

Life
of the
Rev. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

by

David Addison Harsha

**Life
of the
Rev. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.**

by

David Addison Harsha

Quinta Press

Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, England,
SY10 7RN

The format of this volume is copyright
© 2011 Quinta Press

www.quintapress.com

For proof-reading purposes the line breaks are in the same place as the original,
hence the stretched text

LIFE
OF THE
REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

BY

D. A. HARSHA, M.A.

‘O TO BE INSTRUMENTAL TO BRING ONLY ONE SOUL TO JESUS
CHRIST.’ — *Whitefield*.

Whitefield’s Monument.

ALBANY:

J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STBEET.

1866.

No.

Entered according to Act of Congress, In the year 1865, by

D. A. HARSHA,

In the Clerk’s Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Northern District of New York.

EDITION OF 50 COPIES,
Of which 35 copies are for presentation.

‘WHITEFIELD WAS A GREAT AND A HOLY MAN; AMONG THE
FOREMOST OF THE HEROES OF PHILANTHROPY, AND AS A
PREACHER WITHOUT A SUPERIOR OR A RIVAL.’ — *Sir Jas. Stephen*.

‘A BRIGHT AND EXULTING VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT’S SUFFI-
CIENCY WAS HIS THEOLOGY; DELIGHT IN GOD AND REJOICING IN
CHRIST JESUS WAS HIS PIETY; AND A COMPASSIONATE SOLICI-

TUDE FOR THE SOULS OF MEN WAS HIS RULING PASSION. * * HE WAS THE PRINCE OF ENGLISH PREACHERS. MANY HAVE SURPASSED HIM AS SERMON-MAKERS, BUT NONE HAVE APPROACHED HIM AS A PULPIT ORATOR. MANY HAVE OUTSHOWN HIM IN THE CLEARNESS OF THEIR LOGIC, THE GRANDEUR OF THEIR CONCEPTIONS, AND THE SPARKLING BEAUTY OF SINGLE SENTENCES; BUT IN THE POWER OF DARTING THE GOSPEL DIRECT INTO THE CONSCIENCE HE ECLIPSED THEM ALL.'—*Rev. Dr. Hamilton, of London.*

'PERHAPS NO MAN EVER POSSESSED, IN A HIGHER DEGREE THAN MR. WHITEFIELD, ABILITIES FOR EXEMPLIFYING THE RULES OF LONGINUS ON THE SUBLIME; AND, CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF THE SUBJECTS, AND THE MIXED ASSEMBLIES HE ADDRESSED, PERHAPS, NO ONE ACTUALLY EXEMPLIFIED THEM TO GREATER EFFECT.'—*Dr. E. Williams.*

PREFACE.

IN the following biographical memoir of one of the most celebrated pulpit orators the world has ever seen, it has been the aim to present only a summary of his very diversified and eventful career. With the outlines of WHITEFIELD'S life, a full description is given of his character as a preacher, interspersed with anecdotes and illustrations of the power of his eloquence. The biographical incidents are related in chronological order. The principal authorities on his life and times have been carefully consulted and compared. The author would acknowledge his obligations to the several Lives of Whitefield, by Dr. Gillies, Robert Philip, and Dr. Belcher, and to the Essays on his eloquence, in the *Christian Examiner*, *American Quarterly Register*, *Fraser's Magazine*, *North American Review*, *Christian Quarterly Spectator*, *Literary and Theological Review*, *Christian Review*, *New Englander*, and the *Eclectic Review*.

One of the ablest articles on this subject, that he has examined, is that by the Right Hon. Sir James Stephen, in the *Edinburgh Review*, republished by the Messrs. Appleton, New York, in an octavo volume, under the title of *Talfourd and Stephen's Essays*. It is well worthy of a careful perusal by those who wish to see both the excellencies and the faults of WHITEFIELD exhibited in a clear, forcible and philosophical light.

6

The study of WHITEFIELD'S life is interesting, especially to ministers of the gospel. O, that we had more of his spirit animating all branches of the Christian ministry at the present day!—a day of coldness and formality in religious matters. If such were the case, we might expect, with the blessing of God, such a revival of religion as the world has seldom seen. That such a happy result may yet be accomplished, let clergymen and Christian laymen everywhere pray more earnestly, and labor more faithfully, and become more zealous and valiant for the truth as it is in Jesus,—seeking the Lord *till He come and rain righteousness upon us*. Then may we look for another pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that will cause even *the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose*.

It should be the language of every faithful minister of the gospel, 'Now let me study and contrive, wherein I may best promote the interest of Christ and His gospel here on earth.'

It is the author's wish that the perusal of this memoir may stir up the minds of many of the servants of Christ, 'by way of remembrance,' so that, with renewed activity, zeal, benevolence and piety, relying on the God of all grace for assistance, they may be led to imitate more successfully the example of him of whom Cowper justly says:

He lov'd the world that hated him; the tear
That dropp'd upon his Bible was sincere:
Assail'd by scandal and the tongue of strife;
His only answer was—a blameless life;
And he that forg'd and he that threw the dart,
Had each a brother's interest in his heart.'

D. A. H.

D. A. H. ARGYLE, N. Y., Nov., 1865.

LIFE OF
REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD was born in the ancient city of Gloucester, England, on the sixteenth of December, 1714, the year in which Queen Anne died, and George the First ascended the throne. He was nearly a year younger than his devout friend the Rev. James Hervey, whom he was the means of leading to the Cross, and of instructing in 'the way of God more perfectly.' In his native city, the parents of Whitefield kept the Bell Inn. His father dying when he was only two years old, his education devolved upon his mother, who treated him with peculiar tenderness, and gave him the best education within her power. His early youth was spent in the commission of sinful acts; he was then addicted to Sabbath-breaking, card-playing, lying, filthy talking, and several other vicious practices. He committed sins of which he says—*'their dismal effects I have felt and groaned under ever since.'* But like Bunyan,

8

John Newton, and many other pious and zealous servants of Christ, he was at length plucked as a brand out of the fire, and made an illustrious monument of divine grace; that in him Jesus Christ 'might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.'

In the providence of God, Whitefield was raised up in times of great spiritual coldness and declension, to be a 'burning and a shining light' in the Church of Christ, in England and America.*

At the age of twelve, he was placed at the grammar school of St. Mary de Crypt, in his native city, where he remained about three years,

making considerable progress in the study of the Latin classics, and, at the same time, affording remarkable evidence of his oratorical powers. He gained much credit for his declamations before the corporation at their annual visit of the school; and received pecuniary rewards for his efforts on such occasions. He was particularly fond of reading and acting dramatic pieces,—a practice which he subsequently deeply regretted.

* Whitefield was the instrument of producing a higher tone of religious sentiment and feeling, which, happily for England, has been gradually rising ever since the eminent man that produced it has been called to his reward.'—*Electic Review*.

9

Becoming tired of study, he left the school, returned home, and assisted his mother in the business of the inn for more than a year. At the age of seventeen, having become the subject of religious impression, he received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Under his awakenings of conscience, he read, with much delight and profit, *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, and *The Christian's Defence Against the Fears of Death*, by Charles Drelincourt. He now resumed his studies, and, at the age of eighteen entered the University of Oxford. Here he became acquainted with the Wesleys, who sought to enlighten and guide him in his religious convictions. Among other devotional and practical works which seem to have been useful to him, at this time, was Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*,* which his friend Charles Wesley had sent to him for perusal. But, seemingly 'ignorant of God's righteousness' at this period of his life, he went about to establish his own righteousness. He persevered

* Henry Scougal is a pious Scottish divine. Dr. Doddridge says, 'Scougal's works, though few, are of the first rank; decent eloquence suited to his subjects, noble and proper thoughts run through every page of his writings. He seems the best model of his class; his *Life of God*, and other sermons, should be often read.' Another critic observes, 'His *Life of God in the Son of Man* is my *vade mecum*.' There

has been several editions of this useful work.

