

A portrait of George Whitefield, a prominent 18th-century evangelist. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark clerical robe with a prominent white collar and a white wig. His right hand is raised, palm facing forward, in a gesture of blessing or teaching. His left hand rests on an open book. The background is dark and indistinct.

OXFORD

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

Life, Context, and Legacy

Edited by

GEORDAN HAMMOND
& DAVID CERI JONES

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List of Abbreviations

- Dallimore Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival*, 2 vols (London and Edinburgh, 1970, 1980).
- Further Account* George Whitefield, *A Further Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, From the Time of his Ordination to his Embarking for Georgia* (London, 1747).
- Journal 1 George Whitefield, *A Journal of a Voyage from London to Savannah in Georgia. In Two Parts. Part I. From London to Gibraltar. Part II. From Gibraltar to Savannah* [December 1737–May 1738] (London, 1738).
- Journal 2 George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from his Arrival at Savannah, to his Return to London* [May 1738–December 1738] (London, 1739).
- Journal 3 George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from his Arrival at London, to his Departure from thence on his Way to Georgia* [December 1738–June 1739] (London, 1739).
- Journal 4 George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, during the Time he was Detained in England by the Embargo* [June 1739–August 1739] (London, 1739).
- Journal 5 George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from his Embarking after the Embargo, to his Arrival at Savannah in Georgia* [August 1739–January 1740] (London, 1740).
- Journal 6 George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, after his Arrival at Georgia, to a Few Days after his Second Return thither from Philadelphia* [January 1740–June 1740] (London, 1741).
- Journal 7 George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from a few Days after his Return to Georgia to his Arrival at Falmouth, on the 11th of March 1741. Containing an Account of the Work of God at Georgia, Rhode-Island, New-England, New-York, Pennsylvania and South-Carolina* (London, 1741).
- Kidd Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, 2014).
- Lambert Frank Lambert, *'Pedlar in Divinity': George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737–1770* (Princeton, 1994).
- Memoirs* John Gillies (compiler), *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A.* (London, 1772).

- Short Account* George Whitefield, *A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, A.B. Late of Pembroke-College, Oxford. From his Infancy, to the Time of His entering Holy Orders* (London, 1740).
- Stout* Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1991).
- Tyerman* L[uke] Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield, B.A., of Pembroke College, Oxford*, 2 vols (London, 1876–7).
- Works* *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield M.A.*, ed. John Gillies, 7 vols (London, 1771–2).

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Introduction

Geordan Hammond and David Ceri Jones

On Sunday 18 November 1770, John Wesley climbed the steps of the pulpit at Tottenham Court Road chapel in London to deliver, as requested by George Whitefield himself, his old friend's funeral sermon. Having frequently expressed a wish to die while preaching, and having come close to doing so on more than one occasion, the 55-year-old Whitefield's wish had finally been granted following a two-hour open-air sermon at Newburyport, Massachusetts, some six weeks earlier. Although relations between Wesley and Whitefield had long recovered from the bitterness of the 'Free Grace' controversy during the early 1740s, many of Whitefield's followers, by this stage only a small rump at Tottenham Court Road and the Tabernacle at Moorfields, treated Wesley with only thinly disguised contempt.

Mercifully, Wesley was in magnanimous mood. While he was quick to praise Whitefield's 'unparalleled zeal' and 'indefatigable activity',¹ it was Whitefield's catholic spirit that Wesley focused on. Wesley portrayed Whitefield as the archetypal broad-minded evangelical: 'the fundamental doctrines which he everywhere insisted on', said Wesley, 'were the new birth, and justification by faith'.² His concern had been heart religion, and his charismatic preaching gifts had been ideally suited to the evangelistic challenge that had confronted him on two continents. For Wesley, the scale of that challenge ensured that Whitefield maintained a 'deep gratitude to all whom God had used as instruments of good . . . of whom he did not cease to speak in the most respectful manner'.³ Both Whitefield the Calvinist, and Whitefield the Calvinistic Methodist, the leader of a rival branch of Methodism, were deliberately airbrushed out of the picture. They were replaced by what one historian has

¹ John Wesley, *A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. Mr George Whitefield* (London, 1770), 18.

² Wesley, *A Sermon on Whitefield*, 25.

³ Wesley, *A Sermon on Whitefield*, 18.

called Whitefield the evangelical ecumenist.⁴ It was to be a one-dimensional view of Whitefield that was to have remarkable persistence.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Whitefield had been born in a public house under the shadow of Gloucester cathedral in 1714. Despite a patchy education, interrupted by stints working at the Bell Inn, and serious illness, including a bout of measles which left him with a permanent squint, Whitefield matriculated at Oxford in 1732, albeit as a servitor, the most humble rank of undergraduate student. Whitefield had been fascinated by the theatre from an early age, developing a taste for public performance; his academic record was hardly stellar, but his religious development proceeded rapidly. He joined a group practising a highly rigorous approach to the Christian faith about a year after his arrival in Oxford, but his experience of Oxford Methodism proved to be a mixed blessing. Fasting to within an inch of his life during Lent 1735, Whitefield finally experienced the inner transformation he had sought so long. He was ordained deacon in June 1736, and was soon preaching the new birth to clamorous congregations in London and Bristol. By the time he made his first voyage across the Atlantic in February 1738, to serve as a missionary in Georgia, he had published his most often-repeated sermon on the new birth, gained fame as the 'boy parson',⁵ and had begun attacking many of his fellow Anglican clergy for not preaching the true gospel.

Yet it was not until he returned from the American colonies at the end of 1738 that he took up field preaching for the first time. Emulating the Welshman Howel Harris, Whitefield first preached outdoors to a group of colliers at Kingswood near Bristol. Within a couple of months he was preaching to crowds in the tens of thousands at Moorfields and on Kennington Common in London; for a time he was front-page news. In these months the Evangelical Revival movement began to take shape. Contact was made with Methodists in Wales, and the evangelical conversion of the Wesley brothers boosted the movement. In these months Whitefield's confidence knew no bounds, evidenced in the journal he began to issue at regular intervals. Fifteen months in America, during which he preached up and down the eastern seaboard of the colonies, fanned the flames of the Great Awakening. For a time Whitefield seemed poised to sweep all before him. Yet by his return to England in early 1741 the unity of the English revival had been shattered; a bitter disagreement

⁴ James L. Schwenk, *Catholic Spirit: Wesley, Whitefield, and the Quest for Evangelical Unity in Eighteenth-Century British Methodism* (Lanham, MD, 2008), 2.

