

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

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OF THE

FOUNDER, AND PRINCIPAL ALUMNI

OF THE

LOG COLLEGE.

TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE REVIVALS  
OF RELIGION, UNDER THEIR MINISTRY.

COLLECTED AND EDITED

BY

A. ALEXANDER, D.D.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE REV. SAMUEL BLAIR.

Educated in the Log College—Licensed to preach by the Newcastle Presbytery—First settled at Shrewsbury, N. J.—Removes to New Londonderry in Pennsylvania—Great revival in that congregation—His letter to Mr. Prince—How far justifiable in violating rules of order—Dr. Finley's character of him. Mr. Davies' Elogy—Publications.

THE following character of Mr. Samuel Blair is given by Dr. Finley, in his funeral sermon, occasioned by the death of this eminent servant of Jesus Christ.

“He was blessed with early piety. On his dying bed he could recollect with delight, various evidences of gracious influences in his tender years. By this means he was happily preserved from being ever engaged in vicious courses; and at once grew in stature and in grace. Religion, far from being a flashy thing with him, was rational and solid; manifesting itself in unreserved obedience to all God's commandments.

“To a holy disposition was added a great genius, capable of the highest improvement. He had a deep and penetrating judgment, a clear and regular

way of conceiving things, and a retentive memory. He was an indefatigable student, a calm and impartial searcher after truth. He thought for himself, and was determined in his conclusions, only by evidence. He had a very considerable store of critical learning, and was especially conversant with the scriptures in the original languages. How great his attainments in philosophy were, was known by few; for in his last years, his thirst for knowledge did sensibly increase, and he greatly improved himself therein. He studied several branches of the mathematics, and especially, geometry and astronomy; nor will these seem tasteless studies to one who had such a savour of living piety, when it is considered that he saw the glory of God in all his works, and admired and adored Him in all. He delighted to see the 'invisible things of Him, even his eternal power and godhead, manifested by the things that are made.' It was edifying to him to trace the footsteps of the divine wisdom in particulars, and the infinite reach of projection in the frame and structure of the whole.

“But his critical and philosophical learning, and his large acquaintance with geography and history, were exceeded by his knowledge in divinity. This was the business of his life, and herein he made such proficiency as few of his standing in the ministry have attained unto. Here he found what perfectly answered his refined, spiritual taste. The

contemplation of redeeming love, did much more elevate his soul, than that of the works of creation ; for therein he saw the wisdom, the power, the justice, and the love of God, more clearly displayed. On every subject he had a set of most accurately studied thoughts. He had often weighed in an impartial balance, every theological controversy ; was a solid disputant, and able to defend all necessary truth. He was a judicious casuist, and could very satisfyingly resolve dubious and perplexed cases of conscience. He was not only a proficient in systematic divinity, which is comparatively a small attainment, but a great textuary. He studied the sacred oracles above all other things, and that it was not in vain, manifestly appeared from his great ability in ‘dividing the word of truth.’ He could ‘bring out of his treasure, things new and old.’ How clearly and fully would he explain his subject ? with what irresistible arguments confirm the truth ! With what admirable dexterity accommodate it to his audience ! And with what solemn pungency did he impress it on the conscience ! He spoke like one who knew the worth of souls, and felt in himself the surest constraints of love to God and man.

“As to his religious principles, he was of noble and generous sentiments. He had not ‘so learned Christ,’ as to be furious in his zeal for mere circumstantial, or indifferent points. He understood the

nature of religion better than to place it in things in which it does not consist ; and was too much exercised about ‘the great matters of the law,’ to be equally zealous for ‘mint, anise, and cummin.’ Though sacrifice be good ; yet he had learned that ‘mercy is better.’ He believed, and that in accordance with the scriptures, that the communion of saints is of much greater importance, than many of those things in which Christians differ in judgment, and was, therefore, far from such narrowness, as to make every principle and practice which he thought to be good and true, a term of communion ; and he was as far from the contrary extreme of indifference to the truth, and laxness of discipline. As he was diligent in the exercise of his ministerial office, to the utmost of his strength, not sparing himself ; so God did very remarkably succeed his faithful ministrations to the conversion of many souls. He was the spiritual father of great numbers. I have had acquaintance with Christians in different places, where he only preached occasionally, who gave all hopeful evidences of a sacred conversion, and acknowledged him to be the instrument of it. He was strict in discipline ; yet so as to be still candid ; and severely just, yet so as to be still compassionate and tender. And with what wisdom and circumspection, he judged in difficult cases, his brethren of the presbytery well know. We waited for his sage remarks, and heard attentively, his pru-

dent reasonings; and after his words how seldom had any one occasion to speak again! ‘His speech dropped upon us, and we waited for him, as for the rain.’ He has been eminently servicable to the church, by assisting several promising youths in their studies for the ministry; who, becoming learned by his instructions, and formed by his example, are now wise, and useful, and faithful ministers.

“He was remarkably grave and solemn in his aspect and deportment; yet, of a cheerful, even, and pleasant temper. And in conversation with his intimate friends, facetious and witty, when the season and concurring circumstances would allow him to indulge in that way; in respect of which his prudence could well direct him. He was of a generous and liberal disposition; far from being niggardly, or covetous; was forward in acts of charity to the indigent, according to his ability, and all his conduct discovered a noble indifference toward earthly things.

“If we consider him as a friend, he was as firm and steadfast, and might as much be depended on as any I ever knew. He was remote from precarious and fickle humours: his approbation was not easily obtained, nor easily lost. Nor was he a friend only in compliment, but would cheerfully undergo hardships, and suffer disadvantages, in order to do a friendly office. He was conscientiously punctual in attending ecclesiastical judicatures, presbyteries or

synods. His presence might be depended on, if nothing extraordinary intervened, as certainly as the appointed day. He was not absent on every trifling inconvenience. In this respect his conduct was truly exemplary, and demonstrated his constant care for the public interests of religion. So great was his attention to matters of common concern, as to incline him, rather to expose himself, than balk an opportunity of doing good. It is well known, that his going upon an urgent call, in a weakly state of body, and in unsettled season, to a convention of the Trustees of New Jersey College, gave occasion to that fatal sickness, from which he never fully recovered.

“In social life, also, he was worthy of imitation. As a husband, he was affectionate and kind; as a father, tender and indulgent. In him, condescension and authority were duly tempered. There was *that* in him that could engage love and command reverence, at the same time. Who that was acquainted with him would not be ready to say, ‘happy was the family of which he was the head, and happy the congregation that enjoyed his ministry? happy the judicature of which he was a member; and happy the person, who was favoured with his friendship! He was a public blessing to the church, an honour to his people, an ornament to his profession who ‘magnified his office.’ He spoke as he believed; he practised as he preached; he lived holy, and died joyfully.



