

Anecdotes
of
George Whitefield

by the Rev.
J.B. Wakeley

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ANECDOTES

OF THE REV.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

M.A.

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

BY THE REV.

J. B. WAKELEY,

Author of "Anecdotes of the Wesleys"

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THE PRINCE OF PULPIT ORATORS.



SKETCH OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

“BEHOLD, what fire is in his eye! what fervour on his cheek! That glorious burst of winged words, how bound they from his tongue! The full expression of the mighty thought; the strong, triumphant argument; the rush of native eloquence, resistless as Niagara; the keen demand, the clear reply; the metaphor, bold and free; the grasp of concentrated intellect wielding the omnipotence of truth; the grandeur of his speech, In his majesty of mind!”

THE illustrious name of George Whitefield is as familiar to the Christian world as “household words”. He was the Christian hero of two hemispheres, honoured and beloved in both. During the hundred revolving years which have passed since he with joy finished his course his name has lost none of its lustre, and his fame is worldwide.

Gloucestershire, England, distinguished as the birthplace of many world-renowned men—among others Tyndale, who translated the New Testament into English hundreds of years ago, and Sir Matthew Hale, the eminent jurist—has also the high honour of being the place where George Whitefield and Robert Raikes were born—the former the unequalled pulpit orator, the latter the founder of Sabbath-schools in England. It is also famous as the place where Bishop John Hooper was burned at the stake and fell a martyr for the truth. It has been the home of reformers, martyrs, jurists, and orators; and on the banks of the silver Severn stands the monument of Robert Raikes, the Sabbath-school pioneer.

George, the sixth son of Thomas and Elizabeth Whitefield, was born on the 27th* of December, 1714; and it was in the Old Bell Inn, which is still standing, that George Whitefield, more than one hundred and fifty years ago, drew his first breath. After his father's death, which happened when George was about two years of age, the business of the inn was continued by his mother, and it was here that his early days were spent.

In speaking of this era in his young life he says with characteristic simplicity, "I began to assist her in various ways, till at length I put on my blue apron and washed mops, cleaned rooms, and, in a word, became a professed and common drawer for near a year and a half."

How strange that he who rose to the highest pinnacle of earthly fame, that he who astonished the world with his great oratorical powers, should have been in early life employed in waiting on customers in a bar-room!

"His descent augured no brilliant future; but if Virgil was the son of a potter, Demosthenes of a smith, Columbus of a cloth-weaver, Ben Jonson of a bricklayer, Shakspeare of a wool-trader, Burns of a poor peasant, and Luther of a miner, it is not incredible that the preacher who united the mind of a cherub with the heart of a seraph should have sprung from an inn-keeper."†

Beneath the blue apron of the tavern-boy drawing ale for the guests lay a troubled conscience; and with the strange proclivity that often in boyish mimicries hints at peculiar fitness for some great calling, young Whitefield would imitate clergymen, read prayers, and, as he grew older, compose sermons. Deeper went the sounding-line into his evil heart, higher rose his breathings after a purer life; and often late into the night, when the inn at Gloucester was dark and still, the candle yet burned at the window where sat the tavernkeeper's boy reading the Bible, that blessed book whose truths he was afterward to wield so effectually as a weapon of divine power.

* His biographers say the 16th; Whitefield says the 27th. Whitefield's Works, vol. III, p. 500. This is the difference between the Julian calendar (in use when Whitefield was born) and the Gregorian calendar (adopted in Great Britain in 1752).

† Rev. Arthur Pierson.

Young Whitefield was educated at the University in Oxford, which institution he entered in his eighteenth year, and it was here that he became acquainted with John and Charles Wesley, and joined the "Holy Club", Charles Wesley being his spiritual father, and John his early counsellor.

Early he entered the Christian ministry, and in the twenty-first year of his age was ordained by Bishop Benson, who had shown great favour to the young preacher. Through the influence of John and Charles Wesley he became a missionary to Georgia, and was the founder of an orphan asylum in that colony, to which he devoted his time, his talents, his eloquence, and his life.

Thirteen times he crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and in a ministry of thirty-four years preached over eighteen thousand sermons. In England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, in the West India Islands, and in every colony in America, he preached the "Word of Life". No man ever preached to greater crowds. Twenty thousand in Philadelphia, thirty thousand on Boston Common, in Kingswood ten thousand, on Hampton Common twelve thousand, at Bristol twenty thousand, and at Moorfields sixty thousand, thronged to hear him.