⁵ *Further Account*, 7.

with John Wesley over predestination led to a parting of the ways, and Whitefield was forced to establish his own network of exclusively Calvinist societies. For a time Whitefield drew into a loose confederation evangelical Calvinists in Wales, England, and Scotland. By this time there was no coherent evangelical revival, but a series of competing awakenings.

When Whitefield was prepared to give it his full attention Calvinistic Methodism thrived; the problem was that his attention constantly wavered. Within a couple of years of its establishment, Whitefield absented himself in the American colonies for four years. Much of his time in America was devoted to setting his orphanage on a secure footing; the acquisition of a plantation, together with a cohort of Africans, turned him into a passionate advocate of slavery. When he returned to England in 1748 his societies were in disarray, and he was quick to accept the Countess of Huntingdon's offer to be her personal chaplain. While this opened doors into the parlours of the great and the good, Whitefield's role in England in the years that followed became more marginal. Although he opened a chapel in the fashionable Tottenham Court Road, an increasingly corpulent Whitefield cut a very different figure from the dynamic itinerant of the late 1730s. During the last twenty years of his life he crossed the Atlantic seven more times, splitting his life between the British Isles and America. In the latter his preaching continued to polarize opinions, and much of his attention was taken up with securing a royal charter to turn his orphan house into a college. As that looked ever less likely so his rhetoric in support of the liberties of the colonists against their imperial masters became more pronounced. His death on the American side of the Atlantic in September 1770 seemed strangely appropriate.

WHITEFIELD AND HIS BIOGRAPHERS

Whitefield's biographers have tended to fall into two camps.⁶ Some, to use the words of Robert Blair, a correspondent of Philip Doddridge, have 'idolized' him, while he has been 'railed at by others'.⁷ Whitefield sharply polarized opinions during his lifetime, and has done so ever since. Interpretations of Whitefield are inevitably overshadowed by the autobiographical literature which he published. Between 1738 and 1741, Whitefield released a

⁶ A fuller treatment of this theme can be found in David Ceri Jones, "'So much idolized by some, and railed at by others': Towards Understanding George Whitefield", *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 5 (2013), 3–29.

⁷ Robert Blair to Philip Doddridge (28 July 1743), *The Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge*, ed. J. D. Humphreys, 5 vols (London, 1829–31), 4:265.

journal in seven instalments,⁸ complemented by a further two publications that filled in the details of his earliest years.⁹ These journals were not awarts and all window into his interior life, but were designed specifically for publication. They were public documents used by Whitefield to defend himself as criticism of his preaching began to mount in the late 1730s. On one level they are simply a record of Whitefield's daily activities, as he moved from place to place on either side of the Atlantic; but read more closely the unrelenting record of the numbers attending Whitefield's open-air sermons, and the accounts of the effects of those sermons on men, women, and children, amount to a torrent of evidence in support of Whitefield's ministry.

The image Whitefield presented in these journals was deliberate. He portrayed himself as someone set apart by God from an early age. Each occurrence in his early life was interpreted as preparation for his public ministry; at some points he even drew audacious comparisons between his own life and the life of Christ. Publishing an autobiography while still in one's early twenties was always likely to raise eyebrows, but the young Whitefield, intoxicated by his own fame and convinced of God's approbation of his every move, did not hold back in his claims to divine inspiration or in his condemnation of those who dared to question him. The journals reveal, according to Bruce Hindmarsh, 'an ebullient and obstreperous young evangelist',¹⁰ not given to self-criticism, measured judgements, or candid reflection. Philip Doddridge, a usually sympathetic friend, thought that his popularity had 'a little intoxicated him'.¹¹ It took almost twenty years for Whitefield to fully own up to the egotism of his early journals. In 1756 he issued a new edition of his journal in which many errors were corrected and embarrassing passages erased.¹² He admitted that he had been too quick to claim that he was directly led by the Spirit of God, and that he had relied too much on immediate inward impressions. 'I have been', he wrote, 'too bitter in my zeal, wild fire has been mixed with it; and I find that I have frequently written and spoken too much in my own spirit, when I thought I was writing and speaking entirely by the assistance of the Spirit of God.'¹³ The early enthusiastic Whitefield and the later chastened and more circumspect Whitefield were very different characters.

⁸ Bibliographical details on the journals can be found in the Abbreviations page and Bibliography.

⁹ *Short Account and Further Account*.

¹⁰ D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005), 109.

¹¹ Philip Doddridge to [Daniel Wadsworth] [10 September 1741], Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge* (London, 1979), 140.

¹² George Whitefield, *The First Two Parts of his Life, with his Journals, Revised, Corrected and Abridged* (London, 1756), i.

¹³ George Whitefield, *Some Remarks on a Pamphlet, Entitled, The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compar'd* (London, 1749), 35.

Whitefield's first biographer was Glasgow-based Church of Scotland minister, John Gillies. His life appeared as the first volume of his edition of the complete works of Whitefield in 1772; it has all the hallmarks of being an official authorized life. Although evidence for this claim is fragmentary, the two had been in close touch since the 1750s, and it seems likely that the manuscript autobiography which Whitefield had been writing on and off was passed to Gillies towards the end of his life,¹⁴ along with almost 1,500 letters, becoming the basis of Gillies's biography. Inevitably Gillies's work cast a very long shadow. We know, for example, that Gillies possessed a heavy editorial hand, making substantial alterations in both the substance and style of many of the letters which he included in his edition of Whitefield's works. But he also used his biography to rebut criticisms of Whitefield, especially over the financial affairs of his orphanage.¹⁵

The Whitefield Gillies depicted comes very close to being an officially sanctioned version, in as much as it was Whitefield's and not Gillies's voice that remained dominant. More memorialization than biography, Gillies's Whitefield was a rather one-dimensional character. He presented Whitefield as the saintly and divinely inspired itinerant evangelist, wafted along effortlessly on a wave of divine approval. Gillies took every opportunity to provide evidence of divine blessing on Whitefield's ministry, and to exonerate him of any major errors of judgement. This was only partially successful; Whitefield's penchant for corporal punishment at Bethesda was plain for all to see, as was his advocacy of slavery. Like Whitefield's journals before them, Gillies's publications burnished the Whitefield myth. In the short term Whitefield's reputation probably benefited from the attention of hagiographers like Gillies, but in the longer term peeling back the layers of myth to find the authentic Whitefield became increasingly difficult.