“ For a long course of years, he had a habitual, unwavering assurance of his interest in the favour of God, and that a blessed and glorious eternity would, one day open upon him; which were his own emphatical words on his dying bed. This his assurance was solid and scriptural, arising from the many and clear experiences he had of gracious communications to his soul. He was made sensible in his early years, of his guilty state by nature as well as practice; felt his inability to deliver himself; saw plainly that he lay at mercy, and that it was entirely at God’s pleasure to save or reject him. This view of the case created in him a restless concern, until the way of life through Jesus Christ was graciously discovered to him. Then he saw that God could save him in consistency with all the honours of governing justice; for that the obedience and sufferings of Christ, in the room of sinners, have made a sufficient atonement for sin. He saw that Christ was a Saviour every way complete and suitable for him. His soul approved the divine and glorious plan; and freely disclaiming all dependence on his own righteousness, wisdom, and strength, most gladly accepted the offer of the gospel, that Christ should be his ‘ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.’ Strict holiness was his choice, and it was the delightful business of his life, to ‘ do always those things which pleased his heavenly Father.’ And on his dying bed, he had the

full approbation and testimony of his conscience, as to the general bent and tenor of his life. These particulars are the heads of what he himself told me in his last sickness, and are delivered in the same order, as near as I can possibly recollect.”

When he approached near his end, he expressed most ardent desires “to depart and be with Christ:” and especially, the three last days of his life were taken up in this exercise. Many gracious words he spoke, gave an affectionate farewell to his beloved, sorrowful consort, and dear children: tenderly committed them to the divine mercy and faithfulness, and fervently prayed, that the blessing of the Most High might be vouchsafed to them, and rest upon them; which prayer, I hope, will be answered. His last words, a minute or two before his departure, were, “the Bridegroom is come, and we shall now have all things.” And thus, under a gleam of heaven, he breathed out his last.

The Rev. Samuel Davies, who had received nearly his whole education under the tuition of Samuel Blair, was deeply affected when he heard the sad tidings of the death of his revered, and beloved instructor. He was then residing at Hanover, in Virginia, where he had gone to occupy an important station, as will be particularly related in another part of this work. Mr. Davies, who possessed ardent affections, and a lively imagination, frequently gave indulgence to his poetic genius, which, if it had been cultivated,

might have rendered him conspicuous in that department, now invoked his sacred Muse, and composed an elegy of many lines, on his admired friend and tutor. The poem is more remarkable for pathos, than for smooth versification. The only reason for noticing it here, is, to show the opinion entertained of Mr. Blair, by this first of American preachers. A few extracts will be sufficient to answer our purpose.

“ —Blair is no more—then this poor world has lost  
 As rich a jewel as her stores could boast ;  
 Heaven, in just vengeance, has recalled again,  
 Its faithful envoy, from the sons of men,  
 Advanced him from his pious toils below,  
 In raptures there, in kindred plains to glow.”

“ O, had not the mournful news divulged,  
 My mind had still the pleasing dream indulged—  
 Still fancied Blair, with health and vigour blessed,  
 With some grand purpose labouring in his breast.  
 In studious thought, pursuing truth divine,  
 Till the full demonstration round him shine ;  
 Or, from the sacred desk, proclaiming loud,  
 His Master’s message, to the attentive crowd,  
 While heavenly truth with bright conviction glares,  
 And coward error shrinks, and disappears ;  
 While quick remorse, the hardy sinner feels,  
 And Calv’ry’s balm, the bleeding conscience heals.”

“ Oh ! could the Muse’s languid colours paint,  
 The man, the scholar, student, preacher, saint ;  
 I’d place his image full in public view ;  
 His friends should know more than before they knew.  
 His foes astonished at his virtues, gaze,  
 Or shrink confounded from the oppressive blaze.  
 To trace his bright example, all should turn,  
 And with the bravest emulation burn.  
 His name should my poor lays immortalize,

Till he, to attest his character, arise,  
And the Great Judge, the encomium ratifies."

The following lines will serve to show who were the persons, in Mr. Davies's estimation, who deserved to be handed down to posterity, as the chosen friends, and faithful coadjutors of Mr. Blair, in his evangelical labours. They were all alumni of the Log College, or of Mr. Blair's school, at New Londonderry. And if we look at the men educated in this school, we cannot but entertain an exalted opinion of Mr. Samuel Blair, as an instructor.

"Surviving remnant of the sacred tribe,  
Who knew the worth these plaintive lays describe;  
TENNENTS, three worthies of immortal fame,  
Brethren by office, birth, in heart and name.  
FINLEY, who full enjoyed the unbosomed friend;  
RODGERS, whose soul he like his own refined,  
When all attention, eager to admit  
The flowing knowledge, at his reverend feet,  
Raptured we sat; and thou above the rest,  
Brother and image of the dear deceased.  
Surviving Blair! Oh, let spontaneous flow  
The floods of tributary grief you owe.  
And in your number—if so mean a name,  
May the sad honour of chief mourner claim,  
Oh! may my filial tears more copious flow,  
And swell the tide of universal woe.  
Oh! Blair! whom all the tenderest names commend,  
My father, tutor, pastor, brother, friend!  
While distance, the sad privilege denies,  
O'er thy dear tomb, to vent my bursting eyes.  
The Muse erects—the sole return allowed—  
This humble monument of gratitude."

As the remarkable and impressive solemnity of

Samuel Blair's appearance, especially in the pulpit, has been noticed by all who have given any account of him; it will be gratifying to have the same confirmed by such a man as Samuel Davies, who himself was so distinguished for dignity and solemnity in the pulpit, that one of the most excellent laymen I ever knew, told me, that he went to hear Mr. Davies preach, when he was just grown up, and that the sight of the man, and the mere utterance of his text, "Martha, Martha," &c., made a deeper impression on him, than all the sermons he had ever heard before.

"Now, in the sacred desk, I see him rise,  
 And well he acts the herald of the skies.  
 Graceful solemnity, and striking awe  
 Sit in his looks, and deep attention draw.  
 His speaking aspect—in the bloom of youth  
 Renewed—declares unutterable truth.  
 Unthinking crowds grow solemn as they gaze,  
 And read his awful message in his face."

The principal writings of the Rev. Samuel Blair, were collected by his brother John, after his death, and published in Philadelphia, in the year 1754, together with Dr. Finley's Funeral Sermon, from which we have so largely quoted, and Mr. Davies's Elegy.

This volume contains seven sermons, all on highly important and practical subjects; which are treated in a very solemn and methodical manner. His style is perspicuous, but neither terse nor elegant; but the thoughts are those of a profound thinker.

To these sermons is appended an elaborate treatise on Predestination and Reprobation, evincing that the author was a thorough-going Calvinist. This treatise has been recently republished in Baltimore. This volume also contains his "Vindication," written by the direction of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, in answer to "The Government of the Church," &c., by the Rev. John Thompson.

