

Pratt - Gilson Letters

The following are the complete text of eight letters written by William Pratt to Harriet Gilson, which have been passed down to me. He was 22 and she was 27. She was living at the corner of Cambridge and Bowdoin St., in Boston. These letters span the period from May 15 to August 21, 1834. They were married Sept. 4, 1834. They were the parents of six children. They lived in Quincy all their lives, where William was a boot maker, according to the census. Harriet died in 1866 and William died the next year.

I have done my best to transcribe them as faithfully as possible, although there are a few words difficult to read. I have attempted to retain the original spelling. In some cases I have added punctuation, to aid readability.

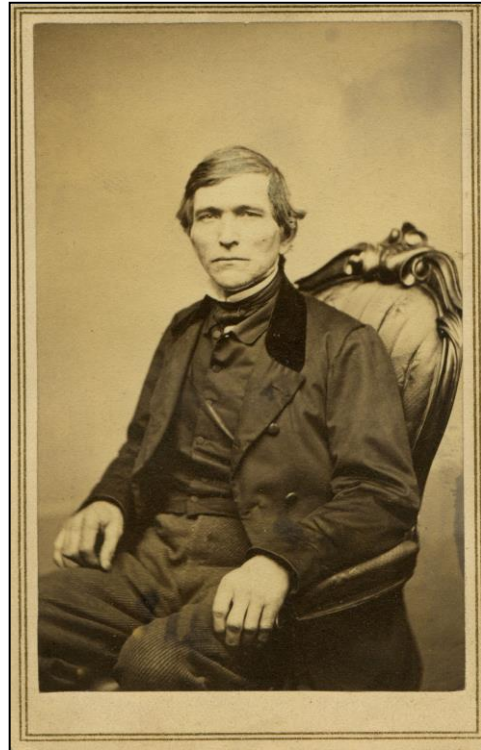
A. Gilbertson, Nov. 9, 2013.

Quincy Thursday May 15th 1834

Dearly Beloved in the Lord

I gladly embrace this opportunity which is offered me of writing to one whom a short acquaintance has endeared to me. I look back upon the circumstances which brought about this acquaintance with wonder and astonishment, and am led sometimes to think it must be a dream, but No it is all a reality.

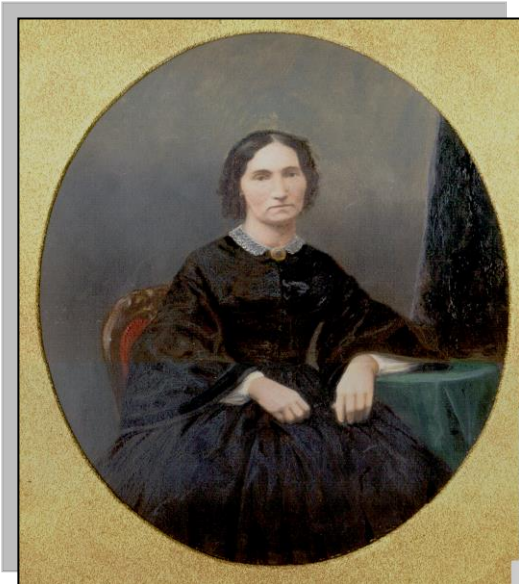
Through the good Providence of God these lines leave us as I sincerely hope they will find you enjoying the best of earthly blessings. Health, for our minds are so intimately connected with our bodies that whatever effects the body also effects the mind in a greater or less degree. I am afraid we do not sufficiently prize the many blessings by which we are surrounded, that we are too apt to think "what do we have more than others" but these things ought not so to be the blessings that we receive from the hand of God should call forth from our hearts the most ardent love and gratitude, the most strong attachment to our Heavenly Father who is the author of every good and perfect gift, in whom we live and move, and have our being. O let us my dear friend strive to cultivate a spirit of Love and thankfulness, and devotion to that being who has in mercy preserved us thus long on earth, and who art giving us from day to day, health, friends, food, and raiment, and all the other comforts and conveniences of life. Does it seem possible that we should be so forgetfull, so unmindfull, so unthankfull to God, that we should have so low an estimate,



of the obligations that he has laid us under to be entirely consecrated to him, our time, our talent, our bodies and Souls, and all that we have in his service. O may we feel more and more that we are not our own, that Christ have bought us and redeemed us by his own most precious blood on the cross that we miserable Sinners, who are not deserving of the least of his favors, might through his blood attain unto everlasting life. Let us be deeply thankfull, and resolve that in the Strength of God we will live more to his glory, that we will reflect more of the image of that Savior whom we profess to love above every other object, that in view of the mercy of God, and our past ingratitude we will humble ourselves, even to the dust, that we may be exalted even to God's right hand.

Truly we are under obligations to serve God with all the heart in view of the blessing of this life. But O my friend what, yes what, are all the blessings of this life without which our existence were misery, in comparison to the blessings of Salvation by the suffering, agony, and death, of Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour who was willing to leave the realms of Glory, and the bosom of the father and the praise of Angels, and Archangels, and didn't condescend to take upon himself the form of a Servant, to be a man of Sorrow, and acquainted with grief to have not where to lay his head. Only think of it that this was God, he who made heaven as a curtain, and laid the foundation of the earth, who was Alpha and Omega the beginning and the ending, the Almighty. O my friend words are too feeble to express the feeling of our souls, as the professed followers of this blessed God and Saviour when we catch but a faint glimpse of the plan of Salvation.