Following Gillies's death a number of new editions of his biography appeared, each appearing to outdo the other in its promise of new material. Aaron Seymour's 1811 version was little more than a reissue of the original Gillies biography, although the renumbering of the chapters gave a different impression.¹⁶ Others did at least make more effort to revise Gillies,¹⁷ but the Countess of Huntingdon's plan to write a short life of Whitefield came to

¹⁴ *Memoirs*, 17n., 235n.

¹⁵ Boyd Stanley Schlenther, 'George Whitefield (1714–1770)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

¹⁶ John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. G. Whitefield, Faithfully Selected from his Original Papers, Journals and Letters* (Dublin, 1811).

¹⁷ John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield* (Falkirk, 1798); John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Late Reverend George Whitefield . . . Revised and Corrected, with Observations Illustrative and Justificatory, by John Jones* (London, 1811).

nothing,¹⁸ and many of the papers of the leading early Methodists which she gathered were unfortunately lost after her death. A similar fate seems to have befallen the papers in Gillies's possession, robbing future historians of invaluable material. As a result many nineteenth-century Whitefield biographers faced little alternative but to rely on Gillies. In the preface to his *The Life and Times of the Reverend George Whitefield* (1837), Robert Philip confessed: 'This work is chiefly from Whitefield's own pen. So far as it is mine, it is his own spirit.'¹⁹ Few appreciated the extent to which Whitefield's authentic voice had been emasculated by Gillies.

In nineteenth-century Methodist historiography two names predominate: Robert Southey and Luke Tyerman. Although Southey's interpretation of Whitefield came as a sideline to the main subject matter of his *The Life of Wesley* (1820), he did not hold back in his criticisms. Admitting that Whitefield 'preached like a lion', he argued that he was so filled with 'exaggerated expressions of humility, and ebullitions of spiritual pride, that it is no wonder the suspicion of hypocrisy should have attached to him'.²⁰ However, when it came to his rivalry with John Wesley, Southey laid the blame for the division over predestination not so much on Whitefield, who had 'neither the ambition of founding a separate community, nor the talent for it', but on his Calvinist friends, especially John Cennick and the Countess of Huntingdon.²¹ For Southey, Whitefield's Calvinism was inexplicable. He remained the flaming evangelist, but one who could not free himself from either his outdated theology or his bellicose friends.

Tyerman's two-volume Whitefield biography, the most ambitious to that point, was a testimony to his rigorous approach and contained much that had evaded Gillies's grasp. In his earlier life of Wesley, Tyerman freely granted that Whitefield was a 'flaming seraph', but when it came to theology, he accused him of adopting a creed, Calvinism, 'which far more powerful minds than his had not been able to defend'.²² Gradually his assessment became more generous and less pejorative. By 1750, he wrote, Whitefield had become 'an evangelist at large . . . a preacher labouring for all', but he also used him as the perfect foil for Wesley—Tyerman's real hero.²³ Where Wesley was the great organizer, whose denomination by the time Tyerman was writing in the late

¹⁸ John Owen, *A Memoir of the Rev. Daniel Rowlands, late of Llangeitho, Cardiganshire* (London, 1848), 9.

¹⁹ Robert Philip, *The Life and Times of the Reverend George Whitefield* MA (London, 1837), n.p.

²⁰ Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley; and the Rise and Progress of Methodism*, 2 vols (London, 1820), 1:150, 368.

²¹ Southey, *The Life of Wesley*, 2:357.

²² [Luke] Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.: Founder of the Methodists*, 3 vols (London, 1872), 1:312.

²³ Tyerman, *John Wesley*, 2:68.

nineteenth century bore eloquent testimony to his gifts and foresight, Whitefield was the 'outdoor preacher', 'the most popular evangelist of the age', the 'roving revivalist'—admirable qualities, but inevitably more ephemeral in nature.²⁴

The publication of a number of semi-popular biographies of Whitefield in the closing years of the nineteenth century, books which tended to feed the late Victorian appetite for larger than life historical heroes, had the effect of blurring the distinction between reliable history and myth. Inevitably, these studies reinforced what had become the traditional interpretations of Whitefield, practically turning them into caricatures.²⁵ In the early twentieth century the number of new studies of Whitefield slowed to a trickle. The most incongruous was Albert Belden's, *George Whitefield—The Awakener* (1930), not so much for the biography itself, but for the foreword, written by J. Ramsay Macdonald, at that time Britain's first Labour Prime Minister. Macdonald, a Nonconformist and passionate advocate of a Christianized Socialism, saw in Whitefield someone who 'gave men self-respect and pride, and did not merely arm them with claims for sharing in this world's goods'.²⁶ It was an odd juxtaposition.

Since the closing years of the twentieth century there has been a revival of interest in Whitefield, both within the academy and outside it. While Canadian Baptist Arnold Dallimore's two-volume biography has been the most extensive study, it is also perhaps the least satisfying. Thoroughly hagiographic, incredibly, Dallimore confessed that he struggled to find any faults with his subject matter. His work was designed to counter the dominance of the Wesleyan take on early Methodist origins, and Dallimore zealously sought to demonstrate that it was Whitefield, not John Wesley, who was the 'foremost figure' of the Evangelical Revival, and that the movement was originally Calvinist not Arminian.²⁷ While Dallimore had been one of the few to draw attention to Whitefield the Calvinist, in reality his study was a polemic, used by late twentieth-century Reformed evangelicals to argue that evangelicalism had been Calvinist from its earliest days.

From within the American academy have come three innovative and complementary biographies. Harry Stout's *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (1991) has aroused considerable debate. Arguing that the key to Whitefield's success was his combination of the

²⁴ Tyerman, 1:iii–iv.

²⁵ These included, James Paterson Gledstone, *The Life and Travels of George Whitefield* (London, 1871); James Macaulay, *Whitefield Anecdotes: Illustrating the Life, Character, and Work of the Great Evangelist* (London, 1886); J. B. Wakeley, *Anecdotes of the Rev. George Whitefield, with a Biographical Sketch* (London, 1900).

²⁶ Albert D. Belden, *George Whitefield—The Awakener: A Modern Study of the Evangelical Revival* (London, 1930), ix.

