

The Works
of
George Whitefield

Journals

Quinta Press
2000

GEORGE WHITEFIELD'S
JOURNALS

*A new edition containing fuller material
than any hitherto published*

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The Seven Journals, first published separately, 1738-1741

A Short Account, published 1740

A Further Account, published 1747

The above first printed in one vol. (abridged), 1756

The above reprinted in one vol. (unabridged), 1905

An Unpublished Journal, first printed, 1938

Banner of Truth edition including unabridged text of all the
above, with additional material, March, 1960

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note included by gracious permission.

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“I see more and more the benefit of leaving written testimonies behind us ... They not only profit the present, but will also edify the future age.”—George Whitefield, 1739.

*“Thus lived, thus laboured a man whose transcendent eloquence—whose great talents, whose time, person, soul—all were laid at the foot of the cross; of his preaching it has been truly said, ‘He seemed to forget his eloquence and to forget himself; to be wholly absorbed in the saving of souls and the glorifying of God.’ Reader, we shall never regret in eternity if now-putting on the spirit of Whitefield’s Master—we go and do likewise.”—An anonymous inscription found on the ms. of the *Unpublished Journal* in Princeton Theological Seminary Library.*

“There is no end to the interest which attaches to such a man as George Whitefield. Often as I have read his life, I am conscious of distinct quickening whenever I turn to it. HE LIVED. Other men seem to be only half-alive; but Whitefield was all life, fire, wing, force. My own model, if I may have such a thing in due subordination to my Lord, is George Whitefield; but with unequal footsteps must I follow in his glorious track.”—CH Spurgeon, 1879.

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*Say to them that are of
a fearful heart, Be strong, fear
not: behold, your God will come
with vengeance, even God with
a recompense; he will come and
save you.*

*Then the eyes of the blind
shall be opened, and the ears
of the deaf shall be unstopped.*

*Then shall the lame man
leap as an hart, and the tongue
of the dumb sing: for in the
wilderness shall waters break
out, and streams in the desert.*

*And the parched ground
shall become a pool, and the
thirsty land springs of water.*

Isaiah 35. 4-7

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Journals

Introduction

As the contents of this book originally appeared as individual publications, it is necessary to give the reader some information regarding the order in which they were written and published. Following Whitefield's departure from England to America at the end of 1737, he sent back in the early summer of 1738 an account of his voyage. This account was designed rather for the private edification of personal friends in London than for immediate publication. Nevertheless it was immediately printed, without the author's knowledge, by T. Cooper, "at the Globe in Paternoster Row," and subsequently became known as Whitefield's *First Journal*. James Hutton, to whom Whitefield had apparently first sent this account, denounced Cooper's pirate edition and published a slightly revised version. This went through four editions in 1738. The blessing on this publication was so evident that Whitefield proceeded to write and publish a further six Journals detailing his life down to March, 1741.¹

On his second voyage to America, in 1739, Whitefield wrote the history of his early life up to his ordination in 1735. This was published in 1740 under the title of *A Short Account*. On his third voyage to America, in 1744, he wrote *A Further Account* (published 1747), covering the time from his ordination to the period dealt with in his *First Journal*,² and thus the only gap which had remained in the history of his early life was filled.

All the above were republished in one volume, "revised, corrected, and abridged," by Whitefield in 1756. Not until 1905

¹ It is said that a good edition of the Journals was also printed in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin. We have not been able to examine it.

² Whitefield despatched his *Further Account* from Bohemia, Maryland, in June, 1746, to his friend Mr Richardson in London. An accompanying letter directed it should be shown to "Madam Cook and Doctor Watts" before being passed on, to John Sims, Whitefield's agent in England. Cf. the letters printed on pp. 264-5 of the December, 1954, issue of the *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, Philadelphia.

were they again republished, by William Wale, who reverted to the fuller text of the first editions. For historical purposes the original versions are naturally the more valuable and therefore they, and not the 1756 revised edition, have been followed in this volume. Whitefield's abridgement and revision was mainly designed to remove passages which had given occasion for misrepresentation and criticism. His *Short Account*, which he published at the age of twenty-five, had been particularly exposed to literary attacks, and the sentences which were erased in the 1756 edition will be noted in this volume by brackets. This will enable the reader to see the character of the alterations which he made; the brackets indicate the maturer reflections of the man, yet leave us with the unabridged text, which presents a portrait of the youthful Whitefield as he really was in his twenties.