The questions are often asked, In what consisted the lock of his strength? What was the secret of his great power? What were his characteristics as a preacher? We answer: Solemnity, tenderness, earnestness, courage, directness, and devotion.

Mr Whitefield had a fine presence, his personal appearance being much in his favour. He was of middling height, well-proportioned and graceful; his complexion fair, his countenance intelligent and manly; his eyes, which spoke volumes, were of a dark blue; but one of them had a squint, which, while in nowise detrimental to his looks, but rather giving additional interest to them, furnished to his revilers a subject for ridicule, they calling him "Doctor Squintum".

He not only had an eloquent eye, but also an eloquent face, every feature of which spoke to him audience. And, with all these requisites of a first-class speaker, he possessed a most magnificent voice.

The most transcendent gifts Heaven has ever bestowed upon man are poetry and eloquence. With the latter Whitefield was richly endowed, The faculty of speech has rarely been given to man in such

perfection as to him. He was the orator of nature. He was born an orator!

His was the eloquence of tears. It is an old maxim that if the preacher would have others weep he must himself weep. He was indeed the weeping prophet. Like David and Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul, he wept. It was the overflow of a great soul; it was the gushing forth of his amazing sympathy. His eyes were a fountain of tears deluging his cheeks. He baptised his hearers with them, and no wonder they were moved and melted.

At one time while preaching he said, "Could my prayers or tears affect you, you should have a volley of the one and floods of the other." Again he said to another audience, "Would weeping, would tears, prevail on you, I could wish 'my head were waters and my eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep' out every argument and melt you into love." "I hardly ever knew him to go through a sermon," said one who knew him well and heard him often, "without weeping more or less." He used to say in the pulpit, "You blame me for weeping, but how can I help it when you will not weep for yourselves?"

"I have known him," says Cornelius Winter, "avail himself of the formality of the judge putting on his *black cap* to pronounce sentence. With his eyes full of tears, and his heart almost too big to admit of speech, he would say after a momentary pause, 'I am now going to put on my *condemning cap*. Sinner, I must do it! I must pronounce sentence!' Then in a burst of tremendous eloquence he would repeat our Lord's words, 'Depart, ye cursed!' and not without a powerful description of the nature of that curse. But it was only by beholding his *attitude* and his *tears* that a person could well conceive of the effect."*

Whitefield was not only the orator of nature, but also of art. He studied oratory; he drilled himself; he copied the finest models; he studied to show himself "a workman that needed not to be ashamed." He sought out "acceptable tones, gestures, and looks, as well as acceptable words. Every accent of his voice spoke to the ear; every feature of his face, every motion of his hands, every gesture, spoke to the eye, so that the most dissipated and thoughtless found their

* Cornelius Winter in Jay.

attention involuntarily fixed.”* He did not study oratory for mere purposes of display, nor for dramatic effect; but that, through its powerful influence over the minds and hearts of men, he might the more effectually succeed in winning souls to Christ. He rebuked those at Oxford for their neglect of its study, provided for its instruction in his orphan asylum, and recommended it in the American colleges.

There was great versatility in his style. Some orators have one peculiar method from which they never vary. They are always grave, always pathetic, or always logical. Not so with Whitefield. In him there was splendid variety. He could be a son of thunder or of consolation; blow the brazen trump of the law, or strike with gentle touch the silver strings of the Gospel; introduce his hearers to Mount Sinai or to Calvary. He could thunder, or be as calm as a summer’s evening; as grand as the majesty of the howling storm, or as mild as the breath of spring.

Whitefield dealt in the picturesque, but his pictures were truthful; they were life-like, resembling the work of some great artist; they were faithful delineations of nature and of individual character. He frequently illustrated his discourses by well-told anecdotes related with a peculiar zest; his dramatic powers, which were of a high order, enabling him to describe incidents so vividly as to almost appear real, as in the case of Lord Chesterfield and the story of the blind man’s dog.

He had a bold imagination, and the creations of his genius were beautiful. His style was always natural, and in perfect unison with the sentiments he uttered. There was about him a commanding majesty, a divine pathos, which, with the splendid music of his voice and the angelic benevolence of his countenance, fascinated his hearers. The over-powering grandeur of his theme fired his soul, kindled his imagination, and inspired his tongue. All the treasures of sweet and solemn sounds were at his command. His heart seemed to be a fountain of living fire, and he used to say that the world wanted more heat than light. The grandeur of his soul appeared to be transfused into his sermons as well as into his countenance. At times he seemed so superhuman and angelic that he has been styled “THE SERAPHIC.”