²⁷ Dallimore, 1:12.

language and techniques of the stage, perfectly suited to the existential trauma of the new birth, and shameless self-promotion, made possible by a revolution in consumer demand and taste, Stout asserted that Whitefield became 'Anglo-America's first modern celebrity'.²⁸ Stout made Whitefield appear startlingly modern. Frank Lambert's *'Pedlar in Divinity': George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals* (1994), has put considerable flesh on the bones of Stout's work by demonstrating exactly how Whitefield utilized various commercial opportunities, especially following the deregulation of the printing industry in the 1690s, to bind together a series of scattered awakenings throughout the British Isles and American colonies. Among Lambert's most startling claims was that by so doing he was able to bind the disparate American colonies together for the first time, perhaps contributing significantly to the development of a distinct American identity.²⁹ This theme has been investigated further by Jerome Mahaffey who, through a close study of the language of Whitefield's sermons, has argued that by his preaching of the new birth, Whitefield established a 'rhetoric of identity formation and unification'.³⁰ For both Mahaffey, and Lambert before him, Whitefield, the American patriot, was an important forerunner of the 'Founding Fathers' of the nation itself.

Whitefield's biographers have until recently tended to perpetuate one-dimensional interpretations of the 'Grand Itinerant'. Beginning with John Gillies, Whitefield's preaching abilities have been widely celebrated, but often to the detriment of many other aspects of his life and career. Part of the difficulty has been the inaccessibility of the primary source material relating to Whitefield, with biographers having to rely on Gillies's less than satisfactory work.³¹ This problem is beginning to be rectified, and it is the editors' hope that this volume will present Whitefield in a number of new and innovative contexts, and point the way to many further avenues of fruitful research.

THE PRESENT VOLUME

Collectively this book aims to provide assessments of Whitefield's life and legacy within a wide range of themes and contexts. There are, of course,

²⁸ Stout, xiii–ix.

²⁹ Lambert, 221–5.

³⁰ Jerome Dean Mahaffey, *Preaching Politics: The Religious Rhetoric of George Whitefield and the Founding of a New Nation* (Waco, TX, 2007), xii. A similar approach has been taken in Stephen Mansfield, *Forgotten Founding Father: The Heroic Legacy of George Whitefield* (Nashville, 2001); Kidd; and to a slightly lesser extent, Jessica M. Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield: Race, Revivalism, and the Making of a Religious Icon* (Jackson, MS, 2015).

³¹ The editors are currently preparing the first complete and critical edition of Whitefield's extensive transatlantic correspondence.

numerous topics relating to Whitefield's life, context, and legacy that are not covered in this volume or are treated briefly. Rather than representing an attempt at comprehensiveness, the chapters offered here were selected to provide a balance between subjects of recognized significance and less known topics. In all cases the goal has been to present new and creative research.

The purpose of the volume is admirably served by Boyd Schlenther's highly original examination of Whitefield's personal life and character, a subject that has commonly received one-sided treatments from Whitefield's biographers. Schlenther shows that Whitefield's personal relationships were often tumultuous and that his character was complex and controversial. Mark Olson's study also supplies crucial context for the volume by tracing how Whitefield's views of conversion developed alongside his theological formation from his foundation as an Oxford Methodist to his full embrace of Calvinism in 1739/40.

Three chapters follow which further set the context for the book by analysing how Whitefield both utilized and was ambivalent towards three major historical factors which impacted his life and ministry: the Church of England, the Enlightenment, and Empire. William Gibson focuses on the response of bishops and clergy to Whitefield and concludes that his disregard for their concerns may have damaged his goal of promoting evangelicalism within the Church. Whitefield's embrace of some Enlightenment themes to support his teaching on the new birth and his rejection of others, in opposition to 'reasoners' such as John Tillotson, is explored by Frank Lambert. Whitefield's life, interwoven with the complexity of the British Empire, is evaluated by Carla Gardina Pestana who argues that his transatlantic travels contributed to a new imperial consciousness among British subjects.

Geordan Hammond, Kenneth Minkema, and Keith Edward Beebe and David Ceri Jones (co-authors) take up the topic of Whitefield and revival. Whitefield's friendship, emergence of tensions, and conflict with John Wesley is examined by Hammond. Minkema analyses his relationship with Jonathan Edwards which evolved from Edwards's cautious support coupled with distancing himself from Whitefield to his public endorsement of his fellow revivalist. Beebe and Jones assess Whitefield's role in helping to create a Calvinist evangelical movement in the Celtic nations of the British Isles: Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

Chapters 9–12 interpret Whitefield within innovative contexts. Brett McNelly looks at Whitefield's published exchanges with his critics arguing that he welcomed criticism and believed it aided the revival. Building from Benjamin Franklin's acoustic experiment to gauge crowd size in Philadelphia, Braxton Boren uses the modern science of computer acoustic simulation to estimate that Whitefield's voice could have reached 20,000 people in unfavourable conditions, and 50,000 in ideal conditions. In a close reading of Whitefield's sermon 'Abraham's Offering up his Son Isaac', Emma Salgård Cunha highlights the

parallels between the value placed on the affectionate impact of contemporary poetry and oratory and the use of affective rhetoric in Whitefield's preaching, showing that Whitefield believed emotional response was only the beginning of conversion. Stephen Berry investigates a major part of Whitefield's life and ministry that is often overlooked—his thirteen transatlantic journeys—where he utilizes Whitefield's descriptions of sailing ships as parish, wilderness, cloister, and haven, to explore how for Whitefield the role and meaning of the ship developed during his lifetime.

Peter Choi and Mark Noll engage with different aspects of the later Whitefield. Georgia and Whitefield's unsuccessful attempt to obtain a royal charter to transform his orphanage into Bethesda College is the subject of Choi's chapter, which maps Whitefield's conscious shift from revival preaching to institution building in his interaction with British imperial culture. Mark Noll presents an in-depth study of Whitefield's 1753 *Collection of Hymns for Social Worship* with particular attention given to its focus on Christology and the atonement and what the book reveals about the evolution of evangelical spirituality.