10

in a course of abstinence and fasting till he had greatly impaired his constitution, and was unable to walk, from extreme weakness. While in this condition he was seized with a severe illness—‘a glorious visitation,’ as he terms it—which seems to have been the instrument of leading him to rely entirely upon Christ and His righteousness for salvation; and of discovering to him the true ground of a sinners hope,—the atoning blood, the vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer. He now began to experience joys of which he had previously been a stranger. Of this happy change he thus speaks: ‘Notwithstanding my fit of sickness continued six or seven weeks, I trust I shall have reason to bless God for it through eternity; for, about the end of the seventh week, after having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan, and many months’ inexpressible trials by night and day, under the spirit of bondage, God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold on his dear Son by a living faith, and by giving me the spirit of adoption, to seal me, as I humbly hope, to the day of redemption. But, oh! with what joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full

11

assurance of faith broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of my espousals, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance.—“The day star” arose in my heart. The spirit of mourning was taken from me. For some time I could not avoid singing psalms wherever I was; but my joy became gradually more settled. Thus were the days of my mourning ended.’ He now examined the New Testament more carefully;

read Bishop Hall's *Contemplations*, with no little profit; and at the same time, poured out his soul to God in earnest prayer for instruction in the way of righteousness and of peace.

For the full restoration of his health, it was found necessary for him to leave the University for some time, and return to Gloucester, that he might enjoy the benefit of a change of air, and a relaxation of study. The short season which he now spent at home was one of great improvement in his spiritual life, for laying aside other books he devoted himself to the study of the Scriptures, and spent considerable time in secret prayer. Of his religious exercises at this time he thus, particularly, speaks: 'My mind being now more opened and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees; laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line

12

and word. This proved meat indeed, and drink indeed, to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the Book of God, in one month, than I could *met* have acquired from all the writings of men. In one word, I found it profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction; every way sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work and word. About this time, God was pleased to enlighten my soul, and bring me into the knowledge of His free grace—and the necessity of being *justified in His sight by faith only*. This was more extraordinary, because my friends at Oxford had rather inclined to the *mystic divinity*. Burkitt's and Henry's *Expositions* were of admirable use, to lead me into *this* and all other gospel truths. *It is* the good old doctrine of the Church of England; it is what the holy martyrs, in Queen Mary's time, sealed with their blood.'

Oh, 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 com-

13

forts of the Holy Ghost, and was edified and refreshed in the multitude of peace.'

About ten years before this time, on the quiet banks of the Hudson river, near New York, the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, whom Whitefield subsequently met at Northampton, was enjoying similar soul-entrancing views of the goodness of God as manifested in the work of redemption. It is refreshing to read, in his ample account of these rambles in the fields near the river, of his sweet communion with God. 'I very frequently used to retire,' he says, 'into a solitary place on the banks of Hudson's river, at some distance from the city, for contemplation on divine things and secret converse with God; and had many sweet hours there. I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the Holy Scriptures of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt a harmony between something in my heart and those sweet and powerful words. I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence, to see the wonders contained in it; and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.' And on leaving New York for his home

14

in Windsor, Connecticut, he records his religious experience in the same happy manner: 'It was sweet to me to think of meeting dear Christians in Heaven, where we should never part more.

At Saybrook we went ashore to lodge on Saturday, and there kept the Sabbath; where I had a sweet and refreshing season, walking alone in the fields. It was a comfort to think of that state, where there is fulness of joy; where reigns heavenly calm, and delightful love without alloy; where there are continually the dearest expressions of this love; where is the enjoyment of the persons loved, without ever parting; where those persons who appeared so lovely in this world, will really be inexpressibly more lovely, and full of love to us. And how sweetly will the mutual lovers join together, to sing the praises of God and the Lamb! How will it fill us with joy to think, that this enjoyment, these sweet exercises, will never cease, but will last to all eternity!

How similar is the experience of God's servants in all ages! How sweet and soothing, oftentimes, are the thoughts of the heart sanctified by divine grace, flinging sunshine over the darkest hours of our earthly pilgrimage, and pointing us to the bright, joyful mansions of our Father's house in heaven! Truly may the sincere Christian say

15

with the Psalmist: 'How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee.'

In 1736, at the age of twenty-two, Whitefield began his ministerial career. He preached his first sermon in his native city, on *The Necessity and Benefit of Religious Society*, from Eccl. 4: ix-xii: '*Two are better than one, etc.*' He then returned to Oxford, took his degree of bachelor of arts, and soon after accepted an invitation to officiate for some time in the chapel of the Tower of London. He remained in the metropolis two months, when, having attained much popularity,

he returned to Oxford, and devoted the chief part of his time to the study of Henry's *Commentary*, which was always a favorite work with him, and which he perused several times in the course of his life, with deep seriousness and devotion. He next officiated for a few months at the rural parish of Dummer,* in Hampshire, and from this period continued to preach to crowded congregations with increasing popularity.

* Shortly after Whitefield left Dummer in 1737, the Rev. James Hervey accepted the curacy of that place, where he remained about a year in the discharge of his ministerial duties.

16

In January, 1738, in the twenty-third year of his age, he sailed for America. Safely reaching Savannah in the month of May, he labored with success in the province of Georgia till the 6th of September of the same year, when he embarked at Charleston, for London.* After a very perilous voyage of nine weeks, he arrived at Limerick. Thence he preceded to Dublin, where he preached, and was cordially received. Remaining only a short time in Ireland, he hastened to London; but many of the clergy there refused him their pulpits, disapproving some expressions in his published letters, and his conduct in America. Suspected of fanaticism and enthusiasm, he was soon excluded from most of the churches in England. Hence he determined to resort to the primitive mode of proclaiming the gospel. 'I thought,' says he, 'it might be doing the service of my Lord, 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.' On the 17th of February, 1738, he preached at Kingswood at Rose Green, his first field pulpit.

* The Rev. J. C. Ryle, in his work, *The Priest, the Puritan and the Preacher*, is mistaken in saying, in regard to this first visit to America, that 'Whitefield returned from Georgia after about two years' absence.'

17

From that day dates his open-air preaching. He now delivered his message to immense crowds, in various parts of England, in Moorfields, on Kennington Common, and on Blackheath, Gloucester, Bristol, and many other towns. In describing his own feelings on one of these occasions, while preaching in the open air, he says, 'The open firmament above me, 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 at times all affected and drenched in tears together, to which sometimes was added the solemnity of the approaching evening, was almost too much for, and quite overcame me.' It is said that from twenty to forty thousand persons were frequently congregated to hear him. The great majority of these hearers were doubtless drawn together by mere curiosity to hear this wonderful and fascinating orator, rather than from any desire to hear the truth as it is in Jesus; and the remarkable impression made upon their minds by his eloquence, it is to be feared, did not long remain, but like the 'morning cloud' and 'early dew,' soon passed away. But still, making allowance for the effect of an eloquence the most sublime and pathetic, it is believed that great numbers, under the preaching of Whitefield, first experi-

18

enced a change of heart, and found peace in believing. The judicious Toplady gives him credit for having been, in the course of his entire ministry, useful to 'tens of thousands besides himself;' and the pious James Hervey expresses his obligation to Whitefield, by stating that his journals and sermons, especially the sermon on '*What think ye of Christ?*' were the means of leading him to a knowledge of the truth.

After visiting Dr. Watts at Stoke Newington, and Dr. Doddridge at Northampton, Whitefield embarked the second time for America, on the 14th of August, 1739, and landed at Philadelphia in the beginning of November. Before visiting Savannah, he preached several times to immense congregations in Philadelphia and New York, at Elizabethtown, Burlington and New Brunswick in New Jersey; and in the States of Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. He reached Savannah on the 11th of January, 1740, and proceeded to lay the foundation of the Orphan-house—a favorite undertaking—for which he had already raised large sums. He continued to preach with his usual fervor, power and success, to very large, attentive, and affected audiences in Savannah and Charleston till the last of August,

19

when he complied with the pressing invitations of the Rev. Dr. Colman* and Rev. Mr. Cooper, of Boston, to visit New England. On reaching Boston he was cordially received by the governor's son, and some of the most distinguished clergymen and citizens; and the following Sabbath after his arrival, preached in Dr. Colman's church. Speaking of this occasion afterwards, Dr. Colman declared that it was the happiest day he ever saw in his life. After having preached in many

* Benjamin Colman was born in Boston in 1673. He graduated at Harvard College in 1692. He was the first minister of the church in Brattle street, Boston. 'He was an eminently useful and good man, and was universally respected for his learning and talents. He was distinguished as a preacher. Tall and erect in stature, of a benign aspect, presenting in his whole appearance something amiable and venerable, and having a peculiar expression in his eye, he was enabled to interest his hearers. His voice was harmonious, and his action inimitable. He was ranked among the first ministers of New England. Jesus Christ was the great subject of his preaching. He dwelt upon the Redeemer in His person, natures, offices, and benefits, and upon the duties of natural religion as performed only by strength derived from the Saviour, and as acceptable only for His sake.'—*Allen's American Biog. Dict.*

In the early part of his life, Dr. Colman spent a few years in England, where he became acquainted with several eminent persons, among whom were John Howe, Dr. Calamy, Burkitt, and Mrs. Howe, then Miss Singer, the author of *Devout Exercises*, and the intimate friend of Dr. Watts. Dr. Colman died in Boston on the 29th of August, 1747, at the age of seventy-three. See *Turell's Life and Character of Dr. Colman*; also *Dr. Sprague's Annals of the American Pulpit*.

