

# BELCHER JOSEPH

GEORGE WHITEFIELD: A  
BIOGRAPHY, WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
HIS LABORS IN AMERICA

Joseph Belcher

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with special reference  
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# **George Whitefield: A Biography, with special reference to his labors in America**

## **PREFACE**

The excellent Matthew Henry has very truly said, "There are remains of great and good men, which, like Elijah's mantle, ought to be gathered up and preserved by the survivors – their sayings, their writings, their examples; that as their works follow them in the reward of them, they may stay behind in the benefit of them."

Influenced by this and kindred sentiments, the compiler of this volume has devoted no small labor to gather from every source to which he could gain access, whatever appeared to him important to be known respecting the most distinguished uninspired preacher perhaps of any age or country. Whatever may be the faults of the work, to use the language of the Rev. Dr. Campbell, one of the present pastors of Whitefield's churches in London, in reference to a short sketch he had himself prepared of our great evangelist, "It will serve to bring him and his apostolic labors before the minds of vast multitudes of the rising generation, to whom both are all but unknown; and this is far from unimportant. Whatever tends to fix the minds of men afresh upon the character of Whitefield is, and it always will be, something gained to the cause of true religion. The contemplation of that character is one of the most healthful exercises that can occupy a Christian heart, or a Christian understanding. It is an admirable theme for ministerial meditation. It tends equally to humble, to instruct, and to encourage; to excite love to Christ, zeal for his glory, and compassion for the souls of men. What Alexander and Cæsar, Charles XII. of Sweden and Napoleon the first, are to those of the sons of men who have not yet ceased to 'learn war,' that Whitefield and Wesley are to those who aspire to eminent usefulness as ministers and missionaries of the cross."

In the preparation of this memoir, the compiler has sought to collect together incidents which might interest and instruct, especially in connection with Whitefield's labors in America; to present him as much as possible in his own dress; and to use the facts of his life to excite and cherish his own spirit, so far as he had the spirit of Christ. Facts reflecting on the reputation and feelings of others have been used only as the interests of truth seemed to demand.

It would have been easy to place on almost every page an array of authorities, and to give here a long list of friends to whom the writer has been indebted for aid; but the sole object of the volume is the honor of Christ in the salvation of men, and that this may be accomplished, we pray that the blessing of Heaven may rest upon it.

Philadelphia, 1857.

## **CHAPTER I.**

# **MORAL STATE OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE EARLY PART OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY – WHITEFIELD FROM HIS BIRTH TO HIS FIRST SERMON**

That we may have a clear and comprehensive view of the labors and success of George Whitefield, it is important that we consider the moral condition of Great Britain and its dependencies when the Head of the church brought him on the field of action. The latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries presented in that country a scene of moral darkness, the more remarkable as it so soon succeeded the triumph of evangelical truth which distinguished the seventeenth century, and which is perpetuated in a religious literature that will bless the world. Causes had long been at work which produced such insensibility and decline as to all that is good, and such a bold and open activity in evil, as it is hoped the grace of God may avert from his churches in all future time. The doctrine of the divine right of kings to implicit obedience on the part of their subjects; the principle of priestly control of the minds of men in religious matters; and clerical influence, sustained by kingly authority, in favor of sports on the Lord's day, together with the evil examples of men high in rank and power, had produced their natural results on the masses of the people, and make it painful, even at this distant period, to survey the scene.

Nor were these all the evils of that day. The expulsion from their pulpits, by the "Act of Uniformity," of two thousand of the most able and useful of the clergy in England, had led to great ignorance and neglect of religion; and though men like Leighton and Owen, Flavel and Baxter, with Bunyan and a host of others, had continued, in spite of opposing laws, to preach when they were not shut up in prison, and to write their immortal practical works, by the time of which we are speaking they had been called to their eternal reward, leaving very few men of like spirit behind them. Thus infidelity, profligacy, and formalism almost universally prevailed.

The low state of religion in the established church at that time may be learned from the Rev. Augustus M. Toplady, himself one of its ministers, who died in 1778. In a sermon yet extant he says, "I believe no denomination of professing Christians, the church of Rome excepted, were so generally void of the light and life of godliness, so generally destitute of the doctrine and of the grace of the gospel, as was the church of England, considered as a body, about fifty years ago. At that period a *converted* minister in the establishment was as great a wonder as a comet; but now, blessed be God, since that precious, that great apostle of the English empire, the late dear Mr. Whitefield, was raised up in the spirit and power of Elias, the word of God has run and been glorified; many have believed and been added to the Lord all over the three kingdoms; and blessed be his name, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls continues still to issue his word, and great is the company of preachers, greater and greater every year."

If it be said that Toplady, as he belonged to a different school of theology from that which then generally prevailed, could scarcely be expected to be impartial, we ask leave to transcribe a few lines from Bishop Butler, who within six months of Whitefield's ordination wrote thus: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if in the present age this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." Bishop Warburton, who commenced his ministry a

few years before Whitefield, and who cannot be charged with enthusiasm, says, "I have lived to see that fatal crisis, when religion hath lost its hold on the minds of the people."

Many other witnesses might be brought to testify that error and worldly mindedness had made mournful havoc among the clergy, and that spiritual religion had been almost buried in forms and ceremonies. A recent writer has well described the state of religion in the established church at that time, as only to be compared to a frozen or palsied carcass. "There," says this Episcopal clergyman, "were the time-honored formularies which the wisdom of the reformers had provided. There were the services and lessons from Scripture, just in the same order as we have them now. But as to preaching the gospel, in the established church there was almost none. The distinguishing doctrines of Christianity – the atonement, the work and office of Christ and the Spirit – were comparatively lost sight of. The vast majority of sermons were miserable moral essays, utterly devoid of any thing calculated to awaken, convert, save, or sanctify souls." Southey, a biographer of Wesley, who assuredly will not be accused of too strong a tendency to evangelical truth, is compelled to say, "A laxity of opinions as well as morals obtained, and infidelity, a plague which had lately found its way into the country, was becoming so prevalent, that the vice-chancellor of the university at Oxford, in a *programma*, exhorted the tutors to discharge their duties by double diligence, and had forbidden the under-graduates to read such books as might tend to the weakening of their faith."

There were undoubtedly some learned and conscientious bishops at this era. Such men were Secker and Gibson, Lowth and Horne, Butler, and others. But even the best of them seem sadly to have misunderstood the requirements of the day they lived in. They spent their strength in writing apologies for Christianity, and contending against infidels. They could not see that without the direct preaching of the essential doctrines of the gospel, their labors must be sadly defective. The man who dared to preach the doctrines of the Bible, and in harmony with the Articles and Homilies of his church, was set down as an enthusiast or fanatic.

Among those who had dissented from the established hierarchy, and who were untrammelled by the impositions of secular authority, the state of vital godliness was also unhappily very low. The noble spirits of early non-conformity had passed from earth, or crossed the Atlantic to the frozen shores of New England, and a race of men had sprung up, some of whom retained the tenets of orthodoxy, but had lost its power; while others reposed on comfortable endowments, and lulled themselves, or were drawn by favorable breezes, into the cold elements of Arianism and Socinianism. As persons in the frozen regions are said to sleep longer and more soundly than others, so did they; and a more terrific blast of the trumpet of the gospel was required to rouse and awake them from their spiritual slumbers. Happily indeed for the world, and for the church in it, there were some exceptions. Watts and Guyse and Doddridge, and their pious associates in different parts of the land, were laborers together in "God's husbandry," and ceased not to cultivate it with affectionate faithfulness and care; and wherever their labors extended, the plants of grace grew and flourished. Darracott, "the star of the west," threw his mild rays over the vales of Somerset; and in the north also a few faithful men were found.

Nor have we even now said all that should be written as to the character of those times. The highest personages in the land then openly lived in ways contrary to the law of God, and no man rebuked them. Profligacy and irreligion were reputable and respectable. Judging from the description we have of men and manners in those days, a gentleman might have been defined as a creature who got drunk, gambled, swore, fought duels, and violated the seventh commandment, and for all this very few thought the worse of him.

Those too were the days when the men whom even kings delighted to honor were such as Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, Walpole, and Newcastle. To be an infidel, to obtain power by intrigue, and to retain it by the grossest and most notorious bribery, were considered no disqualifications even for the highest offices. Such men indeed were not only tolerated, but praised. In those days too, Hume, an avowed infidel, put forth his History, and obtained a pension. Sterne and Swift then wrote their talented, but obscene books; both of them were clergymen, but the public saw little

inconsistency in their conduct. Fielding and Smollett were the popular authors, and the literary taste of high and low was suited by Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Joseph Andrews, and Tom Jones. These authors were ingenious heathen philosophers, assuming the name of Christians, and forcibly paganizing Christianity for the sake of pleasing the world.

Turning to *Scotland*, we find that the bold proclamation of the discriminating truths of the gospel which characterize the preaching of Knox, Welsh, and others, was being rapidly laid aside, and cold formal addresses, verging towards a kind of Socinianism were becoming fashionable. Old Mr. Hutchinson, minister of Kilellan, in Renfrewshire, who saw but the beginning of this sad change, used to say to Wodrow the historian, "When I compare the times before the restoration with those since the revolution, I must own that the young ministers preach accurately, and methodically; but there was far more of the power and efficacy of the Spirit and of the grace of God went along with sermons in those days than now. For my own part – all the glory be to God – I seldom set my foot in a pulpit in those days, but I had notice of the blessed effects of the word." It is true, that even then there were a few faithful witnesses for God in Scotland, such as the brothers Erskine, in the Secession church; but for the most part, coldness, barrenness, and death prevailed. The people knew not God, and were strangers to the life-giving influence and power of the gospel.

The Arianism of England had been carried to the north of *Ireland*, and finding a state of feeling suitable to its reception, it took root and grew up, so as to characterize a distinct section of the Presbyterian church, then and still distinguished by the name of the Remonstrant Synod. The south and west of Ireland were subjected to a blight not less withering, though of a different kind, and which continued much longer – continued, to a great extent, throughout the whole of the last century. The clergy were usually sons of the gentry, and accustomed to their sporting, drinking, and riotous habits. They had no preparation for ministerial duties but a college degree; and no education, either literary or moral, which had not been obtained among wild young men at the university. According to the interest which they happened to have, they passed at once from college to ministerial charges, and again mixed in all the dissipations of the districts where these lay. Ignorant of the truth, they and their congregations were satisfied with some short moral discourse. Many of the people were almost as ignorant of the Scriptures and scripture truth as the inhabitants of Hindostan. The Catholic priests meanwhile were at work among the people, and they had many to help them. The sick and the dying were watched; their fears were wrought upon; they were told of the power which the priests had, of the influence possessed by the Virgin, and much about the *old church*; and as soon as any seemed to give way, on whatever point, the priest was sent for, who plied them anew, and seldom failed in succeeding with the poor ignorant people. They were now ready to receive absolution; but he had farther conditions to propose. The whole family must submit to be rebaptized, or at least promise to attend mass – and this also was not unfrequently gained; the Protestant clergyman being all the while at a distance, neither knowing nor much caring what was going on. In this way great numbers of the lower and middle classes of the Protestants went over to the church of Rome. Throughout whole districts the Protestant churches were almost emptied, and many of those in rural districts were allowed to fall into ruins.

Of *Wales* it is not important at present to say much. From the middle ages downwards, great darkness and superstition had prevailed among its mountains. It is true that in the days of James I., a clergyman named Wroth, whose conversion to the truth had been remarkable, had labored with eminent zeal and success, but at the period of which we are now writing declension had succeeded. Within the establishment all was cold and dead; nearly every minister was ignorant of the Welsh language, a fact which also applied to several successive bishops, while the state of morals, among even the leaders of the hierarchy, was truly deplorable. An old Methodist simply but truly described the country at this period, and of his correct narrative we will here give a free translation.

The land, he tells us, was dark indeed. Scarcely any of the lower ranks could read at all. The morals of the country were very corrupt; and in this respect there was no difference between high



and low, layman and clergyman. Gluttony, drunkenness, and licentiousness prevailed through the whole country. Nor were the operations of the church at all adapted to repress these evils. From the pulpit the name of the Redeemer was scarcely heard; nor was much mention made of the natural sinfulness of man, or of the influence of the Holy Spirit. On Sunday mornings, the poor were more constant in their attendance at church than the gentry; but the Sunday evenings were spent by all in idle amusements. Every Sabbath there was practised a kind of sport, called in Welsh *Achwaren-gamp*, in which all the young men of the neighborhood had a trial of strength, and the people assembled from the surrounding country to witness their feats. On a Saturday night, particularly in the summer, the young men and women held what they called *Nosweithian cann*, or singing eves; that is, they met together and amused themselves by singing in turns to the harp, till the dawn of the Sabbath. These things, with the performance of rustic dramas, would occupy sometimes the whole of the sacred day itself; while a set of vagabonds, called the *Bobl gerdded*, or walking people, used to traverse the villages, begging with impunity, to the disgrace alike of the law and the country. With all this social sprightliness, the Welsh were then a superstitious, and even a gloomy people. They still retained many habits apparently derived from paganism, and not a few of the practices of popery. Their funerals, like those of the Irish, were scenes of riot and drunkenness, followed by prayers for the release of the deceased from the pains of purgatory. Such was the superstition of the people, that when Methodism was first introduced among them, many of the peasantry expressed their horror of the new opinions by the truly Popish gesture of crossing the forehead; and when Wesley first visited them, he pronounced them "as little versed in the principles of Christianity as a Creek or Cherokee Indian." To this declaration he added the striking remark, that, "notwithstanding their superstition and ignorance, the people 'were ripe for the gospel,' and most enthusiastically anxious to avail themselves of every opportunity of instruction."

As an illustration of the truth of the remark we have just introduced from the discerning Wesley, we may mention an incident which occurred in 1736. At this period dissent itself was reduced so low in the country, that there were only six dissenting houses of worship in all North Wales. One Sunday, Mr. Lewis Rees, a dissenting minister from South Wales, and the father of Dr. Rees, the author of the celebrated Cyclopedia which bears his name, visited Pwllheli, a town on the promontory of Slëyn, in Caernarvonshire, and one of the few places in which the Independents still had a chapel. After the service, the congregation, collecting around him, complained very sorely that their numbers were rapidly diminishing, that the few who yet remained were for the most part poor, and that every thing connected with their cause looked gloomy. To which the minister replied, "The dawn of religion is again breaking out in South Wales," referring them to the fact, that already a distinguished man – Howel Harris – had risen up, going about instructing the people in the truths of the gospel. Such was the character of the times when God was raising up agents to revive and extend his cause. We shall before long return to Wales with lively interest.

"Such," says the eloquent Robert Hall, "was the situation of things when Whitefield and Wesley made their appearance, who, whatever failings the severest criticism can discover in their character, will be hailed by posterity as the second reformers of England. Nothing was farther from the views of these excellent men than to innovate on the established religion of their country; their sole aim was to recall the people to the good old way, and to imprint the doctrines of the Articles and Homilies on the spirits of men. But this doctrine had been so long a dead letter, and so completely obliterated from the mind by contrary instructions, that the attempt to revive it met with all the opposition that innovation is sure to encounter, in addition to what naturally results from the nature of the doctrine itself, which has to contend with the whole force of human corruption. The revival of the *old*, appeared like the introduction of a *new* religion; and the hostility it excited was less sanguinary, but scarcely less virulent, than that which signalized the first publication of Christianity. The gospel of Christ, or that system of truth which was laid at the foundation of the Reformation, has since made rapid advances, and in every step of its progress has sustained the most furious assaults."

It ought here to be stated, as illustrating the providence of God in preparing the British empire for the reception of the gospel, that the revolution of 1688 introduced the spirit of toleration, and in 1714, the very year of Whitefield's birth, Anne, the last English sovereign of a persecuting spirit, died, and the throne was assumed by George I., the first prince of the house of Hanover. The way of the Lord was thus prepared for bright illustrations of his mercy.

Rising from the beautiful valley of the Severn, and on the borders of that noble stream, reposes in antique glory the affluent city of Gloucester, with its regular streets, and its majestic cathedral and other relics of bygone days. In that city the traveller may examine three spots which will long be interesting to the student of ecclesiastical curiosities. The first of these is the ancient church of Mary de Crypt, where reposes the dust of Robert Raikes, the founder of Sunday-schools; the second, is the little stone which, in a pensive-looking inclosure, marks the site on which the truly noble-minded and Protestant Bishop Hooper was burnt, an early martyr of bloody Mary's reign. There wicked men stood around to light up the flames, and to mock his sorrows; but as we stand and look, we exult in the subsequent triumphs of truth.

The third spot, and the one to us at the present moment the most interesting, is the Bell inn or hotel, yet standing, though enlarged and beautified since the period of which we write. There Whitefield – the saint, the seraph, the "angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth" – first breathed the vital air. Venerable city, we will rejoice that though within thy walls one glorious luminary of salvation was extinguished, another "burning and shining light" was raised up to diffuse joy and happiness over the two most influential quarters of the globe, and a third has since been given to suggest the simple plan by which millions of the young have already acquired the knowledge of salvation.

George Whitefield, the sixth son of Thomas and Elizabeth Whitefield, was born December 16, 1714, old style. Concerning his father and mother he writes, "The former died when I was two years old; the latter died in December, 1751, in the seventy-first year of her age, and has often told me how she endured fourteen weeks' sickness after she brought me into the world; but was used to say, even when I was an infant, that she expected more comfort from me than from any other of her children. This, with the circumstance of my being born in an inn, has often been of service to me, in exciting my endeavors to make good my mother's expectations, and so follow the example of my dear Saviour, who was laid in a manger belonging to an inn."

In one of his journals, which he commenced at a very early part of his ministry, Whitefield details with great simplicity many incidents of his childhood and youth; from which it appears, that though at times he had many serious thoughts and impressions, the general course of his life, till the age of sixteen, was irreligious. He tells us that in early youth he was "so brutish as to hate instruction, and used purposely to shun all opportunities of receiving it," and that he spent much money, improperly obtained from his mother, in cards, plays, and romances, "which," says he, "were my heart's delight. Often have I joined with others in playing roguish tricks; but was generally, if not always, happily detected: for this I have often since, and do now bless and praise God." His full confessions of this character are very affecting, and should be a caution to young persons to repel all such temptations.