But should we not often inquire why was all this suffering, and agony, and distress. O my dear friend it was Sin which caused all this, yes Sin, which is thought so little off by the unbelieving world, which throug the broad road that leads to Everlasting Death, they "roal it as a Sweet morsel under their tongue," and think not their sins help nail him to that accursed tree, that their sins help thrust in the spear which caused both water and blood to flow from his most precious side. O how dreadful is the thought that Christ should be wounded in the house of his friends, has he ever ben wounded by us, have we not brought the religion of Christ into disrepute by our lives and conversation, have we



not given those around us to reason to much think that it is all an outward show, that we are no better than the imperitent ? around us. O my friend these are serious questions, and should be answered in view of death, judgment, and Eternity.

When I look around me in this place and see so much Sin and wickedness see the Law of God which is holy just and good trampled under foot his name blasphemed in the most shocking manner, his holy word neglected yea despised, and his holy Sabbath spent in idleness, his Sanctuary neglected, and every thing Good and holy ridiculed, my heart is heavy, my Soul faints within me, and I am led to exclaim in the

language of the Prophet Jeremiah, "O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of this people."¹ But amidst so much to cause the disciple of Christ to sink into despondency, blessed be God, there is much in his holy word to encourage us to persevere, "Bring me the tiths into my Storehouse there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now, and see if I will not pour you out a blessing that there will be hardly room to receive it."² "I have never said unto the seed of Jacob (the Church) seek ye my face in vain."³ "Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name that will do" and hundreds of other passages, that might be quoted to Stimulate the humble disciple of the blessed Redeemer to persevere, to labor, and pray, knowing that if we do so looking unto God for a blessing he will, he will in tender mercy look upon our labor of love and in answer to our cry rain down upon us a rain of righteousness, he will revive his work he will build up his Church, and save souls from Death, O that God would give unto his dear people in this place a spirit of prayer and supplication that they may all be found wrestling Jacobs⁴ and prevailing Israels saying we "cannot let the without a blessing" O pray for us dear friend I beseech you and in all your addresses at the throne of Grace forget us not, and remember me, though an unworthy miserable Sinner, that God would give me a double portion of his Spirit that while I have life, and while I have breath they may be spent in his Service. I have not wrote half so much as I want to but you see that I have got to the bottom, I want to speak of our little band of brothers and Sisters of the trials through which we are about to be called to pass through in losing our paster. But I cannot. God bless you.⁵

I shall never forget with what feelings I parted with you how hard the struggle, I long to embrace you in the arms of my love and affection, and clasp your hand in mine with an affectionate Grasp and to give and receive an affectionate --- I need not say what. Grant that the time may speedily come when we shall not enjoy each others company for an hour only, but be united in the way of God's own appointment that we may enjoy the sweets attending such a state, that we may simpathize in each others sorrows, and partake of each others joys, My beloved Sister when I look into a family and see all peace and harmony and love, and all united and happy going on their way towards the Heavenly Jerusalem rejoicing, and see their cheerful fireside surrounded by dear children whom God has given them, or rather has lent them, to be trained up for him to see them honoring their father and mother which is the first commandment. With promise it is then I assure you that I do desire to be in such a situation, but it has ben my lot to be in a situation the reverse of all this, where every thing that was said or done put me in mind of a passage, which I often think of They are like the troubled sea casting up both mire and dirt⁶ where it seemed more like biting and devouring one another as the Apostle says than anything else, but O if religion, the soul purifying religion of Christ should enter such an abode how soon would the darkness dissipate and the glorious son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings. There are many girls in this place about my age, but what are

¹ Jeremiah 9:1. I can't find any versions with the exact words that William uses.

² Malachi 3:10.

³ Isaiah 45:19.

⁴ Genesis 32: 24-30.

⁵ This is at the bottom of the page.

⁶ Isaiah 57:20.

they. They spend all they can get in adorning their bodies which must soon be laid in the grave and mingle with clods of the valley. O I do admire to see a girl dressed plain, and neat, but the passions that rage in our day, are not worthy of being followed. And now good by, good by, may the God of all grace be with you to help you by his mighty power to live by faith and not by sight. Let us never forget our closets nor our bibles which is the Book of Books but may we search the scriptures daily, to see whither we are going, what are our prospects for eternity, let us remember that we are forming moral Character for Eternity, and may we so live that our death may be that of the righteous and our last end like his.

I remain your sincere and affectionate Brother. Wm. Pratt.

I shall endeavor if the weather will permit to come into town the Anniversary week (if the Lord will) and we are all well but you must not be cast down if I do not, every thing is so uncertain in this life. If I do come be assured I will call and if I should not come in then I will come Providence permitting the last Friday in June, I shall look for an answer to this the first of next week. I do hope you will receive this one it would be too hard to have them all lost. My dear Mother sends her love to you. Farewell, W^m. Pratt.

Undated. The rest of this letter appears to be missing.

I was sorry that I was obliged to hurry over this letter as I did. I hope you will be able to puzzle it out if you cannot tell me when I come and I will help you. I thought when I had finished this letter that I should put it into the Mail but after a moments thought I concluded to send it by Mr. Gilit the Quincy Stage driver, the expense is no more, and he will hand it to you without any trouble. In the letter I have mentioned two things that may prevent my coming in to town the last week of this month, I ought to have mentioned one more, that is my work may be so that I cannot consistently leave it, I often have work come that must be done therefore be not disappointed if I do not come.