The text of this reprint follows Wale's edition, but it has been compared with the 1756 edition and one or two of the more interesting alterations are recorded in footnotes. Various errata in Wale's text have also been corrected.¹

It was long believed that apart from the autobiographical material already mentioned, Whitefield wrote no further Journals except a short account of his visit to Bermuda in 1748. (The latter was never published and the manuscript does not appear to have survived.²) This opinion was held by the most thorough writer who has so far written on Whitefield, Luke Tyerman, who says: "From his return to England in 1741, he ceased to write Journals." But sentences in two of Whitefield's letters which Tyerman records should have made him question the above statement; writing from Piscataqua on March 6, 1745, Whitefield says: "I am writing another New England Journal, which I will send when I leave the country. When that will be, I know not." Again he writes from the same place six days later: "I am preparing my sermons for the press, and am also writing another Journal." Nearly two hundred years were to pass before the original manuscript of this forgotten and unpublished

¹ But Whitefield's spelling of American place names has not been revised.

² Some lengthy extracts from it will be found in John Gillies' *Memoirs of the Life of George Whitefield* (1772), pp. 154-73.

Journal was brought to light. It had been lying, unnoticed by Whitefield's biographers, in the Library of Princeton Theological Seminary since 1816.

This Unpublished Journal, transcribed from Whitefield's own manuscript, now for the first time finds its place in a volume of Whitefield's Journals and thus serves to make this a more complete edition than those which have hitherto appeared. The manuscript was found in an imperfect and unfinished condition; five leaves, the equivalent of ten pages, were missing, though some of these may have been blank. The work was obviously never revised or corrected by Whitefield, and the fairly frequent crossings out have been shown in this volume as they illustrate the speed and unpremeditated manner in which Whitefield wrote his Journals.

There are difficulties surrounding the early history of this manuscript, which we shall refer to as the *Unpublished Journal*, that have not yet been fully answered. There is no question whether the manuscript is genuine, a noted American handwriting expert, Mr Morton Pennypacker, having verified the writing as Whitefield's. In doing this he was aided by a curious incident in Whitefield's life. While visiting the town of Southold about 1765 the evangelist stayed overnight with a wealthy but worldly family. Before leaving his bedroom the next morning Whitefield wrote with a diamond upon the window pane, "One thing is needful." The inscription still survives and corresponds exactly with the hand that wrote the *Unpublished Journal*. It is evident, therefore, that this manuscript is the Journal referred to above by Whitefield in his two letters written in March, 1745. The difficulty arises when we attempt to answer the question, what happened to it between that date and June, 1816, when we know it was given to Princeton Theological Seminary? The letters just mentioned indicated Whitefield's intention to despatch the *Unpublished Journal* to England. Whitefield's usual practice was to have a copy made of all that he wrote (this was Mrs Whitefield's task when she accompanied him on this third visit to America), but in this case the generally unfinished state of the manuscript, plus the complete absence of any indication

that a copy was ever known to have existed in England, leads us to presume that no copy was ever made. Had one been sent to England it can hardly be doubted that it would have been published. The considerable profits made on his earlier published Journals had been devoted to his Orphanage in Georgia—an institution which was again badly in debt in 1745. His English agents who undertook his publishing would surely have been quick to seize an opportunity to increase his income had it been offered them. One is thus driven to the conclusion that Whitefield abandoned his original intention to publish the Journal.

The reasons which led to this decision can only be surmised. The Rev. Earnest E Eells suggests that the publication of Prince's *Christian History*, a periodical covering much the same ground as the *Unpublished Journal*, led Whitefield to give up his own work.¹

A hint at another possible reason may be drawn from some words Whitefield wrote to a friend during his voyage home to England in June, 1748. After relating that he had been busy revising the seven Journals previously published, he indicates why such revision was necessary. Among the explanations enumerated is his conviction that he had "published too soon, and too explicitly, what had been better told after my death. By these things, I have hurt the blessed cause I would defend, and have stirred up needless opposition."² Now the period covered by the *Unpublished Journal* was unquestionably a particularly difficult and controversial one. When Whitefield had arrived back in New England in the autumn of 1744 he found himself amidst a storm of clerical opposition. The incident recorded on pp. 607-610 of this volume indicates the attitude of not a few New England ministers, an attitude—as Whitefield probably came to realise—which was to some extent warranted by the enthusiasm of extremists who had arisen after his first visit in 1740. Even good men like Gilbert Tennent had gone too far in their opposition to such clergy as had not assisted in the revival—a fact which was later admitted and regretted.

