The Sovereignty and Goodness of God
By Mary Rowlandson

The Preface to the Reader

It was on Tuesday, Feb. 1, 1675, in the afternoon, when the Narragansets quarters (in or toward the Nipmuc Country, whither they are now retreate for fear of the English Army lying in their own Country) were the second time beaten up by the Forces of the United Colonies, who thereupon soon betook themselves to flight, and were all the next day pursued by the English, some overtaken and destroyed. But on Thursday, Feb. 3d, the English having now been six days on their march, from their head quarters, at Wickford, in the Narraganset Country, toward, and after the Enemy, and provision grown exceeding short, insomuch that they were faint to kill some Horses for the supply, especially of their Indian friends, they were necessitated to consider what was best to be done: And about noon (having hitherto followed the chase as hard as they might) a Council was called, and though some few were of another mind, yet it was concluded by far the greater part of the Council of War, that the Army should desist the pursuit, and retire: the Forces of Plymouth and the Bay to the next Town of the Bay, and Connecticut Forces to their own next Towns; which determination was immediately put in execution. The

1By the modern Gregorian calendar (already used everywhere in Europe outside of the British Isles), the date was February 11, 1676. Until the mid-eighteenth century, England observed the Julian calendar, in which the year began on March 25 instead of January 1 and which reckoned dates ten days earlier than the Gregorian calendar.

The United Colonies of New England was a loose confederation consisting of the Puritan-dominated colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, and Plymouth. It pointedly excluded religiously tolerant Rhode Island.

The colony of Massachusetts Bay.
wise, holy, powerful, and gracious providence of God, towards that worthy and precious Gentlewoman, the dear Consort of the said Reverend Mr. Rowlandson, and her Children with her, as in casting of her into such a waterless pit, so in preserving, supporting, and carrying through so many such extreme hazards, unspeakable difficulties and disconsolateness, and at last delivering her out of them all, and her Surviving Children also. It was a strange and amazing dispensation, that the Lord should so afflict his precious Servant, and Hand maid. It was a strange, if not more, that he should so bear up the spirits of his Servant under such bereavements and of his handmaid under such captivity, travels and hardships (much too hard for flesh and blood) as he did, and at length deliver and restore. But he was their Saviour, who hath said, 

_When thou passest through the Waters, I will be with thee, and through the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee: When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, nor shall the flame kindle upon thee, Isa. 43, ver. 2, and again, He woundeth and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In Famine he shall redeem thee from Death, and in War from the power of the sword._

Job 5.18, 19, 20. Methinks this dispensation doth bear some resemblance to those of Joseph, David and Daniel; yea, and of the three Children too, the Stories whereof do represent us with the excellent textures of divine providence, curious pieces of divine work: and truly so doth this, and therefore not to be forgotten, but worthy to be exhibited to, and viewed, and pondered by all, that disdain not to consider the operation of his hands.

The works of the Lord (not only of Creation, but of Providence also, especially those that do more peculiarly concern his dear ones, that are as the Apple of his Eye, as the Signet upon His Hand, the Delight of his Eves, and the Object of his tenderest Care) are great, sought out of all those that have pleasure therein. And of these verily this is none of the least.

This Narrative was penned by the Gentlewoman her self, to be to her a memorandum of Gods dealing with her, that she might never forget, but remember the same, and the severall circumstances thereof, all the dayes of her life. A pious scope which deserves both commendation and imitation: Some friends having obtained a sight of it, could not but be so much affected with the many passages of working providence discovered therein as to judge it worthy of publick view, and altogether unmeet that such works of God should be hid from present and future Generations: And therefore though this Gentlewomens modesty would not thrust it

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1Meaning that the Narragansett refugees quickly depleted their Nipmuck hosts' food supply.

2This is a reference to the report by James Quanapohit, or Quannapaquait, which appears on p. 119.

3See Genesis 14, esp. 12–16.