20

neighboring towns, he returned to Boston on the 6th of October, and delivered his farewell sermon before an audience which is supposed to have numbered nearly twenty thousand. From Boston he set out to visit the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, at Northampton, preaching on his way at Concord, Sudbury, Marlborough, Worcester, Leicester, and Hadley. Whitefield having read, in England, Edwards' *Narrative of Surprising Conversions at Northampton*, had an earnest desire to see the profound author, and receive from his mouth an account of those remarkable conversions.* Their interview, we are told, was highly interesting. Whitefield preached several very impressive discourses in Edwards' pulpit.

* In the spring of 1740, a second extensive and powerful revival of religion commenced in Northampton. It again very much pervaded the town, and large numbers were added to the church. In the autumn of that year, the Rev. George Whitefield, whose apostolical and eminently useful labors in Europe and America will long be remembered with adoring, on his second visit to the American colonies, went to Northampton for the purpose of seeing and conversing with Mr. Edwards. Their interview was highly interesting. Mr. Whitefield spent four days with him, preached five sermons in his pulpit, and afterwards accompanied him, with some other friends, to East Windsor, for the purpose of paying their respects to Mr. Edwards' venerable father. The labors of this wonderful man in Northampton were blessed to the spiritual benefit of many individuals, and were instrumental in continuing and extending that happy state of religious

21

After leaving Northampton, Whitefield preached, with his usual power and success, in New Haven, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Charleston and Savannah. On the 16th of January, 1741,

he embarked again for England, and arrived at Falmouth in the following March.

On his return to England, Whitefield separated from the Wesleys. The cause of their controversy is well known. Rev. John Wesley, having adopted Arminian sentiments, preached and wrote in favor of Christian perfection, and very strongly against election. This excited Whitefield, who was a decided Calvinist. He could not give up the doctrine of election;—‘a doctrine, which,’ he says, ‘I thought, and do now believe, was taught me of God, therefore, could not possibly recede from it.’ Speaking of the doctrine of perfection, in a letter to Mr. Wesley, he says, ‘I am sorry, honored sir, to hear by many letters, that you seem to own a *sinless perfection* in this life attainable. I think I cannot answer you better than a venerable old minister in these parts answered a

attention, which had preceded his reasonable visit. Mr. Edwards himself seems to have regarded this visit of the great English evangelist with peculiar pleasure, and to have attached no small importance to his labors at Northampton. His ministrations in other parts of New England were, beyond all doubt, eminently instrumental in promoting the interests of real religion.’—*Dr. Miller’s Life of Edwards.*

22

Quaker, “bring me a man that hath really arrived to this, and I will pay his expenses, let him come from whence he will.”* With regard to the *matter* of his own preaching, Whitefield has somewhere else expressed himself thus emphatically; ‘The doctrines I have preached, come with double evidence upon my mind day by day. I am more convinced that they are the truths of God: they agree with the written Word, and the expression of ALL the saints in ALL ages. Nothing more confirms me in the belief of them, than the opposition that is made against them by natural men. ELECTION, FREE GRACE, FREE JUSTIFICATION, without any regard to works foreseen, are such paradoxes to carnal minds, that they cannot away with

them. This is the wisdom of God, which is foolishness with men; and which, the Lord being my helper, I intend to exalt and contend for more and more; not with carnal weapons, that be far from me; but with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. No sword like that.'

* Notwithstanding his difference with the Wesleys on some theological questions, Whitefield seems to have sincerely loved these eminent servants of Christ. As one instance of this we find the following codicil to Whitefield's will: 'N. B. I also leave a mourning ring to my honored and dear friends, the Rev. John and Charles Wesley, in token of my indissoluble union with them, in heart and Christian affection, notwithstanding our difference in judgment about some particular points of doctrine.'

23

At the earnest request of the Rev. Messrs. Erskine,* and several other pious and influential persons, Whitefield visited Scotland in the summer of 1741. Arriving at Leith on the 30th of July, he immediately proceeded to Dunfermline, where he preached in Ralph Erskine's church. He was loved and welcomed by the Erskines. 'I was received,' he says, 'very lovingly at Dunfermline.' He was surprised and delighted when he preached in the meeting-house to an immense assembly, by the rustling of a host of Bibles all at once, as he gave out his text: 'a scene,' he says, 'I never was witness to before!' Ralph Erskine was equally pleased with the sermon and the preacher. He wrote the next day to his brother, Ebenezer: 'The Lord is evidently with him.' and to Adam Gibb: 'I have many pleasant things to say of him: I see the Lord is with him.' 'I look upon this youth as raised up of God for

* Ebenezer Erskine was born in 1680. He received his education at the University of Edinburgh; and became minister of Stirling, in 1731. He died in 1754.

Ralph Erskine was born in 1685. He was also educated at the University of Edinburgh. In 1711, he was ordained pastor of a church at Dunfermline. He died in 1752. These two excellent brothers were the founders of the Secession Church in Scotland. They were fine scholars, popular, faithful, zealous and devotional preachers of the gospel, and their names and writings are still held in high estimation by a large

body of Christians on both sides of the Atlantic.

24

special service,' wrote the Rev. John Willison, of Dundee, author of *Sacramental Meditations*, and *The Afflicted Man's Companion*.

It is proper to state here that the Erskines subsequently became alienated from Whitefield, strongly opposed him from the pulpit, and characterized some of the revivals which took place under his preaching, as 'convulsions instead of convictions,' on account of the physical effects of the awakenings.

Whitefield next visited Edinburgh, in company with Ralph Erskine, and preached to 'a very large and affected auditory' his excellent sermon on *The Kingdom of God*. This discourse, which, perhaps, furnishes the best specimen of Whitefield's eloquence, has not appeared, we believe, in any collection of his sermons. It is contained in a work on the *Revivals of the Eighteenth Century*, by Dr. Macfarland, of Scotland; and is said to have been preached several times in that country.* The common animadversion on the sermons of Whitefield is, 'that they contain no powerful movement of thought.' This criticism does not apply to the discourse just mentioned. Happy and forcible in the illustration of its sub-

* The Rev. Henry C. Fish has published this sermon in his interesting and valuable work, *The Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence*, 2 vols. 8vo. Published by M. W. Dodd, New York.

25

ject, fervid and powerful in its appeals, simple and appropriate in its diction, it will be read with pleasure and profit by all who delight in the prosperity of Zion, and have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

"We may here remark in general, that it would be unfair to judge of Whitefield's pulpit powers from his printed sermons, for they have come down to us in a very imperfect state. The pre-

cise language in which his most masterly and eloquent discourses were conveyed has been lost, as they were not written out in full. But there are several beautiful, striking, and highly characteristic passages which will serve to illustrate the vivacity and vehemence of the great preacher.

In his first visit to Scotland Whitefield preached at Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dundee, Paisley, Perth, Sterling, Haddington, and many other places. Leaving Edinburgh in the month of October, 1741, he passed through Wales, where he was married, on the 11th of November, to Mrs. Elizabeth James,* a widow, whose maiden name was Burnell. Whitefield was now in his twenty-seventh year, and his wife about ten years

* This lady's name is incorrectly given as Mrs. Jones by Dr. Jamieson, in his *Cyclopadia of Religious Biography*. The same error is also repeated in Appleton's *Cyclopaedia of Biography*, revised American edition edited by Rev. Dr. Hawks.