When George was about ten years of age, his mother married a second time, thus forming a connection which led to much unhappiness. He was, however, continued at school; and when twelve years old, was transferred to the grammar-school of St. Mary de Crypt, where he remained about three years. Having a graceful elocution and a good memory, he gained much credit for delivering speeches before the city corporation at the annual visitation of the school, and received pecuniary rewards for his performances on those occasions. How deeply he afterwards deplored these celebrations, especially the performance of plays in connection with his school-fellows, may be learned from his own words: "I cannot but observe here, with much concern of mind, how this way of training up youth has a natural tendency to debauch the mind, to raise ill passions, and to stuff the memory with

things as contrary to the gospel of Christ, as darkness to light, hell to heaven." This sad tendency was but too clearly evinced in the case of Whitefield himself. "I got acquainted," he says, "with such a set of debauched, abandoned, atheistical youths, that if God, by his free, unmerited, and special grace, had not delivered me out of their hands, I should have sat in the scorner's chair, and made a mock at sin. By keeping company with them, my thoughts of religion grew more and more like theirs. I went to public service only to make sport, and walk about. I took pleasure in their lewd conversation. I began to reason as they did, and to ask why God had given me passions, and not permitted me to gratify them. In short, I soon made great proficiency in the school of the devil. I affected to look rakish, and was in a fair way of being as infamous as the worst of them." These were the things, and not oratory, as has sometimes been said, which Whitefield learned from plays and acting.

In the midst of all this, his conscience often made him unhappy; and he wished, if possible, to combine religion with his pleasures. He purchased and carefully read "Ken's Manual for Winchester Scholars," a book which commended itself as having comforted his mother in her afflictions, and which he afterwards considered to have been "of great benefit to his soul."

At the age of fifteen, he thought he had acquired learning enough for any ordinary occupation in life, and as his mother's business was declining, he persuaded her to allow him to leave school and assist in labor. "I began," says he, "to assist her occasionally in the public-house, till at length I put on my blue apron and my snuffers, washed mops, cleaned rooms, and in one word, became professed and common *drawer* for nearly a year and a half." In the midst of the activity called for in such a situation, it pleased God to renew his religious impressions, which induced him, at least at intervals, to attend with much earnestness to the concerns of his soul.

From his childhood, Whitefield tells us, he "was always fond of being a clergyman, and used frequently to imitate the ministers' reading prayers." Nor did this tendency towards clerical engagements cease as he became older. "Notwithstanding," he says, "I was thus employed in a large inn, and had sometimes the care of the whole house upon my hands, yet I composed two or three sermons, and dedicated one of them to my elder brother. One day, I remember, I was very much pressed to self-examination, and found myself very unwilling to look into my heart. Frequently I read the Bible when sitting up at night. And a dear youth, now with God, would often entreat me, when serving at the bar, to go to Oxford. My general answer was, 'I wish I could.'"

His mother's difficulties increasing, it became necessary for her to leave the inn; in which she was succeeded by one of her married sons, with whom George for some time remained to continue his assistance in the business. Some disagreement, however, arising between them, he after a time took his departure from the inn, and went to spend a month with his eldest brother at Bristol. Returning from that city to Gloucester, he resided for a short season with his mother. While thus living unemployed, without any definite object before him, and waiting the openings of providence, his mother was visited by an Oxford student, a servitor of Pembroke college in that university. In the course of their conversation, he told her, that after all his expenses at college for the quarter were discharged, he had one penny remaining. She immediately exclaimed, "This will do for my son!" and turning to him, said, "Will you go to Oxford, George?" He replied, "With all my heart." Application was immediately made to several friends who had influence at the college, and they pledged themselves to serve her. In this confidence, her favorite son returned to the grammar-school, where he not only resumed his studies with greater diligence, but endeavored, and not altogether in vain, to promote religion and virtue among his associates.

Having fully secured his literary preparation for the university, Whitefield removed to Oxford in his eighteenth year, and was immediately admitted, as a servitor, into Pembroke college. He soon found that the seat of learning was also a scene of danger. From the period of 1662, when the two thousand Non-conformists had been expelled from the church, the universities had been sinking into a moral lethargy, preferring uniformity to vital religion. Our young servitor was shocked with the

impiety of the students in general, and dreading their influence on himself, he as much as possible abstained from their society, and shut himself up in his study.

Before he went to Oxford, Whitefield had heard of a class of young men in the university who "lived by rule and method," and were therefore called *Methodists*. They were much talked of, and generally despised. Of this party, John Wesley, a Fellow of Lincoln college, and already in holy orders, was the leader, his brother Charles being also as warmly attached to it. They avowed that the great object of their lives was to save their souls, and to live wholly to the glory of God; and rarely have men subjected themselves to greater self-denials and austerities. Drawn towards them by kindred feelings, Whitefield strenuously defended them whenever he heard them reviled, and when he saw them going, through a crowd manifesting their ridicule, every Sunday to receive the sacrament at St. Mary's or Christ church, he was strongly inclined to follow their example.

For more than a year he intensely desired to be acquainted with them, but a sense of his pecuniary inferiority to them prevented his advances. At length, learning that a pauper had attempted suicide, Whitefield sent a poor woman to inform Charles Wesley, that so he might visit her, and administer religious instruction. He charged the woman not to tell Mr. Wesley who sent her, but, contrary to this injunction, she told his name; and Charles Wesley, who had frequently seen Whitefield walking by himself, on the next morning invited him to breakfast. An introduction to the little brotherhood soon followed, and he also, like them, "began to live by rule, and pick up the very fragments of his time, that not a moment might be lost."

It is painful to read Whitefield's own account of the mortifications of body to which he now submitted; and we are not surprised that, as the result, his health was so reduced as to place even his life in danger. All this time he had no clear view of the way of salvation, and was "seeking to work out a righteousness of his own." In this state he lay on his bed, his tongue parched with fever, and the words of the dying Saviour, "I thirst," were impressed on his mind. Remembering that this thirst occurred near the end of the Saviour's sufferings, the thought arose in his mind, "Why may it not be so with me? Why may I not now receive deliverance and comfort? Why may I not now dare to trust and rejoice in the pardoning mercy of God?" There was, as Tracy has said, no reason why he might not – why he ought not. He saw nothing to forbid him. He prayed in hope, borrowing language from the fact which suggested the train of thought – "I thirst, I thirst for faith in pardoning love. Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." His prayer was heard. He dared to trust in the mercy of God, as revealed in the death of Jesus Christ for sinners. Conscience and his Bible bore witness that he did right. The load that had so heavily oppressed him, the load of guilt and terror and anxiety, that weighed down his spirit while he sinfully and ungratefully hesitated to trust in divine mercy, was gone. He saw the trustworthiness of the mercy of God in Christ, and his heart rejoiced.

"Though," as Tracy has well said, "the English universities were established mainly for the purpose of educating men for the ministry, Whitefield was not likely to gain a good knowledge of theology there. He took another, and a characteristic course. Some time after his conversion, when he was at Gloucester, he says, 'I began to read the holy Scriptures upon my knees; laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I thus got more true knowledge in reading the book of God in one month, than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men.'"

Every hour of Whitefield's time, especially after he had been "filled with peace and joy in believing," was sacredly devoted to preparation for the great work to which he had now solemnly devoted himself. He visited the prisoners in the jail, and the poor in their cottages, and gave as much time as he could to communion with God in his closet. His friends now earnestly importuned him to apply for ordination; but from this his deep sense of unworthiness made him shrink. Besides, he intended to have a hundred and fifty sermons carefully written before he began to preach. He had as yet but one, and he lent that to a neighboring clergyman, to convince him that he was not yet fit to

be ordained. The clergyman kept it for two weeks, divided it into two, preached it to his own people, and then returned it to Whitefield, with a guinea for the use of it.

Still, however, the work of preparation for the ministry was rapidly going on. The state of his health compelled him to retire for a season from Oxford, and he returned home to increase the depth of his piety, and to be led, little as he thought of it, at once to the pulpit. He writes, "O what sweet communion had I daily vouchsafed with God in prayer, after my coming to Gloucester. How often have I been carried out beyond myself, when meditating in the fields. How assuredly I felt that Christ dwelt in me, and I in him; and how daily did I walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and was edified and refreshed in the multitude of peace. I always observed that as my inward strength increased, so my outward sphere of action increased proportionably."

Thus, happy in himself, and thankful to the gracious God who made him so, the affectionate soul of George Whitefield ardently desired that others might participate in his sacred joys. In order to advance this object, he mixed in the society of young people, and endeavored to awaken them to a just sense of the nature of true religion. Some were convinced of the truth, and united with him in religious exercises; and these were some of the first-fruits of his pious labors. His discovery of the necessity of regeneration, like Melancthon's great discovery of the truth, led him to imagine that no one could resist the evidence which convinced his own mind. He writes, "Upon this, like the woman of Samaria, when Christ revealed himself to her at the well, I had no rest in my soul till I wrote letters to my relations, telling them there was such a thing as the *new birth*. I imagined they would have gladly received it; but, alas, my words seemed to them as idle tales. They thought I was going beside myself." He visited the jail every day, and read and prayed with the prisoners; attended public worship very frequently, and read twice or three times a week to some poor people in the city. In addition to all this, he tells us, "During my stay here, God enabled me to give a public testimony of my repentance as to seeing and acting plays; for hearing the strollers had come to town, and knowing what an egregious offender I had been, I was stirred up to extract Mr. Law's excellent treatise, entitled, "The absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage Entertainment." The printer, at my request, put a little of it in the newspaper for six weeks successively; and God was pleased to give it his blessing."

In this manner Whitefield employed himself during nine months; and one effect of so doing was, that the partition wall of bigotry was soon broken down in his heart. He says, "I loved all, of whatever denomination, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." This statement in his diary is connected with an account of the benefit he derived from studying the works of the Non-conformists. "Baxter's Call," and "Alleine's Alarm," so accorded with his own ideas of fidelity and unction, that wherever he recognized their spirit he acknowledged "a brother beloved." On this portion of his history we dwell with unspeakable delight; the only drawback is an undue importance he appears to have attached to *dreams*; and even those, considered as an *index* to his waking hours, are interesting, revealing as they do his deep solicitude on the behalf of souls.

Here then, before he had completed his twenty-first year, we see Whitefield returned to Gloucester, and such was already the fame of his piety and talents, that Dr. Benson, the bishop of the diocese, offered to dispense, in his favor, with the rule which forbids the ordination of deacons at so unripe an age. Thus graphically did he afterwards describe his acceptance of this proposal.

"I never prayed against any corruption I had in my life so much as I did against going into holy orders so soon as my friends were for having me go. Bishop Benson was pleased to honor me with peculiar friendship, so as to offer me preferment, or to do any thing for me. My friends wanted me to mount the church betimes. They wanted me to knock my head against the pulpit too young; but how some young men stand up here and there and preach, I do not know. However it be to them, God knows how deep a concern entering into the ministry and preaching was to me. I prayed a thousand times, till the sweat has dropped from my face like rain, that God of his infinite mercy would not let me enter the church till he called me and thrust me forth in his work. I remember once in Gloucester – I know the room; I look up to the window when I am there and walk along the street – I said, 'Lord,

I cannot go; I shall be puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Lord, do not let me go yet.' I pleaded to be at Oxford two or three years more. I intended to make one hundred and fifty sermons, and thought that I would set up with a good stock in trade. I remember praying, wrestling, and striving with God. I said, 'I am undone, I am unfit to preach in thy great name. Send me not. Lord, send me not yet.' I wrote to all my friends in town and country to pray against the bishop's solicitation; but they insisted I should go into orders before I was twenty-two. After all their solicitations these words came into my mind: 'Nothing shall pluck you out of my hands;' they came warm to my heart. Then, and not till then, I said, 'Lord, *I will go*; send me when thou wilt.'"

Sunday, June 20, 1736, was the day appointed for his ordination in the cathedral at Gloucester. On the preceding evening he spent two hours in prayer for himself and the others who were to be set apart to the sacred office with him; and on the day itself he rose early, and passed the morning in prayer and meditation on the qualifications and duties of the office he was about to undertake. On a review of the solemn services of the day, he says, "I trust I answered every question from the bottom of my heart, and heartily prayed that God might say, Amen. And when the bishop laid his hands upon my head, if my vile heart do not deceive me, I offered my whole spirit, soul, and body to the service of God's sanctuary. Let come what will, life or death, depth or height, I shall henceforward live like one who this day, in the presence of men and angels, took the holy sacrament, on the profession of being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon me that ministration in the church. I call heaven and earth to witness, that when the bishop laid his hands upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me. Known unto him are all future events and contingencies; I have thrown myself blindfold, and I trust without reserve, into his almighty hands. When I went up to the altar, I could think of nothing but Samuel's standing before the Lord with a linen ephod."

Having thus received ordination as a deacon of the church of England, he delayed not to enter upon the work to which he was appointed; and accordingly, on the next Sabbath he preached his first sermon in his native city of Gloucester, selecting for his subject, "The necessity and benefit of religious society." At the appointed time he ascended the pulpit, in the church of St. Mary de Crypt. We have his own record of the service: "Last Sunday, in the afternoon, I preached my first sermon in the church where I first received the Lord's supper. Curiosity drew a large congregation together. The sight, at first, a little awed me; but I was comforted with a heartfelt sense of the divine presence, and soon found the advantage of having been accustomed to public speaking when a boy at school, and of exhorting and teaching the prisoners and the poor people at their private houses, while at the university. By these means I was kept from being daunted overmuch. As I proceeded, I perceived the fire kindled, till at last, though so young, and amidst a crowd of those who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel authority. Some few mocked, but most, for the present, seemed struck; and I have since heard that a complaint was made to the bishop, that I drove fifteen people mad the first sermon. The worthy prelate, as I am informed, wished that the madness might not be forgotten before the next Sunday. Before then, I hope that my sermon upon, 'He that is in Christ is a new creature,' will be completed. Blessed be God, I now find freedom in writing. Glorious Jesus,

""Unloose my stammering tongue to tell  
Thy love immense, unsearchable.""

It is remarkable, under all the circumstances of the case, that Bishop Benson, a man never distinguished for his evangelical views, always showed his friendship for Whitefield. Not only did he offer him ordination when others might have refused, and defend him against the persecutions to which he was exposed, but he more than once gave him pecuniary help when it was much needed, though the young clergyman had never complained.

Thus early apprized of the secret of his strength, his profound aspirations for the growth of Christianity, the delight of exercising his rare powers, and the popular admiration, operating with

combined and ceaseless force upon a mind impatient of repose, urged him into exertions which, if not attested by irrefragable proofs, might appear incredible. It was the statement of one who knew him well, and who was incapable of wilful exaggeration, and it is confirmed by his letters, journals, and a "cloud of witnesses," that "in the compass of a single week, and that for years, he spoke in general forty hours, and in very many sixty, and that to thousands: and after his labors, instead of taking any rest, he was engaged in offering up prayers and intercessions, with hymns and spiritual songs, as his manner was, in every house to which he was invited." Never perhaps, since the apostolic age, has any man given himself so entirely to preaching the gospel of Christ for the salvation of souls, adopting as his motto the language of the apostle Paul, "*This one thing I do.*"

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **WHITEFIELD'S SUCCESS AS A PREACHER IN ENGLAND – FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA. 1736-1738**

Whitefield, though thus prepared for action, was not impatient, but willing to wait till his duty was fully ascertained. On the Wednesday after his first sermon he went to Oxford, where, he says, "I was received with great joy by my religious friends. For about a week I continued in my servitor's habit, and then took my degree of Bachelor of Arts, after having been at the university three years and three quarters, and going on towards the twenty-second year of my age. My dear and honored friends, the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, being now embarked for Georgia, and one or two others having taken orders, the interest of Methodism, as it was then and is now termed, had visibly declined, and very few of this reputedly mad way were left at the university. This somewhat discouraged me at times, but the Lord Jesus supported my soul, and made me easy by giving me a strong conviction that I was where he would have me to be. My degree, I soon found, was of service to me, as it gave me access to those I could not be seen with when in an inferior station; and as opportunity offered, I was enabled to converse with them about the things which belonged to the kingdom of God. The subscriptions for the poor prisoners, which amounted to about forty pounds per annum, were soon put into my hands; two or three charity schools, maintained by the Methodists, were under my more immediate inspection; which, with the time I spent in following my studies, private retirement, and religious converse, sweetly filled up the whole of my day, and kept me from that unaccountable but too common complaint of having any time hang upon my hands."

The stay of Mr. Whitefield at Oxford, however, was very short. He says, "By a series of unforeseen, unexpected, and unsought-for providences, I was called in a short time from my beloved retirement to take a journey to the metropolis of England. While I was an under-graduate, among the religious friends, I was very intimate with one Mr. B – n, a professed Methodist, who had lately taken orders, and was curate at the Tower of London. With him, when absent, I frequently corresponded, and when present took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God as friends. He mentioned me to that late good and great man, Sir John Phillips; and being called down for a while into Hampshire, he wrote to me to be of good courage, and in the strength of God bade me hasten to town to officiate in his absence, and to be refreshed with the sight and conversation of many who loved me for Christ's sake, and had for a long time desired to see me."

On his arrival in London, Whitefield delivered his first sermon there in Bishopsgate church, on the afternoon of Lord's day, August 8. On entering the pulpit, his juvenile aspect excited a general feeling of his unfitness for the station, but he had not proceeded far in his sermon before it gave place to universal expressions of wonder and pleasure. If however he was thus exposed to the danger of vanity, as he says, "God sent me something to ballast it. For as I passed along the streets, many came out of their shops, admiring to see so young a person in a gown and cassock. One I remember in particular, cried out, 'There's a boy parson;' which, as it served to mortify my pride, put me also upon turning that apostolical exhortation into prayer, 'Let no man despise thy youth.'" From his first sermon to his departure, at the end of two months, his popularity in London continued to increase, and the crowds were so vast that it was necessary to place constables both inside and outside of the churches to preserve the peace. He tells us himself, "Here I continued for the space of two months, reading prayers twice a week, catechizing and preaching once, visiting the soldiers in the infirmary and barracks daily. I also read prayers every evening at Wapping chapel, and preached at Ludgate prison every Tuesday. God was pleased to give me favor in the eyes of the inhabitants of the Tower;



the chapel was crowded on Lord's days; religious friends from divers parts of the town attended the word, and several young men came on Lord's-day morning, under serious impressions, to hear me discourse about the *new birth*, and the necessity of renouncing all in affection in order to follow Jesus Christ."