¹ See the footnote on p. 537 of this volume.

² *The Life of George Whitefield*, L. Tyerman, Vol. II, p. 183.

Did Whitefield decide that some of the things in his latest Journal would be “better told” after his death and that its immediate publication might stir and rekindle the opposition which had been rampant when he wrote it? That such thoughts occurred to him is not an impossibility. Prudence and wisdom grow with years. Moreover, would Prince’s publication have been sufficient reason for not issuing his own account? Whitefield had intended his for publication in Britain, whereas Prince’s work was published in New England and could not possibly command the sale in Britain that Whitefield’s would have done. And this fact does not equally cancel out the other reason we have suggested, for had Whitefield published something in London it would still have been quick in reaching the hands of critical readers in New England. The whole matter is, however, still an open question, and it may be some future writer will reach firmer conclusions.

There is also a general factor to be borne in mind with regard to the cessation of Whitefield’s published Journals. It is apparent that he became increasingly disinclined to publish accounts of his own work and personal experiences. When the first seven Journals appeared the revival in England was bound up with Whitefield’s own ministry. To understand the awakening it was necessary to know Whitefield’s doings. But after 1740 the awakening expanded to such an extent that this was no longer the case and it was, after all, the work of God and not just his own part in it which Whitefield desired to see recorded. We find him writing to Gilbert Tennent on February 5, 1742: “I have not freedom now to continue writing a Journal, as usual. I shall proceed, for the future, in a more compendious way.”¹ Already, it seems, he was turning to the conception of a more general account of the progress of the revival rather than details of his individual ministry. This developed into his “design of writing the history of Methodism”²—a labour which, unhappily,

¹ Tyerman, Vol. I, p. 549.

² These were the words of the assistant of his latter years, Cornelius Winter. Cf. *Winter’s Life*, by William Jay, p. 17, also Tyerman, Vol. II, p. 183, and Whitefield’s Preface to the 1756 edition of his Journals.

he never carried out. In beginning his *Unpublished Journal* in the autumn of 1744 Whitefield reverted to his earlier practice,¹ but it may be that in failing finally to commit it to the press he was to some extent influenced by the feeling he so often expressed, "Let the name of George Whitefield perish so long as Christ is exalted!"

A less important difficulty relates to the whereabouts of the manuscript after Whitefield had laid it aside. We know that more than a year after his last reference to it (March, 1745) he was still carrying it with him, for the paper folio on which the *Unpublished Journal* was written also contains three letters in Whitefield's hand: one written at Christian Bridge, Delaware, June 12, 1746; the second at Bohemia, Maryland, June 16, 1746; and a third at Philadelphia, August 7, 1746. So the manuscript was still in his possession on that latter date. The next definite thing we know about it is that seventy years later it was given by Dr John R Bayard Rodgers to Princeton Theological Seminary.

The following version of what happened to the manuscript in the intervening period seems to us to be the most probable: when Whitefield left Philadelphia and Pennsylvania at the end of the summer of 1746 and moved southwards towards Georgia, we know from his published letters² that he again stopped at Bohemia, Maryland. He often stayed at the mansion owned by his friend "good old Mrs Bayard" in this village and regarded it as his "Headquarters" in Maryland.³ It was the kind of place

¹ We are thus presuming that Whitefield had written no Journals since his Seventh, which terminated in January, 1741. This appears to be the case, though his reference to "my next Journal" recorded on p. 515 of this volume seems a rather casual notice that he was about to resume a practice broken off more than three years earlier.

² *Works of George Whitefield*, Vol. II, p. 83.

³ The commencement of his friendship with the aged Susanna Bayard is noted in his Journal for November 24, 1740. The reference to Bohemia as his "Headquarters" is in a letter dated June 26, 1746. This letter is one of ninety-two letters of Whitefield's recently discovered at Wilmington, Delaware. They were edited by Dr John W Christie and published in the June, September and December, 1954, numbers of the *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, Philadelphia.