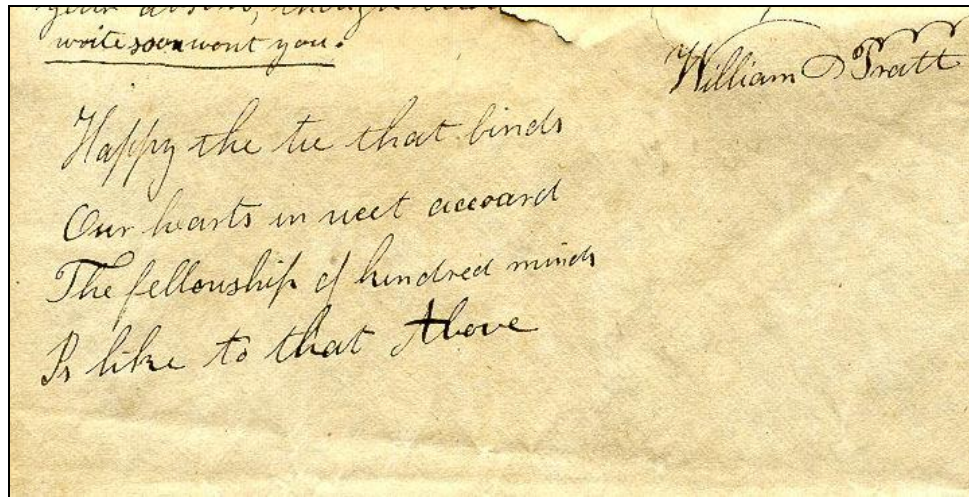
Forgive me my dear friend, if I have said any thing out of the way, with regard to my feelings towards you. Believe me when I say my Heart is drawn out in an especial manner towards you.

May God be with you by his grace, may you live near the throne of his grace, and reflect much of his holy image, pray much, in all your supplications remember your absent, though beloved and Sincere friend. Write soon wont you.

William Pratt

Happy the tie that binds
Our hearts in sweet accord

The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that Above



Quincy June 11th 1834

Most Affectionate Friend

Well how do you do, I hope you did not take cold that stormy evening. If you did you will know where to lay the blame, but I hope you did not take any. I hope you are still in the possession of that blessing, without which the sources of our earthly happiness are in a measure dried up. O let us not forget that hand which upholds us, which keeps us in being, and from which flow every good and perfect gift. Dear friend I am often with you in imagination, walking by your side, conversing on that heavenly theme, which lies nearest to our hearts, the Cause of Christ, how delightful, how glorious is the sight to see two whose hearts are in unison, who worship and adore the same God and Saviour, who are walking in the same straight, and narrow path together, in the spirit, though separated perhaps, after the flesh, whose hearts have been sprinkled by the same precious blood, which flowed from the side of our dear Saviour and who hope at last, to set down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb, to go no more out for ever. O my dear Harriet is it possible, that our names are "Written in the Lambs book of life, that we are heirs with God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," having washed our robes, and made them white in his blood, and yet bring forth no more fruit, yet follow Christ so far off, for we must remember that it is not those that say "Lord, Lord," but those that do the will of God that will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, in fact it cannot be heaven (a place of happiness) to any but those who delight in worship and serve God. Suppose (for instance) we take the drunkard or any notorious Sinner, and place him in a "Prayer meeting," where the people of God delight to pour forth their souls to God in prayer, and supplications, and is he happy, does he unite with them, does he have any relish for such exercises, does he in a word feel at home, and exclaim with David, One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, O no, had he not much rather be in the company of

Spirits more congenial with his own and is no such a place, to him a place of torment most certainly, now if this is true here will it not be true in the world to come, for with the moral character we die, by the same shall we be judged at the bar of God he has in in his infinite wisdom, so connected, holiness and happiness, Sin and misery, that none can enjoy the glories of the upper world but those whose hearts have ben answered by divine grace, and who have shown to the world that this change is real by a Holy rightness and godly life. O may we pray continually for more of the spirit of our divine Master, that we may let our light shine out more before men that they may not have so much occasion to say he has indeed ben with Jesus, and hath learnt of him Heavenly wisdom, Christians who live as Christians should who spend much time in prayer when they come down from the mount of communion with God they will appear like Moses, when his face shone like the brightness of the sun, and this cannot help having a salutary, saving influence, it will infuse itself into the life, and conduct, it will lead such an one to be faithfull to the impenitent by whom he is surrounded, he will clear his spirits from the blood of their souls, so that they can never say at the dread tribunal, thou sawest me going down the broad road that leads to hell, tho sawest me living day after day, month after month, and year after year, and yet thou never warned me of my danger, thou didst never urge, and intreat, and beseech me to throw down my arms of rebellion, to repent of my sins, to look unto Christ, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, and live a Christian life, and now here I am with the awful sentence resting upon my guilty, Sin ruined soul, Depart from me unto everlasting fire: O that thou hadst ben faithfull to me in my probation, then peradventure, I should have accepted with the terms of Salvation, and now should have been welcomed to the mantions of bliss, Let us bring the matter home, if we do shall we not be constrained to say of ourselves, “Thou art the man,” are those not those around us with whom we hold daily commerce, who give no evidence they that are the true disciples of Christ, who give fearful evidence that they are yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity and are we unfaithfull to them, do we warn them to flee from the wrath to come does not the fear of man bring a snare, are we not afraid to do our duty faithfully as in the presence of God, let us remember the words of the Apostle James, “He that correcteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.” O what glories are in store for those who are faithfull unto death, we must practice self denial we must take up our cross, and follow Christ, it is a cross perhaps to warn the impenitent, but, we must Bear the Cross, if we would Wear the crown, and we hope to wear the crown of Victory in the presence of our King. Then let us strive for more of that mind which was in Christ Jesus, and what was the mind of Christ dear Sister, when he stood weeping, only think of the “Mighty God the Everlasting Father” as Isaiah calls him in his prophecy stood weeping over Jerusalem and cried O Jerusalem., Jerusalem &c” and why was this effecting language used, O the universalists tell us it was because the Roman army were to come and lay waste that fair City, but no Christ did not come on earth to weep over the temporal losses of men, was it not because the City was filled (with very few exceptions) with impenitent Sinners, who were hardened in Sin, and going down the broad road to destruction, that was without doubt what led Christ to shed tears of pity over their condition, and shall not we, if we possess this mind, weep over the future condition of those around us shall we not go to God in prayer, feeling that we cannot let our souls rest until we see the salvation of God in our midst, and thus become wrestling Jacobs, and prevailing Israels, let us