The preaching of Mr. Whitefield now excited an unusual degree of attention among persons of all ranks. In many of the city churches he proclaimed the glad tidings of great joy to listening multitudes, who were powerfully affected by the fire which was displayed in the animated addresses of this man of God. Lord and Lady Huntingdon constantly attended wherever he preached, and Lady Anne Frankland became one of the first-fruits of his ministry among the nobility of the metropolis. Her ladyship spent much of her time with Lady Huntingdon, from whose society and conversation she derived great comfort. She was a daughter of Richard, the first Earl of Scarborough; was for many years lady of the bedchamber to the Princess Anne, and to the Princesses Amelia and Caroline; and finally became the second wife of Frederic Frankland, Esq., a member of Parliament, from whose cruelty she endured much.

We have already said, that some time before this Messrs. John and Charles Wesley had embarked for Georgia, and to their names we might have added that of Mr. Ingham, also a member of the Methodist fraternity at Oxford.

Georgia, which was explored by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1584, had been colonized by debtors from Europe, by multitudes who had fled from the grasp of persecution, and by others who were interested in constructing a barrier against Spanish aggression. It originally had trustees in England, concerned for its interests, including sons of the nobility. The chief agent in executing the benevolent designs in view was the truly excellent General Oglethorpe, who admirably carried out the motto he gave to his companions in the work, "*Non sibi sed aliis*" – "Not for themselves, but for others." The children of poverty, taken from the overgrown agricultural population, already a tax upon parish bounty at home, were to be transferred in large numbers to the silk and indigo plantations which were established on the savannahs and bottoms south and west of the river, which thence derived its name from the peculiar conformation of the adjoining plains. Combined with these leading purposes, it was a cherished principle with the early patrons of this colony, that it should become the centre for the diffusion of the gospel among the natives; while charitable foundations were also laid for the secular and religious education of all who would take advantage of such provisions. The first Christians who left Europe to advance the spiritual interests of Georgia were Moravians, and the next were the Wesleys and Ingham. The records of the colony, as quoted in White's Historical Collections of Georgia, show that, Sept. 14, 1735, Charles Wesley was appointed "Secretary for the Indian affairs in Georgia," and that, Oct. 10, 1735, John Wesley was appointed "missionary at Savannah."

Whitefield had left London, and was laboring among a poor and illiterate people in Hampshire, when his attention was directly drawn to Georgia. This was not, indeed, the first time his heart had been interested in the matter. He writes, "When I had been about a month in town, letters came from the Messrs. Wesley, and the Rev. Mr. Ingham their fellow-laborer, an Israelite indeed, from Georgia. Their accounts fired my soul, and made me long to go abroad for God too. But having no outward call, and being as I then thought too weak in body ever to undertake a voyage at sea, I endeavored to lay aside all thoughts of going abroad. But my endeavors were all in vain; for I felt at times such a strong attraction in my soul towards Georgia, that I thought it almost irresistible. I strove against it with all my power, begged again and again, with many cries and tears, that the Lord would not suffer me to be deluded, and at length opened my mind to several dear friends. All agreed that laborers were wanted at home, that I had as yet no visible call abroad, and that it was my duty not to be rash, but wait and see what Providence might point out to me. To this I consented with my whole heart."

The path of duty, however, soon opened before him. While fulfilling his duties at Dummer, in Hampshire, preaching for the Rev. Mr. Kinchin, who was now absent from home, to which labors we have already referred, he received an invitation to a lucrative curacy in London; but Georgia still

rested like one of the prophetic "burdens" on his mind. At this juncture he received a letter from his clerical friend at the Tower, saying that Mr. Charles Wesley had arrived in London. Very soon Mr. Wesley himself wrote to Whitefield, saying, that he was come over to procure laborers, "but," added he, "I dare not prevent God's nomination." "In a few days after this," writes Mr. Whitefield, "came another letter from Mr. John Wesley, wherein were these words: 'Only Mr. Delamotte is with me, till God shall stir up the hearts of some of his servants, who putting their lives in their hands, shall come over and help us, where the harvest is so great, and the laborers so few. What if thou art the man, Mr. Whitefield?' In another letter were these words: 'Do you ask me what you shall have? Food to eat and raiment to put on, a house to lay your head in – such as our Lord had not – and a crown of glory that fadeth not away.' Upon reading this my heart leaped within me, and as it were echoed to the call."

After having consulted his bishop, Dr. Benson, as also the archbishop of Canterbury, and the trustees of Georgia including General James Oglethorpe who was then in London, he went to Bristol, Bath, and other places, to take leave of his personal friends. As he could not refrain from preaching, so every sermon increased his popularity. We give his account of his preaching at Bristol, as a specimen of the reception he met with.

"It was wonderful to see how the people hung upon the rails of the organ-loft, climbed upon the leads of the church, and made the church itself so hot with their breath, that the steam would fall from the pillars like drops of rain. Sometimes almost as many would go away for want of room as came in, and it was with great difficulty I got into the desk to read prayers or preach. Persons of all ranks not only publicly attended my ministry, but gave me private invitations to their houses. A private society or two were erected. I preached and collected for the poor prisoners in Newgate twice or thrice a week, and many made me large offers if I would not go abroad."

Having mentioned General James Edward Oglethorpe, the first governor, and indeed the founder of the colony of Georgia, and to the end of Whitefield's life his cordial friend, a few additional facts concerning him may here be stated. He was the son of Sir Theophilus Oglethorpe, and was born in London, December 21, 1688. At sixteen he was admitted a student at Oxford, but did not finish his studies, as the military profession had more charms for him than literary pursuits. He was first commissioned as an ensign. After the death of Queen Anne, he entered into the service of Prince Eugene. When he attained the age of twenty-four years, he entered Parliament, for Haslemere, where he continued thirty-two years. In November, 1732, Oglethorpe, with one hundred and sixteen settlers, embarked for Georgia, and landed at Charleston, S. C., January 13, 1733. They shortly afterwards proceeded to Georgia, where Oglethorpe laid out a town, and called it Savannah. He very happily secured the good will of the Indians. In 1743, he left Georgia for England, to answer charges brought against him by Lieutenant-colonel Cook. A court martial declared the charges groundless and malicious, and Cook was dismissed from the service. In 1744 he was appointed one of the field-officers under field-marshal the Earl of Stair, to oppose the expected invasion of France. He died in 1785. He was truly a noble man.

As the period approached when Whitefield was to leave England, the people showed their esteem for him in almost every possible way. They followed him so closely, and in such numbers, for holy counsels, that he could scarcely command a moment for retirement. They begged to receive from him religious books, and to have their names written therein with his own hand, as memorials of him, and very many followed him from place to place till his final embarkation.

It was indeed a surprising fact, that a young man, scarcely more than twenty-two years of age, and previously unknown to the world, should be able to collect such immense congregations, and rouse and command their attention; multitudes hanging upon and receiving instructions from his lips. But God had endowed him with a singular union of qualities, which most eminently fitted him for the work of an evangelist. He was faithful to his trust, and his divine Master abundantly blessed and honored him in the discharge of its momentous duties.

We have now traced the amazing effects of Whitefield's *first* sermons, and it may be interesting briefly to inquire into their general character, and to ascertain what truths thus aroused the public mind. Three of these sermons can, happily, be identified with these "times of refreshing;" and they may be depended on, as specimens of both the letter and the spirit of his preaching, because they were printed from his own manuscripts: they are those on "*Early Piety*," "*Regeneration*," and "*Intercession*." Whoever will read the appeals in these sermons, realizing the circumstances under which they were made, will scarcely wonder at the effect produced by them. The topics of the second and third, and the tone of all the three, are very different from the matter and manner of sermonizing then known to the masses of the people. They do not surprise *us*, because happily neither the topics nor the tone of them are "strange things to our ears." Both, however, were novelties in those days, even in London. When or where had an appeal been made like this?

"I beseech you, in love and compassion, to come to Jesus. Indeed, all I say is in love to your souls. And if I could be but an instrument of bringing you to Jesus, I should not envy, but rejoice in your happiness, however much you were exalted. If I was to make up the *last* of the train of the companions of the blessed Jesus, it would rejoice me to see you above me in glory. I could willingly go to prison or to death for you, so I could but bring one soul from the devil's strong-holds, into the salvation which is by Christ Jesus. Come then to Christ, every one that hears me this night. Come, come, my guilty brethren; I beseech you, for your immortal souls' sake, for Christ's sake, come to Christ. Methinks I could speak till midnight unto you. Would you have me go and tell my Master that you will not come, and that I have spent my strength in vain? I cannot bear to carry such a message to him. I would not, indeed, I would not be a swift witness against you at the great day of account; but if you will refuse these gracious invitations, I must do it."

In this spirit, not very prevalent even now, Whitefield began his ministry. There is a fascination as well as fervor, or rather a fascination arising from fervor, in some of his earliest as well as his later discourses. How bold and beautiful is the peroration of that on "*Intercession*." Referring to the holy impatience of "the souls under the altar," for the coming of the kingdom of God, he exclaims,

"And shall not we who are on earth be often exercised in this divine employ with the glorious company of the spirits of just men made perfect? Since our happiness is so much to consist in the communion of saints in the church triumphant above, shall we not frequently intercede for the church militant below, and earnestly beg that we may be all one? To provoke you to this work and labor of love, remember, that it is the never-ceasing employment of the holy and highly exalted Jesus himself; so that he who is constantly interceding for others, is doing that on earth which the eternal Son of God is always doing in heaven. Imagine, therefore, when you are lifting up holy hands for one another, that you see the heavens opened, and the Son of God in all his glory, as the great High-priest of your salvation, pleading for you the all-sufficient merit of his sacrifice before the throne. Join your intercession with his. The imagination will strengthen your faith, and excite a holy earnestness in your prayers."

The nearer the time approached for his leaving the country, the more affectionate the people grew towards him, and the more eagerly did they attend on his ministry. Many thousands of ardent petitions were presented to heaven on behalf of his person and his ministry; and multitudes would stop him in the aisles of the churches, or follow him with their tearful looks. Most of all was it difficult for him to part from his friends at St. Dunstan's, where he administered the sacrament, after spending the night before in prayer.

The man who had produced these extraordinary effects, says Dr. Gillies, had many natural advantages. He was something above the middle stature, well proportioned, though at that time slender, and remarkable for native gracefulness of manner. His complexion was very fair, his features regular, his eyes small and lively, of a dark blue color: in recovering from the measles, he had contracted a squint with one of them; but this peculiarity rather rendered the expression of his countenance more rememberable, than in any degree lessened the effect of its uncommon sweetness.

His voice excelled both in melody and compass, and its fine modulations were happily accompanied by the grace of action which he possessed in an eminent degree, and which is said to be the chief requisite of an orator. An ignorant man described his eloquence oddly, but strikingly, when he said that Mr. Whitefield preached like a lion. So strange a comparison conveyed no unapt idea of the force, and vehemence, and passion – of the authority which awed the hearers, and made them tremble like Felix before the apostle. Believing himself to be the messenger of God, commissioned to call sinners to repentance, he spoke as one conscious of his high credentials, with authority and power; yet in all his discourses there was a fervor and melting charity, an earnestness of persuasion, an outpouring of redundant love, partaking of the virtue of the faith from which it flowed, insomuch that it seemed to enter the heart which it pierced, and to heal it as with a balm.

At length, having preached in a considerable number of the London churches, collected about a thousand pounds for the charity schools, and obtained upwards of three hundred pounds for the poor in Georgia, Whitefield left London, December 28, 1737, in the twenty-third of his age, and went in the strength of God, as a poor pilgrim, on board the Whitaker.

Scarcely had he entered on his voyage from London, when he discovered that but little comfort was to be expected in the ship on which he had embarked. There was no place for retirement, no disposition to receive him as an ambassador of Christ, and a decided dislike even to the forms of religion. They moved but slowly to the Downs, where they were detained for nearly a month, and where Whitefield went on shore to visit Deal, an ancient town, one of the Cinque-ports, so called, where "the common people," as in the case of his great Master, "heard him gladly." With him, through his whole ministry, it was of small importance whether he preached to the rich or the poor; for he viewed the gospel as a message of mercy to *sinners*, and wherever men were found, he was willing to persuade them to be reconciled to God.

The account given by Mr. Whitefield of his visit to Deal, and of the different treatment he received there from different persons, would be almost as correct a description of his labors and reception in a hundred other places. He spent his first evening very comfortably in religious conversation and family prayer, at which a poor woman was much affected. "Who knows," he says, "what a fire this little spark may kindle?" Next evening, eight or nine poor people came to him at the report of this poor woman; and when, after three or four days, the ship in which he had embarked was driven back to Deal, many met together to bewail their own sins and those of others. Soon the landlady who owned the house where he lodged, sent to her tenants, beseeching them not to let any more persons come in, for fear the floor should break under them; and they actually put a prop under it.

The minister of Upper Deal, a mile or two from the town, now invited Whitefield to preach in the church; it was much crowded, and many went away for want of room. Some stood on the leads of the building outside, and looked in at the top windows, and all around seemed eager to hear the word. "May the Lord," says the good man, "make them *doers* of it. In the evening I was obliged to divide my hearers into four companies, and was enabled to expound to them from six till ten. Lord, keep me from being weary of, or in well-doing."

The excitement at Deal became very great, in consequence of the conviction of the people that their own minister, the Rev. Dr. Carter, did not preach the gospel. The good man, to disprove the charge, published a volume of his sermons, which, however admired by gay formalists, furnished but too much evidence of the justice of the charge.

Just as he had left the church at Upper Deal, where he had been preaching to a vast congregation, Mr. Whitefield, in consequence of a sudden change of the wind, was summoned on board, and the Whitaker sailed for Georgia. A very few hours afterwards, the vessel which brought back John Wesley from that colony anchored in the Downs, when he learned that the ships had passed each other, but neither of these remarkable men then knew how dear a friend was on board the other. When Wesley landed, he found it was still possible to communicate with his friend, and Whitefield was surprised to receive a letter from him, saying, "When I saw God by the wind which was carrying you out brought

me in, I asked counsel of God. His answer you have enclosed." The enclosure was a slip of paper with the words, "Let him return to London," which Wesley had obtained by lot, to which he had had recourse. Whitefield prayed for direction, and went on his voyage.

This first voyage of Whitefield to America was invested with scenes of far more than common interest. Perhaps, since the apostle Paul's memorable voyage to Rome, the ocean had never exhibited a more remarkable spectacle than that furnished by this ship. He was but a stripling in his twenty-third year, and a faint and hesitating homage once on a Sabbath-day, from a few of the less obdurate sinners among his hearers, would be all that such a clergyman could expect from an assemblage of gentlemen, of soldiers with their wives and families, and the ship's crew. Yet in the hands of this remarkable youth all became pliant as a willow. He converted the chief cabin into a cloister, the deck into a church, and the steerage into a school-room. He so bore down all opposition by love, reason, and Scripture, that we soon see him, at the request of the captain and officers, with the hearty concurrence of the gentlemen who were passengers, reading "full public prayers" to them twice a day in the great cabin, and expounding every night after the evening prayers, besides daily reading prayers, and preaching twice a day on deck to the soldiers and sailors, and increasing the services on Sundays. In addition to all this, he daily catechized a company of young soldiers, and engaged in the same exercise with the women apart by themselves.

Nor did even all this suffice to expend his zeal, for he commenced a course of expositions on the creed and ten commandments; and so convinced was he of the value of catechetical teaching, that on February 3d he writes, "I began to-night to turn the observations made on the lessons in the morning into catechetical questions, and was pleased to hear some of the soldiers make very apt answers."

Nor were the children forgotten; the Hon. Mr. Habersham, a personal friend who accompanied him, assumed their instruction as his department of holy labor. Mr. Whitefield wrote of him, that he was "pleased to see Mr. Habersham so active in teaching the children. He has now many scholars – may God bless him."

Friendship for Whitefield had influenced Mr. Habersham to accompany the young evangelist to Georgia. Mr. Habersham's friends, at Beverly, in Yorkshire, where he was born in 1712, were greatly opposed to his plans, but surely the hand of God directed them. He presided over the Orphan-house till 1744, when he entered into a commercial partnership. He occupied several important stations, till he became president of the colony in 1769. The proceedings connected with the revolutionary war more than once placed him in great difficulties; he did not live to see its happy results, for in 1775 the state of his health compelled him to visit the north, in hope of its renovation. The change, however, was of no benefit, and he died at New Brunswick, New Jersey, August 28, 1775. The "Gazette" of the day said of him, "In the first stations of the province he conducted himself with ability, honor, and integrity, which gained him the love and esteem of his fellow-citizens; nor was he less distinguished in private life by a conscientious discharge of the social duties, as a tender and affectionate parent, a sincere and warm friend, and a kind and indulgent master. Mr. Habersham was married by the Rev. Mr. Whitefield to Mary Bolton at Bethesda, on the 26th of December, 1740, by whom he had ten children, three of whom, sons, survived him, and were zealous in the cause of American liberty."

In harmony with the solemn duties which Mr. Whitefield had assumed, he watched over the conduct of all around him. He tells us that the ship's cook was awfully addicted to drinking, and when reproved for this and other sins, he boasted that he would be wicked till within two years of his death, and would then reform. Alas, he died on the voyage, after an illness of six hours, brought on by drinking.

One day on this voyage, finding on Captain Whiting's pillow "The Independent Whig," Whitefield exchanged it for a book entitled "The Self-Deceiver." The next morning, the captain came smiling and inquired who made the exchange. Mr. Whitefield confessed the fact, and begged his acceptance of the book, which he said he had read, and liked very well. From thenceforward a visible alteration took place in the conduct of the captain.