26

older than himself. The Rev. Cornelius Winter,* in the letters which form the substance of his own Life by Rev. William Jay, has said that Whitefield 'was not happy in his wife;' that 'she certainly did not behave as she ought;' and that 'her death set his mind much at rest.' It is just to say, however, that these statements are controverted by Robert Philip, in his *Life and Times of Whitefield*.

We next find Whitefield preaching with 'unspeakable power,' in London, Bristol, and Gloucester; and at the same time exclaiming, 'O, free grace! It fires my soul, and makes me long to do something for Jesus. It is true, indeed, I want

* Cornelius Winter was born on the 9th of October, 1742. His youth was irreligious; but the preaching of Whitefield was instrumental in bringing him to Christ. In one of his letters he speaks of Whitefield as his 'ever honored and dear friend and father, by whom, as an instrument in the hand of the Lord, I was brought into newness of life.' Mr. Winter became an able and successful minister of the gospel; and among the young men whom he himself trained for the Christian ministry, was the late excellent WILLIAM JAY, of Bath, who, in acknowledging his obligations to Mr. Winter, says,

'To him I owe all my respectability in life, and all my opportunities of public usefulness.' Mr. Winter accompanied Whitefield in his seventh and last voyage to America, in 1769. He returned to England and died there, on the 19th of January, 1808. See the interesting Memoirs of his Life written by himself, with a Continuation, by the Rev. William Jay, in the third volume of Jay's works, published by the Messrs. Harper, New York.

27

to go home; but here are so many souls ready to perish for lack of knowledge, that I am willing to tarry below as long as my Master has work for me.' While in London, it is stated that he received, in one week, a thousand letters from persons under spiritual concern.*

In the Tabernacle—a large wooden building erected for Whitefield, in London, about this time—occurred some of the most extraordinary awakenings under his ministry.

In the summer of 1742, he again went to Scotland, and preached with wonderful energy and effect in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kilsyth, and Cambuslang, where an extraordinary revival of religion had lately taken place. The same year he returned to London, and resumed his great labors at the Tabernacle.

Whilst at Plymouth, before his third embarkation for America, his public ministrations are said

* In 1842, not many months before he died, the devout Robert Murray McCheyne, of Scotland, while on a visit to London, wrote to the Rev. Horatius Bonar, of Kelso: 'O that my soul were new moulded, and I were effectually called a second time, and made a vessel full of the Spirit, to tell only of Jesus and His love. I fear I shall never be in this world what I desire. I have preached three times here; a few tears also have been shed. *O for Whitefield's week in London, when a thousand letters come.* The same Jesus reigns; the same Spirit is able. Why is He restrained? Is the sin ours? Are we the bottle-stoppers of these heavenly dews?'

28

to have been blessed to many people in that town. A remarkable incident, showing the wonderful power and influence of his preaching there, has been thus narrated:

'The late Rev. Henry Tanner, of Exeter, in the year 1743, removed to Plymouth, to obtain employment as a ship builder. Here it pleased God to call him by His grace, under the ministry of Mr. Whitefield. Being at work, he heard from a considerable distance, the voice of that zealous man of God, who was preaching in the street, or fields, probably between Plymouth town and Dock: he immediately concluded that the preacher was a madman; and determined, with five or six more of his companions, to go and knock him off from the place on which he stood; and, for the purpose of more effectually injuring *the mad parson*, they loaded their pockets with stones. When, however, Mr. Tanner drew near, and perceived Mr. Whitefield extending his arms, and in the most pathetic language inviting poor lost sinners to Christ, he was struck with amazement. His resolution failed him: he listened with astonishment, and was soon convinced that the preacher was not mad; but was indeed speaking the "words of truth and soberness." Mr. Whitefield was then preaching from Acts xvii. 19, 20: "May

29

we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is?—for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears." He went home much impressed, and determined to hear him again the next evening. He attended. Mr. Whitefield was wonderfully fervent in prayer. His text was Luke xxlv. 47: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." After speaking of the heinous sin of the Jews, and of the Eoman soldiers, who were the instruments of perpetrating the cruel murder of the Lord of Life, Mr. Whitefield, turning from the spot where Mr. Tanner then stood, near his side, said, "You are reflecting now on the cruelty of those inhuman

butchers, who imbued their hands in His innocent blood," when, suddenly turning round, and looking intently at Mr. Tanner, he exclaimed, "Thou art the man!" These words, sharper than any two-edged sword, pierced him to the heart; he felt himself the sinner, who, by his iniquities, had crucified the Son of God. His sins stared him in the face; he knew not how to stand; and in agony of soul he was forced to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The preacher then, in melting language, proclaimed the free and superabounding grace of God in Christ, which was commanded to

30

be preached; first of all to Jerusalem sinners, the very people who had murdered the Prince of Life; and from which a gleam of hope beamed into his heart. Under this sermon, many other persons were convinced of sin, and brought to God. The next night Mr. Tanner heard Mr. Whitefield preach again; his subject was "Jacob's ladder." From this discourse he obtained such views of the person, character and love of the great Mediator, as enabled him to lay hold on the hope set before him, and to rejoice in Christ Jesus.'

Mr. Tanner labored with great energy and success in the gospel ministry, during a period of fifty-one years, and died in 1805, at the advanced age of eighty-six. Unable to finish his last sermon, he was taken out of the pulpit, and shortly after expired.*

In the close of 1743, Whitefield visited a great many places in England. From Birmingham he writes: 'I have preached five times this day, and weak as I am, through Christ strengthening me, I could preach five times more.' While on a visit to Kidderminster, the scene of the labors of the devout Richard Baxter, he met with Mr. Williams, a distinguished Christian merchant, and a very intimate friend, and correspondent of Dr. Dodd-

* See his Life by Dr. Hawker.

31

ridge. From Kidderminster he writes: 'I was kindly received by Mr. Williams. Many friends were at his house. I was greatly refreshed to see what a sweet savor of good Baxter's doctrine, works, and discipline remains to this day.'

In the beginning of August, 1744, he set out on his third voyage for America, and after a passage of eleven weeks, arrived at York, in New England, in a very feeble state of health. As his strength increased, he continued to preach to thousands, as usual in various parts of the country, till the spring of 1748, when, for the full restoration of his health, he visited the Bermudas. The effects of so genial a climate he found to be beneficial to his impaired constitution. But, during the few weeks which he passed there, he did not remain idle. He traversed the island of St. George's, the largest of the group, from one end to the other, preaching generally twice a day. 'From the Bermudas he sailed for England, employing much of his time during the voyage in revising his journals. He now found time to correct many of his hasty and erroneous expressions which, with much candor, he acknowledges should never have been made. 'At the same time,' he adds, 'I cannot but praise God, who filled me with so much of His holy fire, and car-

32

ried me, a poor, weak youth, through such a torrent both of popularity and contempt, and set so many seals to my unworthy ministrations. I bless Him for ripening my judgment a little more, for giving me to see and confess, and I hope, in some degree, to correct and amend some of my mistakes.' He reached London on the 6th of July, 1748, after an absence of nearly four years; and after preaching about two months in the metropolis, to very brilliant assemblies, he paid the

third visit to Scotland. Here he met with a cordial reception, and, at Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other places, multitudes flocked to hear him preach.

Early in the year 1749, we find him making an excursion to Exeter and Plymouth. Connected with this visit Dr. Gillies has related the following anecdote: 'When Whitefield was preaching at Exeter, a man was present who had loaded his pockets with stones, in order to fling them at that precious ambassador of Christ. He heard his prayer, however, with patience; but no sooner had he named his text than the man pulled a stone out of his pocket, and held it in his hand, waiting for a fair opportunity to throw it. But God sent a wound to his heart, and the stone dropped from his hand. After sermon he

33

went to Mr. Whitefield and told him, "Sir, I came to hear you this day, with a view to break your head; but the Spirit of God, through your ministry, has given me a broken heart." The man proved to be a sound convert, and lived an ornament to the gospel. Such power belongeth unto God.'