remember that prayer moves the hand that moves the world, that in answer to prayer, and corresponding labours, this great world has got to be converted to God, for the promise of God is yet for all this I will be required⁷ off by the house of Isreal (the Church) to do it for them. I find that this letter is almost filled up, and what shall I say of Quincy the place of my nativity O that I would in truth tell you of a glorious revival of pure and undefiled religion in our midst, but I cannot my lipps are sealed from uttering such language but, one thing among others that we have got to comfort us is, that if Christians are only faithful, and prayerful, manifesting to those around them an ardent desire for their conversion to God, conversing with them as opportunity may offer itself on the subject of religion, that God will bless such a people and such a church, and build them up in the faith and order of the Gospel of Christ. It makes my blood almost chill in my veins to see the young in this place conducting as they do, following the ? and vanities of the world, with their whole souls bound up in balls, dancing schools, rides for pleasure, and such like vain immusements, by which, the Devil is leading them Captive at his will, and why am I not among their number, I was once their once I counted their company and society, but I trust a change, a radical change has taken place in my heart and effections by the Holy Ghost since that time, for I by nature am no better than the vilest of the vile on the face of the whole earth, and were it not for the assisting and preserving grace of God I should have ben left to sink down unto the very dregs of society, I declare how small is a sheet of paper, are they as large as they used to be.⁸

How brittle is the thread of life, how vast the work given us to do and yet how little time to do it. Let us gird on the armour of the gospel, that when we are called away we may be found fighting the battles of the Lord manfully under the captain of our Salvation. The words of the poet are true, We have enlisted in a war in which there is no discharge "and we must conquer or die." I want you should tell me in your letter how your sister does, if she is any better, I often think of her, and how the little one does, that was sick when I was in, and also how your beloved Paster does, whether his health has improved any. My dear mother⁹ sends her love to you and your mother¹⁰ and folks. I hope they will not long be strangers to each other. Is it any harm to wish that I lived near that I could drop in oftener. I do wish so with all my heart, but a comforting text has jest come into my mind, it is this "In patience possess ye your souls." I must say good by for I cannot write without room. The Lord be with you to bless you forever. Yours William Pratt. Remember me to your mother and Sisters.¹¹

I feel very desirous that you should come out and see us, sometimes almost impatient. How much Love will do, but perhaps it will not be advisable for you to come until the house is finished and dedicated to God which I hope will be the last of July, or the first of August. It will soon be here, time flies swift, the house is in a most beautiful situation, has a very commanding appearance. It looks much larger than I thought it would. They

⁷ Or inquired. (Difficult to read).

⁸ This is written at the very bottom of the page.

⁹ Sarah (Newcomb) Pratt (1777-1860).

¹⁰ Harriet's mother was Mary (Eaton) Gilson, who died in 1846. Harriet's father, Nathaniel Gilson, is not mentioned and thus had probably died by 1834.

¹¹ Harriet's sisters were Mary, Lucy, and Elizabeth Gilson.

get along with it briskly the outside is nearly completed. O for the time when it shall be filled with true spiritual worshipers, which will soon be if Christians are only on their post....

Beloved Christian Friend

Quincy June 23 1834

Your letter of the 19th came to hand the 20th and with great satisfaction I assure you. How delightful to hear from friends we love. Think not that my love for you will abate in the least on account of the mistake which you mention in your letter. O no I trust my love is too deep rooted to be plucked up by such a circumstance. I would be glad to fill up this sheet, but time will not permit. I thought I would write a few lines saying that, I would come into town, at the time you mentioned, (God permitting). The thought that you suggested in your last, respecting setting apart one half hour in a week for special prayer for each other, meets my most cordial approbation. I do not know of a single act that we could perform that would tend to strengthen that bond of Love between us so much as this. We will, when we meet agree upon the time. We are all well -- yours in haste from necessity William Pratt.

my pen is poor, my ink is pail
my love to you, shall never fail¹²

Farewell

Do not let the double postage on your letter keep you awake, for they are very partial to us, the letter was marked 6 ¼ cents only ---.