On their arrival at Gibraltar, where they had to continue some time, Mr. Whitefield found that Major Sinclair, without solicitation, had provided a lodging for him, and the governor and military invited him to their table. Being apprehensive that at a public military table he might be more than hospitably treated, to prevent any thing disagreeable, he reminded his excellency that, at the court of Ahasuerus, "none did compel." The governor took the hint, and pleasantly replied, "No compulsion of any kind shall be used at my table;" and every thing was conducted with the greatest propriety. Here he often preached, and was heard by many, including all in high offices. Unusual indeed were the scenes, both with respect to the place and the people. The adjacent promontories, and the vastness of the rock of Gibraltar, aided in the enlargement of the ideas of the preacher as to Him, who "in his strength setteth fast the mountains, and is girded about with power." And the place being a sort of public rendezvous of all nations, he thought, he says, "he saw the world in epitome."

The success of Whitefield's ministry at Gibraltar was truly remarkable. He quaintly says of it, "Samson's riddle was fulfilled there: 'out of the strong came forth sweetness.' Who more unlikely to be wrought upon than soldiers? And yet, among any set of people, I have not been where God has made his power more known. Many that were quite blind, have received their sight; many that had fallen back, have repented and turned to the Lord again; many that were ashamed to own Christ openly, have waxed bold; and many saints have had their hearts filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Among other religions societies to which Whitefield was introduced at Gibraltar, he one day attended the Jewish synagogue, and was agreeably surprised when one of the rulers handed him into the chief seat. The rabbi had the day before heard him preach against profane swearing, and now thanked him for his sermon. He remained in the synagogue during the whole service, engaged, he says, "in secret prayer that the veil might be taken from the heart of the Jews, and they grafted again into their own olive-tree."

Several facts occurred on the way to Savannah after their embarkation from Gibraltar, which are too interesting to pass without notice. On one occasion Captain Mackay, after Whitefield had preached against drunkenness, urged the men to attend to the things which had been spoken; telling them that he was a notorious swearer until he did so; and beseeching them for Christ's sake to give up their sins. On another occasion, while marrying a couple on deck, Whitefield suddenly shut the prayer-book in the midst of the ceremony, because the bridegroom had behaved with levity; and not until the laughter was turned into weeping, would he proceed. At the close of the service he gave the bride a Bible. When a shark was caught, with five pilot-fish clinging to its fins, he said, "Go to the pilot-fish, thou that forsakest a friend in adversity; consider his ways, and be abashed." When a dolphin was caught, the change of its hues from lovely to livid, reminded him to say, "Just so is man; he flourishes for a little while, but when death cometh, how quickly his beauty is gone! A Christian may learn instruction from every thing he meets with." While he was preaching on the death of Christ darkness came on, and he said, "It puts me in mind of that darkness which overwhelmed the world when the God of nature suffered."

In the latter part of the voyage, fever laid prostrate all in the ship except four persons, and at length it seized Whitefield, and confined him to his bed for a week. The attack, though short, must have been severe; for besides other remedies, he was bled three times. During his illness, the captain gave up his own bed to him, and Mr. Habersham watched him day and night; but that which gratified him most was, that the sick between decks, whom he had endangered his life to console, prayed for him with great fervor. He recovered, and repaid the kindness of all. At length, on May 5, they came in sight of Savannah river, and sent off for a pilot; and such was the joy of all, when they came to anchor at Tybee island, that he could not help exclaiming, "How infinitely more joyful will the children of God be, when, having passed through the waves of this troublesome world, they arrive at the haven of everlasting rest!" Though still weak, he preached a farewell sermon to his "red-coated and blue-jacketed parishioners," as he called his military and naval congregation. It was heard with floods of tears.

Upon this voyage, says Dr. Gillies, he made these reflections many years after: "Even at this distance of time, the remembrance of the happy hours I enjoyed in religious exercises on deck, is refreshing to my soul; and although nature sometimes relented at being taken from my friends, and I was little accustomed to the inconveniences of a sea-life, yet, a consciousness that I had the glory of God and the good of souls in view, afforded me, from time to time, unspeakable satisfaction."

Whitefield was cordially welcomed at Savannah by Delamotte and other friends of the Wesleys: the magistrates also offered to wait upon him to pay their respects; but this he declined, and waited upon them. They agreed to build him a tabernacle and a house at Frederica, and to accept his services at Savannah as long as he pleased. He was soon, however, again laid aside by the return of his fever, now accompanied with ague. This attack in a few days brought him so low, and made so great an alteration in his person, that he says, "Had my friends seen me at that hour, they might have learned not to have any man's person in admiration, and not to think more highly of me than they ought to think."

The first thing which Whitefield did after his recovery was to visit *Tomo-Chici*, the Indian king, then on his death-bed. This was the micoe, or king, whom Oglethorpe had taken to England, in 1734, and introduced to king George the Second. He was accompanied by his wife and son, and seven other Indians of the Creek nation. His eloquent speech to the king and queen was so well received at court, that he was loaded with presents, and when he had again to embark, was sent in one of the royal carriages to Gravesend. "He now lay," says Whitefield, "on a blanket, thin and meagre; little else but skin and bones. Senanki, his wife, sat by, fanning him with Indian feathers. There was no one could talk English, so I could only shake hands with him and leave him. A few days afterwards, Mr. Whitefield again went to visit Tomo-Chici, and found that his nephew, Tooanoowee, could speak English. Whitefield says, "I desired him to ask his uncle, whether he thought he should die; who answered, 'I cannot tell.' I then asked where he thought he should go after death. He replied, 'To heaven.' But alas, how can a drunkard enter there? I then exhorted Tooanoowee, who is a tall, proper youth, not to get drunk; telling him that he understood English, and therefore would be punished the more if he did not live better. I then asked him whether he believed in a heaven. He said, 'Yes.' I then asked whether he believed in a hell, and described it by pointing to the fire. He replied, 'No.' From whence we may easily gather, how natural it is to all mankind to believe there is a place of happiness, because they wish it to be so; and on the contrary, how averse they are to believe in a place of torment, because they wish it may not be so. But God is just and true; and as surely as the righteous shall go away into everlasting happiness, so the impenitently wicked shall go into everlasting punishment."

The records of Georgia say, under date of December 21, 1737, "Ordered, that a license be made out for the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield to perform ecclesiastical offices in Georgia, as a deacon in the church of England."

Before Whitefield had any thoughts of going abroad, Charles Wesley talked to him of an orphan-house in Georgia, which he and General Oglethorpe had contemplated. When he arrived in Savannah, and had sufficiently recovered from his illness to examine the state of the colony, the condition of the children deeply affected him; and he set his heart on founding the projected institution as soon as he should be able to collect the needful funds. In the mean time he opened schools in the villages of Highgate and Hampstead, and one also, for girls, in Savannah. He afterwards visited the Saltzburgher's orphan-school at Ebenezer; and if any thing had been wanted to settle his own determination, or to inflame his zeal, he found it there. The Saltzburghers were exiles for conscience' sake, and were eminent for piety and industry. Their ministers, the Rev. Messrs. Grenaw and Boltzius, were eminently evangelical, and their asylum, which they had been enabled to found by British benevolence, for widows and orphans, was flourishing. Whitefield was so delighted with the order and harmony of Ebenezer, that he gave a share of his own "poor's store" to Boltzius, for his orphans. Then came the scene which entirely completed his purpose: Boltzius "called all the children before him; catechized and exhorted them to give God thanks for his good providence towards them;

then prayed with them, and made them pray after him; then sung a psalm. Afterwards, the little lambs came and shook me by the hand, one by one, and so we parted." Whitefield was now pledged to this cause for life.

Most of our readers probably know that the conductors of "The Gentleman's Magazine," a work which has now been regularly published in London for much more than a century, have never been favorable to evangelical truth, or its ministers; it is therefore the more gratifying to copy from that work for November, 1737, the following lines: it will be seen that they were published more than a month before Mr. Whitefield's departure to the American colonies.

### **"TO THE REV. MR. WHITEFIELD, ON HIS DESIGN FOR GEORGIA**

"How great, how just thy zeal, adventurous youth,  
To spread in heathen climes the light of truth!  
Go, loved of heaven, with every grace refined,  
Inform, enrapture each dark Indian's mind;  
Grateful, as when to realms long hid from day,  
The cheerful dawn foreshows the solar ray.  
How great thy charity, whose large embrace  
Intends the eternal weal of all thy race;  
Prompts thee the rage of waves and winds to scorn,  
To effect the work for which thy soul was born.  
What multitudes, whom Pagan dreams deceive,  
Shall, when they hear thy heavenly voice, believe!  
On Georgia's shore thy Wesley shall attend,  
To hail the wished arrival of his friend;  
With joy the promised harvest he surveys,  
And to his Lord for faithful laborers prays;  
Though crowded temples here would plead thy stay,  
Yet haste, blest prophet, on thy destined way.  
Be gentle, winds, and breathe an easy breeze,  
Be clear, ye skies, and smooth, ye flowing seas!  
From heaven, ye guardian angels, swift descend,  
Delighted his blest mission to attend;  
Which shall from Satan's power whole nations free,  
While half the world to Jesus bow the knee.  
Long as Savannah, peaceful stream, shall glide,  
Your worth renowned shall be extended wide;  
Children as yet unborn shall bless your lore,  
Who thus to save them left your native shore;  
The apostles thus, with ardent zeal inspired,  
To gain *all nations* for their Lord desired.  
They measured seas, a life laborious knew,  
And numerous converts to their Master drew;  
Whose hallelujahs, on the ethereal plains,  
Rise scarce beneath the bright seraphic strains.

"Gloucester, Nov. 1, 1737."



After spending a few weeks at Savannah, laboring as much as his health would permit, Whitefield went to Frederica, where he was gladly received; the people "having had a famine of the word for a long season." They had no sanctuary, and therefore he had to preach under a tree, or in Mr. Habersham's house. This visit, although short, endeared him to all the people; and he had the satisfaction before he left, to see them "sawing timber for a commodious place of worship, until a church could be built." His return, however, to Savannah was hastened by a somewhat painful event. One of his friends was lost in the woods, and missing from Tuesday till Friday. The great guns had been fired to direct the wanderer, but in vain; and some of the people had searched for him day and night, without success. This report was sent to Whitefield, and it hurried him away from Frederica. He had the pleasure, however, on his arrival at Savannah, to find his "lost sheep."

During the stay of Whitefield in Georgia, the weather was intensely hot, sometimes almost burning his feet through his shoes. Seeing others do it, he determined to accustom himself to hardship by lying constantly on the floor; which by use he found to be so far from being uncomfortable, that afterwards it became so to lie on a bed. Nor was he more ready to deny himself than he was assiduous to do good; preaching often, catechizing the young, visiting the sick, and exhorting from house to house. Entirely independent and unrestrained, he knew no fear in the discharge of what he regarded as his duty. Knowing that some men of influence, to whom his voice could not be addressed from the pulpit, were living in open defiance of morality and shame, he went into the court and made an address to the grand jury, urging them to present all such offenders without partiality or fear, since the miserable state of the colony was doubtless owing to divine displeasure against their sins.

Reflection on the character, labors, and success of his predecessors, stimulated his zeal and encouraged his hope. It could not be denied that John Wesley had been misrepresented and unkindly treated, both in Savannah and Frederica, and Whitefield therefore rejoiced to bear honorable testimony of him and his colleagues. He says, "Surely I must labor most heartily, since I come after such worthy men. The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people, and he has laid such a foundation, that I hope neither men nor devils will be able to shake it. O that I may follow him as he has followed Christ."

Mr. Whitefield having as yet only received deacon's orders, and wishing to be ordained priest, for the more complete performance of his duty as a minister of the church of England, it became necessary for him to return to Europe for that purpose; and being also desirous of making collections for his Orphan-house, he left Mr. Habersham at Savannah, and went to Charleston, S. C., on his way to England.

At Charleston he became acquainted with the Rev. Alexander Garden, the ecclesiastical commissary of the Bishop of London, who with apparent cordiality twice invited him into his pulpit, and assured him that he would defend him with his life and property, should the same arbitrary proceedings ever be commenced against him which Mr. Wesley had met with in Georgia. Dr. Deems, in his recently published volume, "The Annals of Southern Methodism," tells us, when speaking of his first sermon, "The people at first despised his youth, but his engaging address soon gained their general esteem, and Mr. Garden thanked him most cordially." In an after-period, however, when Mr. Garden more fully understood the evangelical character of Mr. Whitefield's preaching, he frequently took occasion to point out what he called the pernicious tendency of his doctrines, and irregular manner of life. He represented him as a religious quack, who had an excellent way of setting off and rendering palatable his poisonous tenets. On one occasion Garden, to keep his flock from going after this strange pastor, preached from the text, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Whitefield, however, was not to be silenced in this way, and returned the compliment by preaching from the words, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works."

On September 6, 1738, Whitefield embarked for London. The voyage was perilous in the extreme. They were tossed about with bad weather, in a ship out of repair, and in sad want of

provisions. When they were over about one-third of the Atlantic, a vessel from Jamaica would have gladly received him, but he chose to share the lot of his shipmates. They highly valued his services, and one of his fellow-passengers, Captain Gladman, became, as the result of this voyage, a truly pious man. The captain, in a subsequent period, at his own earnest request, became the fellow-traveller of his teacher.

After a passage of about nine weeks, they made the port of Limerick, in Ireland. "I wish," Whitefield says, "I could never forget what I felt when water and provisions were brought us from the shore. Mr. M'Mahon, a country gentleman, came from his seat at midnight on purpose to relieve us, and most kindly invited me, though unknown, to his house, to stay as long as I pleased." At Limerick he was cordially received by that worthy prelate, Bishop Birsough, who engaged him to preach at the cathedral. From thence he went to Dublin, where he preached, and was hospitably entertained by Archbishop Bolton, Bishop Rundel, and Dr. Delany.

Remaining but a short time in Ireland, he proceeded to London, where he arrived December 8. Here he had the pleasure of conversing with some of the Moravian brethren, whose faith and love refreshed his spirit, though he did not entirely approve some of their views. He soon discovered somewhat of a change of feeling towards him on the part of many of the London clergy. Within two days, he found five of the churches were closed against him. He called on the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, who received him with cold civility. The bishop asked him if his journals were not tinctured with enthusiasm; and he replied, with his usual meekness and candor, that they were written only for his own use, and that of his private friends, and that they were published without his knowledge. So anxious was he to avoid giving offence, that he took the earliest opportunity to expunge from his journals whatever he discovered to be erroneous, and whatever he had said without imperative necessity, or which was likely to injure the character and feelings of any one.

The trustees of Georgia, at a meeting in London, received Whitefield with great cordiality, and in compliance with the wishes of the colonists, they presented him with the living of Savannah, the salary of which he declined to receive; but he thankfully accepted five hundred acres of land, on which he proposed to erect his orphan-house.

On Sunday, January 14, 1739, being then in his twenty-fifth year, Whitefield was ordained priest at Oxford, by his worthy friend Bishop Benson. Having preached twice to very crowded congregations, and administered the Lord's supper at the castle, he returned to London the next day. As Dr. Benson once expressed regret that he had ordained Mr. Whitefield, it may be proper here to explain the circumstances. Shortly after the late Countess of Huntingdon first became acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus, Bishop Benson, who had been lord Huntingdon's tutor, was sent for to remonstrate with her ladyship, and to induce her to relinquish what were then considered her erroneous views; but she pressed him so hard with the Articles and Homilies of his own church, and so plainly and faithfully urged upon him the awful responsibility of his station, that for the moment his mind was hurt, and he rose up to depart, lamenting that he had ever laid his hands upon George Whitefield, to whom he imputed the change which had been wrought in her ladyship. "My lord," said she, "mark my words; when you come upon your dying bed, that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with pleasure." It would seem that it was so; for, on his death-bed, the Bishop sent ten guineas to Mr. Whitefield as a token of his favor and approbation, and begged to be remembered by him in his prayers.

The interval between his taking priests' orders, and embarking a second time for Georgia, was employed by Whitefield, with his usual energy and success, in preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and in making collections for his Orphan-house. Having, before his visit to America, collected large sums for the charity schools in the metropolis, he naturally expected that the pulpits would not be denied him now, in which to plead the interests of his own poor. But he was scarcely yet aware that the tide of clerical opinion had turned so extensively and strongly against him. The doctrines he had preached, and the manner in which he had preached them, had produced a sensation so strong,

that he found himself excluded from most of the churches in London. A few, however, were yet open to him for his benevolent design. The Rev. Mr. Broughton conducted himself, among others, very nobly. Having been urged to refuse his pulpit, as some of his neighbors had done, he boldly replied, that "having obtained the lectureship of St. Helen's by Whitefield's influence, he should have the pulpit if he desired it." Mr. Whitefield preached, but Mr. Broughton thus losing the lectureship, Whitefield blamed himself for having done so. Whatever he might himself be willing to suffer, he was not willing to inflict inconvenience on others.

Only a few days before his being ordained as priest, Whitefield offered his first public *extempore* prayer, in a large meeting in Red Cross-street, London. He mentions this fact in a note of his diary as "the first time I ever prayed extempore before such a number." He did not even then suppose that his preaching, as well as his prayers in this manner, were to develop his mighty power. The crowding of the churches now suggested the idea of preaching in the open air. He says, "When I was informed that nearly a thousand people stood out in the church-yard, and that hundreds returned home, this put me first upon thinking of preaching without doors. I mentioned it to some friends, who looked upon it as a *mad* motion. However, we kneeled down and prayed that nothing might be done rashly. Hear and answer, O Lord, for thy name's sake."

We shall soon see how his extempore expositions and prayers were fitting him for this new enterprise. He would have commenced in London now, but he lacked a fair opportunity.