The REV. SAMUEL BLAIR, was a native of Ireland, but came early to this country, and received his education in the Log College, under Mr. Wm. Tennent, Sen., at Neshaminy. He must, indeed, have been among the first pupils of this institution. After finishing his classical and theological studies, Mr. Blair put himself under the care of the New Castle presbytery, by which body he was, in due time, licensed to preach the gospel. Soon after his license, he was settled in the Presbyterian congregation, at Shrewsbury, in New Jersey. He laboured in this field, for five or six years, when he received an earnest call to settle in New Londonderry, otherwise called Fagg's Manor, in the State of Pennsylvania. Here he instituted a classical school, similar in its purpose to that of Mr. Tennent, in Neshaminy. In which, some of the ablest ministers of the Presbyterian church received either the whole, or the more substantial parts of their education. Among these were, the Rev. Samuel Davies, the Rev. Alexander

Cumming, the Rev. John Rodgers, D. D., the Rev. James Finley, and the Rev. Hugh Henry.

Mr. Blair's settlement at Shrewsbury, was in the year 1734, when he was only twenty-two years of age.

The presbytery of New Brunswick did not exist until the year 1738, of which Mr. Blair was one of the original members.

When he received the call from New Londonderry, in Chester county, Pennsylvania, he left it to the presbytery to decide, whether he should go or stay. After mature deliberation, they advised him to accept the call, as they were of opinion it would introduce him into a wider field of usefulness.

There are no records extant, from which we can learn any particulars respecting the fruits of Mr. Blair's labours at Shrewsbury. Here he commenced his ministerial work; and as he was a faithful, able and zealous preacher of the truth as it is in Jesus, we entertain no doubt that some of the good seed which he sowed, fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit. The vicissitudes of that congregation have been remarkable. For a while it was flourishing, and had many respectable members, but it became apparently extinct, and the house of worship was burned; but after being dead for some years, it was resuscitated; it now promises to flourish again.

Under his ministry at New Londonderry, there

occurred a very remarkable revival of religion, of which he wrote a particular narrative. The congregation at Fagg's Manor, consisted almost entirely of emigrants from the north of Ireland; and had been formed a number of years, but had never enjoyed the ministry of a stated pastor. His settlement among them took place in November, 1739; although he was not installed as their pastor, until the month of April, 1740.

The revival referred to above, commenced a short time after his settlement in the place. The following account is contained in the "Narrative" which he wrote, in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Prince, of Boston, in his "Christian History."

*"New Londonderry in Pennsylvania, Aug. 6th, 1744.*

"REV. SIR,

"I do most gladly comply with your desire in sending you some account of the glorious appearance of God in a way of special grace for us in this congregation, and other parts of this country: and am of the same judgment with you and other pious and judicious people, that the collecting and publishing of such accounts may greatly tend to the glory of our Redeemer, and the increase of his triumphs. I much rejoice in the publication of such a collection in the Christian History, so far as it is already carried on: I think it may serve to many excellent purposes, and be an happy mean of advancing the dear interests of our glorious Redeemer's kingdom, both in the present age, and the ages to come. And I cannot but look upon myself as called of God in duty, being thus invited to it, by you, Rev. Sir, to put to a hand, among many others of my reverend fathers and brethren on both sides of the Atlantic, to the carrying on of the design of said history, containing accounts of the revival and propaga-



tion of religion in this remarkable day of grace. I cannot, indeed, give near so full and particular a relation of the revival of religion here, as I might have done, had I had such a thing in view at the time when God was most eminently carrying on his work among us: I entirely neglected then to note down any particulars in writing, for which I have been often sorry since; so that this account must be very imperfect to what it might otherwise have been.

“That it may the more clearly appear that the Lord has indeed carried on a work of true real religion among us of late years, I conceive it will be useful to give a brief general view of the state of religion in these parts, before this remarkable season. I doubt not then but there were some sincerely religious people up and down; and there were, I believe, a considerable number in the several congregations, pretty exact, according to their education, in the observance of the external forms of religion, not only as to attendance upon public ordinances on the sabbath, but also, as to the practice of family worship, and perhaps, secret prayer too: but with these things the most part seemed to all appearance to rest contented; and to satisfy their consciences with a dead formality in religion. If they performed these duties pretty punctually in their seasons, and as they thought with a good meaning, out of conscience, and not just to obtain a name for religion among men; then they were ready to conclude that they were truly and sincerely religious. A very lamentable ignorance of the main essentials of true practical religion, and the doctrines nextly relating thereunto, very generally prevailed. The nature and necessity of the new birth, was but little known or thought of. The necessity of a conviction of sin and misery, by the Holy Spirit opening and applying the law to the conscience, in order to a saving closure with Christ, was hardly known at all, to the most. It was thought, that if there was any need of a heart-distressing sight of the soul’s danger, and fear of divine wrath, it was only needful for the grosser sort of sinners: and for any others to be deeply exercised this way (as there might sometimes be before, some rare instances observable) this was generally looked upon to be a great evil and temptation, that

had befallen those persons. The common names for such soul-concern were, melancholy, trouble of mind, or despair. These terms were in common, so far as I have been acquainted, indifferently used as synonymous; and trouble of mind, was looked upon as a great evil, which all persons that made any sober profession and practice of religion ought carefully to avoid. There was scarcely any suspicion at all, in general, of any danger of depending upon self-righteousness, and not upon the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation. Papists and Quakers would be readily acknowledged guilty of this crime; but hardly any professed Presbyterian. The necessity of being first in Christ by a vital union, and in a justified state, before our religious services can be well pleasing and acceptable to God, was very little understood or thought of: but the common notion seemed to be, that if people were aiming to be in the way of duty as well as they could, as they imagined, there was no reason to be much afraid.

“According to these principles, and this ignorance of some of the most soul-concerning truths of the gospel, people were very generally through the land, careless at heart, and stupidly indifferent about the great concerns of eternity. There was very little appearance of any hearty engagedness in religion: and indeed the wise, for the most part, were in a great degree asleep with the foolish. It was sad to see with what a careless behaviour the public ordinances were attended, and how people were given to unsuitable worldly discourse, on the Lord’s holy day. In public companies, especially at weddings, a vain and frothy lightness was apparent in the deportment of many professors: and in some places, very extravagant follies, as horse-running, fiddling and dancing, pretty much obtained, on those occasions.

Thus, religion lay as it were a dying, and ready to expire its last breath of life in this part of the visible church: and it was in the spring of 1740, when the God of salvation was pleased to visit us with the blessed effusions of his holy spirit in an eminent manner. The first very open and public appearance of this gracious visitation in these parts, was in the congregation which God has committed to my charge.

This congregation has not been erected above fourteen or fifteen years from this time: the place is a new settlement, generally settled with people from Ireland (as all our congregations in Pennsylvania, except two or three, chiefly are made up of people from that kingdom).\* I am the first minister they have ever had settled in the place; having been regularly liberated from my former charge, in East Jersey, above an hundred miles north-eastward from hence; the reverend presbytery of New Brunswick of which I had the comfort of being a member, judging it to be my duty, for sundry reasons, to remove from thence. At the earnest invitation of the people here, I came to them in the beginning of November, 1739; accepted of a call from them that winter, and was formally installed and settled among them as their minister, in April following. There were some hopefully pious people here at my first coming, which was a great encouragement and comfort to me.

