

Faithful Narrative

OF THE
Wicked Life

AND
Remarkable Conversion

OF
Patience Boston alias Samson ;

Who was Executed at *Tork*, in the County of
Tork, July 24th. 1735. for the Murder of
BENJAMIN TROT of *Falmouth* in *Casco*
Bay, a Child of about Eight Years of Age,
whom she Drowned in a Well.

With a PREFACE by the Reverend
Messrs. **SAMUEL & JOSEPH MOODY**,
Pastors of the Churches in said Town.

Jer. 31. 19. — I was shamed, yea, even confounded, because
I did bear the Reproach of my Youth.

Isai. 1. 18. — Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as
white as Snow; tho' they be red like Crimson, they shall be
as Wool.

Ps. 6. 11. Such were some of you; but ye are washed &c.

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T. Green, in *Queen-Street* over against the *Prison*, 1738.

A Faithful Narrative of the Wicked Life and Remarkable Conversion of Patience Boston

[1738]

To the
Candid READER.

This astonishing Relation of a bloody Malefactor's Conversion, was taken from her Mouth while she was in Prison, and being publickly read to her on the Lecture a few Hours before her Execution, she did unconstrainedly own it, as what she had in very Deed experienced.

It must be confessed, that it could not be exactly taken in her own Way of expressing her self; However we are perswaded, that if our Readers could have been Eye and Ear Witnesses of the Emphaticalness of Pronounciation, and of the Spirit with which she uttered Things in themselves infinitely momentous, it must needs have been vastly advantageous to her Character, as a singular Instance of a distinct and thorough, as well as marvellous Work of sovereign and superabundant Grace. Let GOD have all the Glory!

Here is nothing false or feigned. We are ready to think that more Care could scarce have been taken in offering to the Publick what may be depended on—The Account was not drawn up in haste, but Things were written down at twenty several Times—One Day Week and Month after another.

And we trust here is nothing but what may be to the Use of Edifying, by the divine Blessing, to which we recommend the whole;—Concluding with a brief and honest Account how the following Relation comes into thy Hands: It is even thus; A judicious Gentleman of good Learning, and of universal Esteem for Piety

and a PUBLICK SPIRIT, having Business at our Court, saw a Copy of the Narrative, and being affected to Admiration with the Contents of it, Enquired why it was not printed? and understanding that one Reason of Delay was want of Subscriptions, he was generously moved to be at the whole Expence necessary unto this Publication.

Samuel Moody
Joseph Moody.

York, April 24th.
1738.

The Relation of *Patience Boston* alias *Samson*,
in her 23d Year. Taken from her Mouth.

I Was born at *Menomey* on *Cape Cod* Dec. 26. 1711. My Father's Name was *John Samson*, my Mother's Maiden Name was *Sarah Jethro*. I suppose I was Baptized in my Infancy, my Mother being in full Communion with an Indian Church at *Nosset*, as I have been informed; for my Mother died when I was but about three Years old: Soon after which my Father bound me out to Mr. *Paul Crow*, a Religious Family in which I was taught to Read, and learned the *Assembly's Catechism* thro'. I had seasonable and frequent Warnings against sinful Courses, and was put on secret Prayer. But I was very Wicked, and took little notice of what was said to me. I used to play on the Sabbath, tell Lies, and do other Wickedness. And three Times I set Fire to the House, when I was about twelve Years old. My Mistress would tell me that if I did not repent and turn to God, he might justly leave me to greater Sins. She was greatly concerned for me, and told me she was much afraid I should come to the *Gallows*; and though she might not live to see it, she expected no other but that I should come to some untimely End, if I did not speedily reform. Sometimes she would tell me about *Christ's Dying* for poor miserable Sinners; and I read in my Testament how cruelly *Christ* was buffeted scourged and spit upon, which sometimes affected me, and I asked my Mistress who *Christ* was? She told me He was the Son of God, and that his Father gave Him to die for Sinners. And told me of the Prophecies concerning *Christ*, particularly, I remember she mention'd that of his being a *Man of Sorrows*, and acquainted with *Grief*. Now my Mistress observing as I suppose, that I was something affected, and hoping I might be under some Convictions, she pressed me to repent of my many and heinous Sins, and mention'd *Christ's Word* to me about the *Joy* that would be in *Heaven* over a *repenting Sinner*—Thus she followed me continually with Reproofs, Instructions, Counsels and Warnings; and moderate sea-

sonable Corrections, as long as she lived, which was till I was about fifteen Years old; and on her Death-Bed she charged me to mind the Counsel she had given me, and to refrain from evil Words and shun bad Company, and keep the Sabbath strictly, and never tell any more Lies, and to keep my self from the Sin of Uncleaness, and to pray to God for Grace. These Things considerably moved me for a Time, and I think I could not have mourned more, if my own Mother had died then. I am sure now, since my Eyes have been opened, I see that she was a Mother to me, though I was a wicked mischievous and rebellious Servant. One Thing among other shews that I was not only Profane, but set on Mischief. My Master had an Uncle, an old Man that lived in the House, whom I used to mock and study to vex, particularly by turning the Cattle into the Corn when the Folks were gone to Meeting, and then calling on him to drive them out, making him believe they broke into the Field. Now my Mistress being dead, my Master would often put me in Mind of her good Counsel &c; but I had soon worn off that little Sense I had of Religion. My Convictions were too weak for my strong and violent Corruptions. I went out a Nights, and kept bad Company, and followed lewd Practices, till I was freed from my Master, after which I thought my self happy that I had no Body to Command me. I might do as I pleased, and I grew worse and worse, and fell into the Sin of Stealing, and all with little or no Remorse of Conscience. In about a Year, I was Married to a Negro Servant; and because his Master would have it so, I bound my self a Servant with him during his Life Time, or as long as we both should live.

After this I was drawn in to the Love of strong Drink, by some Indians, & used to Abuse my Husband in Words and Actions, being mad and furious in my Drink, speaking dreadful Words, and wishing bad Wishes to my self and others. After I found I was with Child, I had tho'ts of murdering it, and whilst I was big I ran away from my Master, my Husband being Absent on a Whaling Voyage; and I drank hard, and broke the Marriage Covenant, being wicked above Measure. After I got Home, I was delivered of a Child, which I had hurt in my Rambling, so that both its Arms were broken, as was found in Dressing the Child; and it died in a few Weeks, so that I now think I am Guilty of its Death. But my Conscience then was in a dead Sleep. I went on in Drinking, Lying, Swearing, and Quarelling with my Husband, who gave me little or no Occasion, unless by his continual good Counsel. But after I found my self to be with Child again, I was brought under some Conviction; so that I refrain'd from my wicked Courses, and loved to hear my Husband read, and would sit up to read my self after the Folks were in Bed, and loved to hear the Word Preached, and began to pray in Secret, according to my first Mistress's Counsel, though I have never practiced this great Duty before. I went also