Fryday Morning July 4th 1834

Most dearly Belov'd

I would weep tears of blood, were it of any avail, that I am deprived of spending this day with you, but let us not complain nor murmur in the least, "God's ways are not ours," he often sees fit in his holy Providence, to frustrate our plans, but it is always for our good; I have hardly known what it was to be sick for 6 years, while many of my age and sex have fallen into the grave, my frail bark, by the mercy of God, has rode safe o'er the stream of life, for two or three days I have been rather unwell, with a bilious complaint, there are many complaining of the same at this town. I saw the Doctor yesterday he ordered some medicine which must be taken today, that's too bad ain't it but however I will come in next week, if you think it admirable, I do not know what day to set, Monday & Tuesday you are engaged, suppose I should say Wednesday, at the same hour as usual, if you prefer any other day, or in the morning of that day will you write a line and drop it into the Post. Dear Harriet I forgot to tell you how cruel the Doctor is, he says you must live on Gruel, I should be very sorry to call on for a bowl of that in town.

¹² This verse is not original.

P.S. I am very sorry to disappoint your dear Mother, and sisters, but I do not think it would be provident for me to come today, will you be kind enough to make the requisite apologies for my absence.

Mother sends love.

Yours in the strongest bonds of
Christian Love
William Pratt.

Tuesday Eve July the 22d 1834

My Dearest Harriet

Be not surprised on receiving this letter from me. I will remember what we thought with regard to my writing again previous to my informing you when our house would be dedicated, but for several days I have felt a desire to write you. Mr. Sandford that lovely, holy, good man of whom you have often heard me speak thinks that perhaps it will be for the best to defer the dedication until the middle of next month or somewhere about that time for this reason, by the way you must know that this church has been built entirely by the liberality of the neighbouring Churches with the exception of \$225.00 which was subscribed in this Society. The subscription, or donation rather, from abroad, are not all collected and in fact there is not enough subscribed into a few hundred dollars to cover the expenses but Mr. Sandford with a holy zeal well becoming of an angel says "Give yourselves no uneasiness I am not at all concerned about it, only give me a little more time to go into a few more Churches and the Money will be had." Can we help loving such a man O no we cannot find it in our hearts, he has done all, almost, he has been to all the churches that have given, and laid before them the wants of this people, their need of such an house, and their inability to go on without assistance, and the Lord has given him much success. Therefore you see dear Harriet it is somewhat uncertain when all things will be ready for the dedication of the house for he thinks that it will be much the best time to collect it before the house is occupied for after it is done, and dedicated people will not feel so willing to give as now, and I cannot but think so myself although it is deferring your visit to Quincy around which cluster so many pleasing anticipations of enjoyment, but I have not a single word to say it is the Providence of God that has arranged the whole matter what a sweet resolution is this, have you not often found it so, without doubt you have.

How happy thrice happy is the thought my dear Harriet that we are so soon to be united together in the holy bonds of Matrimony, that we are so soon to enter an altar yes a domestic altar not with the inscription that Paul found written on one in Athens "To the unknown God" but to God the father, Son and Holy Ghost, that blessed three in one whom sent us all perfection, around which our little circle will assemble from day to day to offer upon it the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, to seek the remission of all our

sins and to ask of God those blessings which we need for time and eternity. How happy is that family whose God is the Lord. Dear friend I often think of you, I do not know as there has ben an hour, among my waking hours since I saw you that I have not thought of my dear Harriet, and how can I help it, I do not know. Do tell me in your next if you can. I have often ben led to reflect on the spiritual wants of this people as I have enjoyed, the silent, and retired walks, around the village, single and alone. As to the flesh, it is serving after the toil and labor of the day to take a walk into some unfrequented path and there meditate, and hold secret converse with one self. It is beneficial, it is for our spiritual, and everlasting good but at such times there is something wanting to complete my happiness one thing more requisite to fill the cup to overflowing, and can you not guess what that is. It is your presence my dearest. Your absence leaves an aching void. That nothing else can fill. If you were with me, if I could only enjoy your company at such times, I could say from the bottom of my heart It is enough. But hush O my soul, seace thy complaint the happy day is at hand. "Be patient." I have said that in these walks I have ben lead to reflect on the desolation of Zion. It is enough to make the heart of the Christian bleed at every (pour?) to think of the twenty six hundred Souls in this place all with very few exceptions, yes nine tenths of this people are in the road that leads to hell, awful thought, but it is true, jest as true is that God rains, and that he will turn the wicked into hell and all the nations that forget him, O how great is the darkness, yes moral darkness, in which this place is (shrouded?) , and they love to have it so they are perfectly satisfied with their condition poor deluded Souls.