“I had some view and sense of the deplorable condition of the land in general; and accordingly the scope of my preaching through that first winter after I came here, was mainly calculated for persons in a natural unregenerate state. I endeavoured, as the Lord enabled me, to open up and prove from his word, the truths which I judged most necessary for such as were in that state to know and believe, in order to their conviction and conversion. I endeavoured to deal searchingly and solemnly with them: and through the concurring blessing of God, I had knowledge of four or five brought under deep convictions that winter.

\* “It may be convenient here to observe, that in Ireland, are three different sorts of people, deriving from three several nations: 1. those who descend from the ancient Irish; and these are generally Roman Catholics. 2. Those who descend from ancestors who came from England; and these are generally Church of England men. 3. Those who descend from ancestors who came from Scotland since the Reformation: and these are generally Presbyterians; who chiefly inhabit the northerly parts of Ireland: and these are the people who have of late years in great numbers, removed thence into these American regions.

“In the beginning of March, I took a journey into East Jersey; and was abroad for two or three Sabbaths: a neighbouring minister, who seemed to be earnest for the awakening and conversion of secure sinners, and whom I had obtained to preach a Sabbath to my people in my absence, preached to them, I think, on the first Sabbath after I left home: his subject was the dangerous and awful case of such as continue unregenerate, and unfruitful under the means of grace. The text was Luke, xiii. 7. ‘Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? Under that sermon, there was a visible appearance of much soul-concern among the hearers; so that some burst out with an audible noise into bitter crying; a thing not known in these parts before. After I had come home, there came a young man to my house, under deep trouble about the state of his soul, whom I had looked upon as a pretty light merry sort of a youth: he told me that he was not anything concerned about himself in the time of hearing the above-mentioned sermon, nor afterwards, till the next day that he went to his labour, which was grubbing, in order to clear some new ground. The first grub he set about, was a pretty large one, with a high top, and when he had cut the roots, as it fell down, these words came instantly to his remembrance, and as a spear to his heart, ‘cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?’ So, thought he, must I be cut down by the justice of God, for the burning of hell, unless I get into another state than I am now in. He thus came into very great and abiding distress, which, to all appearance, has had a happy issue; his conversation being to this day as becomes the gospel of Christ.

“The news of this very public appearance of deep soul-concern among my people, met me a hundred miles from home; I was very joyful to hear of it, in hopes that God was about to carry on an extensive work of converting grace amongst them. And the first sermon I preached after my return to them, was from Matthew vi. 33. ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.’ After opening up

and explaining the parts of the text, when, in the improvement, I came to press the injunction in the text upon the unconverted and ungodly, and offered this as one reason among others, why they should now henceforth first of all seek the kingdom and righteousness of God, viz., that they had neglected too long to do so already: this consideration seemed to come and cut like a sword upon several in the congregation; so that while I was speaking upon it, they could no longer contain, but burst out in the most bitter mourning. I desired them as much as possible, to restrain themselves from making any noise, that would hinder themselves or others from hearing what was spoken: and often afterwards I had occasion to repeat the same counsel: I still advise people to endeavour to moderate and bound their passions, but not so as to resist or stifle their conviction. The number of the awakened increased very fast: frequently under sermons there were some newly convicted, and brought into deep distress of soul about their perishing estate. Our Sabbath assemblies soon became vastly large: many people from almost all parts around, inclining very much to come where there was such appearance of the divine power and presence. I think there was scarcely a sermon or lecture preached here through that whole summer, but there were manifest evidences of impressions on the hearers; and many times the impressions were very great and general: several would be overcome and fainting; others deeply sobbing, hardly able to contain; others crying in a most dolorous manner; many others more silently weeping: and a solemn concern appearing in the countenances of many others. And sometimes the soul-exercises of some (though comparatively but very few) would so far affect their bodies, as to occasion some strange unusual bodily motions. I had opportunities of speaking particularly with a great many of those, who afforded such outward tokens of inward soul-concern in the time of public worship and hearing of the word: indeed, many came to me of themselves in their distress, for private instruction and counsel; and I found, so far as I can remember, that with by far the greater part their apparent concern in public was not

a transient qualm of conscience, or merely a floating commotion of the affections; but a rational fixed conviction of their dangerous perishing estate. They could generally offer as a convictive evidence of their being in an unconverted miserable estate, that they were utter strangers to those dispositions, exercises, and experiences of soul in religion, which they heard laid down from God's word, as the inseparable characters of the truly regenerate people of God; even such as before had something of the form of religion; and, I think the greater number were of this sort; and several had been pretty exact and punctual in the performance of outward duties; they saw they had been contenting themselves with the form without the life and power of godliness; and that they had been taking peace to their consciences from, and depending upon their own righteousness, and not the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

“In a word, they saw that true practical religion was quite another thing than they had conceived it to be, or had any true experience of. There were likewise many up and down the land, brought under deep distressing convictions that summer, who had lived very loose lives, regardless of the very externals of religion. In this congregation, I believe there were very few that were not stirred up to some solemn thoughtfulness and concern more than usual about their souls. The general carriage and behaviour of people was soon very visibly altered. Those awakened were much given to reading in the Holy Scriptures, and other good books. Excellent books that had lain by much neglected, were then much perused, and lent from one to another; and it was a peculiar satisfaction to people, to find how exactly the doctrines they heard daily preached, harmonized with the doctrines contained and taught by great and godly men in other parts, and former times. The subjects of discourse almost always, when any of them were together, were the matters of religion and great concerns of their souls. All unsuitable, worldly, vain discourse on the Lord's day, seemed to be laid aside among them: indeed, for anything that appeared, there seemed to be almost a universal reformation in this respect in our public assemblies, on the Lord's day.

“There was an earnest desire in people after opportunities for public worship and hearing the word. I appointed, in the spring, to preach every Friday through the summer, when I was at home, and those meetings were well attended; and at several of them, the power of the Lord was remarkably with us. The main scope of my preaching, through that summer, was, laying open the deplorable state of man by nature since the fall, our ruined exposed case by the breach of the first covenant, and the awful condition of such as were not in Christ, giving the marks and characters of such as were in that condition: and, moreover, laying open the way of recovery, in the new covenant, through a Mediator, with the nature and necessity of faith in Christ the Mediator, &c. I laboured much on the last mentioned heads; that the people might have right apprehensions of the gospel-method of life and salvation. I treated much on the way of sinners closing with Christ by faith, and obtaining a right peace to an awakened wounded conscience: showing that persons were not to take peace to themselves on account of their repentings, sorrows, prayers, and reformations; nor to make these things the grounds of their adventuring themselves upon Christ and his righteousness, and of their expectations of life by him: and that neither were they to obtain or seek peace in extraordinary ways, by visions, dreams, or immediate inspirations: but, by an understanding view, and believing persuasion of the way of life, as revealed in the gospel, through the suretyship obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ; with a view of the suitability and sufficiency of that mediatory righteousness of Christ, for the justification and life of law-condemned sinners; and thereupon, freely accepting him for their Saviour, heartily consenting to, and being well pleased with the way of salvation, and venturing their all upon his mediation, from the warrant and encouragement afforded of God thereunto in his word, by his free offer, authoritative command, and sure promise to those that so believe. I endeavoured to show the fruits and evidences of a true faith, &c.

