with divine things. I now so longed after God, and to be freed from sin, that when I felt myself recovering, and thought I must return to college again, which had proved so hurtful to my spiritual interest the year past, I could not but be grieved, and I thought I had much rather have died; for it distressed me to think of getting away from God. But before I went, I enjoyed several other sweet and precious seasons of communion with God, (particularly October 30, and November 4) wherein my soul enjoyed unspeakable comfort.

I returned to college about November 6, and, through the goodness of God, felt the power of religion almost daily, for the space of six weeks. November 28. In my evening devotion, I enjoyed precious discoveries of God, and was unspeakably refreshed with that passage, Heb. 12:22–24. My soul longed to wing away for the paradise of God; I longed to be conformed to God in all things. A day or two after, I enjoyed much of the light of God’s countenance, most of the day; and my soul rested in God.

Tuesday, December 9. I was in a comfortable frame of soul most of the day; but especially in evening devotions, when God was pleased wonderfully to assist and strengthen me; so that I thought nothing should ever move me from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord. Oh one hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this lower world.

Some time towards the latter end of January, 1741, I grew more cold and dull in religion, by means of my old temptation, viz. ambition in my studies. But through divine goodness, a great and general awakening spread itself over the college, about the latter end of February, in which I was much quickened, and more abundantly engaged in religion.

THIS AWAKENING WAS at the beginning of that extraordinary religious commotion through the land, which is fresh in everyone’s memory. It [the commotion] was

for a time very great and general at New Haven; and the college had no small share in it. That society was greatly reformed, the students in general became serious, many of them remarkably so, and much engaged in the concerns of their eternal salvation. And however undesirable the issue of the awakenings of that day have appeared in many others, there have been manifestly happy and abiding effects of the impressions then made on the minds of many of the members of that college. And by all that I can learn concerning Mr. Brainerd, there can be no reason to doubt but that he had much of God's gracious presence, and of the lively actings of true grace, at that time: but yet he was afterwards abundantly sensible [aware], that his religious experiences and affections at that time were not free from a corrupt mixture, nor his conduct to be acquitted from many things that were imprudent and blamable; which he greatly lamented himself, and was desirous that others should not make an ill use of such an example. And therefore, although at the time he kept a constant diary, containing a very particular account of what passed from day to day, for the next thirteen months, from the latter end of January, 1741, forementioned, in two small books, which he called the two first volumes of his diary. [They included] next following the account before given, of his convictions, conversion, and consequent comforts. Yet, when he lay on his death-bed, he gave order (unknown to me till after his death) that these two volumes should be destroyed, and in the beginning of the third book of his diary, he wrote thus, (by the hand of another, he not being able to write himself) . . .

. . . The two preceding volumes, immediately following the account of the author's conversion, are lost. If any are desirous to know how the author lived, in general, during that space of time, let them read the first thirty pages of this volume; where they will find something of a specimen of his ordinary manner of living, through that whole space of time, which was about thirteen months; excepting that here he was more refined from some imprudencies and indecent heats, than there; but the spirit of devotion running through the whole was the same.

IT COULD NOT be otherwise than that one whose heart had been so prepared and drawn to God, as Mr. Brainerd's had been, should be mightily enlarged, animated, and engaged at the sight of such an alteration made in the college, the town, and country; and so great an appearance of men reforming their lives, and turning from their profaneness and immorality to seriousness and concern for their salvation, and of religion reviving and flourishing almost every where. But as an intemperate, imprudent zeal, and a degree of enthusiasm, soon crept in,

and mingled itself with that revival of religion; and so great and general an awakening being quite a new thing in the land, at least as to all the living inhabitants of it; neither people nor ministers had learned thoroughly to distinguish between solid religion and its delusive counterfeits. Even many ministers of the gospel, of long standing and the best reputation, were for a time overpowered with the glaring appearances of the latter; and therefore, surely it was not to be wondered at, that young Brainerd, but a sophomore at college, should be so; who was not only young in years, but very young in religion and experience. He had enjoyed but little advantage for the study of divinity, and still less for observing the circumstances and events of such an extraordinary state of things. To think it strange, a man must divest himself of all reason. In these disadvantageous circumstances, Brainerd had the unhappiness to have a tincture [hint] of that intemperate, indiscreet zeal, which was at that time too prevalent; and was led, from his high opinion of others whom he looked upon as better than himself, into such errors as were really contrary to the habitual temper of his mind. One instance of his misconduct at that time gave great offence to the rulers of the college, even to that degree that they expelled him the society; which it is necessary should here be particularly related, with its circumstances.

During the awakening at college, there were several religious students who associated together for mutual conversation and assistance in spiritual things. These were wont freely to open themselves one to another, as special and intimate friends: Brainerd was one of this company. And it once happened, that he and two or three more of these intimate friends were in the hall together, after Mr. Whittelsey, one of the tutors, had been to prayer there with the scholars; no other person now remaining in the hall but Brainerd and his companions. Mr. Whittelsey having been unusually pathetic [arousing scornful pity] in his prayer, one of Brainerd's friends on this occasion asked him what he thought of Mr. Whittelsey; he made answer, "He has no more grace than this chair." One of the freshmen happening at that time to be near the hall (though not in the room), overheard those words. This person, though he heard no name mentioned, and knew not who was thus censured, informed a certain woman in the town, withal telling her his own suspicion, viz. that he believed Brainerd said this of some one or other of the rulers of the college. Whereupon she went and informed the rector, who sent for this freshman and examined him. He told the rector the words he heard Brainerd utter, and informed him who were in the room with him at that time. Upon which the rector sent for them: they were very backward [reluctant] to inform their friend what they looked upon as private

conversation, and especially as none but they had heard or knew of whom he had uttered those words: yet the rector compelled them to declare what he said, and of whom he said it. Brainerd looked on himself very ill used in the management of this affair; and thought that it was injuriously extorted from his friends, and then injuriously required of him—as if he had been guilty of some open, notorious crime—to make a public confession, and to humble himself before the whole college in the hall, for what he had said only in private conversation. [Since] he [was] not complying with this demand, and [since he] having gone once to the separate meeting at New Haven, when forbidden by the rector; and also having been accused by one person of saying, concerning the rector, “that he wondered he did not expect to drop down dead for fining the scholars who followed Mr. Tennent to Milford,” though there was no proof of it; (and Mr. Brainerd ever professed that he did not remember his saying anything to that purpose)—for these things he was expelled [from] the college.

NOW, HOW FAR the circumstances and exigencies of that day might justify such great severity in the governors of the college, I will not undertake to determine; it being my aim, not to bring reproach on the authority of the college, but only to do justice to the memory of a person, who was I think eminently one of those whose memory is blessed. The reader will see, in the sequel of the story of Mr. Brainerd’s life,⁴ what his own thoughts afterwards were of his behavior in these things, and in how Christian a manner he conducted himself, with respect to this affair: though he ever, as long as he lived, supposed himself ill used in the management of it, and in what he suffered. His expulsion was in the winter, 1742, while in his third year at college.

⁴ Particularly under the date, Wednesday, September 11, 1743.