### **CHAPTER III.**

## **OPEN-AIR PREACHING IN ENGLAND AND WALES – ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE IN LONDON. 1738-1739**

Under the circumstances we have related in our last chapter, Whitefield paid another visit to Bristol, and soon found that he had to meet with new and very unexpected opposition. When he arrived in the city, the chancellor of the diocese, while he did not approve of what he considered his irregular conduct, told him that he would not prohibit any clergyman from lending him his church; but in a few days afterwards he sent for the evangelist, and announced his entire opposition to his movements. Strangely enough, he now asked Whitefield by what authority he preached in the diocese of Bristol without a license. The reply of the intrepid minister was, that he supposed such a custom had become obsolete, and asked the chancellor in his turn, "And pray, sir, why did you not ask the clergyman who preached for you last Thursday this question?" The chancellor then read to him the canons which forbid any clergyman from preaching in a private house; to which Whitefield replied, that he did not suppose these canons referred to professed ministers of the church of England; and when the chancellor told him he was mistaken, he reminded his superior, "There is also a canon, sir, forbidding all clergymen to frequent taverns and play at cards; why is not that put in execution?" And he then added, that notwithstanding any canons to the contrary, he could not but speak the things which he knew, and that he was resolved to proceed as usual. His answer was written down, and the chancellor closed the interview with the words, "I am resolved, sir, if you preach or expound anywhere in this diocese till you have a license, I will first suspend, and then excommunicate you." The crisis was now come; the Rubicon had been passed, and the inquiry might well be made, "What will Whitefield now do?"

Already have we seen that he had earnestly desired, in London, to preach in the open air, for want of room in the churches, and indeed also from the opposition of the clergy, which had begun so strongly to manifest itself; and during this journey to Bristol, he found it necessary to preach in the open air or not at all. As this event was of vast importance in its results, both in his own history and that of Mr. Wesley, who also began to preach on the same spot within two months after Whitefield had opened the way, we must stay a while to narrate the facts.

At that time, the colliers of Kingswood, near the city of Bristol, were a most depraved and reckless class of men. Inconceivably barbarous and ignorant, they trampled on all laws, human and divine, and hesitated not to set the magistrates at defiance. It was dangerous to pass near the scene of their labors, even in open day, for robberies and murders were of frequent occurrence; in a word, it was truly "a seat of Satan." When Whitefield was at Bristol, making collections for his projected orphan institution in Georgia, not a few persons had said to him, "Why go abroad; have we not Indians enough at home? If you have a mind to convert Indians, there are colliers enough in Kingswood." "I thought," says he, "it might be doing the service of my Creator, who had a mountain for his pulpit, and the heavens for his sounding-board, and who, when his gospel was refused by the Jews, sent his servants into the highways and hedges." After much prayer and many inward struggles, he went one day to a gentle elevation on the south side of Kingswood, called Hanham Mount, and there, under an old sycamore-tree, he preached his first sermon in the open air to about a hundred colliers. The scene must have been very impressive. Before him stretched the rich and beautiful valley of the Avon, through which the river was gently winding, bordered in the distance by the undulating hills; while on his right and left the cities of Bath and Bristol were within sight.

The fact of his preaching here soon and extensively spread, and at meeting after meeting his audience increased, till he found himself addressing *nearly twenty thousand persons*. His own account of the effects produced is very striking. He says, "The first discovery of their being affected, was in the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks, as they came out of their coal pits. Hundreds and hundreds of them were soon brought under deep convictions, which happily ended in sound and thorough conversion. As the scene was quite new, and I had just begun to be an extempore preacher, I had often many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not, as I thought, a word to say; but I was never deserted; and I was often so assisted as to understand what that meaneth, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' The open firmament above; the prospect of the adjacent fields; with the sight of thousands and thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in the trees, and all so affected as to be drenched in tears together, to which sometimes was added the solemnity of the approaching night, were almost too much for me; I was occasionally all but overcome." Writing to Mr. Wesley a few weeks afterwards, he says, "Yesterday I began to play the madman in Gloucestershire, by preaching on a table in Thornbury-street. To-day I have exhorted twice, and by and by I shall begin a third time; nothing like doing good by the way. I suppose you have heard of my proceedings in Kingswood."

We scarcely need to remark here, that Kingswood has ever since been regarded as a sacred spot in ecclesiastical history. Here houses for Wesleyan Methodists and Independents were soon erected, and in them thousands have been converted to God. Here was placed the first school for the sons of Methodist preachers, and on Hanham Mount, besides the voice of Whitefield, those of the Wesleys, Coke and Mather, Pawson and Benson, and Bradburn, accomplished some of the mightiest effects which attended their powerful preaching. There are yet some living in the neighborhood who were awakened under their ministry, and whose eyes glisten as they tell of the blessed days that are past.

Besides the colliers, and thousands from the neighboring villages, persons of all ranks daily flocked out of Bristol. And he was soon invited by many of the most respectable people to preach on a large bowling-green in the city itself. Many of the people indeed sneered to see a stripling with a gown mount a table on unconsecrated ground; this even excited once or twice the laugh of some of the higher ranks, who had admired him in the churches. But he was unmoved, and his preaching was so blessed, that many were awakened. Sometimes he was employed almost from morning till night answering those who, in distress of soul, cried out, "What shall I do to be saved?" He now sought the help of Mr. John Wesley, who, after much reasoning with himself on the subject, complied with the invitation, and followed Whitefield's example, who immediately committed the work to him. Before leaving the neighborhood, however, Whitefield had the satisfaction of laying the foundation of a school for Kingswood; for the support of which the colliers liberally and cheerfully subscribed.

Taking an affectionate leave of his Bristol friends, Whitefield made an excursion into Wales, where a revival of religion had commenced several years before, under the ministry of the Rev. Griffith Jones, and was now carried on by the ministry of Mr. Howel Harris, a man of strong mental powers, great Christian zeal, and considerable learning. They met at Cardiff. Whitefield's heart was then glowing with the fire he had himself kindled at Bristol and Kingswood. On his way from Bristol to Cardiff, he was delayed at the New Passage by contrary winds. He says, "At the inn there was an unhappy clergyman who would not go over in the passage-boat, because I was in it. Alas, thought I, this very temper would make heaven itself unpleasant to that man, if he saw me there. I was told that he charged me with being a dissenter. I saw him, soon after, shaking his elbows over a gaming-table. I heartily wish those who charge me causelessly with schism and being righteous overmuch, would consider that the canons of our church forbid the clergy to frequent taverns, or to play at cards or dice, or any other unlawful games. Their indulging themselves in these things is a stumbling-block to thousands."

We have said that Whitefield first met Howel Harris at Cardiff. After preaching in the town-hall, from the judges' seat, he says, "I was much refreshed with the sight of Mr. Howel Harris; whom,

though I knew not in person, I have long loved, and have often felt my soul drawn out in prayer in his behalf... When I first saw him, my heart was knit closely to him. I wanted to catch some of his fire, and gave him the right hand of fellowship with my whole heart. After I had saluted him, and given an exhortation to a great number of people, who followed me to the inn, we spent the remainder of the evening in taking sweet counsel together, and telling one another what God had done for our souls. A divine and strong sympathy seemed to be between us, and I was resolved to promote his interest with all my might. Accordingly we took an account of the several societies, and agreed on such measures as seemed most conducive to promote the common interest of our Lord. Blessed be God, there seems a noble spirit gone out into Wales; and I believe that, ere long, there will be more visible fruits of it. What inclines me strongly to think so is, that the partition wall of bigotry and party spirit is broken down, and ministers and teachers of different communions join, with one heart and one mind, to carry on the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The Lord make all the Christian world thus minded; for, until this is done, we must, I fear, despair of any great reformation in the church of God."

Before leaving Cardiff, Whitefield preached again in the town-hall, to a large assembly. He says, "My dear brother Harris sat close by me. I did not observe any scoffers within; but without, some were pleased to honor me so far as to trail a dead fox, and hunt it about the hall. But, blessed be God, my voice prevailed. This being done, I went, with many of my hearers, among whom were two worthy dissenting ministers, to public worship; and in the second lesson were these remarkable words: 'The high-priests, and the scribes, and the chief of the people sought to destroy him; but they could not find what they might do to him; for all the people were very attentive to hear him.'"

"In the afternoon I preached again, without any disturbance or scoffing. In the evening, I talked for above an hour and a half with the religious society, and never did I see a congregation more melted down. The love of Jesus touched them to the quick. Most of them were dissolved in tears. They came to me after, weeping, bidding me farewell, and wishing I could continue with them longer. Thanks be to God, for such an entrance into Wales. I wrestled with God for them in prayer, and blessed be His holy name for sending me into Wales. I hope these are the first-fruits of a greater harvest, if ever it should please God to bring me back from Georgia. 'Father, thy will be done.'"

Whitefield returned from this short excursion, to Bristol, baptized with Welsh fire, and renewed his labors among the Kingswood colliers with more than his usual power and success. He could not, however, forget the tears which had entreated him to stay longer in Wales, and in three or four weeks he visited Usk and Pontypool, where he was again met by Howel Harris. At Usk, "the pulpit being denied, I preached upon a table, under a large tree, to some hundreds, and God was with us of a truth. On my way to Pontypool, I was informed by a man who heard it, that Counsellor H – did me the honor to make a public motion to Judge P – to stop me and brother Howel Harris from going about teaching the people. Poor man, he put me in mind of Tertullus, in the Acts; but my hour is not yet come. I have scarcely begun my testimony. For my finishing it, my enemies must have power over me from above. Lord, prepare me for that hour."

The report to which we have just referred did not prevent the curate of Pontypool from cordially inviting Whitefield into his pulpit. He also read prayers for him. After the sermon, it was found that so many had come to hear who could not find room in the church, that another sermon was loudly called for. He says, "I went and preached to all the people in the field. I always find I have most power when I preach in the open air; a proof to me that God is pleased with this way of preaching. I betook myself to rest, full of such unutterable peace as no one can conceive of but those who feel it."

In several other places did our evangelist, during this excursion, unfurl the banner of the cross; and at its close he writes, "Oh how swiftly this week has glided away. To me it has been but as one day. How do I pity those who complain that time hangs on their hands! Let them but love Christ, and spend their whole time in his service, and they will find but few melancholy hours." Nor will any wonder that he should thus speak, who consider the spirit which animated his soul. What he some time afterwards wrote to Howel Harris, from Philadelphia, indicated the spirit he himself cherished:

"Intersperse prayers with your exhortations, and thereby call down fire from heaven, even the fire of the Holy Ghost,

"'To soften, sweeten, and refine,  
And melt them into love.'

Speak every time, my dear brother, as if it were your last; *weep out*, if possible, every argument, and compel them to cry, 'Behold how he loveth us.'"

From Wales, Whitefield went to visit his native city, Gloucester; and after one or two sermons, he found himself here also excluded from the parochial pulpits. But notwithstanding his persecutions, and the infirm state of his health at that time, his labors in Gloucester and its vicinity were constant and eminently successful. Bowling-greens, market-crosses, highways, and other such places, bore witness to his faithful and tearful labors.

At Gloucester lived at that time the Rev. Mr. Cole, an old dissenting minister, who often heard Whitefield preach, and used to say, "These are the days of the Son of man indeed!" Whitefield, when a boy, had been taught to ridicule this Mr. Cole; and when he was once asked what profession he would engage in, replied, "I will be a minister, but I will take care never to tell stories in the pulpit like old Cole." Twelve years afterwards, the old minister heard the young one preach, and tell some story to illustrate his subject, when the venerable servant of Christ remarked, "I find young Whitefield can tell stories now as well as old Cole." The good man was much affected with the preaching of his young friend, and was so humble, that he used to subscribe himself his curate, and went about in the country preaching after him. One evening, while preaching, he was struck with death, and asked for a chair to lean on till he had finished his sermon. Having done this, he was carried up stairs and died. When the fact was told to Whitefield, he said, "O blessed God, if it be thy holy will, may my exit be like his!" How striking is this fact when looked at in connection with the circumstances of his own removal from earth.

Intent on the advancement of his orphan-house in Georgia, Whitefield soon went to London, passing on his way through Oxford. At both places he found opposition, and in London was shut out of the churches. He preached to thousands in Islington churchyard, and now resolved to give himself to the work in the open air.

From the conflict with the enemies who a few years before had threatened her existence, the polemics of the church of England now turned to resist the unwelcome ally who menaced her repose. Bishop Warburton led the van, and behind him many a mitred front scowled on the audacious innovator. Divested of the logomachies which chiefly engaged the attention of the disputants, the controversy between Whitefield and the bishops lay in a narrow compass. It being mutually conceded that the virtues of the Christian life can result only from certain divine impulses, and that to lay a claim to this holy inspiration when its legitimate fruits are wanting, is a fatal delusion, he maintained, and they denied, that the person who is the subject of this sacred influence has within his own bosom an independent attestation of its reality. So abstruse a debate required the zest of some more pungent ingredients, and the polemics with whom Whitefield had to do were not such sciolists in their calling as to be ignorant of the necessity of riveting upon him some epithet at once opprobrious and vague. While therefore milder spirits arraigned him as an *enthusiast*, Warburton, with constitutional energy of invective, denounced him as a *fanatic*. In vain Whitefield demanded a definition of these reproachful terms. To have fixed their meaning would have been to blunt their edge. They afforded a solution, at once compendious, obscure, and repulsive, of whatever was remarkable in his character, and have been associated with his name from that time to the present.

The spots on which Whitefield now began, in his own language, "to take the field," and publicly to erect the standard of the Redeemer's cross, are well known. Moorfields, then a place of general rendezvous and recreation from the crowded city, Kennington Common then about two, and Blackheath about five miles from London, were the favorite sites to which he loved to resort,

and "open his mouth boldly" to listening thousands, in honor of his crucified and glorified Lord. Recording his first engagement of this kind in his diary of Sabbath evening, April 29, 1739, he writes, "Begun to be yet more vile this day, for I preached at Moorfields to an exceeding great multitude; and at five in the evening went and preached at Kennington Common, where upwards of twenty thousand were supposed to be present. The wind being for me, it carried my voice to the extreme part of my audience. All stood attentive, and joined in the psalm and the Lord's prayer so regularly, that I scarce ever preached with more quietness in a church. Many were much affected.

"For this let men revile my name,  
I'll shun no cross, I'll fear no shame;  
All hail, reproach, and welcome pain,  
Only thy terrors, Lord, restrain."

For several successive months, the places we have named were his chief scenes of action. At a moderate computation, the audience frequently consisted of twenty thousand. It is said that the singing could be heard two miles, and the voice of the preacher nearly one. Sometimes there were upwards of a hundred coaches, besides wagons, scaffolds, and other contrivances by which a sight of him could be obtained. The rising ground on Blackheath, from which Whitefield preached, is still known as "Whitefield's mount," and after his death, Lord Dartmouth planted it with fir-trees. It will ever be a grateful recollection to the author of this volume, that during the summer of 1839 he prevailed on some of the most eminent ministers of England to preach on every successive Monday evening on this hallowed spot; and that here many thousands then heard the way of salvation, and not a few were brought to the cross of Christ. In that immediate neighborhood too, now densely populated, he organized, and for some years preached to a Christian church. Memorable times! Many were the manifestations of the Redeemer's favor.

An anecdote which we heard many years ago from one of Whitefield's Blackheath hearers, may here be related. While one day preaching on "the heath," there passed along the road at some distance, an old man and "Mary" his wife, with their ass and his loaded panniers, returning from London to their home in Kent. Attracted alike by the crowd and the preacher's voice, the old man and his wife turned a little out of their way to hear "what the man was talking about." Whitefield spoke of somewhat which occurred eighteen hundred years ago, and the old man said, "Mary, come along, it is only something which happened a long while ago;" but Mary's attention had been arrested, and she wished to stay a minute or two longer. They were both soon in tears, and the inquiry was excited in their hearts, "What shall we do to be saved?" On their way home, while "talking of all these things," the old man recollected his neglected Bible, and asked, "Why, Mary, does not our old book at home say somewhat about these things?" They went home, and examined the old book with new light. "Why, Mary," asked the old man, "is this indeed our old book? why, every thing in it seems quite new." So true is it, that the teaching of the Spirit gives new discernment as to the truths of divine revelation.

A fact strikingly illustrating the children's love to our evangelist may be here mentioned. In his open-air preachings, especially in and about London, he was usually attended by many of them, who sat round him, in and about the pulpit, and handed to him the notes of those who desired his counsels and prayers. These children were exposed to the missiles with which he was often assailed, but however terrified they might be, or even hurt, they seldom shrunk; "but," says he, "on the contrary, every time I was struck, they turned up their little weeping eyes, and seemed to wish they could receive the blows for me."

Speaking of his open-air labors, the devoted preacher says, "Words cannot express the displays of divine grace which we saw, and heard of, and felt. Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the glory." On a subsequent occasion he writes, "We have had a glorious season, a true Easter. Jesus



Christ is risen indeed. I have been preaching in Moorfields, and our Saviour carries all before us. Nothing can resist his conquering blood. It would have delighted you to see poor sinners flock from the booths to see Jesus lifted up on the pole of the gospel." The climax of his success there, is one of the most remarkable letters that ever came from a mortal's pen. He records at its close, "We then retired to the Tabernacle, with my pockets full of notes from persons brought under concern, and read them amidst the praises and spiritual acclamations of thousands, who joined with the holy angels in rejoicing that so many sinners were snatched, in such an unexpected, unlikely place and manner, out of the very jaws of the devil. This was the beginning of the Tabernacle society. Three hundred and fifty awakened souls were received in one day; and I believe the number of notes exceeded a thousand. But I must have done, believing you want to retire, to join in mutual praise with me in thanksgiving to God and the Lamb."

Having thus introduced the name of the Tabernacle, it is important that the reader should be acquainted with the origin of the buildings which have borne that name. From the very first of what may be called his irregular labors, Whitefield always declared that he "would never be the founder of a sect." He kept his word; yet two London churches remain as his memorial – the Tabernacle, and Tottenham Court-road chapel, the one in the north, and the other in the western part of the metropolis. The Tabernacle, which was first erected, was his more especial and favorite field of labor, and he dwelt in the house adjoining it, which is still the pastoral residence.

Moorfields, just without the limits of the old north city wall of London, was, a few years before Whitefield first knew it, a marsh, and during the greater part of the year, was absolutely impassable. Having been partially drained, a brick kiln was erected, and the first bricks used in London are said to have been manufactured there. Afterwards it was a field for the practice of archery, when it was laid out in walks, and called the City Mall. Though improved in name and appearance, it became the rallying ground for the rabble of London; wrestlers, boxers, and mountebanks, the idle, the dissolute, and the profane, held here their daily and nightly revels. It appeared, in fact, to be one of the strongholds of Satan, and therefore became a most tempting and important point of attack for the daring eloquence of Whitefield. All London rang one day with the announcement that Whitefield would preach the day following at Moorfields.