“After some time, many of the convinced and distressed, afforded very hopeful satisfying evidence that the Lord had

brought them to a true closure with Jesus Christ; and that their distresses and fears had been in a great measure removed in a right gospel-way, by believing in the Son of God. Several of them had very remarkable and sweet deliverances this way. It was very agreeable to hear their accounts, how that when they were in the deepest perplexity and darkness, distress and difficulty, seeking God as poor condemned hell-deserving sinners, the scheme of recovering grace through a Redeemer has been opened to their understandings with a surprising beauty and glory, so that they were enabled to believe in Christ with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. It appeared that most generally the Holy Spirit improved for this purpose, and made use of some one particular passage or other of the Holy Scripture, that came to their remembrance in their distress: some gospel-offer or promise, or some declaration of God directly referring to the recovery and salvation of undone sinners, by the new-covenant. But with some it was otherwise: they had not any one particular place of Scripture more than another in their view, at the time. Those who met with such a remarkable relief; as their account of it was rational and scriptural, so, they appeared to have had at the time, the attendants and fruits of a true faith; particularly humility, love, and an affectionate regard to the will and honour of God: much of their exercise was in self-abasing and self-loathing; and admiring the astonishing condescension and grace of God towards such vile and despicable creatures, that had been so full of enmity and disaffection to him. They freely and sweetly, with all their hearts, chose the way of his commandments; their inflamed desire was to live to him for ever, according to his will; and to the glory of his name.

“There were others that had not such remarkable relief and comfort, who yet I could not but think were savingly renewed and brought truly to accept of and rest upon Jesus Christ, though not with such a degree of liveliness and liberty, strength and joy; and some of those continued for a considerable time after, for the most part, under a very distressing suspicion and jealousy of their case. I was all



along very cautious of expressing to people my judgment of the goodness of their states, except where I had pretty clear evidences from them, of their being savingly changed ; and yet they continued in deep distress, casting off all their evidences. Sometimes in such cases, I have thought it needful to use greater freedom that way than ordinary ; but otherwise, I judged that it could be of little use, and might easily be hurtful.

“Beside those above spoken of, whose experience of a work of grace was in a good degree clear and satisfying, there were some others (though but very few in this congregation, that I knew of) who, having very little knowledge or capacity, had a very obscure and improper way of representing their case. In relating how they had been exercised, they would chiefly speak of such things as were only the effects of their soul exercise upon their bodies, from time to time, and some things that were purely imaginary : which obliged me to be at much pains in my inquiries, before I could get any just ideas of their case. I would ask them, what were the thoughts, the views and apprehensions of their minds, and exercise of their affections, at such times when they felt, perhaps, a quivering come over them, or a faintness, or thought they saw their hearts full of some nauseous filthiness ; or when they felt a heavy weight or load at their hearts, or felt the weight again taken off, and a pleasant warmth rising from their hearts, as they would probably express themselves, which might be the occasions or causes of these things they spoke of ; and then, when with some difficulty I could get them to understand me, some of them would give a pretty rational account of solemn and spiritual exercises : and after a thorough careful examination this way, I could not but conceive good hopes of some such persons.

“But there were, moreover, several others, who seemed to think concerning themselves that they were under some good work, of whom yet I could have no reasonable ground to think that they were under any hopeful work of the Spirit of God. As near as I could judge of their case from all my acquaintance and conversation with them, it was

much to this purpose. They believed there was a good work going on; that people were convinced, and brought into a converted state; and they desired to be converted too. They saw others weeping and fainting, and heard people mourning and lamenting, and they thought if they could be like these it would be very hopeful with them; hence they endeavoured just to get themselves affected by sermons, and if they could come to weeping, or get their passions so raised as to incline them to vent themselves by cries, now they hoped they were got under convictions, and were in a very hopeful way; and afterwards, they would speak of their being in trouble, and aim at complaining of themselves, but seemed as if they knew not well how to do it, nor what to say against themselves; and then they would be looking and expecting to get some texts of scripture applied to them for their comfort; and when any scripture text which they thought was suitable for that purpose, came to their minds, they were in hopes it was brought to them by the Spirit of God, that they might take comfort from it. And thus, much in such a way as this, some appeared to be pleasing themselves with an imaginary conversion of their own making. I endeavoured to correct and guard against all such mistakes so far as I discovered them, in the course of my ministry; and to open up the nature of a true conviction by the Spirit of God, and of a saving conversion.

“Thus I have given a very brief account of the state and progress of religion here through that first summer after the remarkable revival of it among us. Towards the end of that summer, there seemed to be a stop put to the further progress of the work as to conviction and awakening of sinners; and ever since there have been very few instances of persons convinced. It remains then, that I speak something of the abiding effects and after fruits of those awakenings and other religious exercises which people were under during the above mentioned period. Such as were only under some slight impressions and superficial awakenings, seem in general to have lost them all again without any abiding hopeful alteration upon them. They seem to have fallen back again into their former carelessness and stupidity

and some that were under pretty great awakenings, and considerably deep convictions, of their miserable state, seem also to have got peace again to their consciences without getting it by a true faith in the Lord Jesus; affording no satisfying evidence of their being savingly renewed. But, through the infinite rich grace of God (blessed be his glorious name!) there is a considerable number who afford all the evidence that can be reasonably expected and required for our satisfaction in the case, of their having been the subjects of a thorough saving change: (except in some singular instances of behaviour, which alas! proceed from, and shew the sad remains of original corruption even in the regenerate children of God, while in this imperfect state) their walk is habitually tender and conscientious, their carriage towards their neighbours just and kind, and they appear to have an agreeable peculiar love one for another; and for all in whom appears the image of God. Their discourses of religion, their engagedness and dispositions of soul in the practice of the immediate duties and ordinances of religion, all appear quite otherwise than formerly. Indeed, the liveliness of their affections in the ways of religion is much abated in general, and they are in some measure humbly sensibly of this and grieved for it, and are carefully endeavouring still to live unto God; much grieved with their imperfections and the plagues they find in their own hearts; and frequently they meet with some delightful enlivenings of soul; and, particularly, our sacramental solemnities for communicating in the Lord's Supper, have generally been very blessed seasons of enlivening and enlargement to the people of God. There is a very evident and great increase of Christian knowledge with many of them. We enjoy in this congregation the happiness of a great degree of harmony and concord; scarcely any have appeared with open opposition and bitterness against the work of God among us, and elsewhere up and down the land: though there are a pretty many such in several other places through the country: some, indeed, in this congregation, but very few, have separated from us and joined with the ministers who have unhappily opposed this blessed work.