In 1750, we find Whitefield again visiting London, Gloucester, Bristol, Cornwall, Exeter, Plymouth, Portsmouth, and numerous other places, receiving, at the same time, many applications to preach, with which he found it impracticable to comply. 'I want,' says he, 'more tongues, more bodies, more souls, for the Lord Jesus. Had I ten thousand he should have them all.' At this period he had a delightful interview with Rev. Dr. Doddridge, Dr. Stonehouse, and Rev. James Hervey, who has 'not improperly been called the Melancon of the second reformation in England.'* Of this visit, Hervey, who looked upon Whitefield as his spiritual father, thus writes, in a letter to a friend:

'I have seen, lately, that most excellent minister of the ever blessed Jesus, Mr. Whitefield. I

* Among all the converts of our evangelist, no one was more distinguished for piety, or for his fascination as a writer, than this admirable clergyman. His writings, though too flowery in their style, were eminently suitable, as Whitefield himself says, "for the taste of the polite world."—*Rev. Dr. Belcher.*

34

dined, supped, and spent the evening with him, at Northampton, in company with Dr. Doddridge, and two pious, ingenious clergymen of the Church of England, both of them extensively known to the world by their learned writings. And surely I never spent a more delightful evening, or saw one that seemed to make nearer approaches to the felicity of heaven. A gentleman of great worth and rank in the town invited us to his house, and gave us an elegant treat; but how mean was his provision, how coarse his delicacies, compared with the fruit of my friend's lips: they dropped as the honey-comb, and were a well of life. Surely people do not know that amiable and exemplary man, or else I cannot but think, instead of depreciating, they would applaud and love him. For my part, I never beheld so fair a copy of our Lord, such a living image of the Saviour, such exalted delight in God, such enlarged benevolence to man, such a steady faith in the Divine promises, and such a fervent zeal for the Divine glory; and all this, without the least moroseness of humor, or extravagances of behavior; sweetened with the most engaging cheerfulness of temper, and regulated by all the sobriety of reason, and wisdom of Scripture; insomuch that I cannot forbear applying the wise man's encomium of an illustri-

35

ous woman, to this eminent minister of the everlasting gospel: "Many sons have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

In the spring of 1751, Whitefield revisited Gloucester, Devonshire, and Wales, whence he proceeded to Ireland. During a visit of about six weeks in that country he preached nearly eighty times. In the fall of the same year, he set out on his fourth voyage to America, where he passed the succeeding winter, 'always alert in the path of duty.' Leaving his Orphan-house in a flourishing condition, he returned to England in the spring of 1752. At the commencement of that year we find him thus recording his own views of his past exertions: 'I intend, by God's assistance, now to begin; for as yet, alas! I have done nothing. O S that I may begin to be in earnest. God quicken my tardy pace, and help me to do much work in a little time! This is my highest ambition.'

On his return to London, he wrote, amongst many other letters, one to Dr. Franklin,* with whom he had already formed an acquaintance. In this letter he thus earnestly commends to that renowned philosopher, the careful study and inves-

* '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.'—*Rev. Dr. Belcher.*

36

ligation of the sublime revelations of Christianity: 'I find that you grow more and more famous in the learned world. As you have made a pretty considerable progress in the mysteries of electricity, I would now humbly recommend to your diligent, unprejudiced pursuit and study, the mystery of the new birth. It is a most important and interesting study, and when mastered will richly answer and repay you for all your pains. One at whose bar we are shortly to appear, hath solemnly declared that without it we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. You will excuse this freedom. I must have *aliquid Christi* in all my letters. I am yet a willing pilgrim for His great name's sake.' This honest letter, says Robert

Philip, ought to have delighted the philosopher in his closet, even more than the eulogium he heard whilst standing behind the bar of the House of Lords, when CHATHAM said of him, 'Franklin is one whom Europe holds in high estimation, for his knowledge and wisdom; one who is an honor, not to the English nation only, but to human nature.'

On the 25th of November, 1753, Whitefield delivered an impressive discourse on the dedication of the Tabernacle at Bristol; and soon after this we find him preaching in the open air in dif-

37

ferent parts of Somersetshire, at seven o'clock at night. When he had thus preached one clear, cool, autumn evening, he writes: 'At seven in the evening I preached in the open air, to a great multitude. All was hushed, and exceedingly solemn. The stars shone exceedingly bright. Then, if ever, I saw by the eye of faith, Him who "call-eth them all by their names." My soul was filled with a holy ambition, and I longed to be one of those who "shall shine as the stars forever and ever." My hands and my body were cold; but what are outward things, when the soul within is warmed with the love of God. Oh, that I may die in the field!'

In 1754, Whitefield made his fifth voyage to America. During this visit to our country he preached in the principal towns through the Colonies, traveling as far north as Portsmouth, New Hampshire. In the spring of 1755, he sailed for his native country, which he reached in safety. He now spent eight years in Great Britain, proclaiming the gospel to thousands, with surpassing eloquence, and great success.

In the summer of 1763, we find him making his sixth voyage to America, and preaching with great

acceptance in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and other places. In 1765, he returned to Eng-

38

land, and resumed his labors with all his accustomed energy, activity and zeal.

Amidst the multiplicity of his other labors he found time, in the beginning of 1767, to edit with a recommendatory preface, the works of John Bunyan, a writer whom he greatly admired.*

On the 9th of October, 1768, his wife died. He preached her funeral sermon a few days after, from Rom. viii. 20: 'For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope.'†

In the beginning of September, 1769, he embarked on his seventh and last voyage to America; and, after a long and dangerous passage, arrived at Charleston on the 30th of November. He immediately set out on his errand of mercy, making excursions through many of the States, 'where his labors were prized more highly, and received with more ardor than ever.' His last sermon was preached, while on a visit to New England, at

* This third edition of Bunyan's works was published at London, in 1767-8, in 2 vols., folio, with portrait and plates, at £3 3s. It is now very scarce. At Mr. Williams' sale a copy brought £5 12s. 6d.

† The Rev. Dr. Belcher is mistaken in saying that Whitefield preached her funeral sermon from Romans viii. 28: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.' See his Biography of Whitefield, published by the American Tract Society, p. 136.

39

Exeter, New Hampshire, on the 29th of September, 1770. On that solemn occasion he addressed a large congregation for nearly two hours, preaching from 2 Cor. xiii. 5: 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates!' This discourse, which was preached only twenty-

four hours before his death, is said to have been delivered with such clearness, pathos, and eloquence, as to please and surprise the surrounding thousands. After finishing this sermon he rode on the same day to Newburyport, Massachusetts, a distance of fifteen miles.

But the time of his departure was now at hand. While preaching at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he caught a cold which was followed by a severe attack of the asthma—a disease with which he was frequently afflicted—and which now proved fatal. The very next day after reaching Newburyport, which was the Sabbath, he ceased to breathe, at about six o'clock in the morning, and entered into his rest.

In the presence of a vast concourse of people, many of whom were in tears, the Rev. Mr. Jewet preached his funeral sermon. His remains were placed beneath the pulpit of the Old South Church

40

at Newburyport, where they still lie. It is truly a consecrated spot to the Christian visitor. Several years ago a monument was erected over his remains by Mr. Bartlet, of Newburyport, with an appropriate inscription by the Rev. Ebenezer Porter, D. D., of the Theological Seminary at Andover.

In reviewing the life of Whitefield, we find that there was hardly a town in England, Scotland, or Wales, which he did not visit; and that he crossed the Atlantic *thirteen times*. It is computed that, during the thirty-four years of his ministry, he preached publicly eighteen thousand times. It is with much propriety then that the Rev. Augustus M. Toplady styles him '*The Apostle of the English Empire*: in point of zeal for God, a long course of indefatigable and incessant labors, unparalleled disinterestedness, and astonishingly extensive usefulness.'

'Paul's love of Christ and steadiness unbribed
 Were copied close in him, and well transcribed;
 He follow'd Paul, his zeal a kindred flame,
 His apostolic charity the same;
 Like him cross'd cheerfully tempestuous seas,
 Forsaking country, kindred, friends and ease;
 Like him he labor'd, and like him content
 To bear it, suffer'd shame where'er he went.'

COWPER.