to speak with the Minister, about my Spiritual State and present Troubles, who gladly received me, and both Counsell'd and Encourag'd me; gave me a Catechism and turned me to several Answers which he judg'd suitable for me, advising me to think much of them. He gave me also an excellent little Book, and came to me with farther good Instructions. My Convictions continued several Months, and good People hop'd I was becoming a new Creature. But I left God, and he left me; which made me think of my first Mistress's Words to me, '*That Sinning would make me leave Praying or Praying would me leave Sinning.*' I left off Prayer, and soon returned to wicked Courses, drowning all good Tho'ts, Desires, Purposes and Beginnings of Reformation, in strong Drink; growing worse than ever before, till I grew near my Time, when I was something startled at the Tho'ts of Death, concluding I must certainly go to Hell, if I died then. For besides all my other heinous Abominations, I had *Murder* in my *Heart* towards my Second, as well as my first Child; and so I had after my Child was born, attempting something that way when I perceived it's Crying, and it's taken up my Time to tend it, caused some Uneasiness in the Family. And when at the end of two Months, it pleas'd God to take away the Child by sudden Death in the Bed by us, which terrified me not a little; yet in less than a Month, getting mad with strong Drink, I quarrell'd with my Husband, and to vex him, told him that I had Murdered our last Child, and stood to it, appealing to God as a Witness that I had killed it; so that my Husband said, he must go to the Justice, and inform against me. I told him, I would go with him, and accuse my self before the Justice, which I did. He perceiving that I was in Drink, put me off till the next Morning; But I got more Drink on purpose to harden me in the Lies I had fram'd against my self; and being sent for, I still affirm'd that I had killed my Child. But the Justice not finding me sober, put off a full Examination to the Afternoon. Accordingly, towards Night he came to my Master's, and hearing his Voice, I presently ran to my Bottle, and drank more Rum; and a third Time affirm'd my self to be guilty of murdering the Child, and was sent to Prison. After I came to be confin'd, I was in a distress'd Condition, not so much for my wicked Heart or wicked Life; for I saw little of either: as for fear of Death and Hell, not being fit to go into another World. But I was resolv'd and fix'd in my Mind, not to tell any more Lies; for I knew that if I went out of the World with a Lie in my Mouth, my Punishment from the Hand of God would be the greater; and I had little or no Hope of escaping Punishment from the Hand of Man. For as I said, I had three Times accus'd my self before the single Justice who sent me to Prison, and afterwards before three Justices together, all which witnessing against me on my Trial; I expected no other, but to be Condemn'd and Executed. So I pray'd to God three Times a Day for the Pardon of all my Sins, especially

that of Lying so often against my Conscience, and thereby destroying my own Life. This I thought was a greater Sin, than if I had indeed Murdered my Child.

But when I came on my Trial; pleading Not Guilty, I was acquitted, and my Heart rejoyc'd. I was sent back again to Prison, till Security should be given for the Charges; but I chose rather to be Bound to a new Master for two Years, than to go back to my last Master; and my Husband consenting, I was Bound to Capt *Dimmick*, who after about a Year sold me, at my desire, to Mr. *Joseph Bailey* of *Casco Bay*, I being enticed by an Indian Woman who was sold in those Parts; and the great Thing that mov'd me to desire to go into the Eastern Parts was the Hope I had of more Opportunity to follow my wicked Courses. And I have ever since, lived in Drunkenness, and Swearing; and once again accus'd my self of Murdering a Child, which I affirm'd I had had there, which appear'd to every Body's Satisfaction, to be a meer Falshood; for nothing was to be found where I said I had buried the Child, and a Number of Women on Examination declar'd I had not then been deliver'd of a Child.

I am thus free and full in confessing my heinous Transgressions, with the dreadful Aggravations of them, that I may justify God, and be a Warning to Sinners, especially young People, not to give Way to the beginnings of Sin; but to resist Temptations, and avoid the Occasions of Evil: As also that the sparing Mercy, Long Suffering Patience and pardon-ing Grace of God may be magnified, and many may be excit'd to praise and glorify the Name of the Lord, and that despairing Sinners may come to hope in God's Mercy, if it may appear that such a Monster of Wickedness is pluck'd as a Firebrand out of everlasting Burnings, and received into Gods Favour through Christ.

But to speak of that horrid wilful Murder, of which I have indeed been guilty. From some groundless Prejudice which I had taken against my Master, to whom I was sold by Mr. *Bailey*, I did last Fall bind my self by a wicked Oath that I would kill that Child, though I seem'd to love him, and he me; which is an Aggravation of my bloody Cruelty to him. Having solemnly sworn that I would be the Death of the Child, I was so far from repenting of it, that I thought I was oblig'd to fulfil it. And I often renew'd my Resolution when I had been in Drink, and made my Master angry, that to be revenged on him, I might Murder his Grand-Child, of which I thought he was very fond, having bro't him up from his Infancy. I would have killed my Master himself, if I could have done it; and had Thoughts of putting Poison into his Victuals, if I could have got any. But when the Time came for me to be left under the prevailing Power of Satan's Temptations; I took the Opportunity of my Master and Mistress being from Home, and both his Sons also abroad; that the Child and I were left alone. The

Evening before I had been contriving to burn the Barn, but was prevented: I had also once before drawn the Child into the Woods with me, designing to knock him on the Head, and got a great Stick for the same Purpose; but as I was going to lift it up, I fell a trembling, from a sense of God's Eye upon me; so that I had not Power to strike.—But now, as I was going to say, when the Time was come to fill up the Measure of my Iniquity; I went to the Well and threw the Pole in, that I might have an Excuse to draw the Boy to the Well, which having done, I asked his Help to get up the Pole, that I might push him in, which having done, I took a longer Pole, and thrust him down under the Water, till he was drowned. When I saw he was dead, I lifted up my Hands with my Eyes towards Heaven, speaking after this Manner, Now am I guilty of Murder indeed; though formerly I accused my self falsely, yet now has God left me &c. And it seemed as if the Ground where I went was cursed for my sake, and I thought God would not suffer me to escape his righteous Vengeance. I went forthwith, and informed the Authority, and when the Jury sat on the Body, I was ordered to touch it: This terrified me, lest the Blood should come forth, to be a Witness against me; and I then resolved in my Heart, that I would be a Witness against my self, and never deny my Guilt; so I tho't God would not suffer the Child to bleed; then I laid my Hand on it's Face, but no Blood appeared. Yet after this, I would fain have covered my Sin in Part, as if the Child had of himself fallen into the Well, and I was tempted to thrust him down under the Water. After the *Jury* had bro't in wilful Murder, I was sent to Prison, but got Drunk by the Way, having little Sense of my dreadful Case; yet my Temptation in Part was to drink that I might forget my Sorrow. After I was shut up, I encouraged my self that I should have a long Space to repent, and have nothing else to do for most Part of a Year; and I set on Praying and Reading, Day and Night. While I was awake, my Thoughts were upon my former wicked Life, and present woful Condition that I had bro't my self into, by Murdering a poor innocent Child, that never did me Hurt. And I wholly refrained from strong Drink, and desired I might have good Books to read, and seemed glad when any came to Visit me; but did not at first desire Visits from Ministers, till I found how desirous they were to help me, and that I might speak freely to them, and that I needed their Direction. The first Minister that visited me, was the Minister of a neighbouring Congregation, (the Minister of the Town being from Home,) He endeavoured to shew me my utter Inability to Help my self: I might as well, he said, reach the Heavens with my Arm, as turn from Sin to God; leading me in his Discourse to Christ, and Faith in him, with a diligent Use of all Means, in order to a thorough Conversion; telling me I must spend *all* my Time in Prayer Reading and Meditation, as being liable every Day to a natural Death, as well as others. So he pressed on me a speedy Repentance