The book concludes with two chapters on Whitefield's legacy. Isabel Rivers looks at various ways in which Dissenters and Church of England evangelicals viewed Whitefield from 1770 to 1839, with Dissenters progressively embracing his catholicism and Anglican evangelicals increasingly critical of his relationship to the Church. The diverse ways in which Whitefield was commemorated in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain and the USA is analysed by Andrew Atherstone, who demonstrates in several case studies that Whitefield's legacy was interpreted to serve contemporary concerns.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The origins of this volume can be dated to a lecture given by David Ceri Jones in June 2012 titled “‘So much idolized by some, and railed at by others’: Towards Understanding George Whitefield’. The opening lines of the lecture referenced the enthusiastic celebrations of the tercentenaries of the birth of John and Charles Wesley in 2003 and 2007 resulting in substantial scholarly reassessments of their lives and legacies, and suggested that Whitefield's tercentenary was ‘likely to be a more muted affair’.³² Subsequent collaboration between the editors of this book resulted in an attempt to begin redressing this imbalance with the ‘George Whitefield at 300’ conference held at Whitefield's alma mater, Pembroke College, Oxford, in June 2014. The conference featured

³² Jones, “‘So much idolized by some, and railed at by others’”, 3. Presented as the Manchester Wesley Research Centre Annual Lecture.

papers from over forty scholars from the UK, Germany, USA, Australia, and New Zealand. All sixteen of the chapters in this volume were first presented as papers at the conference.³³ This international gathering was made possible by four institutions that sponsored it: Aberystwyth University, the Manchester Wesley Research Centre, the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History at Oxford Brookes University, and The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University. Special thanks are due to all of those who participated in the conference, to the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, particularly Professor William Gibson (Director), Dr Peter Forsaith (Research Fellow), and Emma Curran (then Administrator), who took the lead in organizing the conference, to Dr Boyd Schlenther for compiling the index to this volume, and to Tom Perridge and Oxford University Press for their enthusiastic support of this project. Huw Edmunds and staff at Pembroke College also played a crucial role in providing an ideal setting for the conference and helping to make it a success.

³³ Six other revised conference papers have been published in William Gibson and Thomas W. Smith (eds), *George Whitefield Tercentenary Essays*, in *The Journal of Religious History, Literature and Culture*, 1:2 (2015). Details about the conference, including information on other papers that have been published, can be found at <<http://www.mwrc.ac.uk/whitefield-conference>>.

Whitefield's Personal Life and Character

Boyd Stanley Schlenther

Portraying a personal life runs the risk of being charged with facile psycho-analysing. Nevertheless, that his father died when Whitefield was aged 2; that measles contracted when he was about 4 resulted in his lifelong squint; that he was mercilessly teased—bullied—and on one occasion repeated the words of one of the less elevating psalms: 'But in the Name of the Lord will I destroy them'; that, devoted to playacting at school, he often dressed in girls' clothes and performed female parts; and that the remembrance of doing so has 'covered me with Confusion of Face, and I hope will do so, even to the End of my Life'—none of this can be deleted from an attempt to grapple with the person who was George Whitefield.¹

Whitefield's personal life should have had a more favoured development. His father's Bell Inn was Gloucester's grandest; but his sudden death meant that all responsibility fell on Whitefield's mother, who, when Whitefield was 8, remarried: 'an unhappy Match', in Whitefield's own words; and the shadow cast over him was long.² He later recalled that 'I once was full of envy, hatred, malice, and such like cursed tempers.'³ His stepfather's mismanagement of the Bell forced George to withdraw from school and to assist with the most menial of tasks, until, after several years, his mother separated from her husband and moved from the Bell.

OXFORD AND THE 'HOLY CLUB'

Whitefield returned to school and then matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford, on 7 November 1732, a month before his eighteenth birthday.⁴

¹ *Memoirs*, 279 (for the squint); *Short Account*, 11, 13.

² *Memoirs*, 279.

³ Whitefield to the Allegheny Indians (21 May 1740), *Works* 1:174.

⁴ Douglas Macleane, *A History of Pembroke College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1897), 352.

A week later it was recorded: received 'of Mr George Whitfield servitor in Pembroke College the sum of three pounds for his caution [money]'.⁵ For all his time at Pembroke, over three and a half years, he acted as a servitor, the lowest undergraduate rank, and engaged in a 'scarcely less menial capacity than he had filled at home'.⁶ In exchange for free tuition, he served as lackey to three or four highly placed students. Wearing a special gown for the role, he was required to wake them in the morning, black their boots, run their errands, and tidy their rooms. However, although the servitor's status was lowly, the status of an Oxford student was at least a smudged carbon copy of a gentleman; and as he came to the end of his undergraduate career Whitefield recorded in his diary: 'God make me to reflect how short a time it is since I was a common drawer in a publick-house . . . but now, blessed be free grace, I am appointed as it were, to be head of the Methodists, have an annuity allowed me of £30 and hopes of being elected [college] Chaplain.'⁷

Can it be doubted that his servile situation had spurred him to seeking a role in life that would make him excel in some way and explains a serious propensity to self-promotion? He recorded in his diary that he found himself 'too bashful in company. The Lord keep me from a sinful modesty.' His published journal reveals in some detail the degree to which he had abased himself physically—not to say spiritually—for perhaps a full year from 1734 to 1735. 'Whole Days and Weeks', he wrote, were 'spent in lying prostrate on the Ground', and he ate 'the worst Sort of Food'. The extent of this self-abasement led not only his fellows in the Holy Club but other students and tutors, all members of his family, and not least Whitefield himself, to reckon that his mental circuitry had somehow gone haywire. Peace only came sometime in mid-1735. As he later reflected: 'I know the place; it may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed himself to me, and gave me the new birth.'⁸

A year after he arrived at Oxford he had become part of the so-called 'Holy Club', and the surviving fragments of his diary list criteria he used at the end of each day as a means of measuring himself by the group's standards. Utilizing fifteen queries, each day he listed those he had observed, in the order that he had kept them: for example, 'Have I been frequent in prayer? Been meek, cheerful, affable in everything I said or did?' Most frequently at the head of the

⁵ Caution Money Account Book, PMB/D/1/4/1, Pembroke College archives, 15 November 1732.

⁶ Maclean, *History of Pembroke College*, 360.

⁷ George Whitefield's manuscript diary, 29 February–26 June 1736, British Library Add. MSS 34068, 31 May 1736 (hereafter BL diary).