But I trust that Christ has a few that do not bow the knee to Baal. I trust he has a branch of his most holy Church in this place, which emits some light among so much darkness, but this light is dim, sometimes it seems as though it was jest going out, but No, I have faith to beleave that God is to build a glorious cause in this place, we know that the captivity of this people is to be turned back, there is no doubt about it, but when, depends upon the faithfulness of Christians. God will not work a miracle to bring back this place from their grievous revolt. O no it will be in answer to the prayer of faith, offered up to God by his own people. Would to God that Christians were not so fond of putting their lights under bushels, to prevent its shining, but what will this avail God will soon come and take away this bushel and expose our naked deformity before an assembled universe. There is a great responsibility resting upon the disciple of Christ, has not God (in one sense) put the salvation of sinners into the hands of Christians, true the Spirit of God alone can convince men of Sin, but how is this Spirit to be obtained, shurly in answer to prayer, well, who is willing to ask God for this so desirable a gift, it cannot be those that "cast off fear and restrain Prayer before God"¹³ it must be the meek, the lowly follower of the blessed Jesus that must bring down the Holy Ghost without which wee all languish, and die, let us then endeavor to have more and more of the Spirit of Christ, of prayer and supplication, that when wee go to God in prayer we may go feeling that we cannot be denied our request that Sinners must be converted, or they are forever miserable, O my dear Harriet have wee not some dear connections whom wee love that is out of Christ who are yet in their sins, whose feet stand on slippery places, beneath whose feet roll the billows of divine wrath, and shall we not carry such on the arms of our faith. Shall we

¹³ Job 15:4.

not pray, most earnestly that they may be delivered from the power and dominion of Sin, that they may enjoy that liberty wherewith Christ makes free.

My dear Harriet the cat (as the expression is) has not got quite out of the bag, she has got her head, and her two paws out. I thought the jade would be wholly out before this time there are so many to hector her in all quarters. I am accosted, very frequently now a days respecting this matter. Says one "Well William I want to ask you one question, I don't believe any thing about it, but I thought I would ask you the first chance I got, are you going to be married, I hear you had hired a house down town." Says I "have you heard so, do you believe the reports in circulation about me, they had just such a story about me a year ago that I was going to marry Elizabeth S----- but I am not married yet you see." Another says "I want to come to your wedding you will give me a piece of wedding cake won't you." Says I, "Certainly any one that has ben to as much trouble to pry into other folks business as yourself deserves a good large slice." And so it goes, and I have to take it. Don't you pity me, don't much for I don't care much about it, they must fly round and work lively their time is short it will soon be over. My dear I want to see you very much. Must I wait untill the midle of next month. O dear me, I can scarce realise that it is but two weeks since I saw you and received and gave that parting Kiss. It seems two months certainly. Will you write and tell me about this matter, what you think of it, and if I had better come in. I want to see you \$1.25 cents worth yes I want to see you \$1.26 cents worth, and if this is the case I had I not better come Ha Ha. I saw a piece in the paper the other day that excited my curiosity, it amused me much. It was respecting the old bachelor portraying his character and situation I felt thankful that I was to be delivered from such a forlorn condition. Yours Wm. Pratt.

My dear old Granna¹⁴ has had a bad fall, she fell on her length, I do not know but it will shorten her days. I will tell how it haptened last Saturday morning she arose as usuel at her usuel hour half past five, and had partly dressed herself, when she put one hand on the arm of her rocking chair, while she with the other arranged her clothes about her neck, and I suppose she pushed the chair however it rocked over and she with it, and had not there ben a foreboard up her head must have hit the handirons, and I do not know but killed her. O I wish you could see her, see how thankfull she is to think that it hurt her no worse, although the poor old lady cannot move in bed without groaning it gives her so much pain. O that I had as much of the Spirit of Christ as she has, she has ben very fortunate, she has ben blind 7 years and never had any thing like such a fall before. Any one of her age upwards of 90, very large, they fall like a dead weight when they do fall. For 60 years has she belonged to the Church of Christ and honored her profession by a holy life. God grant that she may long be spared to pray for the prosperity of Jerusalem. But we cannot according to the course of poor human nature expect that she will live a great while longer, but when she is called it will as a shock of Corn fully ripe fit for her master's use. We should miss her very much but our loss would be her gain. Goodby. Goodby. Goodby.

¹⁴ His maternal grandmother, Mary (Bent) Newcomb (1744-1841). His paternal grandmother had died before this time.

These lines leave us all enjoying good health at least as well as usual, excepting my dear Grandma who has met with an accident the particulars of which you shall find within. I have just returned from a pleasant walk all alone, how beautiful to inhale the sweet fragrance from the new mown hay it is serving to poor human nature after the labors of the day are o'er. How sweet are the following lines.

Is there a place that can impart
Blest visions to the aching heart?
Is there a place whose image dear
Can soothe our grief dispel our fear?
That place is home

Whatever hardships be our lot
Still home's the touchstone of the heart;
Whatever can our bosoms cheer
Whatever we regard as dear;
Is found in home, Sweet Home¹⁵

My dear mother sends her love to you and your mother and Sisters and all the good folks, remember me to your mother, Elizabeth, Mrs. White & husband, and little ones. Tell the little girl that she must be a Busy Bee when I come again. Do not work so steady as to get Sick....

your unworthy, though Affectionate Friend, William Pratt

Quincy August 15 1834

My dearest and most beloved

I am very much fatigued, I have ben to work out to day shoveling, and wheeling gravel, and I feel to night as though I was fifty years old certainly. I would not set down to write to any other on earth but as Mother was comeing in I thought I must write a few lines. Four or five of us have ben to work raising a bank on the North side of the Meeting House today. I expect to feel pretty sore after it but no matter for that you know it was very necessary that it should be done and there was but few to do it, and I should not have felt right to withhold my share of the labour, there was no one that could be hired to do it. There is but one knows how much you occupy my thoughts. I feel at times as though I must come in and see you, but then it would not be prudent perhaps but O that happy time when I may embrace you as my own in at hand. "Praise the Lord O my Soul and all that is within me praise his holy Name." I can se nothing so far that is to prevent us from being as happy as it is the lot of man to be on earth, true

Our portion is not large, indeed!
But then, how little do we need!