Whitefield understood the power of illustration, He ever kept the volume of nature open before him, delighting to unfold its magnificent

* Gillies.

pages. The ocean, the thunder-storm, the bow encircling the heavens, furnished him with themes to illustrate his subject; or a trial, or a pilot-fish, or a furnace—in fact, any thing and everything, whether magnificently grand or ever so insignificant, he made subservient to his oratorical powers. His eloquence, reminded one of the ocean, adding, as it does, to its own boundlessness, contributions from every part of the universe. Well has it been said that Whitefield “ransacked creation for figures, time for facts, heaven for motives, hell for warnings, and eternity for arguments.”*

There was a directness about his preaching. It did not mean every one in general and nobody in particular. He used the sharpest arrows, and took the most direct aim, addressing his hearers in such a manner that each one felt that he himself was meant. It was as direct as when Paul said to the Corinthians, “And such were some of you;” as direct as when Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man!” He said at one time, “I intend, by the divine help, not only to preach to your heads, but also to your hearts.”

In preaching he was terribly in earnest. He spoke as if he believed the truths he uttered—that there was a heaven and a hell; as if he stood between them listening to the groans of the damned on the one hand, and the songs of the redeemed on the other; as if he could hear the knell of eternal death tolling over lost souls, and all the caverns of despair echoing with their groans; as if he “had measured eternity, and taken the dimensions of a soul.”

But the crowning glory, the transcendent excellence that, as a preacher, ensured him success, was that he was endowed with power from on high. The holy anointing rested upon him—the divine unction, the baptism of the ever-blessed Spirit! This it was that made him a flame of fire as well as a flame of love; this that gave to him

“Thoughts that breathe and words that burn;”

this that made “his tongue like the pen of a ready writer;” this that caused his speech to distill as the dew upon the flower, the gentle rain upon the newmown grass; this that made his countenance look seraphic, like that of Moses when he came down from communing with God on the mount; this that made his eyes to glitter in the rays

* Philip’s *Life and Times of Whitefield*.

of the excellent glory, and his tongue to reverberate the sounds that came down from heaven; this that gave him his commanding power, his burning zeal, his holy ardour, his heavenly enthusiasm, his melting pathos!

He studied his sermons under the shadow of the cross; they were steeped in tears, baptised in the name of the Eternal Three, and then preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

At one time, after having preached to tens of thousands, he says, "The glorious Immanuel caused life and power to follow it, and I hear that arrows have stuck fast in many hearts." Again, referring to his preaching on various occasions, he says, "A whole shower of divine blessings descended from heaven upon the congregation." "The Lord was with me." "I preached with as convincing and soul-edifying a power as I ever felt in my life." "The words distilled as the dew, and I think I was in the very suburbs of heaven." "The word came with most gloriously convincing power." "I preached again with great power." "I preached to about twelve thousand with uncommon freedom and power. Much of the divine presence was there." "Preached with wonderful power to a full congregation." "I preached with as great freedom, power, and melting as I have ever seen." "These words much refreshed me, 'And the Lord was with David whithersoever he went.'" "I preached with much of the Redeemer's presence. Indeed, our Saviour kept the good wine 'till the last; he made our cup to overflow." "was enabled to preach there with so much power that all must confess God was with us of a truth." "My mouth and heart were greatly opened in preaching." "Sunday was a day of the Son of man. The word was clothed with much power both for sinners and for saints." Such were some of his expressions in regard to the great secret of his success. He had power divine, power obtained by wrestling with the angel of the covenant. "Had he been less prayerful he would have been less powerful. He was the prince of preachers *without* the veil, because he was a Jacob 'within the vail.' His face shone when he came down from the mount, because he had been long alone with God upon the mount. It was this which won for him the title 'Seraphic,' not in the scholastic but in the angelic sense of the term. But he was a human seraph, and thus burnt out in the blaze of his own fire. He was so

often at the throne, and always so neat it, that, like the apocalyptic angel, he came down ‘clothed with its rainbow.’”*

Whitefield was wholly devoted to his work from the time the Bishop laid his hands on his head till he triumphantly finished his course and went up to receive his well-earned crown. He had one all, absorbing, all-engrossing object before him, and he made every thing bend to it, as is evinced by his enthusiastic exclamations: “O for more bodies, more tongues, more lives, to be employed in the service of my Master!” “O that I could fly from pole to pole, preaching the everlasting Gospel!” “Fain would I spend and be spent for the good of souls.” “It is my meat and my drink.” “Had I a thousand lives the Lord Jesus should have them all!” “O that I may die, and drop in my blessed Master’s work!” “I am determined, in his strength, to die fighting, and to go on till I drop!” “I hope to die in the pulpit, or soon after I come out of it!” “The pleasure I have had this week in preaching the Gospel I would not part with for ten thousand worlds!”