⁸ BL diary, 12 April 1736; *Short Account*, 38, 39; 'All Mens Place', in *Eighteen Sermons, preached by the late Rev. George Whitefield* (London, 1771), 360.

list was 'Did I in the morning plan the business of the day', and he apparently rose at 4:00 each morning.⁹

His new birth did not free him from inward personal struggles: 'Full of the Holy Ghost at Even[song]'; yet two months later: 'I laughed in Even[song]. P[lease] God forgive for Xt's sake. Amen. Amen.'¹⁰ He called himself a 'vile villain'; 'No comfortable communion with God almost all day . . . disordered'; yet three weeks later he recorded that he 'had great assistance from the Holy Ghost to me. Was enabled to apply all the promises made to the Apostles to myself.'¹¹ On the day of his public examination for the BA he noted: 'God grant that I may ever come off with as much security and honour; (not that I value these).'¹² He received his degree on 25 June 1736.¹³ Following his year of self-mortification, culminating in his new birth in mid-1735, Whitefield had more or less resumed normal college life. The Pembroke buttery books show that he 'battelled'—that is took his meals—in college until August 1736.¹⁴ An occasion on which he drank a glass of wine was significant enough for him to record in his diary. He certainly was far removed from that set of Pembroke men who, it was reported, were 'jolly, sprightly young fellows . . . who drank ale, smoked tobacco, and sung bacchanalian catches the whole evening'.¹⁵

THE DIFFICULTY OF RELATIONSHIPS

Whitefield's restless personality owed something to his bumpy relationship with home and family. Preaching at Gloucester 'among my own countrymen and former acquaintance[s] is one of the greatest trials I have met with'.¹⁶ This rocky relationship contributed much to his rootless life, and well before his graduation he was bemoaning their apparent lack of interest in him. This focused most sharply on his mother.¹⁷ He had long agonized over her marital status—'the cross God has given me to bear at Gloucester'—yet now a fellow Holy Club member 'satisfyed me' regarding the 'lawfulness of my Mother's living separate from her husband &c. For which I humbly thank God'.¹⁸ Whitefield now felt free to agonize over his mother's soul. Wherever he was, he

⁹ BL diary, first leaf. ¹⁰ BL diary, 18 March, 10 May 1736.

¹¹ BL diary, 18, 19 March, 6 April 1736. ¹² BL diary, 14 May 1736.

¹³ *Registrum Collegii Pembrochiensis*, PMB/P/2/1, Pembroke College archives.

¹⁴ Buttery books, PMB/F/1/1736, Pembroke College archives.

¹⁵ BL diary, 16 March 1736; Richard Graves, quoted in V. H. H. Green, *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge* (London, 1964), 115.

¹⁶ Graham C. G. Thomas (ed.), 'George Whitefield and Friends: The Correspondence of Some Early Methodists', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 26:3–27:4 (1990–2). Volume 27:3: Whitefield to Daniel Abbot (13 April 1739), 291.

¹⁷ Whitefield to John Wesley (11 June 1735), *Works*, 1:483.

¹⁸ BL diary, 27 May 1736.

bombarded her: 'O my honoured mother, my soul is in distress for you: Flee, flee I beseech you to Jesus Christ by faith.' When she comes 'to judgment, God will shew you how many tears I have shed in secret for you'. Over the years this was the continuing theme, with increasing resentment at her not replying to his letters. 'One would imagine' that 'your affections are abated to me'.¹⁹ She died in 1751, apparently having come to no reconciliation with her youngest son.

It could rightly be supposed that Whitefield had a limited focus on personal friendship. Apparently, his only Gloucester boyhood friend was Gabriel Harris, and at Oxford it is difficult to determine anyone who consistently filled that role. At the very close of his university career he met an 18-year-old student from Lincoln College, Thomas Turner. 'I like the young man', yet 'Turner is so brisk [with me] I hope nobody has put prejudices in his head.' However, Whitefield soon began 'to bath privately with Turner . . . He seems to be very fond of me.'²⁰ Nevertheless, Whitefield was saying at that time: 'I love retirement dearly. I am never less alone than when alone.' As one correspondent wrote to him in the mid-1750s, 'I have heard you observe, you sought no new Friendships'; and in the last years of his life Whitefield ruefully observed that 'Job's friends were his greatest trials . . . So it hath been with me.'²¹

It is difficult to find Whitefield expressing deep human affection. The only evidence is a flurry of five letters written within a period of three weeks in early 1738 to John Edmonds, a founding member of London's Fetter Lane Society. 'Surely . . . there is a divine attraction between your soul and mine . . . and the very mention of your name fills me with a sympathy I never felt for anyone before . . . May we continue lovers of God and one another for ever . . . oh dearest, dearest Mr Edmonds, ever, ever, ever your own, G.W.' Finally, Whitefield wrote to Edmonds's wife: 'You've got that which I would be glad to have', that is 'your husband for a companion'.²²

COURTSHIPS AND MARRIAGE

In Whitefield's relationships with women, expressions of affection sound with an eloquent absence. As a guest of Thomas Delamotte and his wife, Whitefield

¹⁹ Whitefield to Elizabeth Longden (16 November 1739, 22 August 1740, 26 August 1746), *Works*, 1:122, 203; 2:82–3.

²⁰ BL diary, 15, 23 April, 10 May 1736. Two days after Whitefield mentioned meeting him, Turner matriculated at Lincoln College. Joseph Foster (ed.), *Alumni Oxonienses . . . 1715–1886*, 4 vols (Oxford and London, c.1888–91), 4:1451.

²¹ BL diary, 17 April 1736; Edward Grace to Whitefield (18 January 1756), Library of Congress, Papers of George Whitefield, vol. 1, letter 43; Whitefield to Mrs W— (4 May 1762), *Works*, 3:276.

²² Whitefield to John Edmonds (10, 13, 22 January 1738); Whitefield to Mary Edmonds (31 January 1738), 'Whitefield and Friends', 26:4, pp. 372, 374, 384.

became acquainted with their daughter Elizabeth and on his last visit tentatively broached the matter of marriage. Then, from Georgia, with staggering honesty he wrote two letters: one to Elizabeth's parents, the other to her. To them he reported that one of three women he had already brought from England to be engaged in the work of the Bethesda orphanage had died, while another 'seems to be in a declining state'. Therefore, 'a mistress is absolutely necessary for the due management . . . [at Bethesda], and to take off some of that care, which at present lies upon me . . . [Do] you think your daughter . . . is a proper person to engage in such an undertaking? . . . I am free from that foolish passion, which the world calls Love.' To their daughter he wrote: 'Can you, when you have a husband, be as though you had none, and willingly part with him, even for a long season, when his Lord and master shall . . . command him to leave you behind? . . . I have often thought you was the person appointed for me . . . [but] the passionate expressions which carnal courtiers use, I think, ought to be avoided by those that would marry in the Lord.' Four months later he had his answer and informed William Seward: 'I . . . find from . . . *letters* that Miss E— D— is in a seeking state only. Surely that will not do; I would have one that is full of faith and the Holy Ghost . . . Such a one would help, and not retard me in my dear Lord's work . . . I hang upon my Jesus . . . he daily . . . assures me that he will not permit me to fall by the hands of a woman.'²³