without the least Delay. Those Words seemed to sink down into my Heart, and had an abiding Influence. Thus by variety of Helps, I was lead something into the Knowledge of my Self, how unable I was to repent & believe, and how necessary Faith was. I saw it to be really so by plain Scripture, especially by several Places in John, particularly, John 3. 16. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* So my Mind ran much on Believing in Christ. But I thought I must repent too, and that of all my Sins. And in Reading, Praying, Hearing the Word preached, and discourse with such as visited me; I thought I had got some Sense of Sin, in many Ways wherein I had practised it from my Childhood. But it troubled me, that I could not see the Sin of Murder, as I concluded I must see it, before God would pardon me. And I had an earnest desire that the Congregation would pray for me, that I might have a further Discovery of the Evil of Sin, of all my Sins, and especially *Murder*. Then a Note was written for me, and my Desires were offered up to God. I found no great Alteration all that Week, though I held on in the Use of Means, thinking I would not, I must not despair. If I despaired, I thought I should be as *Cain*. But the next Week after, (the People of God still spreading my Case before the Lord) I had such strong Convictions and killing Terrors as amazed me: My Sins were set in Order before me, especially the Sin of Murder; So that though I had desired to see my Sins, yet I could not bear the Sight of them; for the Sense I had of the Wrath of God against me for Sin, was intollerable; my Conscience seem'd all on a Flame. I sent to desire that the Minister would come to me; but he not being at Home, the School Master came, and talked and prayed with me, and I had some Relief for the Present. But my Distress returned, continued, increased. My Sins appeared too great to be Pardoned. God, I thought, had utterly forsaken me. I could not Pray for five Days together, whereas I used to pray six Times a Day.—Now I did not dare to take the Name of such a holy and glorious God into my Mouth, in this Way. The Prayers of such a Monster of Wickedness, I thought, would be an Abomination to the Lord. I had indeed some encouraging Places of Scripture brought to my Mind, such as *Isai. 55[.] 6. 7. &c.* yet I could not believe any Word of Comfort or Encouragement belonged to me. And the Destroyer of my Soul hurried me, hurried me from Day to Day, to murder my self; and if I could have found a Way to put an End to my Life, I should surely have done it. I wished for a Knife, or a String, my Garters and Coat-String being taken from me. I wished I could have gone to the Water, which I saw through the Grates, to have Drowned my self. I wrung my Hands, and beat my Breast, and could have torn into my Vitals, if I had strength to do it. All the while, laying the whole Blame on my self. I had been convinced indeed that my Heart was as full of Enmity against God, as

any Serpent against Man; but my Enmity in these Agonies of Soul, did not appear to be working. I thought I had so dishonoured God beyond all Example, that he could not bear the Sight of me among the Living on Earth; I had as good go to Hell, I thought, first as last, having not the least Glimpse of Hope, ever to escape that Place of Torment. I knew Hell would be worse still, though all the Pains of Travail and Sickness, with all the Anguish I ever felt before, was nothing to this; but I saw plainly that I deserved eternal Misery, and Hell was the only fit Place for me. I was angry with the Prison Keeper for restraining me from my self-murdering Desires. The Ministers and others visited me in this Condition, and would encourage me to hope in the infinite Mercy of God and Merits of Christ, mentioning many Promises and Examples of pardoning Mercy, out of the Scriptures; but nothing reached me. I could take hold of nothing till the Time of Mercy and Love was come, I could not be perswaded to believe, that ever such a Sinner as I had been, was pardoned. I thought of *David*; but then I considered that he committed only two great Sins, whereas I had committed all Kinds of Sins, I thought, and had committed Adultery and Fornication often, and often committed Murder in my Heart; but *David* only once fell into those Sins, and I thought he did not Sin with such an Heart as I did; for he was a Man after God's own Heart. So that after all that I had read, or heard, or could think; my Case seemed desperate, till I seemed to have some Glimmering of Hope, and a Day or two after such Light and Joy, so sweet and good, that I can no more express it, than I can make known the desperate Sorrow and Anguish that went before, in the Extremity of it. It came after the following Manner; I went to Bed one Night, full of Trouble; but not in utter Despair. It was long before I could get any Sleep, as I had before lien whole Nights waking, whilst I meditated on nothing but Terror. But falling asleep at length, I slept I suppose till after Midnight, then awaked in a more calm and easy Frame than I had been for a Week before, when I used sometime to cry out at my first Waking, that I was going to Hell! But now I could think about Believing in Christ. All my Thoughts seemed to run upon Believing, Believing; and I could pray that God would enable me to believe, and give me converting Grace. And it was plain to me that it must be the Almighty Power of God, to make me believe. And I began to hope he would do it for Christ's Sake, being perswaded that he was able to do it for me, having read two Sermons of Dr. *Increase Mather's* on Isai. 63. 1.—*Mighty to save*; Wherein he shews that Jesus Christ is a mighty Saviour. For though I had read several Books, yet none of them seemed so plainly to lead me to Christ, as that Book. I had indeed in my Extremity forgotten this, and all Grounds of Encouragement; but now it was a great Help to me, that by Books and Ministers and good Christians, both Men and Women, I have been so abundantly