¹⁵ This was a verse reprinted in many newspapers, but I don't know the author.

For nature's calls are few;
In this the art of living lies,
To want no more than may suffice,
And make that little do.¹⁶
Dear Harriet this is wisdom's part,
This is that incense of the heart,
Whose fragrance smell to heaven¹⁷

I have thought considerable since you returned only dear Harriet about my getting a new coat for that occasion. I know jest what will be said if I do not, "Has not William got him a new coat. I should not have thought that he would have worn that coat which he has worn, nearly a year and a half, I guess he is in pretty straitened circumstances or else he would have had a new one" such remarks will be made I have no doubt it true that we are but little what people say but I would not like to give them occasion, you know that I need ware it but a little while, yea a few times until the one I now ware gets defaced, I wish you would have some conversation with Mama about it and tell her what you think. I do not wish to get it if you think it will be for the best not.

I need not tell you how happy the hand of Providence of God as ordered things with regard to Granna and Aunt Salla.¹⁸ Mother will tell you without doubt. I regret exceedingly that you are not to be here when our house is dedicated but if it is for the best not to come. I have not a word to say well what more shall I write. I do not know, I doubt some whether you can read what I have wrote my hand trembles so after working out. If you can't I will help you puzzle it out one of these days over a good winters fire. Good by, May the Lord God be with you with his special blessing

Yours in the Strongest
of Bonds

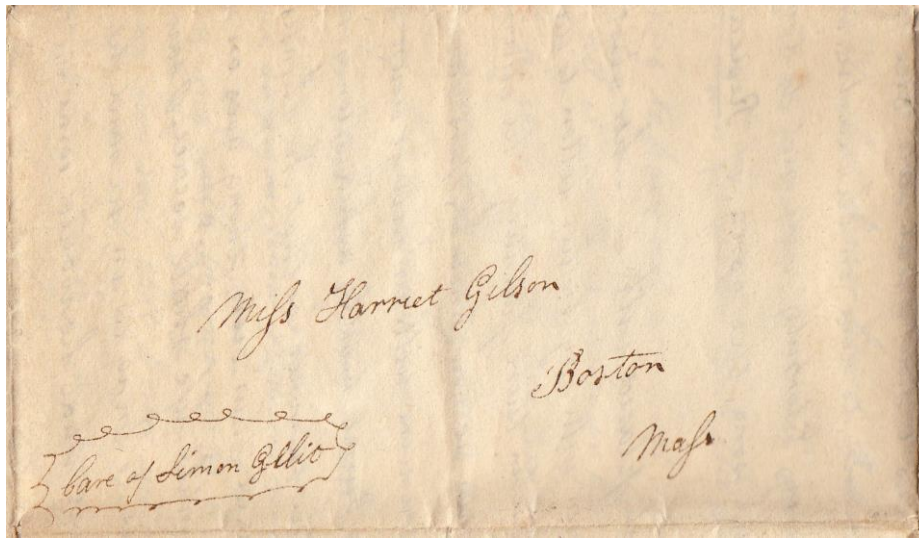
William Pratt

Remember me to your mother and Mr White & wife and Elisabeth and the good folks you know who. I will write again on Thursday (God permitting). Farewell.

¹⁶ From the poem, "The Fire-side" by Nathaniel Cotton.

¹⁷ These last three lines are also from the poem "The Fire-side" (although they appear later in the poem) – William has merely changed "Dear Chloe" to "Dear Harriet." See <http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/nathaniel-cotton/the-fire-side/> for the full poem.

¹⁸ It is not clear who Aunt Salla was. William's mother was named Sarah; perhaps other's referred to her as Aunt Salla. William himself had no aunts named Sally or Sarah that I know of.



Quincy August 21st 1834

My dearest Harriet

Thursday Eve With much pleasure do I set down at this time to write you who lies so near my heart, It seems three months since I last saw you but instead of this being the case it is not three weeks, thus do our hours pass when absent from our friends, but I trust in the space of another week to behold the face of her upon whom my heart and affections are fixed, but I must leave this train of thought.

Our house is dedicated to God.¹⁹ The services were held yesterday at 2 O'clock and although it rained and stormed very bad making it almost impossible for females to get out, yet the house was filled, I must say that I was disappointed in seeing so many present. Doct. Codman²⁰ of Dorchester, Mr Thomas of Abington, Mr Perkins²¹ of Braintree (Granna's old minister) took part in the services and Mr Storrs²² of Braintree preached the Sermon. And such a sermon, I never heard, he cut up Unitarianism, and Universalists root and branch. He made Mr. Whitney²³ the Unitarian minister and Mr Smith the Uni'st. minister look rather disconsolate to hear such astounding truths

¹⁹ He was a founding member of the Evangelical Church of Quincy, later called the Bethany Congregational church. This church still exists today:

<http://bethanychurchquincy.org/aboutbethanypage.html>

²⁰ Rev. John Codman. "When the Rev. John Codman became the first minister of the second church in Dorchester - now in Codman Square - during the early 1800s, the fiery Puritan refused to share his pulpit with Unitarian preachers. 'The controversy got so heated, Codman bought up all the pews (to keep from his dissentors).'" <http://www.dotnews.com/taylor.html>

²¹ Rev. Jonas Perkins (1790-1874). He was minister of the Weymouth Union Church in East Braintree from 1815 to 1860.