That would seem to have been that—except five months later Whitefield was writing that 'Mr and Mrs Delamot refuse to give their daughter, but yet I believe she may be my wife'.²⁴ In fact, she soon married a Fetter Lane Moravian. His bitter dismissal of Elizabeth Delamotte's Christian commitment, only then to suppose that he would marry her, must place a question mark around Whitefield's integrity. In any case, we might not be inclined to disagree with Luke Tyerman's observation that George Whitefield was 'as odd a wooer as ever wooed'.²⁵ Any doubt regarding that judgement evaporates instantly when confronted with Whitefield's actual marriage. Two and a half months before he mused that Elizabeth Delamotte would yet be his wife, Seward—on his behalf—approached Elizabeth James, asking if *she* would marry Whitefield and go to Georgia to supervise Bethesda. Mrs James, a Welsh widow, was a supporter of Howel Harris; more than that, they were engaged. However, Whitefield proceeded to propose marriage to Harris's

²³ Whitefield to Mr and Mrs [Thomas] Delamotte (4 April 1740); Whitefield to Elizabeth Delamotte (4 April 1740); Whitefield to William Seward (26 June 1740), *Works*, 1:159–60, 160–1, 194.

²⁴ Whitefield to Gilbert Tennent (25 November 1740), Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Special Collections, Box 1, File 06.

²⁵ Quoted in Dallimore, 1:368.

fiancée; after all, Whitefield wrote, he had just 'received a release from Miss F—d' and was free to do what God 'shall be pleased to shew me is my duty'.²⁶ Who Miss F was is anyone's guess. At this juncture, Whitefield appears to have been leading an intricate personal life, engaged in a game of matrimonial chess with at least three queens in play.²⁷ When they met at her home, Whitefield assured Harris that it was God's will that Elizabeth James become Elizabeth Whitefield, and a broken-hearted Harris handed her over. When she objected that she was committed to Harris, Whitefield 'said he would not love her the less nor be jealous . . . & was for marrying now immediately', which took place five days later.²⁸

Whitefield informed a correspondent that 'the Lord has given me a wife. Her name was James, a widow, between thirty and forty years of age.' Two months later he had narrowed her age to 'about thirty-six years . . . neither rich in fortune, nor beautiful as to her person, but, I believe, a true child of God, and would not, I think, attempt to hinder me in his work for the world'. To another correspondent he wrote that since he had married for Christ, 'I shall thereby not be hindered . . . O for that blessed time when we shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be as the angels of God!'²⁹ Six months after their wedding, Whitefield's wife, ten years his senior, was having 'exceeding close inward trials'. Thus began twenty-seven years of marriage. Over those years Whitefield expressed such statements as: 'Marry when or whom you will, expect trouble in the flesh.' Or, a clergyman's wife can prove to be 'a thorn in the flesh. Ministers must expect such things.'³⁰ The unsuitability of Whitefield's marriage only magnified his already restless spirit.

Two years into marriage, Elizabeth gave birth to a son, whereupon Whitefield publicly announced that God had informed him of the baby's destiny as a noted preacher. In the event, John Whitefield died aged four months, leaving two deep scars of guilt. Whitefield believed that he might well have been responsible for an accident in the chaise he had been driving, in which he and his expectant wife had been badly shaken and which he felt contributed directly to John's death. The second scar was his having to admit that, in his certainty of his son's becoming a great preacher in the sight of God, Whitefield

²⁶ National Library of Wales (NLW), Howel Harris diary, 10 September 1740; Whitefield to Howel Harris (22 August 1741), NLW Trevecka letter 3333.

²⁷ A year after he took a wife, Whitefield told Howel Harris that there had been '2 that he did not marry'. Howel Harris diary, 10 November 1742, in Tom Beynon, *Howell Harris, Reformer and Soldier (1714–1773)* (Caernarvon, 1958), 42.

²⁸ NLW, Howel Harris diary, 9 November 1741.

²⁹ Whitefield to J[ames] H[abersham] (7 December 1741); Whitefield to G[ilbert] T[ennent] (2 February 1742); Whitefield to J[ames] O[gilvie] (30 December 1741), *Works* 1:344, 363, 355.

³⁰ Whitefield to Howel Harris (29 May 1742), *Works*, 1:398; Whitefield to Mr S— (20 November 1750); Whitefield to the Countess of Huntingdon (14 February 1754), *Works*, 2:387, 3:63.

had—in his own words—‘misapplied several texts of scripture’.³¹ He proceeded now to throw himself into an even more feverish preaching schedule, taking him from his wife’s side for lengthy periods and all the more setting the pattern of absence and distance that became a source of rumbling irritation between them. Breathtakingly, he mused over leaving his wife in America ‘unknown to her’, to look after Bethesda when he returned to England in 1748. ‘Should I go without her, I fear, the trial will be too hard for her’; yet he did leave her. Having told her that he was going only to Bermuda to preach and promising soon to return to the American mainland—whence they together would embark for England—from Bermuda he sailed direct to England, leaving her stranded, destined to cross the Atlantic alone. One historian airily states that she ‘undoubtedly submitted to this change in plans with little or no complaint’ and caps these fancies with this: ‘Although Whitefield was so busy that her hours in his company were few, the association with so saintly a man could not fail to be a benediction’ to her soul. Whitefield wrote: ‘O that I knew how it was with her! But I see that God will make those he loves, to live by faith and not by sense.’ She did not reach England for a full year after Whitefield. Meanwhile, he received from her a letter, in which he ‘found something of the woman mixed with the Christian’.³²

On his 1748 return to England, Whitefield confided that ‘none in America could bear’ his wife, while she herself felt that she had been nothing ‘but a load & burdhen [*sic*]’ to him.³³ Never again did she accompany him on any of his preaching missions at home or abroad. Over the years, the relationship became ever more painful. In 1751 after an absence from her of several months, Whitefield planned to sail once again for America. ‘How my wife is, I cannot tell, having not heard from her for some time; but I hope she will be resigned.’ ‘I dread coming to London, and think it would be best to part [for America] at a distance.’ In 1754 he was in America again and soon decided to prolong his stay. The task of informing his wife fell to a New Jersey minister: ‘Shall I now sympathize with you, under the frequent & sometimes long absence of your dear Husband? Or shall I not . . . congratulate you on his being about his Master’s business . . . by denying your self.’ There is an endorsement written on the cover of the letter: ‘Not read.’³⁴

³¹ Whitefield to Mr D— T— (9 February 1744), *Works*, 2:51–2.