directed to Christ, and encouraged to trust in him. And as I lay waking and musing about this mighty Saviour and about believing in Christ for Salvation; these Words came fresh into my Heart. *Weeping may endure for a Night, but Joy cometh in the Morning*. I did not remember that ever I had read such Words in the Bible; yet I thought it was God spoke it to my Heart. It was not like Man's speaking. Yet after this I was ready to give Way to some unbelieving Thoughts, that would be rising in my Mind, or were cast into me; till I had another Scripture, which though at first I did not know to be any Part of God's written Word, yet afterwards I found to be Christ's Words to unbelieving *Thomas*, John 20. 27. *Be not faithless, but believing*; and it is added, v. 29. *Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed*; which is further Matter of Comfort to me. I had not seen Christ, with my bodily Eyes; but I think he has spoken to my Heart, by his Spirit; and that I have seen him by the Eye of Faith. Now I was carried out in more free Confession of my Sins, so many and great, and especially the Sin of Murder; and more earnest in my Prayers that God would blot out my Transgressions, and cast my Sins behind his Back, than ever in my Life before. When the Morning came, I looked out, and all Things seemed pleasant and smiling. I thought if I was to be Executed that Day, Death would seem pleasant to me. God seemed now to accept my Prayers and Praises, which could never enter into my Heart to believe, in the Time of my Distress. But I soon found some jealous Thoughts arising in my Mind, least I might flatter and deceive my self; That such a one as I should ever obtain pardoning Mercy, seemed too good News to be true, and I was suspicious of a false Spirit, and the joy of a Hypocrite. But examining my Heart, I could not find that I depended on any Thing in my self. I had I thought been emptied of *self Righteousness*, and seen all to be but as *filthy Rags*; and I could not but believe in Christ, though it was with a Mixture of Unbelief. Now Sin seemed to be the most hateful Thing in the World to me, and I loathed my self for Sin, because God had been so dishonoured. I had a comfortable Day, beyond all the Joys that the World could afford, above all the Pleasures of Sin. Several comfortable Scriptures were brought to my Mind. John 3. 16. Rev. 22. 17.—*Whosoever will, let him take the Waters of Life freely*. I wished I could glorify God, my Heart seemed to be set on Glorifying of God. I wanted to have some good People come, and help me to praise God. I desired also to know from some that had Knowledge in the Scriptures, and were acquainted with the Way of God's Spirit; what the Meaning of this strange Alteration in my Condition was, and how it used to be with such as were Converted, and what used to follow on Believing in Christ, and whether a false Spirit might not cause Light and Joy. I had none to open my Mind to all that Day; but in the Evening I acquainted the Woman of the House something with my new Condition, and she asked

me whether I would speak with the Minister? at which I was glad, and the Minister was called, and I related to him, as well as I could, what I had experienced of Light and Comfort, and what my Desires were, having made known to him my Trouble and Distress before. He gave me Counsel and Caution, and encouraged me to hold on seeking and waiting for further Discoveries. I passed the Night following in a joyful, yet mournful Frame; seeing now what a glorious and holy and gracious God I had sinned against. My Heart seemed to be melted within me, and Sin appeared worse than Hell. I hated Sin, because God hated it; and I loathed my self for Sin, and for my dishonouring God, more than ever I loathed a Toad, or a Rattle Snake. But still rejoicing in my Saviour, and weeping for Joy, praying that God would not take his Holy Spirit from me, and that I might have a Heart to love and praise the Lord, so long as I lived. I was greatly strained to know how I should behave my self, and what I should do to glorify God. I thought I would while I lived, and especially when I came to die, give Warning to all, and especially to *Young People*, of the Evil and Danger of Forsaking the Lord and running into Temptation, and following sinful Courses, to provoke God further to leave them. The shameful Death I was to die, had now no Terror in it, so long as I thought Christ, by being made a Curse, redeemed Sinners from the Curse of the Law. I cannot easily express how willing I was to die for my Sin by the Hand of Justice, that the Guilt of Blood might not lie upon the Land. I thought I would not be released, if I might. Now I saw it was easy to believe, when in the Light; though it seemed so hard, and sometimes impossible, while in the darkness of my natural Estate. But I was told, I must expect to meet with Darkness still as well as Light, and that I must endeavour to believe in the Dark: so I thought I would; but then I tho't also that I should believe when God helped me to believe, and that if he should leave me, I was gone. My Comfort continued, without any considerable Darkness, for several Days and Nights; after which I had a short Time of Trouble, an Hour of Darkness. It brought me into a trembling Condition, yet I was enabled to believe still, and to rejoyce, though with trembling. This was not like the Darkness and Terror I had been in before. I tho't now God was only chastening me, to do me Good, and make me more watchful and humble and thankful, and with the returning Light and Comfort, I took great Delight in reading good Books, especially the *Bible*. I have seen more in a Verse, than formerly I could do in all the Bible. Good People, that I used to despise and hate in Time past, seem the most excellent in the World.

After this was the *Friday Lecture*, for two Sabbaths before which, I was not out; the first of them, I was not well; and on the other, I was in such Distress of Soul, and so hopeless of getting any Good, that I had no Heart to go to Meeting; but being in so comfortable a Frame the most of that

Week I attended the Lecture with Joy and Delight of Soul, beyond what I ever had at any merry Meeting for Drinking, or lewd Practices. The Text was Jer. 10. 16. *The Portion of Jacob is not like them. Doct. No People in the World have such a Portion as the People of God.* I thought I could have sat all Day and all Night, under Christ's Shadow, his Fruit was so sweet to my Taste, sweeter than Honey to my Mouth. I returned to my *beloved Prison*, which seemed a most *pleasant Place* to me, since I *met with Christ here*, and have had Communion with God in holy Duties. Prayer is my Delight. I am sometimes so carried out that I can't break off, till I am spent. I am ready to sink down; but at other Times, I am so troubled that I cannot speak in Prayer, God seems to shut the Door against me; and not to welcome me into his Presence. Especially once that after Morning Prayer, I had neglected Reading and Praying, (having some Work to do) till towards Night; though my Conscience, I can't tell how many Times in the Day, checked me for it. Yea I thought afterwards, it was the Spirit of God by my Conscience, that moved me to holy Duties. I found when I came to Pray that God was withdrawn from me; that I could scarce speak a Word. The Thoughts of my having quenched the Spirit, in not readily complying with his Motions, quite overcame me; so that I was fain to go from my Knees to my Bed; where I lay sadly bemoaning my self, that I had grieved away the good Spirit of God; and when he would return to me I could not tell. Then I saw what a poor weak Creature I was, and how impossible it was for me to perform any Duty, except the Lord was with me, enabling me by his Grace. Nor could I make one Prayer more till Help was called in, and I had the Meaning of God's Dealing with me opened to me, and had divers Examples of poor Indians converted, and how they lived, and how they died, read to me; by which I was refreshed and revived, and could pray with usual Liberty and Enlargement. And in the Night following, I had sweet Scriptures brought to my Mind out of the Psalms and Gospels, particularly that in the fourth Psalm, *Thou has put Gladness into my Heart, more than in the Time when their Corn and Wine increased.* As Dr. Mather's Sermons in general on Christ the mighty Saviour, have been exceeding helpful to me; so I would mention one Passage in particular, which was as Life from the Dead to my Soul. It is near the End of the first Sermon in these Words—“Believing Sinners are they unto whom this Saviour will be the Author of their eternal Salvation. Their Salvation is begun, as soon as they believe. He that believes, *hath* everlasting Life. It is not only true, that he shall have everlasting Life; but he *hath* it already, in the beginning of it; and is in Respect of the Promise of God, as sure of Heaven, as if he were there already. John 3. 16. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish but have everlasting Life.*” It was not long after this before the Lord did as it were tell me, he would more