41

Regarding his personal appearance during the earlier part of his ministry, Dr. Southey thus writes: 'He was something above the middle stature, well proportioned, though at this time slender, and remarkable for a native gracefulness of manner. His complexion was very fair, 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 remarkable, 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 that grace of action which he possessed in an eminent degree, and which has been said to be the chief requisite of an orator.'*

* The following are some of the editions of the writings of Whitefield: *Works, to which is prefixed an Account of his Life*, by John Gillies, D. D., and a portrait. 7 vols. 8vo. London, 1771-2. *Seventy-five Sermons on Important Subjects*, 3 vols. 8vo. *Sermons on Important Subjects*, with a Memoir of the Author, by Samuel Drew; a Dissertation on his character, etc., by the Rev. Joseph Smith, and a portrait. 8vo. London, 1833. *Eighteen Sermons*, edited by Andrew Gifford. 8vo. Journals in England, Wales, Savannah, Georgia, New York, Philadelphia, Virginia, etc. 12mo. London, 1743. A critic has remarked, that 'the adventures and commentaries of Alexander and Caesar are not better calculated to excite the martial flame, than the life, journals, letters, and sermons of G. Whitefield to animate the benevolent zeal of the Christian preacher.'

42

We would now point out some of the most striking qualities in his oratorical character, and give a few more instances of the wonderful effects of his eloquence. Toplady styles him the PRINCE OF PREACHERS;* and the Rev. Henry Venn affirms of him, that scarcely any one of Christ's ministers since the days of the apostles has exceeded or equaled him. The Rev. John Newton bears testimony to Whitefield's unrivalled powers of oratory. He once remarked in company, that as a preacher Whitefield far exceeded every other man of his time. 'I bless God,' he added, 'that I lived in his time; many were the winter mornings I rose at four o'clock to attend his Tabernacle discourses at five; and I have seen Moorfields as full of lanterns at these times, as I suppose the Haymarket is full of flambeaux on an opera night.' In a funeral sermon preached at Olney, from these words: 'He was a burning and a shining light,' the same excellent divine thus speaks of Whitefield: 'Some ministers are burning and shining lights in a peculiar and eminent degree. Such a one, I doubt not, was the servant of God whose death we now lament. I have had some opportunities of looking over the history of the

* 'Mr. Toplady called him the prince of preachers, and with good reason, for none in our day preached with the like effect.'—*Rev. Cornelius Winter.*

48

Church in past ages; I am not backward to say, that I have not read or heard of any person, since the apostles' days, of whom it may be more emphatically said, "He was a burning and a shining light," than the late Mr. Whitefield; whether we consider the warmth of his zeal, the greatness of his ministerial talents, or the extensive usefulness with which the Lord honored him. I do not mean to praise the man, but the Lord who furnished him, and made him what he was. He was

raised up to shine in a dark place. The state of religion when he first appeared in public, was very low in our Established Church. I speak the truth, though to some it may be an offensive truth. The doctrines of grace were seldom heard, from the pulpit, and the life and power of godliness were little known. Many of the most spiritual among the dissenters, were mourning under a sense of a great spreading declension on their side. What a change has taken place throughout the land within a little more than thirty years; that is, since the time when the first set of despised ministers came to Oxford I And how much of this change has been owing to God's blessing on Mr. Whitefield's labors, is well known to many who have lived through this period, and can hardly be denied by those who are least willing

44

to allow it ... His zeal was not like wildfire, but directed by sound principles, and a sound Judgment ... The Lord gave him a manner of preaching which was peculiarly his own. He copied from none, and I never met with any one who could imitate him with success.'

Some of his excellencies as a preacher will be seen from the following considerations:

The great secret of his power as a pulpit orator consisted in what has been termed the first, and second, and third requisites in an orator: a good delivery; the 'action—action—action' of Demosthenes. There was an indescribable charm about Whitefield's *manner* that speedily enchained listening thousands. His bold and vehement gestures, his clear and distinct enunciation, his glowing and expressive countenance, the fire of his eye, the thunder of his voice,—*all* were imposing in the highest degree. Truly may it be said that even his uplifted, weaponless hands were 'mightier than the truncheon of generals, or the scepter

of monarchs.' In estimating his character as an orator, it must be remembered that his face was a language, and his intonation music, and his action passion.

His voice was one of great compass, of remarkable power and melody, and rich and captivating

45

in its modulations. Its loudest tones could be heard by twenty thousand people, and under favorable circumstances to the distance of nearly a mile. But the greatest effects of his voice were produced by its continual variations, now falling in whispering accents producing breathless attention; now rising to those beautifully varied middle notes so pleasing to the ear; and now swelling into tones of thunder, subduing the passions of the reckless and awing the spirit of the bold. So bewitching were the tones of his voice, and so perfect and inimitable his action, that GARRICK* said of him, he could make men weep or tremble by his varied utterances of the word '*Mesopotamia*.'

His pathos was deep and irresistible; and no one, perhaps, ever used so boldly, or with more

* David Garrick, one of the greatest actors that ever graced the stage, was born at Hereford, England, on the 28th of February, 1716. At the age of ten he was sent to the Grammar school of Litchfield. In 1736, he became one of Dr. Johnson's scholars at Litchfield; and soon after accompanied his teacher to London. In the winter of 1741, he first appeared on the London stage, where he soon gained the greatest celebrity as an actor, which he retained till his retirement in 1776. He died on the 20th of January, 1779, and was interred with distinguished honors in Westminster Abbey. Garrick was a frequent hearer, and a great admirer, of Whitefield. He once made the remark, that the oratory of this wonderful preacher was not at its full height until he had repeated a discourse forty times.

46

success, the highest styles of impersonation. His very 'Hark I hark!' would often conjure up Gethsemane with all the affecting scenes of that memorable night when the Saviour prayed thus,

‘O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.’ And his apostrophe to Peter on the Holy Mount would ‘light up another Tabor, and drown it in glory from the opening heaven.’

The Rev. Cornelius Winter says of him: ‘It was not without great pathos, you may be sure, he treated upon the sufferings of the Saviour. He was very ready at that kind of painting,—which frequently answered the end of *real* scenery. As though Gethsemane were within sight, he would say, stretching out his hand,—“Look yonder! What is it I see? It is my agonizing Lord!” And, as though it were no difficult matter to catch the *sound* of the Saviour praying, he would exclaim, “Hark! hark!—do you not hear?” You may suppose that as this occurred frequently, the efficacy of it was destroyed; but, no, though we often knew what was coming, it was as new to us as though we never heard it before. That beautiful apostrophe, used by the prophet Jeremiah: “O, earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord,” was very subservient to him, and never

47

used Impertinently.’ The same writer tells us that he would sometimes, at the close of a sermon, personate a judge about to perform the most solemn part of his office. With his eyes full of tears, and an emotion that made his speech falter, after a pause which kept the whole audience in breathless expectation of what was to come, he would say, ‘I am now going to put on my condemning cap. Sinner, I must do it: I must pronounce sentence upon you!’ and then, in a tremendous strain of eloquence, describing the eternal punishment of the wicked, he recited the words of Christ: ‘Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.’ When he spoke of St. Peter, how,

after the cock crew, he went out and wept bitterly, he had a fold of his gown ready in which he hid his face.

One of the most striking qualities in the mental constitution of Whitefield, was his surpassingly brilliant imagination. A writer in *The New Englander* remarks with much force and propriety: 'Perhaps for no power of mind was he so much distinguished as the one now brought into particular notice. It was this element in his mental constitution, which induced him to contract in early life so great a fondness for dramatic

48

writers. It was this which enabled him to present such vivid pictures before the mental eye of his auditors, that all seemed for the hour to be amid scenes of enchantment. It was this which gave him wings to soar into eternity, and dwell now amid the radiant verities of an eternal weight of glory, and now in the soul's great charnel house, amid the dread realities of the second death. It was this which infused so abundantly into all his sermons the elements of the dramatic.'

No orator, perhaps, ever had the grand principles of the pathetic and the sublime united in a higher degree than Whitefield. This enabled him to sway the passions as with a magic touch. By a stroke of the pathetic he could dissolve his hearers in tears; and by a burst of the sublime, thrill their very souls. He moved others because he was himself moved. A writer in the *North American Review* says that 'Whitefield's power was always from passion.' And another remarks that 'sometimes the preacher wept exceedingly, stamped loudly and passionately, and was frequently so overcome that for a few seconds one would suspect he could never recover, and when he did, nature required some little time to com-

pose herself.' The result of all this was that 'the agitated assembly caught the passions of the

49
speaker, and exulted, wept, or trembled at his bidding.'

