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The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole

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Cole." Dates in running heads extend from 1741 to 1765. These I have inserted in brackets where they will help keep the chronology clear. The document is signed on page [70] in Cole's hand: "Nov Kensington in Farmingtown 1765: Nathan Cole." I have retained spelling and punctuation as they appear in the manuscript, with the exception of Cole's ampersand, which has been converted to 'and.' I have also added headings and have broken the text into paragraphs.

The Nathan Cole Manuscript Volume contains a three-and-a-half page item in Cole's hand, headed "in ye spiritual travels of Nathan Cole etc." In it Cole refers to "this year 1771." Apparently he intended this to be an addendum to his autobiography written six years earlier, and accordingly it has been appended to the work here.

### The Spiritual Travels of Nathan Cole

*I was born Feb 15th 1711 and born again octo 1741—*

When I was young I had very early Convictions; but after I grew up I was an Arminian untill I was *near* 30 years of age; I intended to be saved by my own works such as prayers and good deeds.

*[George Whitefield at Middletown]*

Now it pleased God to send Mr Whitefield into this land; and my hearing of his preaching at Philadelphia, like one of the Old apostles, and many thousands flocking to hear him preach the Gospel; and great numbers were converted to Christ; I felt the Spirit of God drawing me by conviction; I longed to see and hear him, and wished he would come this way. I heard he was come to New York and the Jerseys and great multitudes flocking after him under great concern for their Souls which brought on my Concern more and more hoping soon to see him but next I heard he was at long Island; then at Boston and next at Northampton.

Then on a Sudden, in the morning about 8 or 9 of the Clock there came a messenger and said Mr Whitfield preached at Hartford and Weathersfield yesterday and is to preach at Middletown this morning<sup>8</sup> at ten of the Clock, I was in my field at Work, I dropt my [3] tool that I had in my hand and ran home to my wife telling her to make ready quickly to go and hear Mr Whitfield preach at Middletown, then run to my pasture for my horse with all my might; fearing that I should be too late; having my horse I with my wife soon mounted the horse and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear, and when my horse got *much* out of breath I would get down and put my wife on the Saddle and bid her ride as fast as she could and not Stop or Slack for me except I bad her and so I would run untill I was *much* out of breath; and then mount my horse again, and so I did several times to favour

<sup>8</sup> Thursday, Oct. 23, 1740.

my horse; we improved every moment to get along as if we were fleeing for our lives; all the while fearing we should be too late to hear the Sermon, for we had twelve miles to ride double in little more than an hour and we went round by the upper housen parish.<sup>9</sup>

And when we came within about half a mile or a mile of the Road that comes down from Hartford weathersfield and Stepney to Middletown; on high land I saw before me a Cloud or fogg rising; I first thought it came from the great [4] River,<sup>10</sup> but as I came nearer the Road, I heard a noise something like a low rumbling thunder and presently found it was the noise of Horses feet coming down the Road and this Cloud was a Cloud of dust made by the Horses feet; it arose some Rods into the air over the tops of Hills and trees and when I came within about 20 rods of the Road, I could see men and horses Sliping along in the Cloud like shadows and as I drew nearer it seemed like a steady Stream of horses and their riders, scarcely a horse more than his length behind another, all of a Lather and foam with sweat, their breath rolling out of their nostrils every Jump; every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of Souls, it made me tremble to see the Sight, how the world was in a Struggle; I found a Vacance between two horses to Slip in mine and my Wife said law our Cloaths will be all spoiled see how they look, for they were so Covered with dust, that they looked almost all of a Colour Coats, hats, Shirts, and horses.

We went down in the Stream but heard no man [5] speak a word all the way for 3 miles but every one pressing forward in great haste and when we got to Middletown old meeting house there was a great Multitude *it was said to be 3 or 4000* of people Assembled together; we dismounted and shook off[f] our Dust; and the ministers were then Coming to the meeting house; I turned and looked towards the Great River and saw the ferry boats Running swift backward and forward bringing over loads of people and the Oars Rowed nimble and quick; every thing men horses and boats seemed to be Struggling for life; *The land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses* all along the 12 miles I saw no man at work in his field, but all seemed to be gone.

When I saw Mr Whitfield come upon the Scaffold he Lookt almost angelical; a young, Slim, slender, youth before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted Countenance, and my hearing how God was with him every where as he came along it Solemnized my mind; and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach; for he looked as if he was Cloathed with authority from the Great God; [6] *and a sweet sollome solemnity sat upon his brow* And my hearing him preach, gave me a heart wound; By Gods blessing: my old Foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me; then I was convinced of the doctrine of Election: and went right to quarrelling with God about it; because that all I

<sup>9</sup> Middletown Upper Houses Parish, the present town of Cromwell.

<sup>10</sup> The Connecticut River.

could do would not save me; and he had decreed from Eternity who should be saved and who not.

[*Conversion Crisis*]

I began to think I was not Elected, and that God made some for heaven and me for hell. And I thought God was not Just in so doing, I thought I did not stand on even Ground with others, if as I thought; I was made to be damned; My heart then rose against God exceedingly, for his making me for hell; Now this distress lasted Almost two years:—Poor—Me—Miserable me.—It pleased God to bring on my Convictions more and more, and I was loaded with the guilt of Sin, I saw I was undone for ever; I carried Such a weight of Sin in my breast or mind, that it seemed to me as if I should sink into the ground every step; and I kept all to my self as much as I could; I went month after month mourning and begging for mercy, I tried every way I could think to help my self but all ways failed:—Poor me it took away *most* all my Comfort of eating, drinking, Sleeping, or working. Hell fire was most always in my mind; and I have hundreds of times put my fingers into my pipe when I have been smoaking to feel how fire felt: [7] And to see how my Body could bear to lye in Hell fire for ever and ever. Now my countenance was sad so that others took notice of it.

Sometimes I had some secret hope in the mercy of God; that some time or other he would have mercy on me; And so I took some hopes, and thought I would do all that I could do, and remove all things out of the way that might possibly be an hindrance; and I thought I must go to my Honoured Father and Mother and ask their forgiveness for every thing I had done amiss toward them in all my life: if they had any thing against me; I went and when I came near the house one of my Brothers was there, and asked me what was the matter with me: I told him I did not feel well, and passed by; But he followed and asked again what was the matter. I gave him the same answer, but said he something is the matter more than Ordinary for I see it in your Countenance: I refused to tell at present—Poor me—I went to my Father and Mother and told them what I came for: and asked them to forgive me every think [*sic*] they had against me concerning my disobedience or whatsoever else it might be; they said they had not any thing against me, and both fell aweeping like Children for Joy to see me so concerned for my Soul.

Now when I went away I made great Resolutions that I would forsake every thing that was Sinfull; [8] And do to my uttermost every thing that was good; And at once I felt a calm in my mind, and I had no desire to any thing that was sin as I thought; But here the Devil thought to Catch me on a false hope, for I began to think that I was converted, for I thought I felt a real Change in me. But God in his mercy did not leave me here to perish; but in the space of ten days I was made to see that I was yet in the Gall of bitterness; my Convictions came on again more smart than ever—poor me—Oh then I long'd to be in the Condition of some good Man.