

The Christian History, June 30, 1743

The Christian History was a periodical published in Boston, Massachusetts, between 1743 and 1745. Each issue contained accounts of religious revivals in Great Britain and in the colonies. This account describes events in Jonathan Edwards's Northampton, Massachusetts.

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In the Night after the Lord's Day, October 29, 1727, there was a general and amazing Earthquake throughout New England & the neighbouring Provinces; which with several repeated Shocks afterwards in divers Parts of the Land, was a Means of awakening many to serious Thoughts of God and Eternity, and of reviving Religion among us. . . .

But a more remarkable Revival of Religion in this Country follows in a Time of great Security; when there was no terrible Dispensation of Providence to awaken the minds of Men, in the Years 1734, 45, and 36. An Account of this is given in a printed Treatise entitled, A faithful Narrative of the surprising Work of God in the Conversion of many hundred Souls in Northampton . . . in the Province of the Massachusetts, . . . written by the Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards Minister of Northampton, Nov. 6. 1736. . . .

Just after my Grandfather's [Solomon Stoddard] Death, it seemed to be a time of extraordinary Dullness in Religion: Licentiousness for some Years greatly prevailed among the Youth of the Town; they were many of them very much addicted to Night-walking, and frequently the Tavern, and lewd Practices, wherein some, by their Example, exceedingly corrupted others. It was their Manner very frequently to get together, in Conventions of both Sexes, for Mirth and Jollity, which they called Frolicks; and they would often spend the greater part of the Night in them, without regard to any Order in the Families they belonged to: and indeed Family-Government did too much fail in the Town. It was become very customary with many of our young People, to be Indecent in their Carriage at Meeting, which doubtless, would not have prevailed to such a Degree, had it not been that my Grandfather through his great Age (tho' he retained his Powers surprisingly to the last) was not able to Observe them. There had also long prevailed in the Town, a Spirit of Contention between two Parties, into which they had for many

Years been divided, by which, was maintained a Jealousy one of the other, and they were prepared to oppose one another in all public Affairs.

But in two or three Years after Mr. Stoddard's Death, there began to be a sensible Amendment of these Evils; the young People . . . by degrees left off their Frolicking, and grew observably more Decent in their Attendance on the public Worship, and there were more that manifested a Religious Concern than there used to be.

At the latter end of the Year 1733, there appeared a very unusual flexibleness, and yielding to Advice, in our young People. It had been too long their manner to make the Evening after the Sabbath, and after our public Lecture, to be especially the Times of their Mirth, and Company keeping. But a Sermon was now preached on the Sabbath before the Lecture, to shew the Evil Tendency of the Practice, and to persuade them to reform it; and it was urged on Heads of Families, that it should be a thing agreed upon among them to govern their Families, and keep their Children at home, at these times.... But Parents found little, or no occasion for the exercise of Government in the Case; the young People declared themselves convinced by what they had heard from the Pulpit, and were willing of themselves to comply with the Counsel that had been given: and it was immediately, and, I suppose, almost universally complied with; and there was a thorough Reformation of these Disorders thenceforward, which has continued ever since. . . .

Presently upon this, a great and earnest Concern about the great Things of Religion, and the eternal World, became universal in all Parts of the Town, and among Persons of all Ages. . . . All other Talk but about spiritual and eternal Things, was soon thrown by. . . . The Minds of People were wonderfully taken off from the World; it was treated amongst us as a Thing of very little Consequence. . . . The Temptation now seemed to lie on that Hand, to neglect worldly Affairs too much, and to spend too much Time in the immediate Exercise of Religion. . . .