This was in January, 1739. Gillies says, "The thing being strange and new, he found, on coming out of the coach, an incredible number of people assembled. Many told him that he would never come out of that place alive. He went in, however, between two friends, who by the pressure of the crowd were soon parted from him entirely, and obliged to leave him to the mercy of the rabble. But these, instead of hurting him, formed a lane for him, and carried him along to the middle of the fields, where a table had been placed. This, however, having been broken by the crowd, he mounted a wall, and preached to an exceeding great multitude in tones so melting, that his words drew tears and groans from the most abandoned of his hearers. Moorfields became henceforth one of the principal scenes of his triumphs. Thirty thousand people sometimes gathered together to hear him, and generous contributions here poured in for his orphan-house at Bethesda. On one occasion twenty pounds – about one hundred dollars – were received in half-pennies, more than one person was able to carry away, and enough to put one out of conceit with a specie currency."

It was not till his fifth visit to London, in March, 1741, that Whitefield ventured to preach in Moorfields on a *week-day*; the day selected for this bold action being Good-Friday. His chief, if not his only friends on this occasion, he tells us, were a few "orthodox dissenters." These people perceiving the inconvenience to which he was subjected by the weather, during the morning and evening services in Moorfields, procured the loan of a piece of ground, and employed a carpenter to build a large temporary shed, to screen the auditory from the cold and rain. This building Whitefield called a "tabernacle," as it was only intended to be used a few months during his stay in his native country, previous to his return to America. Providence, however, had otherwise determined, and this proved the commencement of a permanent establishment of the means of grace. A great spiritual awakening

took place; congregations became very large, acquiring at the same time considerable cohesion, and assuming a stationary character. This original fabric of wood was a place of large dimensions; and notwithstanding its rude aspect and temporary design, it sufficed for the accommodation of Whitefield and his flock, during the twelve succeeding years – a period the most brilliant and useful of his extraordinary career.

Some of Whitefield's friends, however, did not approve of the original wooden structure; and anticipating or desiring the formation of a Christian church, they called for the immediate erection of a substantial brick building, a point which was debated with a warmth approaching to violence, of which Whitefield makes pathetic mention seven years afterwards. Here then several important facts are established: that the original tabernacle sprang not from Whitefield, but from a voluntary movement among his adherents, composed chiefly, if not wholly, of Protestant dissenters; that the expense was borne not by him, but by them; that much debate and dissension attended the measure, proving the thoroughly free and popular character of the original movement; and that, as the edifice originated with the people alone, so did the institution of regular worship. It is certain that fears existed in the mind of Whitefield as to the success of such an organization; but the results most happily disappointed his expectations.

The subject of the erection of a more spacious edifice in the place of the tabernacle of wood, was first discussed at the mansion of Lady Huntingdon, in Leicestershire, when Drs. Doddridge and Stonehouse, and the Rev. Messrs. Hervey and Whitefield happened to meet together, in the summer of 1751. During the following winter, Whitefield began to make collections for the object, and on almost its first presentation in London, nine hundred pounds, or four thousand five hundred dollars, were subscribed. "But," he says, "on the principle that burned children dread the fire, I do not mean to begin until I get one thousand in hand, and then to contract at a certain sum for the whole." The fact was, that Whitefield had often been in great straits for the support of his orphan-house in Georgia, "for I forgot," he says, "that Professor Francke built in Glaucha, in a populous country, and that I was building at the very tail of the world." In March, 1753, he wrote to Mr. Charles Wesley, "On Tuesday morning the first brick of our new Tabernacle was laid with awful solemnity. I preached from Exodus 20:24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' The wall is now about a yard high. The building is to be eighty feet square. It is on the old spot. We have bought the house, and if we finish what we have begun, shall be rent free for forty-six years." In June the dedicatory services took place, when the Tabernacle, though capable, with its capacious galleries, of holding *four thousand* people, was crowded almost to suffocation. Often have we seen this vast building crowded with worshippers, with delight have we occupied its pulpit, and with devout gratitude do we record, that never for a moment has the frown of heaven rested upon it. Thousands will ever bless God for its erection.

Not unfrequently has the question been discussed, to what denomination of Christians does the Tabernacle really belong? In answer to this question, we give a legal document which may also show what is done in reference to houses of worship in England, under the laws for the maintenance of religious toleration.

"These are to certify whom it may Concern, that a Certificate bearing date the Eighteenth Day of June, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty-four, under the Hands of Starkey Myddleton Minister, Robert Keen, Thomas Cox, Samuel Grace, Robert Hodgson, James Smith, Thomas Robinson, Benjamin Coles, Thomas Brooks, and Samuel Lockhart, for appropriating and setting apart a Certain Building for that purpose erected, situate near the Barking Dogs in the Parish of Saint Luke in the County of Middlesex, and intended for the meeting place of a certain Congregation of Protestant Dissenters from the Church of England, calling themselves Independents, was Registered in the Registry of the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, London, This Twenty-first Day of June in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty-four.

*"THOMAS COLLINS, Deputy Registrar."*

While the new Tabernacle was in the course of erection, Whitefield visited Norwich, where his ministry was largely attended, and notwithstanding much opposition, was followed with considerable success. Writing to his friend Keen, he says, "How does God delight to exceed even the hopes, and to disappoint the fears of his weak, though honest-hearted people. In spite of all opposition, he hath caused us to triumph even in Norwich. Thousands attend twice every day, and hear with the greatest eagerness. I hope it will appear yet more and more that God hath much people here." Compelled by alarming illness, the result of his too much preaching, he suddenly returned to London, from whence he thus wrote to one of the converts at Norwich: "I shall little regard the weakness and indisposition of my body, if I can but have the pleasure of hearing, if not before, yet at the great day, that good was done to one precious soul at Norwich. Blessed be God for the seed sown there. I doubt not but it will be watered with the dew of his heavenly blessing, and bring forth a divine increase."

Truly the gospel did triumph, not only in the erection of the Tabernacle in that city, but in preparing sinners to be pillars in the temple of God, and to win others to his service.

Among other converts won at Norwich, was the afterwards popular and useful minister of Christ, the Rev. Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, England. When a young man, about eighteen, he resided in that city, and was engaged in the business of a barber. When he was walking one morning with several companions who had agreed that day to take their pleasure, the first object which attracted their attention was an old woman who pretended to tell fortunes. They immediately employed her to tell theirs, and that they might qualify her for the undertaking, first made her thoroughly intoxicated. Robinson was informed, among other things, that he would live to a very old age, and see his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren growing up around him. Though he had assisted in intoxicating the old woman, he had credulity enough to be struck with those parts of the prediction which related to himself. "And so," said he when alone, "I am to see children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. At that age I must be a burden to the young people. What shall I do? There is no way for an old man to render himself more agreeable to youth, than by sitting and telling them pleasant and profitable stories. I will then," thought he, "during my youth, endeavor to store my mind with all kinds of knowledge. I will see and hear, and note down every thing that is rare and wonderful, that I may sit, when incapable of other employments, and entertain my descendants. Thus shall my company be rendered pleasant, and I shall be respected, rather than neglected, in old age. Let me see, what can I acquire first? Oh, here is the famous Methodist preacher, Whitefield; he is to preach here, they say, to-night; I will go and hear him."

From these strange motives, as he told the celebrated Rev. Andrew Fuller, he went to hear Whitefield preach. That evening his text was, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Matt. 3:7. "Mr. Whitefield," said Robinson, "described the Sadducees' character; this did not touch me; I thought myself as good a Christian as any man in England. From this he went to that of the Pharisees. He described their exterior decency, but observed, that the poison of the viper rankled in their hearts. This rather shook me. At length, in the course of his sermon, he abruptly broke off; paused for a few moments; then burst into a flood of tears, lifted up his hands and eyes, and exclaimed, 'Oh, my hearers, *the wrath's to come! the wrath's to come!*' These words sunk into my heart like lead in the water; I wept, and when the sermon was ended retired alone. For days and weeks I could think of little else. Those awful words would follow me wherever I went: 'The wrath's to come! The wrath's to come!'"

Scarcely had Whitefield completed the Tabernacle in London, before he was earnestly solicited to hold public services at the west end of the city, and Long-Acre chapel, then under the charge of a dissenter, was offered for his use. An unruly rabble endeavored to drive the preacher from his post; but a running fire of brickbats, broken glass, bells, drums, and clappers, neither annoyed nor frightened

the intrepid evangelist; nor did an interference on the part of the hierarchy, which followed soon after, prohibiting his preaching in an incorporated chapel. "I hope you will not look on it as contumacy," said Whitefield to the bishop, "if I persist in prosecuting my design until I am more particularly apprized wherein I have erred. I trust the irregularity I am charged with will appear justifiable to every lover of English liberty, and what is all to me, be approved at the awful and impartial tribunal of the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls." Writing to Lady Huntingdon, he says, "My greatest distress is so to act as to avoid rashness on the one hand and timidity on the other;" and this shows, what indeed was proved in his whole life, an entire absence of that malignant element of fanaticism which courts opposition and revels in it.

"Determined," as Mrs. Knight says, in her beautiful volume, *"Lady Huntingdon and her Friends,"* "not to be beaten from his ground, yet hoping to escape some of its annoyances, Whitefield resolved to build a chapel of his own. Hence arose Tottenham Court-road chapel, which went by the name of 'Whitefield's soul-trap.'" Admirably does he say, "I pray the Friend of sinners to make it a soul-trap indeed to many wandering creatures. My constant work is preaching fifteen times a week. Conviction and conversion go on here, for God hath met us in our new building." It was completed and dedicated in November, 1756. Though not equal in its triumphs to the Tabernacle, the congregation has always been large, and its preachers – always the same as those at the Tabernacle – have not labored in vain. In 1829, '30, improvements were made in the building, which still, however, contains Whitefield's pulpit. A vast area in the centre was originally filled with plain seats, where the masses of the people were accommodated free of all pew rent.

Let not infidels tell us, that the religion of these men and of those times was mere enthusiasm, and that the temporal interests of men were neglected in professions of high regard for those of a spiritual character. Let such men know that within two years of the opening of Tottenham Court-road chapel, not only did the congregation build a parsonage-house for their minister, but twelve almshouses for as many poor widows. The Tabernacle has always acted with equal generosity. In proportion to their means, few congregations in the world have exceeded these two in works of benevolence.

Assuredly what has sometimes been charged on evangelical ministers – that they attend to the spiritual interests of mankind, but neglect their temporal sufferings – would never apply to Mr. Whitefield. No sooner had he completed these large edifices, where vast congregations assembled, than he was heard frequently to plead for those laboring under oppression or distress in foreign lands. He preached in both these houses in behalf of the poor French Protestants in Prussia, who had suffered much from the cruelty of the Russians, when great numbers of the nobility, and some of the highest officers of the crown went to hear him. The collections for this object amounted to upwards of fifteen hundred pounds, or seven thousand five hundred dollars; and for this disinterested act of benevolence Whitefield received the thanks of his Prussian Majesty.

Again, on the day recommended by the government for a general fast, Mr. Whitefield preached both at the Tabernacle and at Tottenham Court-road chapel, after which he collected five hundred and sixty pounds for the relief of the German Protestants, and the sufferers by fire at Boston, for which he received the unanimous thanks of the inhabitants of that town. Lady Huntingdon wrote to one of her friends, "It would delight you to have seen what crowds of the mighty and noble flocked to hear him. The collection was for the relief of the poor German Protestants. I invited several to come who probably would not attend his ministry on other occasions." Few places at that time could boast of such a constellation of transcendent genius and senatorial talent, such a brilliant assemblage of wisdom, magnanimity, and oratorical powers, as were then found within these houses of the living God.

One word may be allowed here on the plain architecture of these buildings. "We are," says the excellent Mr. James, "in many things improved, and I rejoice in the improvement; but the occasion of my joy is at the same time the occasion of my fear and my jealousy also. Our ecclesiastical architecture

is just now a special object of our attention. Whitefield, it may be confessed, paid too little attention to this; we, perhaps, are paying too much. His only solicitude was to save souls, careless altogether of the tastefulness of the building within which that work, which has no relation to styles of architecture, was carried on. His only calculation in the construction of a building was, how many immortal souls could be crowded within four square walls, and under a roof, to hear 'the joyful sound.' Hence the somewhat uncouth buildings which he erected. Ah, but when I consider that every stone in those unsightly walls has echoed to the sound of salvation and the hymns of redeemed spirits, and that almost every spot on the floor has been moistened by the tears of penitence, then, in a feeling of sanctity I seem to lose the sense of deformity, and there comes over me an awe and solemnity which no modern gothic structure with its lofty arches and painted windows can inspire. But still, as religion is not only the most holy, but the most beautiful thing in God's universe, there is no reason why taste and devotion should not be united. It is the ministry of the word, however, upon which the church must be chiefly intent."

## **CHAPTER IV.**

### **WHITEFIELD'S SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA.**

#### **1739, 1740**

As in the preceding chapter, for the sake of connecting the history of Whitefield's church edifices in London, we have anticipated the order of events, we go back to the period shortly before his second voyage to America.

About the time of which we are now writing, a circumstance occurred of deep interest, which Whitefield relates at considerable length. Joseph Periam, a young man in London, who had read his sermon on "regeneration," became deeply impressed by it; he sold all that he possessed, and prayed so loud and fasted so long, that his family supposed him deranged, and sent him to the Bedlam madhouse, where he was treated as "methodistically mad," and as "one of Whitefield's gang." The keepers threw him down, and forced a key into his mouth, while they drenched him with medicine. He was then placed in a cold room without windows, and with a damp cellar under it. Periam, however, found some means of conveying a letter to Whitefield, requesting both advice and a visit. These were promptly given. The preacher soon discovered that Periam was not mad; and taking a Mr. Seward and some other friends with him, he went before the committee of the hospital to explain the case. It must have been somewhat of a ludicrous scene. Seward so astounded the committee by quoting Scripture, that they pronounced him to be as mad as Periam. The doctors frankly told the deputation, that in their opinion, Whitefield and his followers were "really beside themselves." It was however agreed, that if Whitefield would take Periam out to Georgia, his release would be granted. Thus the conference ended, and the young man went out as a schoolmaster at the Orphan-house. There he was exemplary and useful, and when he died two of his sons were received into the institution.

Mr. Whitefield so successfully pleaded the cause of his American orphans, that during his journeys of twelve months he collected upwards of one thousand pounds towards the erection of his intended house for their accommodation. With this sum in his possession, he set sail for America the second time, August 14, 1739, accompanied by his friend Mr. Seward, eight men, one boy, and two children.

While all this was going on, the inhabitants of Georgia were making every possible preparation for his reception. The records of the trustees say, May 16, 1739, "Read a commission to the Rev. George Whitefield to perform all religious and ecclesiastical offices at Savannah, in Georgia." Again: "June 2, 1739. Sealed a grant of five hundred acres of land to the Rev. George Whitefield, in trust for the use of the house to be erected and maintained for the receiving such children as now are, and shall hereafter be left orphans in the colony of Georgia, in pursuance of the direction of the Common Council held the 30th of last month."

Not only was Whitefield anxious to establish the orphan-house for the benefit of the whole colony of Georgia, but having been ordained priest, for the purpose of instructing the inhabitants of the town of Savannah, he was desirous of making full proof of his ministry among them. After a passage of nine weeks he landed at Philadelphia, and was immediately invited to preach in the churches; to which people of all denominations thronged as in England. He was especially pleased to find that they preferred sermons when "not delivered within the church walls." And it was well they did, for his fame had arrived in the city before him, and crowds were collected to hear him which no church could contain.

A letter written on this voyage to America has recently come to light, which beautifully illustrates the spirit by which Whitefield was now animated. It was addressed to the Rev. John Cumming of Andover, Hampshire, England.

*"Wrote at Sea, dated at Philadelphia, Nov. 9, 1739.*

"Reverend and dear Sir – You see by my writing this how willing I am to cultivate a correspondence with you. I wish Christians in general, and ministers of Christ in particular, were better acquainted. The cause of Christ thereby must be necessarily promoted. But bigotry and sectarian zeal have been the bane of our holy religion. Though we have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, yet if we do not all worship God in one particular way, we behave to each other like Jews and Samaritans. Dear sir, I hope that neither of us have so learned Christ. Blessed be God for his free grace in Christ. The partition wall has for some time been broken down out of my heart, and I can truly say, whosoever loves the Lord Jesus, 'the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' For this reason, dear sir, I love you. For this reason, though I decrease, yet I heartily wish you may increase, even with all the increase of God. I am persuaded you are like-minded. I believe my friends have prayed for me. The Lord hath dealt most lovingly with me his servant. He has chastened and corrected, but hath not given me over into the hands of the enemy. A future journal will acquaint you with particulars. What I have sent over to be published will afford you abundant matter for thanksgiving in behalf of,

*"Dear sir, your affectionate friend,*

*Brother, and servant,*

*"G. WHITEFIELD."*

The old court-house of Philadelphia, then standing on Second and Market streets, had a balcony, which several years before the visit of Whitefield had been often used instead of a pulpit. In 1736, we find that Mr. Abel Noble had preached "from the court-house steps," on a Monday, to a large congregation standing in Market-street, on the subject of keeping the Sabbath. In the same year, Michael Welfare appeared there to give his "warning voice," and now, in 1739, it became one of the favorite preaching stands of the great evangelist. Here he stood, surrounded by many thousands, even down to the side of the Delaware river, not a few bathed in tears, and inquiring after the way of salvation.

Dr. Franklin says, "The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous; and it was a matter of speculation with me to observe the influence of his oratory on his hearers, and how much they admired and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them, by assuring them that they were, naturally, half beasts and half devils. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless and indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world was growing religious; so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families in every street."

A constant attendant on his ministry at this time says, "His hearers were never weary; every eye was fixed on his expressive countenance; every ear was charmed with his melodious voice; every heart captivated with the beauty and propriety of his address. He was no contracted bigot; all denominations partook of his religious charity. Anxious in America for our civil privileges, he was alike solicitous for the spiritual and temporal happiness of mankind. No man since the apostolic age preached oftener or with better success. He was, moreover, a polite gentleman, a faithful friend, an engaging companion, and a sincere Christian. His sermons in the open air lasted about one and a half hours."