²² Rev. Richard Salter Storrs, pastor of the First Congregational Church in Braintree, died in 1873 at age 86.

²³ Rev. Peter Whitney (1770-1843), pastor of the United First Parish Church (Unitarian) in Quincy.

thundered forth, as from the throne of God. O it does seem impossible that there can be the man found on the face of this wide earth who will stand forth before the people of his charge, as the ambassador of Jesus Christ from week to week and declare to them that the door of heaven is alike open to him who has spend a life in drunkenness & debauchery, and him who through much tribulation hath inherited the promises when God himself has declared "The drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Or that will preach that not "by grace are ye saved" as Paul preached when sent forth as the Apostle to the gentiles, but by works of righteousness that we have done, by merit on the part of the sinner. Ah sinner did I say how can that be, a sinner merit anything from the hand of God for the very term implies that we have broken the law of God, and had we kept it perfect we should have ben unprofitable servants we should have done no more than our duty. Mr Storrs text was in Isaiah 37th verse A man shall be a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest &c. He showed plainly that the man here spoken of was the "Man Christ Jesus" he then described his reign dividing it into three parts, the past, present, and future. O my dear Harriet I wish you could have heard it, it was the most beautiful description of the reign of the Messiah that I ever heard. I do hope that the services of that day will never be forgotten by many who will date their conversion from this place. I am persuaded that the Lord is waiting to be gracious, he is waiting to pour out his Spirit upon us and revive his work in this place. All it wants is faith in God, that simple yet firm trust in him that he will do as he promised, this is the faith that will reach to heaven and bring down a blessing, but it is vain for us to tell of having this christian grace unles we show it by our life and conversation, for it is "Actions speak louder than words," and always will be, Paul says you know "Show me your faith without works and I will show you my faith by my works," O that I could feel more of the love of Christ within my own soul, that I were willing to do more, to labour more for my Saviour, when I think of his Love towards me a poor, miserable, vile, polluted Sinner, and then look at my life even now that I profess to love him and his cause above every other object, I am dumb, and cannot speak.

My dear Harriet how do you feel when you look over your past life. Do you feel satisfied with it, and on the whole think it is pretty good. O no I trust not, but feel that you have occasion to thank God that he has spared us while we have ben unprofitable in his vinyard. When I look over my life and think that nineteen years I lived without hope and without God in the world careless and secure in Sin, and that God should arrest (as I trust he has) me in my course of rebellion, and make me as I hope a monument of his grace. And when I think on my life since I have named the name of Christ my prayers how cold and formal, my reasons of self how often I have let the Godly fire almost entirely go out within this sacred enclosure, my bible how often the Lord has made me believe that duty called me from studying its sacred contents. In view of all these solumn truths how great does the love of Christ my Lord appear in suffering me to live on the earth, in praying ground within the voice of mercy. Eternity will not be too long for us my dear Harriet to sing the song, the song, of Redeaming Love.

My dear Mother was much pleased with her visit at your house on monday last. I have ben down with my brother Cotton²⁴ today and papered our room, and Mr Howard has ben there painting the chamber, and tomorrow if nothing prevents more than we know of, Mrs. Savil she who washed for my brothers wife when you were with us will go down and clean the house where it is wanting. Mr. Burrel kindly asked after you this Morning. Mr. Potter has repaired the Chimney, so that he thinks it will not leak, the roof has also ben fixed , thus every thing goes on very happily and thus may they go on until life shall cease. I saw Mr Gilit about his coach and two horses to bring us in, he said he would tell me on Saturday evening next what he would come in for, but says he I will tell you now that I will carry you in so that it will a great deal cheaper that to have any other way. I think that will be much the best way for us by all means. I will come in on Thursday next at an early hour say half past 7 or 7 O'clock which I suppose will be soon enough. I will bother you no more about my Coat ha ha. If you think that I can get a vest like the pattern which you saw, ready made when I come in I will not do any thing about it until I come in. It now wants 8 minutes of 11 O'clock and being very tired I believe I must wish you good night and retire to rest.

Our dear paster was installed the day of the dedication of the house. The right of fellowship was given by Mr Sandford. It was the most affecting of any part of the service. I did my best but could not refrain from weeping. There were 12 Clergymen present., all the servises were very interesting indeed.

I thought from what Mother said that it would be well to measure he windows in our parlour. I did so yesterday and they measure 3 feet in width and 5 ½ in length. I want you to write soon as you can, I want to hear from you by letter. Good by. May your dear Saviour be very near you at all times,

William Pratt

My dear brother James²⁵ has this evening returned from Providence R.I. He was ordained there yesterday. He will preach in Quincy in the Episcopal Church next Sunday, and then expects to go to Rhode Island to labour there in a parash. God grant that he may prove a faithful labourer in the vinyard. I want to write a great deal more but my room is all gone. Your Sincere ----- absent friend Wm. Pratt.

²⁴ Cotton Pratt, born March 12, 1799, and died March 14, 1887, in San Francisco; see <http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sf/vitals/sfobipm.htm>.

²⁵ Rev. James Pratt (1809-1874).