Preaching with him was no mere profession, nor did he enter the priest’s office for a piece of bread. The pulpit he called his throne, and preaching his delightful work. He said there was “nothing like keeping the wheels oiled by action. The more we do the more we may do; every act strengthens the habit, and the best preparation for preaching on Sunday is to preach every day in the week,”

The following description of Whitefield and his eloquence, taken from the, *New York Observer*, is so graphic we take great pleasure in transcribing it:

“The name of Whitefield is stereotyped on the popular mind as the representative of that highest of arts, pulpit eloquence; so that to say that a preacher is as eloquent as Whitefield would be regarded as extravagant as to say that a senator was as eloquent as Demosthenes. And yet strange it is that no biographer or writer, in his day or ours, has given a just and true portraiture of this unequalled preacher. We read his printed sermons, and they disappoint us. We say to ourselves, These are not great sermons, nor apparently eloquent ones. We wonder how it was that the utterance, even by his fire-touched lips, could have so entranced listening thousands. But the truth is Whitefield wrote these sermons on his voyages across the Atlantic, amid the noise

* Philip’s Life and Times of Whitefield.

and uproar of sea-life, and in the absence of those stirring sympathies which were kindled in the crowded audiences of Tottenham Court. They cannot give one, therefore, a just idea of the preacher. It would be about as absurd to judge of his eloquence by these specimens as it would be to judge of the spirit and fire of a war-horse on the battlefield by seeing him leisurely walked over the parade-ground.

“Of all men in the world, Whitefield was the last who should have published his sermons. So much did he owe to physical temperament, to the volume and varied intonations of his voice, to the irrepressible fires of a soul all alive to the grand and overpowering visions of divine truth, to a sort of inspiration kindled by the sight of thousands whose eyes were ready to weep and whose hearts were ready to break the moment his clarion voice rang out on their expectant ears—so much did he owe to these circumstances that his eloquence cannot be appreciated by any account of it which can be given verbally, or be delineated on paper. Vain is it, therefore, to look into his, printed sermons to find his power.

“Whitefield’s eloquence grew out of many circumstances, all of which cannot be explored any more than we can trace the mysterious sources of the rapid, full-flowing, and fertilising Nile. There was a histrionic vein in his very boyhood. The play of his passions even then was wonderful. As he grew to manhood these qualities ripened unconsciously into strength; and so gifted was he at the very outset of his public life that had he chosen the stage instead of the pulpit, Garrick might have found a competitor whose genius would have eclipsed, if not utterly extinguished, his own. Such is said to have been the admission of that celebrated tragedian after listening to one of Whitefield’s sermons.

“Without being handsome, Whitefield’s face was a speaking one. It was a luminous medium of the passions. The bright or the dark, the lurid cloud and the calm sunshine, made themselves known, not only in the voice and the gesture, but especially in the ever-varying expressions of the eloquent countenance. The writer, who has sought to obtain from every possible source traditionary facts concerning this matchless preacher, once heard a very old man say that when he was listening to Whitefield he was spellbound, and could scarcely tell by what means the magic power was so potent over him. After some

questioning, the old man said he believed it was owing to his voice in part, but more to his expressive face. That face, said he, was like a canvas, and the preacher painted on it every passion that stirs in the human breast. It was at one moment terrific, as if all the furies were enthroned on that dark brow; and the next, as by a dissolving view, there would come forth an angelic, sweetness that savored of heaven itself. His eyes, upturned, seemed to the beholder to penetrate the very throne of God. He saw, so it would seem, the celestial host. He addressed Gabriel, as if familiar with that bright archangel. He bade him suspend his flight and receive the news, and bear it upward, that one more sinner had repented. Who but Whitefield would have dared the almost impossible rhetorical experiment? Who would have ventured to cry out "Stop, Gabriel, stop?" But it was done by him, and as naturally as if the vision were real, and as if Gabriel folded his wings at the preacher's call, and received the joyful message. And when, too, he took the sinner to the judgement-seat, tried him by God's unerring law, brought him in guilty, and then, with moistened eyes and a heart burning with pity, put on the cap of condemnation, and proceeded, with choking utterance, to pronounce sentence, while the audience were melted to tears—when all this was done, not as an actor would do it, but in the faith of a real prospective scene, and with unutterable sorrow of soul, as speaking under God's high sanction—how intensely moved and excited must the audience have been!