Watson, in his "Annals of Philadelphia," speaking of Whitefield's first visit to that city, tells us that he preached to a crowd of fifteen thousand persons on Society hill, and adds, "About the same time he so far succeeded to repress the usual public amusements, that the dancing-school was discontinued, and the ball and concert rooms were shut up, as inconsistent with the requisitions of the gospel. No less than fourteen sermons were preached on Society hill in the open air in one week, during the session of the Presbyterian church; and the gazette of the day, in noticing the fact, says,

"The change to religion here is altogether surprising, through the influence of Whitefield; no books sell but religious, and such is the general conversation."

It is said, that though some gentlemen broke open the assembly-rooms, no company could be induced to visit them. Such was the popularity of Whitefield, that when he left the city, about one hundred and fifty gentlemen accompanied him as far as Chester, fifteen miles from Philadelphia, where he preached to about seven thousand people. At White Clay creek, he preached to eight thousand people, three thousand of whom, it is said, were on horseback. Many complimentary effusions to him appeared in the newspapers, and James Pemberton, a very distinguished *Friend*, said of him, "In his conversation he is very agreeable, and has not much of the priest; he frequents no set company."

An old gentleman assured Watson, the annalist, that on one occasion the words, "And he taught them, saying," as pronounced by Whitefield on Society hill, were heard at Gloucester point, a distance by water of two miles.

Abundant reasons might be assigned for our introducing in this place an account of the institution called "the Log college." It has proved the parent of every collegiate and theological institution connected with the large and wealthy body of Presbyterians in this country; it was originated by a family which became especially endeared to Mr. Whitefield; and from his journal, recording his visit to it, we have, in some respects at least, the clearest statement of facts concerning it which history has preserved.

As we have already shown, about one hundred and forty years ago, the state of religion, both in Europe and America, was very low. Nor was the condition of the Presbyterian body an exception. As the late Dr. Alexander, in his interesting volume, called "The Log College," says, "The ministers composing the Presbyterian church in this country were sound in the faith, and strongly attached to the Westminster confession of faith and catechisms, as were also their people; and there were no diversities or contentions among them respecting the doctrines of the gospel; but as to the vital power of godliness, there is reason to believe that it was little known or spoken of. Revivals of religion were nowhere heard of, and an orthodox creed, and a decent external conduct were the only points on which inquiry was made, when persons were admitted to the communion of the church. Indeed, it was very much a matter of course, for all who had been baptized in infancy, to be received into communion at the proper age, without exhibiting or possessing any satisfactory evidence of a change of heart by the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. And the habit of their preachers was to address their people as though they were all pious, and only needed instruction and confirmation."

Such was the lamentable state of things when the Rev. William Tennent, sen., an Irish clergyman past the middle stage of life arrived in this country, about the year 1716. After laboring for a season in the state of New York, till about 1721, he received an invitation to settle at Bensalem, where he ministered to the small Presbyterian congregation till 1726, when he was called to Neshaminy, in the same county, where he labored for the rest of his life, living till 1746, when he died, aged seventy-three. In Neshaminy the good man felt that he was called not only to discharge the duties of a preacher and pastor, but to look over the whole country, and to devise means for the extension of the cause of Christ. He had himself four sons, the subjects of divine grace, and blessed with talents for usefulness in the kingdom of the Redeemer, and he felt that when other young men rose up in the church, favored with ministerial talents, they also would need mental cultivation. Hence his determination to erect the humble building of which we now write, which was the first Presbyterian literary and theological institution in this country, the immediate parent of the college at Princeton, and from which, indeed, all similar institutions emanated.

The site of the Log college is about a mile from Neshaminy creek, where the Presbyterian church has long stood. The ground near and around it lies handsomely to the eye, and the more distant prospect is very beautiful; for while there is a considerable extent of fertile, well-cultivated land, nearly level, the view is bounded to the north and west by a range of hills, which have a very



pleasing appearance. Mr. Whitefield has left in his "Journal," the only description we have of the building. "The place," says he, "wherein the young men study now, is in contempt called 'the college.' It is a log-house about twenty feet long, and nearly as many broad; and to me it seemed to resemble the school of the old prophets, for their habitations were mean. That they sought not great things for themselves is plain from these passages of Scripture, wherein we are told that each of them took a beam to build them a house; and that at the feast of the sons of the prophets, one of them put on the pot, while the others went to fetch some herbs out of the field. All that we can say of most of our universities is, they are glorious without. From this despised place, seven or eight worthy ministers of Jesus have lately been sent forth; more are almost ready to be sent, and the foundation is now laying for the instruction of many others."

Of the senior Tennent, the founder of the Log college, little more is known than what we have already given. He was a member of the synod of Philadelphia, who were satisfied with his reasons for leaving the Established church of Ireland, and for several years this body cordially coöperated with him in his zealous labors. Their unity of feeling, however, seems to have declined. This we learn from a passage in Whitefield's "Journal," which also gives us a beautiful view of the good old man. "At my return home, was much comforted by the coming of one Mr. Tennent, an old gray-headed disciple and soldier of Jesus Christ. He keeps an academy about twenty miles from Philadelphia, and has been blest with four gracious sons, three of which have been, and still continue to be eminently useful in the church of Christ. He brought three pious souls along with him, and rejoiced me by letting me know how they had been evil spoken of for their Master's sake. He is a great friend of Mr. Erskine, of Scotland; and as far as I can learn, both he and his sons are secretly despised by the generality of the synod, as Mr. Erskine and his friends are hated by the judicatories of Edinburgh, and as the Methodist preachers, as they are called, are by their brethren in England."

Not long after this, the Log college was visited by Whitefield, who wrote the account we have already given. He also says, under the date of Nov. 29, 1739, "Set out for Neshaminy, twenty miles distant from Trent Town, where old Mr. Tennent lives, and keeps an academy, and where I was to preach to-day, according to appointment. About twelve o'clock, we came thither, and found about three thousand people gathered together in the meeting-house yard. Mr. William Tennent, junior, an eminent servant of Jesus Christ, because we stayed beyond the time appointed, was preaching to them. When I came up, he soon stopped; sung a psalm, and then I began to speak as the Lord gave me utterance. At first, the people seemed unaffected, but in the midst of my discourse, the power of the Lord Jesus came upon me, and I felt such a struggling within myself for the people as I scarce ever felt before. The hearers began to be melted down immediately, and to cry much; and we had good reason to hope the Lord intended good for many. After I had finished, Mr. Gilbert Tennent gave a word of exhortation, to confirm what had been delivered. At the end of his discourse, we sung a psalm, and dismissed the people with a blessing; O that the people may say Amen to it. After our exercises were over, we went to old Mr. Tennent's, who entertained us like one of the ancient patriarchs. His wife, to me seemed like Elizabeth, and he like Zachary; both, as far as I can learn, walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Though God was pleased to humble my soul, so that I was obliged to retire for a while, yet we had sweet communion with each other, and spent the evening in concerting what measures had best be taken for promoting our dear Lord's kingdom. It happened very providentially that Mr. Tennent and his brethren are appointed to be a presbytery by the synod, so that they intend bringing up gracious youths, and sending them out from time to time into the Lord's vineyard."

We may be permitted to add here, that among the ministers sent out by Mr. Tennent, from the Log college, to preach the gospel, were his four sons, Gilbert, William, John, and Charles, the Rev. Messrs. Samuel Blair, John Blair, Charles Beatty, and Rev. Dr. Samuel J. Finley, President of Princeton College; of some of these excellent men the reader will hear again in the course of this volume.

In reference to his first visit to Philadelphia, Whitefield thus writes: "I have scarcely preached among them, but I have seen a stirring among the dry bones. Go where I will, I find people with great gladness receive me into their houses. Sometimes I think I am speaking to stocks and stones; but before I have done, the power of the Lord comes over them, and I find I have been ploughing up some fallow ground, in a place where there has been a great famine of the word of God. But as God's word increases, so will the rage and opposition of the devil. Scoffers seem to be at a stand what to say. They mutter in coffee-houses, give a curse, drink a barrel of punch, and then cry out against me for not preaching more morality. Poor men, if God judges them, as he certainly will do, by *their* morality, out of their own mouths will he condemn them. Their morality, falsely so called, will prove their damnation. God has enlarged my heart to pray. Tears trickle down my face, and I am in great agony; but the Lord is pleased to set his seal to what he enables me to deliver. Amid cries and groans in the congregation, God gives me much freedom of speech. Many people and many ministers weep. My own soul is much carried out. I preached to a vast assembly of sinners; nearly twelve thousand were collected; and I had not spoken long, before I perceived numbers melting; as I proceeded, the power increased, and thousands cried out; never before did I see so glorious a sight. Oh, what strong crying and tears were poured forth after the dear Lord Jesus! Some fainted; and when they had gotten a little strength, they would hear and faint again. Never was my soul filled with greater power. Oh, what thoughts and words did God put into my heart. As great, if not greater commotion was in the hearts of the people. Look where I would, most were drowned in tears."

An aged man who was living in 1806, and who well remembered the scenes he witnessed, bore testimony that after this visit of the great evangelist, public worship was regularly celebrated in Philadelphia twice a day for a whole year; and that on the Lord's day it was celebrated three, and frequently four times in each church. He said there were not less than twenty-six societies regularly held for prayer and Christian conference.

Such was the influence of Whitefield, not only in Philadelphia, but throughout the colony of Pennsylvania, that in the city attention to commerce was suspended, and in the country the cultivation of the land for the time being was abandoned, that people might hear him proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Among other very striking conversions in Philadelphia at this period, was that of a young lady, who had for several years made a public profession of Christianity, but who now became fully convinced that "she was totally unacquainted with vital piety." When Mr. Whitefield began his labors in that city, she was greatly affected by his preaching, on which she constantly attended, and often afterwards told her friends, that after the first sermon she heard him preach, she was ready to say with the woman of Samaria, "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did." The preacher, she said, so exactly described all the secret workings of her heart, her wishes, and her actions, that she really believed he was either more than human, or else that he was supernaturally assisted to know her heart. She was not then aware that all depraved hearts are much alike, and that he who in lively colors can paint one, gives a description which will be recognized by many as their own. This young lady once walked twenty miles to hear a sermon from Whitefield; she became a most eminent Christian, and was one of the constituent members of the church organized by Mr. Tennent. She married Mr. Hugh Hodge, who was also one of the seals of Mr. Whitefield's ministry, and a deacon of the church, and for more than sixty years she eminently "adorned the gospel of God in all things."

During this first visit of Mr. Whitefield to Philadelphia, another interesting circumstance occurred. Whitefield preached one evening standing on the steps of the court-house, in Market-street, which became, as we have said, his favorite spot during that and subsequent visits. A youth some thirteen years of age stood near him, and held a lantern for his accommodation; but becoming deeply absorbed in the sermon, and strongly agitated, the lantern fell from his hands, and was dashed in pieces. Those near the boy, observing the cause of the accident, felt specially interested, and for a few moments the meeting was discomposed by the occurrence. Some fourteen years afterwards,

Mr. Whitefield, on his fifth visit to this country, was visiting St. George's, in Delaware. He was one day riding out with the Rev. Dr. John Rodgers, then settled as the minister at St. George's, in the closed carriage in which Whitefield generally rode. Mr. Rodgers asked him whether he recollected the occurrence of the little boy who was so affected with his preaching as to let his lantern fall. Mr. Whitefield replied, "O yes, I remember it well; and have often thought I would give almost any thing in my power, to know who that little boy was, and what had become of him." Mr. Rodgers replied with a smile, "I am that little boy." Mr. Whitefield, with tears of joy, started from his seat, took him in his arms, and with strong emotion remarked, that he was the *fourteenth* person then in the ministry whom he had discovered in the course of that visit to America, in whose conversion he had, under God, been instrumental.

From Philadelphia, Whitefield was invited by Mr. Noble to New York; this gentleman being the only person with whom he then had an acquaintance in that city. Upon his arrival, he waited with his friend on the commissary, but he refused to Whitefield the use of the church. This commissary of the bishop, he says, "was full of anger and resentment, and denied me the use of his pulpit before I asked for it. He said they did not want my assistance. I replied, that if they preached the gospel, I wished them good luck: I will preach in the fields; for all places are alike to me." The undaunted evangelist therefore preached in the fields; and on the evening of the same day, to a very thronged and attentive audience, in the Rev. Mr. Pemberton's meeting-house, in Wall-street; and continued to do so twice or three times a day, with apparent success.

Of this visit to New York, and of Whitefield's labors there, we have a graphic account, furnished by one of his hearers, for "Prince's Christian History." Of the first sermon in the fields, the writer says, "I fear curiosity was the motive that led me and many others into that assembly. I had read two or three of Mr. Whitefield's sermons and part of his Journal, and from them had obtained a settled opinion, that he was a good man. Thus far was I prejudiced in his favor. But then having heard of so much opposition, and many clamors against him, I thought it possible he might have carried matters too far; that some enthusiasm might have mixed itself with his piety, and that his zeal might have exceeded his knowledge. With these prepossessions I went into the fields. When I came there, I saw a great number of people, consisting of Christians of all denominations, some Jews, and a few, I believe, of no religion at all. When Mr. Whitefield came to the place designated, which was a little eminence on the side of a hill, he stood still and beckoned with his hand, and disposed the multitude upon the descent, before, and on each side of him. He then prayed most excellently, in the same manner, I suppose, that the first ministers of the Christian church prayed. The assembly soon appeared to be divided into two companies, the one of which I considered as God's church, and the other the devil's chapel. The first were collected round the minister, and were very serious and attentive; the last had placed themselves in the skirts of the assembly, and spent most of their time in giggling, scoffing, talking, and laughing. I believe the minister saw them, for in his sermon, remarking on the cowardice and shamefacedness in Christ's cause, he pointed towards *this* assembly, and reproached the former, those who seemed to be Christians, with the boldness and zeal with which the devil's vassals serve him. Towards the last prayer the whole assembly appeared more united, and all became hushed and still; a solemn awe and reverence appeared in the faces of most, a mighty energy attending the word. I heard and felt something astonishing and surprising, but I confess I was not at that time fully rid of my scruples. But as I thought I saw a visible presence of God with Mr. Whitefield, I kept my doubts to myself.

"Under this frame of mind, I went to hear him in the evening at the Presbyterian church, where he expounded to above two thousand people within and without doors. I never in my life saw so attentive an audience. All he said was demonstration, life, and power. The people's eyes and ears hung on his lips. They greedily devoured every word. I came home astonished. Every scruple vanished; I never saw nor heard the like; and I said within myself, 'Surely God is with this man, of a truth.' He

preached and expounded in this manner twice every day for four days, and his evening assemblies were continually increasing.

"On Sunday morning at eight o'clock, his congregation consisted of about fifteen hundred people; but at night several thousands came together to hear him; and the place being too strait for them, many were forced to go away, and some, it is said, with tears lamented their disappointment. After sermon he left New York at ten at night, to fulfil a promise that he had made to preach at Elizabethtown, at eleven A. M. the next day."

We give a few paragraphs from the same vigorous pen, relating to the personal manners and the doctrines of our evangelist. "He is a man of a middle stature, of a slender body, of a fair complexion, and of a comely appearance. He is of a sprightly, cheerful temper, and acts and moves with great agility and life. The endowments of his mind are very uncommon; his wit is quick and piercing; his imagination lively and florid; and as far as I can discern, both are under the direction of an exact and solid judgment. He has a most ready memory, and I think speaks entirely without notes. He has a clear and musical voice, and a wonderful command of it. He uses much gesture, but with great propriety. Every accent of his voice, every motion of his body *speaks*, and both are natural and unaffected. If his delivery is the product of art, it is certainly the perfection of it, for it is entirely concealed. He has a great mastery of words, but studies much plainness of speech.

"His doctrine is right *sterling*. I mean, perfectly agreeable to the Articles of the church of England, to which he frequently appeals for the truth of it. He loudly proclaims all men by nature to be under sin, and obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God. He maintains the absolute necessity of supernatural grace to bring men out of this state. He asserts the righteousness of Christ to be the only cause of the justification of the sinner; that this is received by faith; that this faith is the gift of God; that where faith is wrought, it brings the sinner under the deepest sense of his guilt and unworthiness to the footstool of sovereign grace, to accept of mercy as the free gift of God, only for Christ's sake. He denies that good works have any share in our justification: that indeed they do justify our faith, and necessarily flow from it, as streams from the fountain; but Christ's external righteousness imputed to us, and his inherent righteousness wrought in us, is the only cause of man's salvation. He asserts the absolute necessity of the new birth, where a principle of new life is ingenerated in the heart of man, and an entire change is produced in the temper and disposition of the soul; and that this new production is the work only of God's blessed Spirit. That wherever this change is wrought, it is permanent and abiding, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. He asserts that the special influence and indwelling of the Spirit, was not peculiar to the first Christians, but that it is the common privilege of believers in all ages of the church; that the Holy Spirit is the author of the sanctification and comfort of all God's people; and that, even in these days, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. He said, that to many of his hearers, he feared he spoke in an unknown tongue; that he preached great mysteries; that true Christians knew what he meant, and that all his hearers, if they are saved, must be brought to understand them. These are some of the doctrines which have been attended with such mighty power in this city. This is the doctrine of the martyrs. This they sealed with their blood; notwithstanding that so many in our days have departed from it.

"Mr. Whitefield speaks much of the language of the New Testament; and has an admirable faculty in explaining the Scriptures. He strikes out of them such lights, and unveils those excellencies which surprise his hearers, when he expounds them. He expresses the highest love and concern for the souls of men; and speaks of Christ with the most affectionate appropriation – '*My Master! My Lord!*' He is no enemy to the innocent freedoms and liberties of the gospel; nor does he affect singularity in indifferent things. He spends not his zeal in trifles, but says, 'The kingdom of God consists not in meats and drinks; but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' He breathes a most catholic spirit, and prays most earnestly that God would destroy all that bigotry and party zeal which has divided Christians. He supposes some of Christ's flock are to be found under every denomination, and upbraids the uncharitableness of those who confine the church to their own communion. He

professes a most sincere love to all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and declares that he has no design to make a party in religion. He professes that his whole design in preaching the gospel is to bring men to Christ, to deliver them from their false confidences, to raise them from their dead formalities, and to revive primitive Christianity among them; and if he can obtain this end, he will leave them to their liberty, and they may go to what church, and worship God in what form they like best."