4See Daniel 3.
into the Press, yet her gratitude unto God made her not hardly persuadable to let it pass, that God might have his due glory and others benefit by it as well as herself. I hope by this time none will cast any reflection upon this Gentlewoman, on the score of this publication of her affliction and deliverance. If any should, doubtless they may be reckoned with the nine lepers, of whom it is said, *Were there not ten cleansed, where are the nine? but one returning to give God thanks.* Let such further know that this was a dispensation of publick note, and of universall concernment, and so much the more, by how much the nearer this Gentlewoman stood related to that faithful Servant of God, whose capacity and employment was publick in the house of God, and his name on that account of a very sweet savour in the Churches of Christ. Who is there of a true Christian spirit, that did not look upon himself much concerned in this bereavement, this Captivity in the time thereof, and in this deliverance when it came, yea more than in many others; and how many are there, to whom so concerned, it will doubtless be a very acceptable thing to see the way of God with this Gentlewoman in the aforesaid dispensation, thus laid out and portrayed before their eyes.

To conclude, whatever any coy phantasies may deem, yet it highly concerns those that have so deeply tasted, how good the Lord is, to enquire with *David, What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?* Psal. 116. 12. He thinks nothing too great; yea, being sensible of his own disproportion to the due praises of God he calls in help. *Oh, magnifie the Lord with me, let us exalt his Name together,* Psal. 34. 3. And it is but reason, that our praises should hold proportion with our prayers; and that as many hath helped together by prayer for the obtaining of this Mercy, so praises should be returned by many on this behalfe; And forasmuch as not the general but particular knowledge of things make deepest impression upon the affections, this Narrative particularizing the several passages of this providence will not a little conduceth thereunto. And therefore holy *David* in order to the attainment of that end, accounts himself concerned to declare what God hath done for his soul, Psal. 66. 16. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what God hath done for my soul, i.e. for his life, see v. 9, 10. He holdeth our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved, for thou our God hast proved us, thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Life-mercies, are heart-affecting mercies, of great impression and force, to enlarge pious hearts in the praises of God, so that such know not how but to talk of Gods acts, and to speak of and publish his wonderfull works. Deep troubles, when the waters come in unto thy soul, are

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wont to produce vows: vows must be paid. *It is better not vow, than vow and not to pay.*8 I may say, that as none knows what it is to fight and pursue such an enemy as this, but they that have fought and pursued them: so none can imagine what it is to be captivated, and enslaved to such atheistical, proud, wild, cruel, barbarous, brutish (in one word) diabolical creatures as these, the worst of the heathen; nor what difficulties, hardships, hazards, sorrows, anxieties and perplexities do unavoidably wait upon such a condition, but those that have tried it. No serious spirit then (especially knowing anything of this Gentlewoman's piety) can imagine but that the vows of God are upon her. Excuse her then if she come thus into publick, to pay those vows. Come and hear what she hath to say.

*I am confident that no Friend of divine Providence will ever repent his time and pains spent in reading over these sheets, but will judg them worth perusing again and again.*

Here Reader, you may see an instance of the Soveraignty of God, who doth what he will with his own as well as others; and who may say to him, *What dost Thou?*9 Here you may see an instance of the faith and patience of the Saints, under the most heart-sinking tryals; here you may see, the promises are breasts full of consolation, when all the world besides is empty, and gives nothing but sorrow. That God is indeed the supreme Lord of the world, ruling the most unruly, weakening the most cruel and savage, granting his People mercy in the sight of the unmercifull, curbing the lusts of the most filthy, holding the hands of the violent, delivering the prey from the mighty, and gathering together the out casts of Israel. Once and again you have heard, but here you may see, *that power belongeth unto God;* that our God is the God of Salvation, and to him belong the issues from Death. That our God is in the Heavens, and doth whatever pleases him. Here you have Sampons Riddle exemplified, and that great promise, Rom. 8. 28. verified, *Out of the Eater comes forth meat, and sweetness out of the strong.*10 The worst of evils working together for the best good. How evident is it that the Lord hath made this Gentlewoman a gainer by all this affliction, that she can say, 'tis good for her, yea better that she hath been, than that she should not have been thus afflicted.

*Oh how doth God shine forth in such things as these!* Reader, if thou gettest no good by such a Declaration as this, the fault must needs be thine own. Read therefore, Peruse, Ponder, and from hence lay up something from the experience of another, against thine

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8See Ecclesiastes 5:5.
9Job 9:12.
10Although Romans 8:28 refers to a promise by God, Samson's riddle and the passage quoted are found in Judges 14:14.
own turn comes, that so thou also through patience and consolation of the Scripture mayest have hope.