"It was no affectation. when his tears fell like rain. It was for no rhetorical effect that he threw himself into these impassioned expostulations with his careless and impenitent hearers. Whitefield never played a part. His boldest and most original pulpit efforts were the natural efflux of a soul which knew no selfish impulse, but which beat with sincere love to lost men. It was not *Whitefield*, but *Christ*, that he was thinking of. It was not to attract admiration upon himself, but to draw all men to the Saviour, that he thus spake. His eloquence was kindled at the cross, and displayed its grandest features when redemption by that cross was its mighty theme.

"His personal appearance, judging from what is considered the best engraved likeness, is not calculated to impress us either with great intellectual force or a graceful exterior. That wig of huge

dimensions, covering and concealing the higher and more striking lineaments of the forehead; the upraised hands, a most awkward thing in a picture, though a most impressive one to witness; his eyes, so small, with a decided cast in one of them, render this likeness any thing but consonant with our preconceived notions of the 'seraphic man.' But while in person he was not among the most majestic or the most attractive, all defects were instantly lost sight of the moment that eloquent voice began to peal out its unrivalled music. The term 'seraphic' was not given to him for his exterior grace or his symmetrical features. It was the spirit within him, shining through and illuminating those features, until the audience, hushed or excited, were ready to doubt if the speaker were a man or an angel! His burning eloquence seemed to the listener as properly symbolising the responsive cry, one to another, of the glowing seraphim.

"The eloquence of Whitefield, by the concurrent testimony of those with whom the writer in younger days conversed, including one venerable divine, was owing, as in most other similar cases to a combination of qualities rather than to any single excellence. The great foundation of it all lay in a soul of intense emotions stirred to its very depths by the power of religion. He was a consecrated man from the first. It was a full, joyful, and cordial surrender of all his powers and afflictions to Christ, and to the love of souls for Christ's sake. He counted every thing but loss for him. His love was the grand impulsive power in all his journeys, his labours, his self-denials, and his aims. In this respect he came nearer than any modern preacher we know of to 'the great Apostle of the Gentiles.'

"This burning zeal for Christ found expression in the gesture, the countenance, and the voice. These were the electric wires through which the fiery current within flowed down in startling shocks or melting influences upon thousands. In gesture no man ever excelled, perhaps none ever equalled him. These gestures were unstudied, and so gave the greater emphasis to his utterance. A single movement of his finger, with the accompanying expression of his face, would thrill an audience or dissolve them in tears. His face, radiant with the light from heaven, which he had caught on the mount of communion, begat an immediate sympathy as all eyes were riveted upon it.

"A countenance will thus affect us, as we all know. How often have

we felt its power ere a word was spoken! But O, when that face began to throw off from its lustrous surface the rays of divine intelligence, and when tears and smiles alternated as the subject was pensive or joyful, how did the audience, with responsive sympathy, weep or rejoice under the eloquent preacher! But the voice! What shall we say of *that*? It was such as man is seldom gifted with. It could be heard distinctly, on a clear, still evening, for a mile. It was smooth, variable, and could express the gentlest emotions. It was capable, also, of swelling into thunder peals, and then every ear tingled and every heart trembled. If the organ of some great cathedral had the power to speak, and could express the finest and most tender sentiments from its delicate pipes, and roll forth majestic thoughts on its largest ones, it would give some idea of Whitefield's variable and powerful tones.

“Whitefield's power as a pulpit orator cannot be separated from his pious emotions, nor from his religious views. Had he embraced a theory of religion less emotional, more after the pattern of rationalists or ritualists, his eloquence would have been lost to the world. Never would his soul so have taken fire, nor his lips glowed with the burning coal of enthusiastic passion. But he believed in man's ruin by sin, in the certain interminable woe that awaited the impenitent; in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and the free offer of salvation through faith in the cross. Such were his views, and under this conviction he looked upon his audiences. He saw but one hope set before them, and with his whole soul moved and melted by the love of Christ on the one hand, and the love of souls on the other, he pressed every hearer, with all the energy of a dying man speaking to dying men, to accept the great salvation. Nor do we think that the pulpit can reach its appropriate power, nor for any length of time retain it, unless these grand cardinal doctrines of grace are the inspiring themes.