thoroughly break my Heart for Sin, and then bind it up, and heal it. Accordingly, I found renewed inward Mourning and Grieving for Sin, as against a glorious holy good and gracious God. I was pained at my very Heart; I felt it as plain as I could do a Sore breeding in my Flesh. I had a more steady and continued Sorrow for my Sins; I thought I would have given a World had I a World to give, that I had never sinned as I had done. My Sin was ever before me, and it seemed to make me Heart sick, to look back on any, and on all my wicked Ways. I loathed and abhorred my self. It was my fixed Perswasion that there was not one in all this Country, who had been so bad as I. I thought of many Malefactors that I had read or heard of, and many Examples that were read to me, out of Dr. *Cotton Mather's* Church History; but I saw my self worse than any of them. So I hoped God was humbling me yet more, and killing Sin in my Heart. It seemed better to have humbling Considerations set before me, than any Thing that might have a tendency to lift me up. I dealt plainly with my self, and it seemed hateful to me to be flattered; I could not abide any Thing which looked that Way. My Affections to earthly Things seemed to be more deadned; and my Love, I hope, was fixed on that which is Good. How sweet was reading and praying and musing and hearing and speaking of Christ! Good Books were precious to me, but the *Bible* seemed more *delightful* than any Book; and *Christ* was more *precious*. I hope I have a Treasure in Heaven, because my Heart is there.—The Rev. Mr. S. of *Falmouth* came to visit me, and dealt plainly with me; and I thought I had cause to bless God, not only for the great Encouragement he gave me, but for laying open my Sins before me in such a Manner as he did. He visited me a second Time, and assured me, that his plain Dealing with me, was in Faithfulness to the Lord, and in Love to my Soul; affectionately renewing the Encouragement he had given me; and among other precious Scriptures mentioned that in I. Tim. 1. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners; of whom I am chief.* I was comfortable for several Days; but then as the *Sabbath* came on, I was strangely hurried with new Temptations; and falling under Fears again that my Heart was not right, I grew more and more discouraged about my eternal State; and it was strongly suggested to me that if God would convert me, he would do it of his own Mind; and not for my Prayers, or the Prayers of any for me. So I thought to wait, and see what God would do for me; and not to use any Means. The Temptation prevailed so far upon me on Saturday Evening, that I thought I should not go to Meeting, the Mind I was then in: but it was a wicked Mind, and I was soon made to see it; for my Sins were again set in order before me, especially the most heinous of them; and I had *Blasphemous Thoughts* cast into me, such as are not fit to be mentioned. My Terror increased, and I feared God might by a

Thunder Bolt or some other Way, strike me dead; but I strove against such abominable Thoughts. I think I can say, my Soul did, and does hate them. I cried to the Lord, and Help was unexpectedly sent in, after it was Night. I had seasonable Relief, and could take my natural Rest; yet not without getting up more than once, in the silent Night, to pray. And in the Morning I could joyfully attend the publick Worship, and in the Afternoon Exercise I was so delighted, that I wished the Meeting might not be done so soon as usual; I thought I could have sat and heard the Word, many Hours. I returned to Prison in my Chains of Iron; but more comfortable than I could have been with a Chain of Gold, in my former imprisoned State of Soul. The Prison-Keeper came to me, counselled and comforted me; and what he said to me, seemed to take hold of me. I have reason to bless God for putting me into the Hands of such as are so kind to me and tenderly concerned for me, both as to my Soul and Body; I hope God will reward them. I now see the Kindness of the Lord, in all the Kindness that good People in this Place are continually shewing me. I believe it is for Christ's sake; and whatsoever becomes of me, God will reward them. I find the Lord is discovering to me more and more of the Hardness of my Heart, which I never was sensible of before this Time of my Imprisonment. When I was in Prison before, if any Body had told me what an Heart I had, I could not have believed it. This makes me justify God, and wonder I am out of Hell; and I think I should desire to serve God, and do something for his Glory and the Good of Souls whilst I live, though he should turn me into Hell at last. I was much affected with the Case of the Prisoners at *Boston*, especially when the Day came for their Execution, having heard that they were too little sensible of their own Condition: I prayed for them as well as I could; and it seemed to me, in the Hope I then had that God had begun good Work in my Soul, that I would have been willing to take the Place of one of them; if an Exchange might have been made, and he might take my Place, to have more Time to prepare for Death. But I had need improve all the Time I may have, if it were much more, in Mourning for my wicked Heart and Life; by which I have dishonoured God, and destroyed my own Soul. Soon after this, I had a further and deeper Sense than ever, of the Hardness of my Heart. The whole Night after the three Malefactors were Executed at *Boston*, and all the next Day, and the Night following, till almost Break of Day; I was distressed, not only on the Account of my horrid Guilt, and Liableness to eternal Wrath, for my wicked Life, and bloody actual Sins; but for the Wickedness of my Heart. I could not read, I could not pray, and when the Minister and others came to talk with me, I could not speak, or if my Mouth was opened sometimes, it was only in Way of self Condemning. My Conscience was continually accusing of me, God seemed to frown upon me; and Satan ready to devour me. I could take

Comfort in nothing: I had sweet consolation in Scriptures before; but I could find no Relief on looking back on any of them. One Word was mentioned to me that seemed to relieve me, for about a Quarter of an Hour; It was John 10. 28. &c. *I give unto them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Hand &c.* Then I was utterly benighted again, and feared that God had given me up. Rom. 9. 18. was a dreadful Word to me, and would be running in my Mind, all Day and all Night; for I could sleep but very little, for two whole Nights. Now I tho't I understood what I had heard about *Pharaoh*; That his Hardness of Heart was a worse Judgment than all the ten Plagues that were upon him, and upon his People. I was ready to wish I had never been born, and I had a more wicked Thought than that in my Heart; for I wondred that God would make me, when he knew that I should so Sin against him. Before my Heart was changed, I had had Thoughts more Blasphemous, and then I harboured them more than I could do now; for now I desired to justify God, and though I could not so fully as I would; yet I was greatly troubled and vexed at my self, that I could not love the Lord as I had done before. All the outward Crosses I had met with seemed nothing to this Plague of an hard Heart. I think, if my Distress had continued to that Degree a few Days, it would have distracted me. The Door of Mercy seemed to be shut against me; and to miss of the Favour of God, after I had had such Hopes, seemed worse to me than if I had never been brought out of my first Darkness into such marvellous Light. I hope this inexpressible Distress I was in humbled me; And the return of Light and Comfort again was the more sweet to me. And that Word came unto me with Power, *Be of good cheer, thy Sins be forgiven thee.* Then I thought of a Passage in Dr. *Mather*, which I mention'd before, as Life from the Dead to me, and I could reason about what God had done for me; That having spoken Peace to my Soul, and changed my Heart, I should never quite fall away.

I thought my Salvation was begun when I first believed, and God would finish his own Work; and I thought it was not for any to direct God how he should do it, or when. When I came to see the Light of another Morning, to find that I was not only out of Hell, but to have fresh and lively Hopes of getting to Heaven; how thankful, as well as joyful, did I seem to be! I never was so thankful before; and my Peace and Joy continued to and through the Sabbath, excepting once in the Forenoon, when Rev. 21. 8. was mentioned, that *Whoremongers, Adulterers, Thieves, and all Liars should have their Part in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone*; this struck a Damp to me, knowing that I had been a Fornicator, Adulterer, Thief and Liar, besides my Blood Guiltiness; it filled my Heart with Grief, and my Eyes with Tears. But after, in the Sermon, the Example of the Woman who washed Christ's Feet with her Tears &c. was mentioned out of *Luke 7.* and

what Christ said about the Creditor's frankly forgiving the greater as well as lesser Debtor, though he owed ten Times as much as the other; my Spirit revived, and I thought none in the World had more cause to love Christ than I; who had so much forgiven me. The Example also of *Manasseh* was mentioned, and how he was humbled and pardoned, though he had filled *Jerusalem* with innocent Blood, from one End to the other. So in the Way of Believing I had Joy and Peace; which continued without prevailing Darkness and Distress for several Days.