While going from Philadelphia to New York, or on his return, Whitefield appears to have preached at Maidenhead, Abington, Neshaminy, Freehold, Burlington, Elizabethtown, and New Brunswick, to many thousands, gathered from various parts, among whom there had been a considerable awakening under the ministry of Mr. Frelinghuysen, a Reformed Dutch minister, and the Rev. Messrs. Tennent, Blair, and Rowland. It was no less pleasing to him than strange to see such congregations in a foreign land; ministers and people shedding tears, sinners struck with awe, and religious persons who had been much persecuted, filled with joy. The old *Tennent church* at Freehold, where preached Whitefield, Brainerd, Davies, and other "famous men" of that day, still echoes with the same gospel. In size the building is forty feet by sixty, with three entrances on the larger side. The pulpit is on the north side of the house, immediately opposite the central door, so that the minister faces the width of the church instead of its length. The pulpit is very narrow, and is surmounted with a sounding-board, according to the custom of our fathers. In the middle aisle lie buried the remains of the sainted William Tennent, whose death took place about seven years after that of Whitefield, at the age of seventy-two years. A handsome monumental tablet records the leading dates of his pilgrimage.

Some of our readers may inquire as to the localities honored by Whitefield's preaching in and about the city of New York. We find many records of his discoursing in the open fields of the surrounding country; the old City Exchange, which stood at the foot of Broad-street, near Water-street, and which was built on large arches, was a favorite spot for itinerant preachers, and for Whitefield among the rest. During his various visits to New York, from 1745 to 1760, he generally preached in the Presbyterian church in Wall-street, which was then the only church of that denomination in the city, and of which the Rev. Dr. Pemberton, from Boston, was the minister. Afterwards, a few years before his death, he was accustomed to preach in the Brick church in Beekman-street; which was then familiarly called the "Brick meeting," and in common parlance, said to be "in the fields;" so little was the city extended at that period. So prosperous was his ministry in New York, that it was found necessary immediately to enlarge the Presbyterian church in Wall-street, by the erection of galleries; and a year or two afterwards it was again enlarged about one-third, in order to accommodate the stated worshippers.

When Whitefield was preaching before a very large number of the seamen of New York, he introduced the following bold apostrophe into his sermon: "Well, my boys, we have a cloudless sky, and are making fine headway over a smooth sea, before a light breeze, and we shall soon lose sight of land. But what means this sudden lowering of the heavens, and that dark cloud arising from beneath the western horizon? Hark! don't you hear the distant thunder? Don't you see those flashes of lightning? There is a storm gathering. Every man to his duty. How the waves rush and dash against the ship! The air is dark. The tempest rages. Our masts are gone! What next?" The unsuspecting tars, reminded of former perils on the deep, as if struck by the power of magic, arose, and with united voices exclaimed, "Take to the longboat, sir!" The reader may well imagine how this very natural answer would be used by the preacher.

While at New York, Whitefield wrote, "God willing, in about seven months I hope to see New England on my return to Europe. An effectual door is there opened, and no wonder there are many adversaries. Shortly I expect to suffer for my dear Master." And after his return to Philadelphia, he showed his piety and meekness by writing to the Rev. Dr. Pemberton, of New York, "I have been much concerned since I saw you, lest I behaved not with that humility towards you which is due from a babe to a father in Christ; but you know, reverend sir, how difficult it is to meet with success, and

not be puffed up with it; and therefore, if any such thing was discernible in my conduct, O pity me, and pray to the Lord to heal my pride. All I can say is, that I desire to learn of Jesus Christ to be meek and lowly in heart; but my corruptions are so strong, and my employ so dangerous, that I am sometimes afraid."

One of the most important incidents of this journey to New York, was the meeting of Whitefield with Gilbert Tennent. Two powerful preachers could hardly resemble each other less; and the great strength of each lay in characteristics in which the other was deficient. In one point, especially, Whitefield felt and recorded his new friend's superiority. He heard Tennent preach. "Never before heard I such a searching sermon. He went to the bottom indeed, and did not 'daub with untempered mortar.' He convinced me, more and more, that we can preach the gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our hearts. I found what a babe and novice I was in the things of God." These men, as Tracy says, having once met, could not but be friends and allies for life; and the effects of their alliance could not fail to be felt by thousands.

Both at Philadelphia and New York, printers applied to Whitefield for copies of his sermons for publication, and two were so issued, in the influence of which their author had cause to rejoice. In an after-period, the celebrated Benjamin Franklin printed Whitefield's "Journal in New England," still extant; a copy of which was sold at auction in Philadelphia in 1855, for about thirty times its original price. His journals, indeed, and his sermons became considerable articles in commerce, and did not a little, amid the comparatively sparse population of the country, to extend both his fame and his usefulness.

But the time was now come when it became important that Whitefield should pursue his course towards Savannah. He could not, however, regret his stay so long on the road. "It is unknown," he says, "what deep impressions have been made on the hearts of hundreds. Many poor sinners have, I trust, been called home, and great numbers are under strong convictions. An opposer told me I had unhinged many *good sort of people*. I believe it."

Nor was this the only good he had done. No small sympathy had been excited among Christian people in favor of his orphan family, and a spirit of liberality and of prayer was extensively cherished. "They sent me," says the grateful evangelist, "butter, sugar, chocolate, pickles, cheese, and flour, for my orphans; and indeed, I could almost say, they would pluck out their own eyes and give me. O that what God says of the church of Philadelphia may now be fulfilled in the city called after her name – 'I know thy works.'"

The ready liberality which everywhere met Whitefield, determined him to pursue his journey by land. He therefore procured a vessel, in which he sent on his family and their supplies to Savannah. Of this sloop, Captain Gladman was master; and a young man who had recently been converted by the preaching of the great evangelist, willingly offered himself as mate. We have already seen that he was accompanied southward as far as Chester by a very large company of gentlemen of Philadelphia; and on his arrival at that place, a court was about to open, but the judges sent him word that they would not commence their business until the sermon, which they expected from him, was over. Nearly a thousand people had travelled from Philadelphia to hear it, and it was thought that those collected from places many miles around, composed an assembly of not less than seven thousand persons. A platform was erected, and it was believed that many of his hearers obtained something infinitely better than the mere gratification of their curiosity.

Among other places at which he preached on this journey, was White Clay creek, endeared to him not only as the place where he first met with his beloved friend William Tennent, but as the residence of a Welsh family who had heard him preach at Cardiff and Kingswood before they emigrated, and who bore, what was to him a fact of endearing interest, the name of *Howell*. But during this tour Whitefield had to endure considerable privations and peril in riding through the woods. On one occasion, he heard the wolves "howling like a kennel of hounds" near to the road; on another, he had a narrow escape in trying to cross the Potomac in a storm. Here also he had once to swim his

horse, owing to the floods; for it was now the depth of winter. One night, Seward and he lost their way in the woods of South Carolina, and were much alarmed at seeing groups of negroes dancing around large fires. Notwithstanding all the hardships, however, of the journey, no real injury was sustained from it.

Our evangelist at length arrived at Charleston in good health and spirits. But he could not obtain admittance to St. Philip's church; Garden, the commissary, who had once promised to "defend him with life and fortune," was absent, and the curate would not open the doors without his leave. The people, however, had not forgotten him, and the Rev. Josiah Smith, the congregational minister, and the pastor of the French church, at once threw open their houses and pulpits, and rich indeed were the blessings they enjoyed.

The congregations during his present visit to Charleston were large and polite; but he says they presented "an affected finery and gayety of dress and deportment, which I question if the court-end of London could exceed." Before he left, however, there was what he called "a glorious alteration in the audience." Many of them wept; and the hitherto light and airy had visibly strong feelings, as shown in their countenances. Such was their extreme anxiety to hear more from him, that after he had gone to the shore to sail for Georgia, they prevailed on him to preach again.

On the next morning, Whitefield and his companions left Charleston in a canoe for Savannah; and on their way lay on the ground in the woods, surrounded by large fires to keep off the wild beasts. On this fact he makes the reflection, "An emblem, I thought, of the divine love and presence keeping off evils and corruptions from the soul." On his arrival at Savannah, January 11, 1740, he was very happy to meet his family, who had arrived there three weeks before him; and to find, by letters from England, New York, etc., that the work of the Lord prospered. One thing, however, greatly distressed him. The colony of Georgia was reduced even to a much lower state than when he left it, and was deserted by nearly all who could get away. He thought that to employ those who were left, would render them an important service, and that the money thus expended might be the means of keeping them in the colony.

During the absence of Mr. Whitefield from Georgia, Mr. Habersham had fixed on a plot of ground of five hundred acres, about ten miles from Savannah, on which the orphan-house should stand, and had already commenced to clear and stock it. The orphans, in the mean time, were accommodated in a hired house. Whitefield afterwards regretted the course pursued. He found the condition of the orphans so pitiable, and the inhabitants so poor, that he immediately opened an infirmary, hired a large house at a great rent, and took in, at different times, twenty-four orphans.

In the March following, Whitefield was again at Charleston, where he went to meet his brother, the captain of a ship, from England. Here he was requested by many of the inhabitants to give some account of his poor orphans, which he did in the house of worship occupied by his friend the Rev. Josiah Smith, the first native of South Carolina who received a literary degree. Such was the spirit excited, that the collection amounted to seventy pounds sterling. This was no small encouragement, especially as he had reason to believe that most of it came from those who had received spiritual benefit from his ministry.

But if Whitefield now had his joys in Charleston, so he had also his sorrows. We have seen that in a previous visit to this city, he had considered himself "set for the defence of the gospel." He had remarked, in reference to the twelfth article of the church of England, "Observe, my dear brethren, the words of the article, 'Good works are the fruit of faith, and follow after justification.' How can they then precede, or be in any way the cause of it? No, our persons must be justified, before our performances can be accepted." Commissary Garden, of whom we have already spoken, now seized the opportunity of Whitefield's visit to Charleston, to write him a letter, dated March 17, attacking his doctrine of justification, and challenging him to defend what he had said concerning the bishop of London and his clergy. In this letter, he urged in reply to what the evangelist had said, "If good works do necessarily spring out of a true and lively faith, and a true and lively faith

necessarily precedes justification, the consequence is plain, that good works must not only follow after, but precede justification also." Whitefield replied the next day, "I perceive that you are angry overmuch. Was I never so much inclined to dispute, I would stay till the cool of the day. Your letter more and more confirms me, that my charge against the clergy is just and reasonable. It would be endless to enter into such a private debate as you, reverend sir, seem desirous of. You have read my sermon: be pleased to read it again; and if there be any thing contrary to sound doctrine, or the Articles of the church of England, be pleased to let the public know it from the press; and then let the world judge whether you or my brethren the clergy have been rashly slandered." This was but the commencement of a controversy, in which were concerned Garden of Charleston, and the Rev. Messrs. Croswell and Gee of Boston, portions of which are preserved in the Old South church library, in the latter city; and which was afterwards resumed between Garden and Smith, of Charleston, in the "South Carolina Gazette," as may be seen in the library of the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Massachusetts.

In the mean time, Whitefield had returned to Savannah, and on March 25, he laid the first brick of the main building of the orphan-house, which he called *Bethesda*, that is, a house of mercy. It was built of wood, and measured seventy feet by forty. By this time nearly forty children had been received, to be provided for with food and raiment; and counting the workmen with these, he had nearly one hundred persons to feed day by day. To do all this he had very little money in the bank; still he was not discouraged, being persuaded that his present duty was to advance the interests of the colony by carrying on his work. "As yet," says he, "I am kept from the least doubting. The more my family increases, the more enlargement and comfort I feel. Set thy almighty *fiat* to it, O gracious Father, and for thine own name's sake convince us more and more, that thou wilt never forsake those who put their trust in thee." On reviewing this passage fifteen years afterwards, he wrote, "Hitherto, blessed be God, I have not been disappointed of my hope."

We close our present chapter with a very short visit to Charleston. In this city Whitefield had assuredly produced a very extraordinary excitement, and very opposite opinions were entertained in reference to his character and doctrines. On the day after he had laid the first stone of Bethesda, Mr. Smith undertook at Charleston to defend the conduct and character of his beloved friend, in a sermon from Job 32:17: "I said, I will answer also my part; I also will show mine opinion." As this discourse was published during the following June, with a commendatory preface by the Rev. Drs. Colman and Cooper of Boston, and is still highly valued as a piece of contemporary history, we give an extract, particularly as to the *manner* of the preaching of the great evangelist.

"He is certainly a finished preacher. A noble negligence ran through his style. The passion and flame of his expressions will, I trust, be long felt by many. My pen cannot describe his action and gestures, in all their strength and decencies. He appeared to me, in all his discourses, to be very deeply affected and impressed in his own heart. How did that burn and boil within him, when he spake of the things which he had 'made touching the King.' How was his tongue like the pen of a ready writer, touched as with a coal from the altar. With what a flow of words, what a ready profusion of language, did he speak to us upon the great concerns of our souls. In what a flaming light did he set *our* eternity before us. How earnestly he pressed Christ upon us. How did he move our passions with the constraining love of *such* a Redeemer. The awe, the silence, the attention which sat upon the face of the great audience, was an argument how he could reign over all their powers. Many thought he spake as never man spake before him. So charmed were the people with his manner of address, that they shut up their shops, forgot their secular business, and laid aside their schemes for the world; and the oftener he preached, the keener edge he seemed to put upon their desires to hear him again.

"How awfully, with what thunder and sound, did he discharge the artillery of heaven upon us. And yet, how could he soften and melt even a soldier of Ulysses with the mercy of God. How close, strong, and pungent were his applications to the conscience; mingling light and heat; pointing the arrows of the Almighty at the hearts of sinners, while he poured in the balm upon the wounds of the



contrite, and made broken bones rejoice. Eternal themes, the tremendous solemnities of our religion, were all *alive* upon his tongue. So, methinks – if you will forgive the figure – St. Paul would *look* and speak in a pulpit. In some such manner, I am tempted to conceive of a seraph, were he sent down to preach among us, and to tell us what things he had seen and heard above.

How bold and courageous did he look. He was no flatterer; he would not suffer men to settle on their lees; and did not prophesy smooth things, nor sew pillows under their arms. He taught the way of God in truth, and regarded not the persons of men. He struck at the politest and most modish of our vices, and at the most fashionable entertainments, regardless of every one's presence, but His in whose name he spoke with this authority. And I dare warrant, if none should go to these diversions until they have answered the solemn questions he put to their consciences, our theatre would soon sink and perish. I freely own he has taken my heart."

## CHAPTER V. CONTINUATION OF WHITEFIELD'S SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA. 1740

At the period when Whitefield laid the cornerstone of his Bethesda, his health was much impaired, and his spirits depressed. But it was necessary that funds should be obtained, to meet the claims now daily made upon him. He had received handsome donations from Charleston, New York, and Philadelphia, yet the urgent demand was for more. He therefore embarked from Charleston for Newcastle, Delaware, in a sloop, and arrived there in about ten days. Passing on from thence to Philadelphia, he found the churches closed against him. The commissary told him that he would lend the church to him no more. The laconic answer of Whitefield was, "The fields are open;" and eight thousand people assembled to hear him the same evening, and ten thousand on the following day. On the following Lord's day morning, he collected one hundred and ten pounds sterling for his "poor orphans," and then went to the Episcopal church, where the commissary preached a sermon on justification by works. As Whitefield was recognized at church, it was naturally expected that in the evening he would answer the sermon; nor was the public expectation disappointed. After his sermon, he collected eighty pounds more for Bethesda.

But far higher success than this attended his labors. Societies for worship were commenced in different parts of the town; not a few began seriously to inquire after the way of salvation; many negroes came to the evangelist with the inquiry, "Have I a soul?" and a church was formed, of which the distinguished Gilbert Tennent was the eminently useful pastor. No less than one hundred and forty, who had undergone a previous strict examination as to their personal piety, were received as constituent members of the church, and large additions were from time to time made to their number.

Several events of special interest occurred during this visit to Philadelphia. Tennent had to tell a series of delightful facts as to the usefulness of Whitefield's former labors. He began to deliberate on a plan for a negro school in Pennsylvania, as he did afterwards also in Virginia, but unexpected difficulties intervened, and both in the end were abandoned. Mr. Jones, the Baptist minister of the city, told Whitefield of the change produced by his former preaching on the minds of two ministers; one of whom stated to his congregation that he had hitherto been deceiving both himself and them, and added, that he could not preach to them at present, but requested them to unite in prayer with him; and the other resigned his charge, to itinerate among the unenlightened villages of New Jersey and elsewhere. Another fact was, that an Indian trader became so impressed with the preaching of Whitefield, that he had given up his business, and was gone to teach the Indians with whom he used to trade. Nor had his usefulness stopped here: he heard of a drinking club, which had attached to it a negro boy remarkable for his powers of mimicry. This boy was directed by the gentlemen who composed the club to exercise his powers on Mr. Whitefield: he did so, but very reluctantly; at length he stood up and said, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not; unless you repent, you will all be damned." This unexpected speech had such an effect as to break up the club, which met no more.

We add a few paragraphs from Seward's journal, who soon after sailed for England to promote the interests of Georgia, and who died in the parent country. They date from the 24th to the 26th of April. "Came to Christopher Wigner's plantation in Skippack, where many Dutch people are settled, and where the famous Mr. Spalemburg lately resided. It was surprising to see such a multitude of people gathered together in such a wilderness country, thirty miles distant from Philadelphia. Mr. Whitefield was exceedingly carried out, in his sermon, to press poor sinners to come to Christ by faith, and claim all their privileges; namely, not only righteousness and peace, but joy in the Holy

Ghost; and after he had done, our dear friend Peter Bohler preached in Dutch, to those who could not understand Mr. Whitefield in English."

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