TER AMICAM

A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson

On the tenth of February 1675, Came the Indians with great numbers upon Lancaster: Their first coming was about Sun-rising; hearing the noise of some Guns, we looked out; several Houses were burning, and the Smoke ascending to Heaven. There were five persons taken in one house, the Father, and the Mother and a sucking Child, they knockt on the head; the other two they took and carried away alive. There were two others, who being out of their Garison upon some occasion were set upon; one was knockt on the head, the other escaped: Another there was who running along was shot and wounded, and fell down; he begged of them his life, promising them Money (as they told me) but they would not hearken to him but knockt him in head, and strippt him naked, and split open his Bowels. Another seeing many of the Indians about his Barn, ventured and went out. There was quickly shot down. There were three others belonging to the same Garison who were killed; the Indians getting up upon the roof of the Barn, had advantage to shoot down upon them over their Fortification. Thus these murthorous wretches went on, burning, and destroying before them.

At length they came and beset our own house, and quickly it was the dholesest day that ever mine eyes saw. The House stood upon the edge of a hill; some of the Indians got behind the hill, others into the Barn, and others behind any thing that could shelter them; from all which places they shot against the House, so that the Bullets seemed to fly like hail; and quickly they wounded one man among us, then another, and then a third. About two hours (according to my observation, in that amazing time) they had been about the house before they prevailed to fire it (which they did with Flax and Hemp, which they brought out of the

Barn, and there being no defence about the House, only two Flankers at two opposite corners, and one of them not finished) they fired it once and one ventured out and quenched it, but they quickly fired again, and that took. Now is that dreadfull hour come, that I have often heard of (in time of War, as it was the case of others) but now mine eyes see it. Some in our house were fighting for their lives, others wallowing in their blood, the House on fire over our heads, and the bloody Heathen ready to knock us on the head, if we stirred out. Now might we hear Mothers & Children crying out for themselves, and one another, Lord, What shall we do? Then I took my Children and (one of my sisters, hers) to go forth and leave the house: but as soon as we came to the door and appeared, the Indian shot so thick that the bullets rattlest against the House, as if one had taken an handful of stones and threw them, so that we were fain to give back. We had six stout Dogs belonging to our Garrison, but none of them would stir, though another time, if any Indian had come to the door, they were ready to fly upon him and tear him down. The Lord hereby would make us the more to acknowledge his hand, and to see that our help is always in him. But out we must go, the fire increasing, and coming along behind us, roaring, and the Indians gaping before us with their Guns, Spears and Hatchets to devour us. No sooner were we out of the House, but my Brother in Law (being before wounded, in defending the house, in or near the throat) fell down dead, whereat the Indians scornfully shouted, and hallowed, and were presently upon him, stripping off his cloaths, the bullets flying thick, one went through my side, and the same (as would seem) through the bowels and hand of my dear Child in my arms. One of my elder Sisters Children, named William, had then his Leg broken, which the Indians perceiving, they knockt him on head. Thus we were butchered by those merciless Heathen, standing amazed, with the blood running down to our heels. My eldest Sister being yet in the House, and seeing those wofull sights, the Infidels haling Mothers one way, and Children another, and some wallowing in their blood: and her elder Son telling her that her Son William was dead, and my self was wounded, she said, And, Lord, let me dy with them; which was no sooner said, but she was struck with a Bullet, and fell down dead over the threshold. I hope she is reaping the fruit of her good labours, being faithfull to

12The approximate translation of this phrase is "thry three-fold friend," but subsequent editions corrected it to read per amicum, "by a friend," probably the rendering intended here.
13By our calendar, February 20, 1676. See note 1.
14Projecting fortifications.
15Rowlandson had three children, Joseph Jr. (b. 1661), Mary (b. 1665), and Sarah (b. 1669).
16Two of Rowlandson’s sisters and their families were among the thirty-seven persons housed in the Rowlandson garrison.
17Her youngest child, Sarah.