One of the best accounts of Whitefield's *manner* of address that we have ever met with is from the pen of the Rev. Josiah Smith, an eye-witness of some of his oratorical efforts: '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, very deeply affected and impressed in his own heart. How did *that* burn and boil within him, when he spake of the things 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

50
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 application to the conscience; mingling light and heat; pointing the arrow 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.’

With all his other surpassing qualities as an orator, there was a deep solemnity in his delivery. His own maxim was ‘to preach as Apelles painted—for ETERNITY.’ It is said that he was first struck with this maxim at the table of Archbishop Boulter in Ireland, where the Rev. Dr. Delany said to him, ‘I wish whenever I go up into a pulpit, to look upon it as the last time I shall ever

51
preach, or the last time the people may hear.’* Never did Whitefield forget this. He would often say, ‘Would ministers preach for eternity, they would then act the part of true Christian orators, and not only calmly and coolly inform the understanding, but by persuasive, pathetic address, endeavor to move the affections and warm the heart. To act otherwise bespeaks *and ignorance of human nature*, and such an inexcusable indolence and indifference in the preacher, as must *constrain* the hearers to suspect, whether they will or not, that the preacher, let him be who he will,—*only deals in the false commerce of unfelt truth.*

Another noticeable quality in the oratory of Whitefield was the use which he often made of passing events to illustrate and enforce his subject. One of the happiest instances of this nature has been thus related: ‘Before he commenced his ser-

mon, long, darkening columns crowded the bright, sunny sky of the morning, and swept their dull shadows over the building, in fearful augury of the storm. His text was; "Strive to enter in

* The same feeling seems always to have stirred the spirit of Richard Baxter while in the pulpit. His own memorable lines on this point are worthy of the serious consideration of all ministers of the gospel:

'I preached as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men.'

52

at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "See that emblem of human life," said he, pointing to a shadow that was flitting across the floor, "It passed for a moment, and concealed the brightness of heaven from our view;—but it was gone. And where will ye be, my hearers, when your lives have passed away like that dark cloud? Oh, my dear friends, I see thousands sitting attentive, with their eyes fixed on the poor, unworthy preacher. In a few days we shall all meet at the judgment seat of Christ. We shall form a part of that vast assembly that will gather before the throne; and every eye will behold the Judge. With a voice whose call you must abide and answer, he will inquire whether on earth ye strove to enter in at the strait gate; whether you were supremely devoted to God; whether your hearts were absorbed in Him. My blood runs cold when I think how many of you will then seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Oh, what plea can you make before the Judge of the whole earth? Can you say it has been your whole endeavor to mortify the flesh, with its affections and lusts? that your life has been one long effort to do the will of God? No! you must answer, I made myself easy in the world by flattering myself that all

53

would end well; but I have deceived my own soul, and am lost. You, O false and hollow

Christian, of what avail will it be that you have done many things; that you have read much in the sacred Word; that you have made long prayers; that you have attended religious duties, and appeared holy in the eyes of men? What will all this be, if instead of loving Him supremely, you have been supposing you should exalt yourself in heaven by acts really polluted and unholy? And you, rich man, wherefore do you hoard your silver? wherefore count the price you have received for Him whom you every day crucify in your love of gain? Why, that, when you are too poor to buy a drop of cold water, your beloved son may be rolled to hell in his chariot, pillowed and cushioned around him.”

‘His eye gradually lighted up, as he proceeded, till, towards the close, it seemed to sparkle with celestial fire. “Oh, sinners!” he exclaimed, “by all your hopes of happiness, I beseech you to repent. Let not the wrath of God be awakened. Let not the fires of eternity be kindled against you. See there!” said he, pointing to the lightning which played on the corner of the pulpit—“’Tis a glance from the angry eye of Jehovah! Hark!” continued he, raising his finger in a list-

54

ening attitude, as the distant thunder grew louder and louder, and broke in one tremendous crash over the building, “It was the voice of the Almighty as He passed by in His anger.” As the sound died away, he covered his face with his hands, and knelt beside his pulpit, apparently lost in inward and intense prayer. The storm passed rapidly away, and the sun, bursting forth in his might, threw across the heavens a magnificent arch of peace. Rising, and pointing to the beautiful object, he exclaimed, “Look upon the rainbow, and praise Him that made it. Very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof. It com-

passeth the heavens about with glory; and the hands of the Most High have bended it.”*★

* Speaking of the sermons and the preaching of Whitefield, the Rev. William Jay once remarked in conversation: ‘His sermons are certainly, as we here them, bald and meagre. They, however, do no *justice* to the man; they are badly reported, and we must particularly remember that George Whitefield was not the *writer*, but the *preacher*. He was the preacher for the *people*, for the million; not the classical writer of discourses for the closet or the study. He poured forth his soul in the pulpit in the most intense and thrilling manner; but his taste was not the most correct, nor his composition the most pure and elegant. Still, what an *effect* everywhere his discourses produced! and *that*, after all, is the *grand test* of *eloquence*. The impressions made by his preaching were perfectly marvellous;—and is it not better to be a little less correct, and to have something of Whitefield’s power?’

55

The effect of Whitefield’s eloquence was electric. It fascinated persons of all classes and professions. Poets, historians, orators, statesmen, actors, clergymen, and distinguished men of science and literature, were seen to weep and tremble at his bursts of impassioned oratory. Among his delighted hearers were Bolingbroke, Hume, Chesterfield, Shuter, Lady Huntington, John Newton, and Dr. Franklin. Bolingbroke said of him: ‘He is the most extraordinary man in our times. He has the most commanding eloquence I ever heard in any person.’ Lord Chesterfield wrote to Lady Huntington: ‘Mr. Whitefield’s eloquence is unrivalled, his zeal inexhaustible.’ When Hume was asked by a friend, what he thought of Whitefield’s preaching, he replied: ‘He is, sir, the most ingenious preacher I ever heard: it is worth while to go twenty miles to hear him.’ He then repeated the following passage, which occurred towards the close of the discourse he had been hearing: ‘After a solemn pause, Mr. Whitefield thus addressed his numerous audience, “The attendant angel is just about to leave the threshold, and ascend to heaven. And

shall he ascend and not bear with him the news of one sinner, among all this multitude, reclaimed from the error of his ways?" To give the greater

⁵⁶
effect to this exclamation, he stamped his foot, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and with gushing tears, cried aloud, "*Stop, Gabriel! Stop, Gabriel! Stop,* ere you enter the sacred portals, and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God."* He then, in the most simple, but energetic language, described what he called a Saviour's dying love to sinful man, so that almost the whole assembly melted into tears. This address was accompanied with such animated, yet natural action, that it surpassed anything I ever saw or heard in any other preacher.'

Mr. Winter relates the following anecdote which shows the readiness as well as effectiveness of Whitefield's oratory. 'The famous comedian, Shuter,† who had a great partiality for Mr. Whitefield, showed him friendship, and often attended his ministry. At one period of his popularity he was acting in a drama under the character of Ramble. During the run of the performance he

* In what sublime language has Jeremy Taylor described the joy in heaven, over a repenting sinner:

'Every sinner that repents causes joy to Christ, and the joy is so great that it runs over and wets the fair brows and beautiful locks of cherubim and seraphim, and all the angels have a part of that banquet; then it is that our blessed Lord feels the fruits of His holy death, the acceptance of His holy sacrifice, the graciousness of His person, the return of His prayers.'

† This popular comedian died in 1776.

⁵⁷
attended service on Sabbath morning at Tottenham-court chapel, and was seated in the pew exactly opposite to the pulpit, and while Mr. Whitefield was giving full sally to his soul, and in his energetic address, was inviting sinners to the Saviour, he fixed himself full against Shuter, with his eye upon him, adding to what he had

previously said, "And thou poor Ramble, who hast long rambled from Him, come thou also. O, end all thy rambling by coming to Jesus." Shuter was exceedingly struck, and coming to Mr. Whitefield, said, "I thought I should have fainted, how could you serve me so?"

