

Samuel Belcher (1704-1756) was a saddle-maker who lived in East Windsor, Connecticut, under the ministry of Edwards's father, Timothy Edwards. Belcher was one of the thousands caught up in the religious fervor of the revivals. Printed here is his "Relation," or the narrative of his spiritual experiences that he gave before the congregation in order to gain acceptance into full church membership. While this was a common requirement in colonial New England, and while Belcher's relation, probably delivered in the late summer of 1741, begins and ends normally enough, the rest was anything but conventional. First, describing his own sense of personal sin, he declared, "what a Dreadful thing it was to fall into the hands of an angry God"-apparently an explicit reference to Sinners. Also, he explicitly mentions first being awakened under the preaching of George Whitefield, and then under that of Eleazar Wheelock* and Benjamin Pomeroy.* He portrayed his conversion, occurring one morning, as sudden, overpowering, and physical. Note, too, that he identifies a moment when "it pleased the Lord to Send his terrors into my Soul"-a realization that ministers of the time would have identified as "conviction of sin," as pivotal in his movement towards assurance of salvation.*

I Desire to Adore and praise and Glorify God that it has been my portion to be born and brought up in a land of light and knowledge, where the light of the Glorious Gospel Shines in Such power, and that I have been born of Such parents who have been Careful to instruct me in the principles of Religion in my early Days, and that it has pleased the Lord to follow me with the Convictions of his Holy Spirit, from one time to another. I Remember that about three years ago I had Strong thoughts within myself that my time here was exceeding Short, which Set me upon meditating, what would become of my Soul if God Should then take me out of this world, and I found that I was Dead in trespasses and Sins, and I thought what a Dreadful thing it was to fall into the hands of an angry God, the Least weight of whose anger I was not able to endure. But after this I was exceeding Cold and Dull in the things which Concerned my Eternal Salvation, and my Convictions in Some measure wore away, and I went on in Sinning, and Dishonoring God, until Mr. Whitefield* preached here, and I was Greatly affected with his preaching both here and at Hartford.[1] But I quickly Grew Cold and Dull in Seeking rest for my Soul, but I Committed Sins with Greater Reluctancy than I used to Do. But as I was travelling through Lebanon[2] last Aprill I happened to be in Discourse with a man, who told me of the Glorious workings of the Spirit of God among them, which awakened me up very much, and I was Greatly affected, which made me weep and Confess my Sins, and plead with God for mercy. But my Conviction wore off again in Some measure; but when Mr. Wheelock* and Mr. Pomeroy* preached here the first time, I was awakened up to Call upon God in a more earnest manner then I used to Do, and Soon after hearing Mr. Wheelock preach here again, and Seeing the wonderful workings of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of Some, I was more Concerned than ever I was before, and the Next morning as I was alone in prayer it pleased the Lord to Send his terrors into my Soul: then Did my Sins Stare me in the face and my Guilt Confounded me, for I had Sinned

against Such light and Knowledge, that I could not but Justify God if he Should Send me into Everlasting woe and misery; then Did I feel such a Load of Guilt upon me that I thought it would Sink me Down to the Ground. And God was pleased to Show me my own helplessness, and inability to Save myself; but God was pleased to enable me to Cry mightily unto him in the bitterness of my Soul for mercy in and through Jesus Christ, and to plead his merits as a satisfaction for my Sins. Thus whilst I was praying and Confessing my Sins and pleading for mercy, I felt my Load Go off, and my mouth was Stopped, and I Could not utter one word for Some time, and I felt as if my heart was Changed and I had that Joy and Comfort come into my Soul beyond Expression; and my mouth was opened and I Spake forth the praises of God for his Goodness to me. Then Could I See Something of the Loveliness of Jesus Christ and the Goodness of God to me in and by him, and I Could See the vanity and Emptiness of all Earthly Comforts in Comparison of what I felt at that time, and I Could Bless and praise God for his wonderful Distinguishing free Grace and Love to me, in and by Jesus Christ, and I Saw that If God had not Used an Almighty power with me I Should have Still Continued in my Sins. But Since that I have been Greatly in the Dark Concerning my Spiritual State, but God has been pleased to Grant me light in Darkness. And when I have been going to the house of God under Great Darkness, I have come home full of joy and rejoicing, especially hearing a Discourse from John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will Draw all men unto me," wherein was Set forth the Great Sufferings which Jesus Christ underwent for the Redemption of Sinners, and the Great fullness that there was in him, enough to Save the whole world, if they would Come up to the terms which the Gospel Requires, and I went home full of joy and Comfort. I hope that Discourse was made profitable to my Soul. I have had Strong Desires to Join with This Church in full Communion, but have been afraid of Coming unworthily to the Same; but those words of our Savior, "This Do in Remembrance of me,"[3] have been of encouragement to me. I Desire the earnest prayers of this Church for me that God would enable me to walk as becomes the Gospel and to adorn the Doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ in all things.