The Rev. Mr. *W.* of *Berwick* preached a Sermon at *York*. In Sermon Time, especially towards the Close, I hope I had real Communion with God, under a believing sense of his gracious Presence with his People in his House. And in Prayer after Sermon, my Soul seemed to be so much in Heaven where God is most gloriously present; that I had for a little while forgot as it were that I was yet upon Earth. I can't remember that ever I had that Degree of Comfort before or since, though in its Strength it lasted not long.—It was some Time before that, I heard a Sermon from Rom. 9. 18. *Therefore he has Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will be hardneth.* I had often read the whole Chapter, being directed to it by the Minister; but was never so sensibly convinc'd how necessary and how reasonable a Thing it was to submit to God's Sovereign Will in all Things. It was shown in one of the Sermons, how that there were many that did grudge the Grace of God to others, especially such as had been black and bloody Sinners.

I thought if God should have no Mercy on me, but harden me to my eternal Ruin, he was just; he might do what he would with his own. I thought if I were damned, I desired others might be saved.

This was before we heard of the Court's Ajournment. The Minister applied himself to me, and told me, he hoped I would no more behave my self proudly before God and Man. I must confess I had dreadful risings of Heart against God's Decrees concerning the Children of Men, and his Disposing of them, according to his mere Will and Pleasure; but I hoped I should never more be found fighting against God. Yet I have found since that there was much Ignorance and Rebellion remaining. I was sometimes sorely Tempted to deny my Guilt on my Trial; and while this Temptation lasted, I had no inward Comfort. The vain Hope I had of escaping the Gallows, and enjoying my Child, and going back to my Relations and Acquaintance, afforded me many pleasing Tho'ts; but it was not like the Joy of the Lord I had before, and have had since. When the Minister ask'd me after my Recovery from the Temptation, which was best, carnal Joy, and worldly Comfort; or the Joy of the Holy Ghost? I could not but say that spiritual Comfort was a Thousand Times, a Million Times the best.

That wicked Frame continued a Week or Ten Days. I was tempted on

Saturday, not to go to Meeting the next Day, having been in a dark Frame the Sabbath before. I did not find those Longings for the Sabbath, and Rejoycings at the near Approach of it; as I had sometimes found. Besides I had so grieved such as used to visit me, and now knew of my evil Frame; that I was ashamed to be seen by them. I thought I would go to Meeting no more till my Trial was over: But one that heard me speak my Mind, told me God would change it: and entreated me, if I had any love to God, or my own Soul; that I would not stay away from Meeting. This put me on thinking how few Sabbaths I had to live; for my solemn Vow came to Mind, and indeed was almost always in my Mind; and though in that bad Frame I began to wish I had not made it; yet having made it, I began to think again I must fulfil it; and there was but two Sabbaths and a Lecture before the sitting of the Court; and how shall I answer it (thought I,) if I should neglect them. Thus I was enabled to take up a Resolution that I would attend the publick Worship, and nothing should hinder me.

But that very Night my poor Child was taken with a Fever, so that I could not carry it out; and was justly deprived of the Opportunity. My Child was dangerously ill. I examined my self, whether I was willing to part with it; and hoping God would take it to himself, I think I was willing. (And before this I had been brought I trust to justify God, though he should cast it into Hell.) I thought also that my own Death would be easier, if my Child was gone before; so I was willing God should do as he pleased. I desired the Prayers of the Congregation for it; and when God was pleased to restore it, I desired to be a truly thankful, and thought God might graciously continue it to me as a Comfort in my lonely Condition.

For many Days before my Trial I was fixed in my Resolution, as I had been for the most Part from the Time I made the Promise; to Plead Guilty. And I was so pressed in my Conscience to take the Guilt of Blood from the Land, on my self; that nothing could prevail with me to deny the Fact; Yea when I had Liberty to plead again after I had once pleaded Guilty; my Conscience constrained me to do it a second Time.

One of the Judges asked me why I did not plead *not Guilty* now, as I did on my Trial at *Barnstable*; I answered, because then I was not guilty, but now I was. I was further asked, whether I had not been over perswaded by any Body to plead as I did? I answered no; but I did it to please God. Some before my Trial, that were jealous lest I should be awed by Men to plead guilty, examined me pretty strictly about the Matter; I could not but speak with some Earnestness, and say to this Purpose; You and I shall appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and then you'll know that I own my Guilt because I dare not dishonour God, and wrong my Conscience. After my Trial I had Peace in my own Mind, and desired to be humbly thankful to God that he had helped me in a Time of so great Temptation. I desired

still to trust in God, and not in my self; and notwithstanding new Exercises that I had before my Condemnation, I was carried through all, and was enabled to receive my Sentence with Silence in my Heart as well as Lips; Yea I hope I received it with thankfulness, and it was in my Mind to thank the Judges, and desire their Prayers; but I had not the Confidence to do it: However they gave me good Counsel, and encouraged me out of the Scriptures, and let me know that I should not be forgotten of them. I could not forbare to send from the Prison to thank the Judges for their Tenderness as well as Faithfulness, and to desire their Prayers. Since my Condemnation I have been more settled in my Mind, than before. I have been desirous to improve my Time in nothing but religious Exercises; I find the more I read and pray, the more delightful it is to me; and I can hardly allow my self Time for necessary Sleep. I have still new Discoveries of the hardness of my Heart, and that my Strength is but Weakness. And by these and many other humbling Considerations, am I brought to put my Mouth in the Dust, if so be there may be Hope. And I have Hope through Grace, that such a Monster of Wickedness as I, may be saved. My Surety, I trust, has paid my whole Debt; and I know he is able to sanctify me by his *Spirit*, as well as justify me by his *Righteousness*.

The *Catechism* I learnt in my Youth, is often brought to my Mind, and many precious Words that I had heard and read for my seasonable Relief and Comfort. My Soul is carried out in Love to good experienc'd Christians that come to see me. Methinks now I can understand their Language, and sweetly relish it, which in Years past I had no Savour of; because I did not know the Meaning of it. Spiritual Things are sweeter to me than Meat, Drink or Sleep. Sometimes it seems to me I could speak and hear of the Things of Christ Day and Night without Weariness. But I am not always in such a Frame. Death, Judgment and Eternity appear awful to me. I have many Jealousies, lest my Faith should not be right: I know, if I have true Faith though weak, Christ has prayed for me that my Faith fail not. Now whilst I am speaking of these Things, I am enabled so to trust in Christ that I could be willing to die this Day, if it were the Will of God. I could just now, depending on the Promises of God, venture into another World—I have been lately helped by those Words 2. Tim. 2. 3. *Thou therefore endure Hardness, as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ*. And by the 19th v. of the same Chapter, *Nevertheless the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his*.—Thus I was fortified before my Trial, and have been more established since.