A gentleman in Edinburgh was once returning from hearing one of Whitefield's sermons, when he was met, on his way home, by an eminent minister whom he usually heard, and who expressed great surprise that he should go to hear such a man. The gentleman replied: 'Sir, when I hear you, I am planting trees all the time; but, during the whole of Mr. Whitefield's sermon, I never found time to plant one.' A similar incident is related of a ship-builder, who usually could 'build a ship from stem to stern during the sermon, but, under Mr. Whitefield could not lay a single plank.'

58

One of the greatest triumphs of his persuasive power was when he drew from Dr. Franklin's pocket the money which that 'clear, cool reasoner' had resolved not to give. Whitefield was then preaching in Philadelphia, and collecting for his Orphan-house at Savannah. The anecdote is thus related by Dr. Franklin himself: 'I did not disapprove of the design; but as Georgia was then destitute of materials and workmen, and it was proposed to send them from Philadelphia, at a great expense, I thought it would have been better to have built the house at Philadelphia, and brought the children to it. This I advised; but he was resolute in his first project, rejected my counsel, and I therefore refused to contribute. I happened, soon after, to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket

a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded, I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper; another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket into the collector's dish,—gold and all.'

59

'At this sermon,' continued Franklin, 'there was also one of our club, who, being of my sentiments respecting the building in Georgia, and suspecting a collection might be intended, had, by precaution, emptied his pockets before he came from home: towards the conclusion of the discourse, however, he felt a strong inclination to give, and applied to a neighbor, who stood near him, to lend him some money for the purpose. The request was fortunately made to perhaps the only man in the company who had the firmness not to be affected by the preacher. His answer was, "At any other time, friend Hopkinson, I would lend to thee freely, but not now, for thee seems to me to be out of thy right senses."'

Among the many anecdotes that are told of the effects of Whitefield's eloquence, the following is one of the most striking. On one occasion Lord Chesterfield was listening in Lady Huntington's pew, when Whitefield was comparing the benighted sinner to a blind beggar, led by a little dog, on a dangerous road. The little dog, at length, breaks his string, and gets away from his master. The poor blind man, with his staff between both hands, gropes his way unconscious to the edge of a precipice. While standing on the very verge of the cliff, still feeling his way, his staff slips

60

through his fingers, and drops down the descent, too deep to send back an echo. Supposing it to

be on the ground, the owner stoops down to regain it, stumbles forward and falls headlong. At this instant, Chesterfield, who had been watching with breathless alarm the blind man's movements, unconsciously sprang from his seat to save the catastrophe, exclaiming, 'Good God! he is gone!' An effect like this could not have been produced except by the highest effort of genuine, soul-stirring oratory. It shows, in a strong manner, the irresistible power of eloquence over the passions, how it often stirs the very depths of the spirit, and produces indescribable, thrilling emotions.

We have another illustration of Whitefield's dramatic power in his preaching, on one occasion, to a large number of seamen in New York, when he introduced into his sermon a description of a storm and shipwreck in these stirring words:

'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

61

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 imagination of the sailors was so irresistibly carried away in the climax of this vivid description of impending danger and destruction that they sprang to their feet exclaiming: '*Take to the long boat, sir!*'

In reading this account of the electric effect of Whitefield's oratory we have been forcibly reminded of a passage of the eloquent Dr. Griffin,*

of our own country, pronounced with remarkable effect, in the close of a sermon in which he set before his audience, in glowing colors, a scene of dreadful solemnity and grandeur: 'I see,' said the preacher, 'I see a storm collecting in the heavens; I discover the commotion of the troubled elements; I hear the roar of distant winds. Heavens and earth seem mingled in conflict; and I cry to those for whom I watch, *A storm! a storm! get into the ark or you are swept away.* Ah, what

* The reader should peruse an admirable *Memoir of the Rev. Dr. Griffin*, by the Rev. William B. Sprague, D. D., the distinguished author of the *Annals of the American Pulpit*, one of the noblest monuments of literary labor in any age or country.

62

is that I see? I see a world convulsed and falling to ruins; the sea burning like oil; nations rising from under ground; the sun falling; the damned in chains before the bar; and some of my poor hearers among them. I see them cast from the battlements of the judgment seat. *My God, the eternal pit has closed upon them forever!**

* Dr. Owen, while setting before his hearers the duty of those who are under apprehensions of the storm of divine wrath to fly to the ark of safety before the door of mercy is forever closed, once exclaimed in these direct, searching, and powerful words:

'Suppose a poor creature to be under this tempest, full of sad and dreadful thoughts and apprehensions of the wrath of God; behind, before, round about, he can see nothing but hailstones and coals of fire; heaven is dark and dismal over him; he hath not seen sun, moon or stars, in many days,—not one glimpse of light from above, or hopes of an end. "I shall perish; the earth shakes under me; the pit is opening for me. Is there no hope?" Why, see how Christ is suited in this distress also. He is "a covert" from this tempest; *get into him, and thou shalt be safe.* He hath borne all this storm, as far as thou art concerned; abide with Him, and not one hurtful drop shall fall upon thee,—not one hair of thy head shall be singed with this fire. Hast thou fears? hast thou a sense of the wrath of God for sin? dost thou fear it will one day fall upon thee, and be thy portion? Behold a covert, a sure defence, is here provided.'

How consolatory to the truly penitent is this language, setting forth the gospel plan of salvation, in view of that storm of wrath which is coming 'upon the children of disobedience!'

O, may the thoughtless sinner consider these words seriously, and resort at once to the blessed Saviour, who is 'a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.' 'Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.'

63

One who was present writes that the 'impression which these words made can never be effaced from his recollection.' And what, we ask, can be more solemn and sublime than this passage? When we can scarcely read it without *thrilling* emotions, what must have been the effect when it came from the lips of the eloquent orator? Words cannot adequately describe the manner in which such expressions must have been uttered by one who was a master of the oratorical art. The varying tone of voice—the changing expression of countenance—the impassioned gestures—the deep pathos—*these* must have sent the solemn words to the hearts of his hearers with overwhelming emotion. We have seldom read any passage of Christian eloquence, which has so completely realized our conception of the style of Whitefield. From what we know of the oratory of that unrivaled preacher, we may well suppose that many of his powerful expressions were similar in construction to the one just quoted. When we take into consideration the *inimitable* action which accompanied the utterance of such grand and solemn passages, we shall be able to gain some idea of the eloquence of Whitefield and of Griffin.

Whitefield approached, perhaps, as near as any other man of modern times the charming manner,

64

the sublime utterances, the torrent-vehemence of Demosthenes. He certainly possessed, in an eminent degree, that grand principle in true eloquence, of transferring his sublime thoughts and thrilling emotions to the minds of his hearers. And if eloquence is, as one has defined it, 'a great and fervent spirit pouring itself, in a living torrent,

into the hearts and souls of its auditors,' then Whitefield was a perfect orator, for such a spirit did he manifest in his oratorical efforts, and such was its power.

If we would gain a true conception of his eloquence, we must call up in our minds his beaming countenance, his musical tones, his impressive looks and gestures, his intense earnestness, his lucid and simple style, his melting pathos and sublime utterances, his sudden bursts of passions, his singular faculty of description, and his wonderful power of alarming the conscience by striking enunciations of religious truths.

'Servant of God, well done!
 Thy glorious warfare's past,
 The battle's fought, the race is won,
 And thou art crowned at last;
 Of all thy heart's desire,
 Triumphantly possess'd,
 Lodged by the ministerial choir,
 In thy Redeemer's breast.

65

In condescending love
 Thy ceaseless prayer He heard,
 And bade thee suddenly remove
 To thy complete reward;
 Ready to bring the peace,
 Thy beauteous feet were shod,
 When mercy signed thy soul's release,
 And caught thee up to God.

With saints enthron'd on high,
 Thou dost thy Lord proclaim,
 And still to God salvation cry,
 Salvation to the Lamb!
 O happy, happy soul,
 In ecstasies of praise,
 Long as eternal ages roll,
 Thou seest thy Saviour's face.

Redeem'd from earth and pain,
Ah! when shall we ascend,
And all in Jesus' presence reign
With our translated friend!
Come Lord, and quickly come!
And when in Thee complete,
Receive thy longing servants home,
To triumph at Thy feet'

THE END.