“It would have been a great advantage to this account, had I been careful in time to have written down the experiences of particular persons: but this I neglected in the proper season. However, I have more lately noted down an account of some of the soul exercises and experiences of one person, which I think may be proper to make public on this occasion. The person is a single young woman, but I judge it proper to conceal her name, because she is yet living. I was very careful to be exact in the affair, both in my conversing with her, and writing the account she gave me of herself, immediately after. And though I don't pretend to give her very words for the most part, yet I am well satisfied I don't misrepresent what she related. The account then is this; she was first brought to some solemn thoughtfulness and concern about her soul's case, by seeing others so much concerned about their souls: when she saw people in deep distress about the state of their souls, she thought with herself, how unconcerned she was about her own. And though she thought that she had not been very guilty of great sins, yet she feared she was too little concerned about her eternal well-being: and then the sermons she heard made her still uneasy about her case; so that she would go home on the Sabbath evenings, pretty much troubled and cast down; which concern used to abide with her for a few days after, but still, towards the end of the week she would become pretty easy; and then, by hearing the word on the Sabbath days, her uneasiness was always renewed for a few days again. And thus it fared with her, until one day as she was hearing a sermon preached from Heb. iii. 15: ‘To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’ The minister, in the sermon, spoke to this effect, ‘How many of you have been hearing the gospel for a long time, and yet your hearts remain always hard, without being made better by it: the gospel is the voice of God, but you have heard it only as the voice of man and not the voice of God, and so have not been benefited by it.’ These words came with power to her heart. She saw that this was her very case; and she had an awful sense of the sin of her misimprovement of the gospel, of her stupidity, hardness and

unprofitableness under the hearing of the word of God. She saw that she was hereby exposed to the sin-punishing justice of God, and so was filled with very great fear and terror: but she said there was no other sin at that time applied to her conscience, neither did she see herself as altogether without Christ.

“ This deep concern, on the fore-mentioned account, stuck pretty close by her afterwards. There was a society of private Christians to meet in the neighbourhood, some day after, in the same week, for reading, prayer, and religious conference. She had not been at a society of that kind before, but she longed very much for the time of their meeting then, that she might go there: and while she was there, she got an awful view of her sin and corruption, and saw that she was without Christ and without grace; and her exercise and distress of soul was such, that it made her for a while both deaf and blind; but she said she had the ordinary use of her understanding, and begged that Christ might not leave her to perish, for she saw she was undone without him. After this she lived in bitterness of soul: and at another time she had such a view of her sinfulness, of the holiness and justice of God, and the danger she was in of eternal misery, as filled her with extreme anguish; so that had it not been that she was supported by an apprehension of God’s all-sufficiency, she told me, she was persuaded, she should have fallen immediately into despair. She continued for some weeks in great distress of spirit, seeking and pleading for mercy without any comfort; until one Sabbath evening, in a house where she was lodged, during the time of a sacramental solemnity, while the family were singing the 84th Psalm, her soul conceived strong hopes of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, and she had such apprehensions of the happiness of the heavenly state, that her heart was filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory; she sung with such elevation of soul, as if she had sung out of herself, as she expressed it; she thought at the time, it was as if the Lord had put by the veil and showed her the open glory of heaven: she had very enlarged views of the sufficiency of Christ to

save: she was clearly persuaded, to the fullest satisfaction, that there was merit enough in him to answer for the sins of the most guilty sinner; and she saw that God could well be reconciled to all elect sinners in his Son; which was a most ravishing, delightful scene of contemplation to her.

“ But while she was in this frame, after some time she thought with herself, that notwithstanding all this, yet she could not with the full assurance of faith lay claim to the Lord Jesus as her own Saviour, in particular; she could not say with such full satisfaction and certainty as she desired, that he would be a Saviour, in particular, to her; and hence, for want of thoroughly understanding wherein the very essence of a saving faith consists, she had some jealous fear that she was not yet brought truly to believe in Christ. However, she was pretty free from her former terrors, after this sweet interview. But after some time, she grew more disconsolate, and more sensibly afraid of her state, on the forementioned account: she heard that sinners in closing with Christ by faith, received him for their Saviour, which she thought included in it a persuasion that he was their’s, in particular, and she could not clearly say that this had ever been her case; and so she came awfully to suspect herself to be as yet an unbeliever; and though she came in time to that sweet plerophory, and full assurance of faith; yet she has since seen her mistake in that matter about the nature of a true and saving faith. She continued very much under these grievous dejections, for about two years, and yet enjoyed considerable sweetness and comfort, at times. She often came to hear sermons with a desire to get clearly convinced of her being yet in a Christless state, and with a formed resolution to take and apply to herself what might be said in the sermon to the unconverted: but most commonly she returned very agreeably disappointed; she would generally hear some mark of grace, some evidence of a real Christian laid down, which she could lay claim to, and could not deny; and thus she was supported and comforted, from time to time. During these two years, it was still with much fear and perplexity that she adventured to communicate in the Lord’s Supper; but she could not omit it; and she always found some refreshing and sweetness, by that ordinance. ”

“ After she had been so long under an almost alternate succession of troubles and supports, the sun of righteousness at last broke out upon her, to the clear satisfaction and unspeakable ravishment of her soul, at a communion table. There her mind was let into the glori-

ous mysteries of redemption, with great enlargement ; while she meditated on the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, she thought with herself, he was not merely a man who suffered so for sinners, but infinitely more than man, even the most high God, the eternal Son, equal with the Father : and she saw his being God, put an infinite lustre and value upon his sufferings as man ; her heart was filled with a most unutterable admiration of his person, his merit and his love : she was enabled to believe in him with a strong self-evidencing faith ; she believed that he had suffered for her sins ; that she was the very person who by her sins had occasioned his sufferings, and brought agony and pain upon him. The consideration of this filled her with the deepest abhorrence of her sins, and most bitter grief for them ; she said she could have desired with all her heart to have melted and dissolved her body quite away in that very place, in lamentation and mourning over her sins. After this enjoyment, her soul was generally delighting in God, and she had much of the light of his countenance with her : and Oh ! her great concern still was, how she might live to the Lord, how she might do anything for him, and give honour to him. The Lord condescended to be much with her by his enlivening and comforting presence, and especially, sacramental seasons were blessed and precious seasons to her. At one of those occasions, she was in a sweet frame, meditating on the blood and water that issued from the wound made by the spear in her Saviour's side ; she thought, as water is of a purifying cleansing nature, so there was sanctifying virtue as well as justifying merit in the Lord Jesus ; and that she could no more be without the water, his sanctifying grace to cleanse her very polluted soul, than she could be without his blood to do away her guilt : and her heart was much taken up with the beauty and excellency of sanctification. At another time, a communion solemnity likewise, she was very full of delight and wonder with the thoughts of electing love ; how that God had provided and determined so great things for her before ever she had a being. And a very memorable enjoyment she had at another time, on Monday after a communion Sabbath, when these words came to her mind, 'The Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.' The glory and delight let in upon her soul by these words was so great, that it quite overcame her bodily frame : she said it seemed to her that she was almost all spirit, and that the body was quite laid by ; and she was sometimes in hopes that the union would actually break, and the soul

get quite away. She saw much at that time into the meaning of her Lord in those words, 'Because I live ye shall live also.'