I was told this Morning (*June 30*) by one that looked in through the Grates (after he was denied coming into my Room) that by pleading Guilty, I hanged my self; but it did not move me, as such Temptations used to do, before my Trial. Yet I dare not trust my self, or depend on Grace

received. I would depend on Christ alone (whatever Trials I may yet have) to uphold, strengthen and carry me through.

I have been much concerned for my Child. I once thought that all Children went to Heaven, and did not see so clearly the Justice of God, if it should be otherwise; but one Night, as I was sitting with my Child in my Lap, and looking on it, I think it was made plain to me that my Child had the same sinful Nature that I had, and stood in as much need of a Saviour; and that it would be just with God to damn it. And I hope I have been enabled to believe for my Child, as well as for my self.—Afterwards, when I was told I need not be distressed for my Child, either as to its Soul or Body; because it was disposed of into a Family where much Care would be taken for the Welfare of both; I presently thought and said, I had found by woful Experience how little a religious Education would signify without the sanctifying Work of God's Spirit on the Heart. I knew that if Christ would give Grace to my Child it would have Grace, else no Means would avail any Thing—And yet I desire to bless God for a religious Education. If I had not learned to read, and been taught my Catechism, it would have been harder for me to come to the Knowledge of God & Christ.—How are we condemned by the Covenant of Works, and relieved by the Covenant of Grace.

THE Reader will excuse it that the Narrative breaks off so abruptly, and will give us leave to supply the Deficiency with the following Extract from the Diary of a Person that was much Conversant with the Deceased, during her Confinement.

I Being providentially at the House of the Rev. Mr. Moody Nov. 21. 1734. The Prison-Keeper's Wife came down in haste, and said she was afraid the Prisoner would be distracted, she was in such Distress. We went up, and found her crying out in a most terrible Manner, such as I never heard the like. She smote her Hands together often, and kept continually lamenting and roaring and shrieking, for I think Hours together, with little Intermission. Some of her Expressions, which she repeated with utmost Vehemency, ten or twenty Times together, were such as follow—O I have offended a merciful God! a merciful God! I have offended the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Sin, Sin, Sin! &c. O now I find it is an evil and bitter Thing to depart from the Living God! O the Sin of Murther! Murther! Murther!—O the Sin of Lying.—O I used to play a Sabbath Days!—O my putting off my returning to God!—O to die Christless! to die Christless, to die without an Interest in Christ! O to part from Christ! To part from Christ! O the Door of Heaven is shut against me!—O my God, my God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me!—O *Patience! Patience!*

you wicked Wretch, you first forsook God, and then he forsook you! O he is a good God! He is a good God! He is a God of Truth, He will be as good as his Word! He will be as good as his Word!—O God's Anger! God's Anger! God's Anger!—O the Wrath of God! the Wrath of God!—O my dear Soul! my dear Soul! God's Anger is burning in my Soul! O that Fire there is cool, to what I feel in my Soul!—O my Soul is in Hell; my Soul is in Hell!—She had some Intermissions, in which she was more comfortable, and uttered such Expressions as these, I will Pray, I will Pray—I do believe what Christ has said in John, *All that the Faith giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*—I do love God, I have loved him ever since I have known him.* In the Afternoon and at Night she was I think quite distracted, and through Horror and Amazement of Soul, spake she knew not what her self; such Expressions as I never heard, nor read of. Two Persons sat up with her all that Night, in which she rested but little; tho' the extremity of her Distress and Distractedness was only by Fits.

Nov. 25. Being sent for I visited the Prisoner, and found her in great Distress, crying out as before; but left her in a very humble, calm, comfortable Frame of Spirit.

June 20. 1735. I found the Prisoner Melancholly at Noon; but at Night she was very chearful, and was well satisfied in what she had done in Pleading Guilty Yesterday; and thinks she should not be surprized if she were to be executed to Morrow, and rejoices that she is out of the Reach of Temptation to deny the Fact, and hopes she own'd it out of true Love to Christ.

July 16. *Patience* I think is in an excellent Frame; free and chearful, and above the Fact of Death. In reading a Book of the Rev. Mr. Stoddard's to Day, she thought she was as sure of going to Heaven as she could desire to be. Nor should she be afraid to say to Christ if bodily present, as *Peter* did, *Thou knowest that I love thee.* And is more sure that she loves Christ, than that she loves her Child at her Breast, or any Creature in the World. When she was in such Anguish of Spirit, after her first Comfort; she says the Thought of having sinned against an Holy God, and of being separated for ever from Christ, was most of all distressing to her (which as I remember is agreeable to the Expressions she uttered at that Time.) She hopes she shall speak more freely on the Gallows, of what God has done for her Soul; because then there will be no Danger of her bringing a Scandal on Religion, by her after Conversation.

She is unwilling the common Whipper should Execute her, because he

*This was some Time after she had received the Light and Comfort mentioned in the foregoing Relation.

covered, Mr. *Moody* asked her, whether she remembered what she designed to say? She said, Yes, and added, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*. Soon after which the Executioner did his Office, and the dear Saint I doubt not quietly slept in Jesus. I believe there never was a justly condemned Malefactor, that had a greater Interest in the Hearts and Affections of the Children of God, than the Deceased.

Finis.

Source Notes

A Faithful Narrative of the Wicked Life and Remarkable Conversion of Patience Boston originally was published and sold in 1738 by the Boston printers, Kneeland and Green. According to the title page, Boston ("alias Samson") was executed in York, Maine, on July 24, 1735, roughly three years before the narrative appeared. In addition to Boston's account of her sinful life and saintly conversion, the text included a preface written by the ministers Samuel and Joseph Moody and dated April 24, 1738. In their preface, the ministers stated that the narrative "was taken from her Mouth while she was in Prison, and being publickly read to her . . . she did unconstrainedly own it" (119). The Moodys, however, revealed that, since "it could not be exactly taken in her own Ways of expressing her self," they provided Boston with rhetorical as well as spiritual expertise (119). While stressing that "nothing false or feigned" was in the text, they further revealed the time and effort they put into the project: "We are ready to think that more Care could scarce have been taken in offering to the Publick what may be depended on—The Account was not drawn up in haste, but Things were written down at twenty several Times—One Day Week and Month after another" (119). Rather than acting in the capacity of a mere amanuensis, the Moodys directed both Boston's performances in print and in public. Since the text abruptly switches from a first person to a third person narrative towards the end, it is obvious that the Moodys offered Boston both words and comfort.

