

Are ye God's children? Are ye converted, and become like little children? Then deal with God as your little children do with you; as soon as ever they want any thing, or if any body hurts them, I appeal to yourselves if they do not directly run to their parent. Well, are ye God's children? Doth the devil trouble you? Doth the world trouble you? Go tell your Father of it, go directly and complain to God. Perhaps you may say, I cannot utter fine words: but do any of you expect fine words from your children? If they come crying, and can speak but half words, do not your hearts yearn over them? And has not God unspeakably more pity to you? If ye can only make signs to him; "As a father pitieth his children, so will the Lord pity them that fear him." I pray you therefore be bold with your Father, saying, "Abba, Father! Satan troubles me, the world troubles me, my own mother's children are angry with me; heavenly Father, plead my cause!" The Lord will then speak for you some way or other.

George Whitefield, *Sermons on Important Subjects* (London: Henry Fisher and P. Jackson, 1832), 277.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: What topics does Whitefield encourage his listeners to discuss with God?

Analyze: How might a discussion with God in this manner influence a worshipper's understanding of her place in the universe?

Evaluate: Compare Whitefield's tone to Benjamin Franklin's (Doc. 3.11). How are they both similar in their informality and appeal to the individual? How do they differ?

DOCUMENT 3.13

JONATHAN EDWARDS, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

1741

Jonathan Edwards wrote the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" to proclaim the horrors of damnation in terms that were more personal and visceral than the language used by his Puritan forebearers. Edwards's rhetoric and tone reflect the emphasis on individual salvation that marked the First Great Awakening, the British North American religious movement of the 1740s.

So that thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the

least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment: the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God. . . .

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ.—That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up. . . .

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet, it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sereno Edwards Dwight and Edward Hickman (New York: Daniel Appleton, 1835), 9–10.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: What is Edwards's primary argument in this sermon? To whom is the sermon directed?

Analyze: To what extent does the image of John Winthrop IV (Doc 3.10) communicate values that are similar to those expressed in Edwards's sermon? Explain.

Evaluate: Compare Edwards's understanding of God to George Whitefield's in Document 3.12. What are key similarities between the two? What are key differences?