"Respecting a time of sickness she had, concerning which I enquired of her, she told me, she expected pretty much to die then, and was very joyful at the near prospect of her change; and sensibly grieved to find herself recover again, chiefly because, that while she lived here she was so frail and sinful, and could do so little for the Lord's honour. I was with her in the time of that sickness, and indeed, I scarcely ever saw one appearing to be so fully and sweetly satisfied under the afflicting hand of God; she manifestly appeared to lie under it with a peaceful serenity and divine sweetness in her whole soul. In a word, her whole deportment in the world, bespeaks much humility and heavenliness of spirit.

"One of our Christian friends, a man about fifty years of age, was removed from us by death in the beginning of May last; of whom I can give some broken imperfect account, which perhaps may be of some use. His name was Hanse Kirkpatrick: he was a man of a pretty good understanding, and had been, I believe, a sober professor for many years, though he had not been very long in America. After the work of religion began so powerfully amongst us, I found in conversation with him, that he believed it to be a good work, but seemed very unwilling to give up his good opinion of his own case: he told me of some concern and trouble he had been in about his soul in his younger years; but yet the case looked suspicious that he had got ease in a legal way, upon an outward form of religion. At another time, being at his house, and taking up a little book that lay by me on the table, which I found to be Mr. Mather's dead faith anatomized, and self-justiciary convicted,' he said to me, that was indeed a strange book as ever he saw, and that according to that author, it was a great thing indeed to have a right faith that was true and saving, another thing than it was generally supposed to be; or to this purpose. He seemed to me at that time to be under more fears about his own case than I had observed in him before. Not long after this, as he was hearing a sermon, one day, the word was applied with irresistible evidence and power to his heart, so that he saw himself as yet in a perishing undone case: whereupon, the distress and exercise of his soul was so great, that he fell off the seat on which he was sitting, and wept and cried, very bitterly. A little after this he went to Philadelphia, at the time of the meeting of the synod, in hopes that perhaps he might meet with some benefit to his



soul, by hearing the ministers preach there, or by conversing with some of them. He told me afterwards, that while he was there, and as he walked the streets, he was unspeakably distressed with the view of his miserable condition; so that he could hardly keep his distress from being publicly discerned upon him: and, that he seemed sometimes to be even in a manner afraid that the streets would open and swallow up such a wretched creature. He told me of his trouble, and his very sweet relief out of it, in a most moving manner, under a very fresh sense and impression of both; but the particulars of his relief, I have quite forgot.

“He was afterwards chosen and set apart for a ruling elder in the congregation. He died of an imposthume, and gradually wasted away for a long time before his death, and was for about two months entirely confined to his bed. He told me, that for some time before he was laid bedfast, he had been full of very distressing fears and jealousies about his soul’s state, and was altogether unsatisfied about his interest in Christ; but that soon after he was confined to his bed, the Lord afforded him his comforting presence, cleared up his interest, and removed his fears. After this, he continued still clear and peaceful in his soul, and sweetly and wholly resigned to the Lord’s will, until death. While he had strength to speak much, he was free and forward to discourse of God and divine things. One time, as two other of our elders were with him, he exhorted them to continue steadfast and faithful to God’s truths and cause; for, he said, if he had a thousand souls, he could freely venture them all upon the doctrines which had been taught them in this congregation. One time when I took leave of him, he burst out into tears, saying, ‘I had been the messenger of the Lord of hosts to him that the Lord had sent to call him out of the broad way of destruction.’ For some days before his decease, he could speak but very little, but to all appearance, with a great deal of serenity and sweetness of soul, he fell asleep in Jesus.

“There have been very comfortable instances of little children, among us. Two sisters, the one being about seven, the other about nine years of age, were hopefully converted, that summer, when religion was so much revived here. I discoursed with them both very lately, and from their own account, and the account of their parents, there appears to have been a lasting and thorough change wrought in them. They speak of their soul experiences with a very becoming gravity, and apparent impression of the things they speak of.

“The youngest was awakened by hearing the word preached: she

told me she heard in sermons, that except persons were convinced and converted, they would surely go to hell ; and she knew she was not converted. This set her to praying with great earnestness, with tears and cries ; yet her fears and distress continued for several days, until, one time, as she was praying, her heart, she said, was drawn out in great love to God ; and, as she thought of heaven, and being with God, she was filled with sweetness and delight : I could not find by her, that she had at that time any explicit particular thoughts about Christ as a Redeemer, but, she said, she knew then that Christ had died for sinners. She told me, she often found such delight and love to God since, as she did then, and at such times, she was very willing to die that she might be with God : but she said, she was sometimes afraid yet of going to hell. I asked her, ‘If she was troubled at any time when she was not afraid of going to hell?’ She said, ‘yes:’ I asked her, ‘what she was troubled for, then?’ she said, ‘because she had done ill to God ;’ meaning, that she had done evil, and sinned against God. Some time after she first found comfort, one night, when her father and all the rest of the family, but her mother and herself, were gone to a private society, she said to her mother, ‘that the people were singing and praying, where her father was gone,’ and desired her mother to do the same with her : and after they were gone to bed, ‘she desired her mother to sing some psalms which she had by heart, for she said, she did not want to go to sleep.

“Her sister was brought into trouble about her soul, that same summer, by sickness. It continued with her some time after her recovery ; until one day, coming home from meeting, as she heard some people speaking about Christ and heaven, her heart was inflamed with love to Christ. She says, that ‘when she has Christ’s presence with her, she does not know what to do to get away and be with God.’ Their parents told me, that for a long time they seemed to be almost wholly taken up in religion : that no weather, through the extremity of winter, would hinder them from going out daily to by-places for secret prayer ; and if anything came in the way that they could not get out for prayer, at such times as they inclined and thought most proper, they would weep and cry. Their parents say they are very obedient children, and strict observers of the Sabbath.

“There are likewise other young ones in the place, of whom I know nothing to the contrary, but what they continue hopeful and religious, to this day.

“This blessed shower of divine influences, spread very much

through this province, that summer : and was likewise considerable in some other places, bordering upon it. The accounts of some ministers being something distinguished by their searching, awakening doctrine, and solemn pathetic manner of address, and the news of the effects of their preaching upon their hearers, seemed in some measure to awaken people through the country, to consider their careless and formal way of going on in religion ; and very much excited their desires to hear those ministers. There were several vacant congregations without any settled pastors, which earnestly begged for their visits : and several ministers who did not appear heartily to put their shoulder to help in carrying on the same work, yet then yielded to the pressing importunities of their people, in inviting those brethren to preach in their pulpits : so that they were very much called abroad, and employed in incessant labours, and the Lord wrought with them, mightily. Very great assemblies would ordinarily meet to hear them, on any day of the week ; and, oftentimes, a surprising power accompanying their preaching, was visible among the multitudes of their hearers. It was a very comfortable enlivening time to God's people ; and great numbers of secure careless professors, and many loose irreligious persons, through the land, were deeply convinced of their miserable perishing estates ; and there is abundant reason to believe and be satisfied, that many of them were in the issue, savingly converted to God. I myself, have had occasion to converse with a great many up and down, who have given a most agreeable account of very precious and clear experiences of the grace of God. Several, even in Baltimore, a county in the province of Maryland, who were brought up almost in a state of heathenism, without almost any knowledge of the true doctrines of Christianity, afford very satisfying evidences of being brought to a saving acquaintance with God in Christ Jesus.

“ Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured to give a brief account of the revival of religion among us, in these parts ; in which I have endeavoured, all along, to be conscientiously exact, in relating things according to the naked truth : knowing, that I must not speak wickedly, even for God ; nor talk deceitfully, for Him.

“ And upon the whole, I must say, it is beyond all dispute with me, and I think it is beyond all reasonable contradiction, that God has carried on a great and glorious work of his grace among us.

“ I am, Rev Sir,

“ Your very respectful son and servant,

“ SAMUEL BLAIR.

“REV. SIR.

“Having an opportunity of obtaining these attestations before sending my letter to you, I send them also along, if you please they may be inserted in the Christian History, at the end of my account.

S. B.

“New Londonderry, August 7th, 1744.

“We the subscribers, ruling elders, in the congregation of New Londonderry, do give our testimony and attestation to the above account of the revival of religion in this congregation and other parts of this country, so far as the said account relates to things that were open to public observation, and such things as we have had opportunity of being acquainted with. Particularly, we testify, that there has been a great and very general awakening among people, whereby they have been stirred up to an earnest uncommon concern and diligence about their eternal salvation, according to the above account of it: and, that many give very comfortable evidence by their knowledge, declaration of experience, and conscientious practice, of their being savingly changed and turned to God.

JAMES COCHRAN,  
JOHN RAMSAY,  
JOHN LOVE,

JOHN SMITH,  
JOHN SIMSON,  
WM. BOYD.”

Mr. Samuel Blair was truly a burning and a shining light: but like many others of this description, while he warmed and enlightened others, he himself was consumed. Though his life was protracted beyond the age attained by Davies and Brainerd; yet he may be said to have died young; for from the inscription on his tomb, it appears, that he was only thirty-nine years, and twenty-one days old, when he was taken away. His remains lie in the burying ground of Fagg’s Manor; where his tomb may yet be seen. The whole inscription is,

“Here lieth the body of  
 The Rev. SAMUEL BLAIR,  
 Who departed this life,  
 The 5th day of July 1751.  
 Aged 39 years and 21 days.”

“In yonder sacred house I spent my breath,  
 Now silent, mouldering, here I lie in death ;  
 These lips shall wake and yet declare,  
 A dread amen, to truths they published there.”

Mr. Blair was one of the most learned and profound, as well as pious, excellent, and venerable men of his day. His deep and clear views as a theologian, are sufficiently evident from his treatise on “Predestination,” where this awful and mysterious doctrine is treated with the hand of a master.

As a preacher, Mr. Blair was very eminent. There was a solemnity in his very appearance, which struck his hearers with awe, before he opened his mouth. And his manner of preaching, while it was truly evangelical and instructive, was exceedingly impressive. He spoke as in the view of eternity, as in the immediate presence of God. The opinion which Mr. Davies entertained of Mr. Blair as a preacher, may be learned from an anecdote received from Dr. Rodgers, by a person still living.\* “When the Rev. Samuel Davies returned from Europe, his friends were curious to learn his opinion of the celebrated preachers, whom he had heard in England and Scotland. After dealing out liberal

\* Rev. Dr. Miller.

commendations on such as he had most admired, he concluded by saying, that he had heard no one, who, in his judgment, was superior to his former teacher, the Rev. Samuel Blair.

Mr. Blair was intimately associated with Mr. Gilbert Tennent, in all his controversies with the synod of Philadelphia. He concurred in all the proceedings of the New Brunswick presbytery, in which they acted in opposition to the rule of the synod, requiring candidates to be examined by a committee of their appointment; and in preaching within the bounds of settled congregations, where the people requested it. He also united with Mr. Tennent in presenting to the synod complaints against the members of that body, by which proceedings the minds of the majority of the synod were so exasperated, that they introduced a solemn PROTEST against the New Brunswick brethren, which led to an immediate separation of the parties; a schism which continued seventeen years, before it could be healed; as has been already related. To ascertain, at this time, which of the parties were most to blame in these unhappy controversies and divisions, is not easy. Faults undoubtedly there were on both sides. The OLD SIDE, were much to blame in setting themselves in opposition to the revival of religion, which had so gloriously commenced. By doing so, they incurred a fearful responsibility. That Tennent and Blair transgressed the rules of order, cannot be de-

nied. They disobeyed the synod, and entered into the congregations of their brethren without their consent. Whether in these things they were excusable, will depend upon the true state of the churches, at that time. Our Saviour and his apostles, disregarded the orders of the priests and of the synagogue. And Luther and the other Reformers, did not feel themselves bound by the authority of the popish magistracy and priesthood. Every minister holds a commission to preach the gospel to every creature, to whom he can gain access; and if a certain number of people, who are anxious to hear the gospel, happen, by human arrangements, to be circumscribed within the limits of a parish, over which another has charge; and if this nominal pastor is believed not so to preach the gospel as to lead the people in the way of salvation, why may not the faithful preacher disregard these human arrangements intended to promote order, and carry the gospel to those who are thirsting for the word of life? No doubt, the principle is liable to great abuse, and may occasion great disorder, and result in much more evil than good. The question in regard to these devoted men is, whether the people in the congregations of their opponents were really in such a perishing condition as would authorize them to overleap the fence, which, for the sake of order, had been set up. And this is the point which, in my opinion, we are incapable of deciding. Men may

continue to maintain in theory an orthodox creed, and yet may manifest such deadly hostility to vital piety, that they must be considered the enemies of the cause of God, and the work of the Spirit. That the opposers of the revival, at that time, did exhibit such a character cannot be asserted universally, for some of them appear to have been, in the main, sincere Christians, and only meant to set themselves in opposition to those opinions and practices, connected with the revival, which were reprehensible.

But that many of those of the Old Side, manifested a malignity of spirit against the revival, which was wicked in the extreme, I entertain no doubt. I have heard so much from aged persons who were living in the midst of the revival ; and even the subjects of it, have given me such accounts of the malignant spirit with which the whole work was ridiculed and opposed, by many, that I cannot doubt, that, in a good degree, the contest between the parties, was, between the friends and the enemies of true religion. And something of the same spirit of hostility to revivals was handed down to our own times. I have known men of high standing in the church, and undoubted learning, who derided every account of revivals, and sudden conversions, as fanatical and foolish. It is, therefore, my deliberate opinion, that in the general, the Tennents and Blairs, and their coadjutors, were men approved of God, and greatly honoured, as the instruments of winning many



souls to Christ ; while their opponents, were for the most part, unfriendly to vital piety.

But while I consider the ministers of the New-Brunswick presbytery, and their coadjutors, as the real friends and successful promoters of true religion, in this land, I do not mean to exonerate them from all blame. They were men, and liable to human imperfections. Some of them were men of ardent temperament, and somewhat overbearing disposition ; and under the influence of a fervid zeal, they did and said many unadvised things. When the state of the church became more settled, and the warmth of their feelings had subsided, they themselves viewed matters in a very different light from what they had done, in the heat of the controversy.