Shortly after Boston's execution, Kneeland and Green published a brief eight-page narrative of Boston's life, *The Confession, Declaration, Dying Warning and Advice of Patience Samson* (Boston, 1735), but no copy of this text has been found. What little notice the newspapers took of Boston was confused. *The Boston Weekly News-Letter* of June 26, 1735, stated: "We hear that from York, That at Superior Court held there last Week an Indian Woman received sentence of Death for the Murder of her Bastard Child." Similarly, *The Boston Gazette* (June 30, 1735) reported: "We hear from York, that the Indian Woman under Sentence of Death for the Murder of her Bastard Child, is to be Executed. . . ." Both papers later noted that Boston's crime was murder rather than infanticide. The *News-Letter* (July 31) announced that "Last Thursday was executed at the Town of York,

in the County of York, the Indian Woman condemned at the last Assizes for the Murder of her Master's Son." And the *Gazette* reported: "We hear from York, that on Thursday last the Indian Woman was Executed there for the Murder of her Master's Child. . . ." For a recent discussion of the *Faithful Narrative*, comparing it to "The Declaration and Confession of Esther Rodgers," see Williams, "Behold a Tragic Scene."

For information concerning the Moodys, see *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, IV, 356-65 (Samuel), and VI, 259-62 (Joseph); see also Frederick Lewis Weis's *The Colonial Clergy and the Colonial Churches of New England*, 144 (Samuel) and 143 (Joseph). In addition to helping his father in print and in the pulpit, Joseph Moody became famous for his highly eccentric behavior. Known as "Handkerchief Moody," he suddenly began wearing a handkerchief over his face in 1738, "which he never raised unless his face was turned to the wall or his eyes screwed tight shut" (*Sibley's* 260). Hawthorne, in "The Minister's Black Veil," modeled his Parson Hooper on "Handkerchief Moody," which the author acknowledged in a well known footnote. According to the legend surrounding Moody, the veil was worn to symbolize the minister's sorrow over the accidental death of a childhood playmate and the more recent death of his wife (see *Sibley's* 261). Regardless of the causes, it is interesting to note that "Moody's mind cracked" at about the same time he and his father were ministering to Boston, as the preface they wrote for the narrative was dated "April 24th. 1738" (ii). Both infanticide and Boston are treated briefly in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Good Wives*.

is an idle Man, and will mispend the Money he gets: and that *Sambo* a Negro should not do it, because it would be a dishonour to the Church of which he is a Member.

A Young Man brought her a Bottle of Rum t'other Day, and offered her a Dram; She took about a Jill in a Mugg, with which she made some Punch for her Child, not well; but never tasted a Drop her self. Such a victory has she got, by the Grace of God, over the Sin that did so easily beset her; and in which she has been overtaken even since her Imprisonment.—She *is* comfortable she says, and can't be otherwise; because the Spirit of God comforts her; and if it were not for that, she thinks she should be distracted again with Fears and Terrors.

July 23. Being called by the Prison Keeper's Wife, I went up to see the Prisoner. I found her very sorrowful, and she began to utter some despairing Words, as if there was no Hope for her; but I told her it was sinful for her to speak so, and asked her whether she had not seen Sin to be worse than Hell, &c. After some Discourse she was more still, and soon came into a calm and comfortable Frame, and so continued (blessed be God!) most of the Day.

The Rev. Mr. *A.* of *Oyster River* came to see her. She spake freely to him, and among other Things told him, she was not afraid to speak as a Dying Person, that she had truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He talk'd excellently to her, and after expounding Part of *John* 14. Prayed with her. At Night standing by the Window, I heard her reading the 3d Chapter of *John*. When she came to those Words v. 15. She stop'd and said, O dear, sweet! *That whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal Life.*

Thursday July 24. I understand the Prisoner slept most of the Time from two or three o'Clock this Morning, till near eight. She tells Mr. *P.* of *Somersworth*, that she had this Morning a more realizing Sense of Death, and some Fears; but her Hopes were above her Fears. He prayed affectionately and particularly with her. After the Lecture preached by Mr. *Moody* from 2. *Chron.* 33. 9.—I went up with the Prisoner; She finds it hard to part with her Child. Mr. *Moody* read to her the Passage of *Abraham's* offering up his Son.

When the *Sheriff* came, she desired to be alone a few Minutes, and then came out, and with a composed Countenance said, I am ready. She walked to the Place of Execution in the same calm Temper. When she came there she behaved her self very decently. Mr. *A.* made a Speech from a Text of Scripture, and prayed. Then she prayed her self with a distinct and audible Voice and pertinent Expressions, as near as I can remember to this Purpose,—“She adored God as infinite and unchangeable; She confessed her Sins, naming several, and prayed that she might be cleansed in the Blood of Christ. She over and over committed her precious Soul to God,

begging Mercy for Christ's sake, acknowledging that God out of Christ is a consuming Fire. She acknowledged the Justice of God in what was befallen her, for that she was guilty of Murder, and blessed God for bringing her thither, and granting her that Opportunity, and for giving her Comfort; admiring at it that such a one as she should have Comfort. She prayed for true Faith in Jesus Christ, Lord (said she) I believe, help thou mine Unbelief! She prayed for her Child, that it might be brought up in the Fear of an infinite God, and gave it up to Him. Lord, said she; it is not my Child, but thine. The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord. She pray'd for the innumerable Spectators (as she expressed it) That they might all take Warning by her, and beware of the Sins of Drunkenness, Lying &c. and that God would awaken secure Sinners. She pray'd for the Ministers that had been helpful to her, that God would reward all their Kindness. And for the Man that was to execute her, that he might be sensible of all his evil Ways, and that this Providence might be sanctified to him. And finally, that God would be with her the few Moments she had to live, and carry her thro' that last Trouble.”—Then she asked, whether there was any Time left? And being told there was, she began to warn all, especially Young People, against the Sins of Drunkenness, Lying & c; but seemed to be faint, and a little confused, and so she was bid to sit down. Then a Paper, at her desire, taken from her Mouth was read, during which she sat down on a Board that lay across the Cart, and read in the Bible, with such composure and calmness a Mind, it was truly admirable.—After this Mr. *Moody* made a short Speech, to this Purpose—That he had suffered Reproach already on the Account of the dear Child of Christ standing there, and expected to suffer more for what he was now going to say; and then told the Multitude, he had two Things to say to them, 1st. That he verily believed that Hundreds there present if they did not begin to seek God in earnest that Night, would perish for ever. And 2d. That if they would begin now in earnest, and hold out but a Fortnight, he hoped many of them would secure their eternal Salvation. This I well remember was the Substance, and true Import of what was then spoken; though it has been represented much otherwise. Before this, when the Prisoner first went up into the Cart, Mr. *Moody* declared to her, that if she had told him the Truth, as he believed she had, her Sins were all forgiven, and she had a saving Interest in Christ; and this he had Authority to say to her as a Minister of Christ. She was asked several Times, whether her Faith held out, and she professed it did. After the Rope was about her Neck, I asked her whether she did not believe that Christ, who had helped her along so near her End, could help her along the few Steps that yet remained? She (evidently with a Smile, which several others besides my self took notice of) answered, Yes. After her Face was