³² Whitefield to Howel Harris (6 March 1748), NLW Trevecka Letter 1773; Dallimore, 2:254, 111; Whitefield to Mrs F— (2 June 1748), *Works* 2:142; Whitefield to Howel Harris (13 December 1748), NLW Trevecka Letter 1833.

³³ Howel Harris diary, 5 September 1751, in Tom Beynon (ed.), *Howell Harris’s Visits to London* (Aberystwyth, 1960), 16; Elizabeth Whitefield to Howel Harris (6 October 1746), NLW Trevecka Letter 1535.

³⁴ Whitefield to the Reverend Mr Z— (12, 29 July 1751), *Works*, 2:417, 420; James Davenport to Elizabeth Whitefield (10 October 1754), Dr Williams’s Library, Congregational Library MS. Ilc.9/12.

She died in 1768, and a monument recorded this ambiguous inscription: 'To the memory of Mrs. Whitefield, who, after thirty years' strong and frequent manifestations of her Redeemer's love, mixed with strong and frequent strugglings against the buffetings of Satan, and many sicknesses and indwellings of sin, was joyfully released.' Cornelius Winter, who knew the couple intimately, wrote that Whitefield 'was not happy in his wife . . . He did not intentionally make his wife unhappy . . . [but] her death set his mind much at liberty.' Winter added that 'she could be under no temptation from his conduct towards the [female] sex', for in such matters 'he was a very pure man'. Indeed, he apparently was never accused of personal impurity, except by satirists. His relationships with women in general were not close; neither, of course, were they close with his wife. That crusty bachelor, John Berridge, famously wrote after Elizabeth's death that matrimony 'might have spoiled John [Wesley] and George [Whitefield], if a wise Master had not graciously sent them a brace of ferrets. Dear George has now got his liberty again, and he will escape well if he is not caught by another tenterhook.'³⁵ There was little chance of that. Having married in haste, George Whitefield had had leisure enough to repent. His original impulse had been correct: marriage for an itinerating preacher was not wise, perhaps not even godly.

Before he graduated from Oxford, Whitefield confided to his diary that 'I have a natural shyness I find to do things that are . . . dull or basic'. He now translated this aversion into a recurring pattern of tiring of—in fact of reneging on—commitments. From the outset he proved, at best, a vicarious vicar and very soon 'resolved to give up [the] Savannah Living . . . and not to fix in any particular Place'. Moreover, less than two months after returning from four years in America, he was stating that he did not want the responsibility of establishing and nurturing Methodist 'societies' in England. Howel Harris, who had struggled to keep the London chapel afloat during the deluge of those years, bitterly complained that after his return Whitefield refused to take any responsibility, and 'all is confusion'. Departing again for America, Whitefield called on Robert Keen and other laymen to carry the total burden of his London chapel affairs, together with 'all other my concerns in England: . . . Consider, dear Sir, it is for God!' 'Do not consult me in any thing, unless absolutely necessary.' He later implored these laymen to run things not only in his absence but 'when I am present'. 'Send me no bad news . . . Let me enjoy myself in my delightful itinerancy.' His brother James said of Whitefield that he lacked 'resolution to go through what he takes in hand steadily'—a

³⁵ For the inscription: *The Annual Register for the year 1769* (London, 1769), 110; William Jay, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the late Rev. Cornelius Winter* (London, 1809), 80; John Berridge to the Countess of Huntingdon (23 March 1770), [A. C. H. Seymour], *The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon*, 2 vols (London, 1839), 1:389.

judgement difficult to doubt, unless one applies it to his incessant preaching.³⁶ It may be concluded that his marriage also suffered from a lack of 'resolution'.

BOASTFULNESS AND JUDGEMENTALISM

As a young man, George Whitefield displayed a remarkable self-assurance, not to say boastfulness, his lips never far from his own trumpet. As has been noted, he prayed to be preserved from a 'sinful modesty'. Perhaps at first his pride confused him, and as he received his Oxford degree he recorded: 'O proud Whitefield proud Whitefield God humble thee.' However, over the following years there are dozens of instances where the self-trumpeting sounds a discordant blast. Beginning with the observation that he, like Christ, had been born in an inn, he stated that 'God has Set His seal to my Ministry', and that the 'account of my infant years was wrote by the will of God'. To others, Whitefield reported that 'God [gives me] such wisdom as all the adversaries cannot resist'. 'I think few enjoy such continued manifestations of God's presence as I do, and have done for some years.' He assured his mother that 'Jesus . . . causes whatever I take in hand to prosper'.³⁷

It must be supposed that Whitefield believed that all this somehow conveyed God's glory and not his own, and surely he would have been duly taken aback by a follower's letter announcing that it would be 'no crime to fall down & worship you'. What to Whitefield's followers was evidence of his God-inspired ministry, to detractors appeared an ego of wide girth. This unsettling aspect of his character, when combined with a judgemental spirit, could prove explosive, and for a time his proselytizing zeal was matched by his venom. He unequivocally maintained that anyone who did not adopt his formula for the chemistry of conversion would be 'thrust down into Hell', that those who opposed him were servants of Satan.³⁸ Martin Benson had given Whitefield

³⁶ BL diary, 3 April 1736; Journal 7, p. 62; Whitefield to John Wesley (1 September 1748), *Letters II, The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford, 1982), 327–8; Howell Harris diary, 19 December 1749, Beynon, *Howell Harris's Visits to London*, 251; Whitefield to R[obert] K[een] (15 January, 26 March 1763, 4 May 1765, 20 September 1767), *Works*, 3:285, 290, 326, 353; Howell Harris diary, 22 July 1748, Beynon, *Howell Harris's Visits to London*, 208.

³⁷ BL diary, 15 June 1736; Journal 3, p. 19; Whitefield to John Wesley (8 November 1739), *Letters I, The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 25, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford, 1980), 699; Whitefield to Westley Hall (21 February 1738), 'Whitefield and Friends', 26:4, p. 386; Whitefield to John Wesley (9 November 1740), *Works*, 1:219; Whitefield to Elizabeth Longden (2 May 1746), in 'Newly Discovered Letters of George Whitefield 1745–46', ed. John W. Christie, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, 32:2 (1954), 86.

³⁸ John Groves to Whitefield (1 August 1764), Library of Congress, Papers of George Whitefield, vol. 2, letter 38; Whitefield to Mary Edmonds (31 January 1738), 'Whitefield and Friends', 26:4, p. 384; Sermon, 'A Preservative against unsettled Notions', *Works*, 5:157.