“The eloquence of Whitefield never waned. It was greater if possible at fifty than at thirty. It never was more impressive or powerful than just before the silence of death suddenly settled upon his lips; and his last efforts in the pulpit partook so much of a heavenly inspiration that some regarded them as the preparatory vibrations of that golden harp upon which he was to swell forever the high notes of redemption.”

“Mr Whitefield often quoted Thomas Betteiton, the famous English actor who for many years bore away the palm from all his competitors. Betterton affirmed that the stage would soon be deserted if the actors upon it spoke like the preachers. “Mr Betterton’s answer to a worthy prelate,” said Mr Whitefield, “is worthy of lasting regard. When asked how it was that the clergy, who speak of things *real*, affected the people so little, and the players, who speak of things *imaginary*, affected them so much, replied, ‘My Lord, I can assign but one reason: We players speak of things imaginary as real, and too many of the clergy speak of things real as though they were imaginary.’”

The favourite maxim of Whitefield was to “preach as Apelles painted—for *eternity*.” He was first struck with this maxim when a young man at the table of Archbishop Boulter in Ireland, where the great Doctor Delany said to him, “I wish, whenever I go into a pulpit, to look upon it as the last time I shall ever preach, or the last time the people may hear me.” Whitefield never forgot this remark. He often said, “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, endeavour to move the affections and warm the heart. To act otherwise bespeaks *a sad ignorance of human nature*, and such an inexcusable indolence and indifference in the preacher as must *constrain* the hearers to suspect, whether they so will or not, that the preacher, let him be who he will, *only deals in the false commerce of unfelt truth*.”

Much has been said and written concerning his printed sermons. It has been the custom to decry them, and they are seldom read. This shows that his eloquence consisted more in the manner than, in the matter of his discourses. This is the case with many public speakers. It was so with Summerfield, Bascom, and others. Some of his sermons were taken down in short-hand; others were hastily written by himself while crossing the Atlantic. Some are tame, but others eloquent, and in their application powerful. They have not the beauty of Robert Hall, the strength of Chalmers, the massiveness of Edwards, the elegance of Dwight, the splendour of Melville, the gorgeousness of Richard Winter Hamilton, nor the logic of the Wesleys; yet they have been admired by many, and the reading of them has produced powerful effects. The reading of Whitefield’s sermon on “What think

ye of Christ?" was the means of the conversion of the Rev. James Hervey. Reading his sermons led Andrew Kinsman to Christ, and he afterward became a distinguished minister. He was awakened while reading Mr Whitefield's sermon on the New Birth. He then read them in his father's family, a number of whom were thereby converted.

We will name but one more instance of the effects produced by the reading of these sermons. Samuel Morris, a resident of Virginia, having obtained a copy of Whitefield's sermons, which he read with great profit to himself, and feeling desirous that others should be similarly benefited, invited his neighbours to his house to hear them read; the result was that an extraordinary religious interest was created. Multitudes thronged to hear them, till at length the interest became so great that they erected a meeting-house for mere reading. Melting scenes followed, and sinners were awakened and converted. The people "could not keep from crying out and weeping bitterly" during the readings. Mr Morris, being invited to visit other localities with his volume of sermons, did so, and the awakening extended to several towns. Four chapels were built, and several societies organised in the neighbourhood of Hanover, all resulting from the reading of these sermons.

This volume of sermons, read by Morris, founded the Presbyterian Church in Virginia, no dissenting minister having prior to that time settled in the colony. Mr Whitefield gives a full account of it in one of his letters.

It might be supposed we were overrating his powers as a preacher, and overestimating him as a pulpit orator. Not so: we have not exaggerated at all, but have come far short of doing him justice. It would take another Whitefield to do justice to Whitefield. Had you heard him you would say the half had not been told you.

We might adduce hosts of witnesses to testify to his superior powers as a pulpit orator, such as Franklin, Lord Chesterfield, Bolingbroke, Hume, and others from the fashionable and the literary world, as well as noted actors like Garrick, Shuter, and others. We will, however, notice the testimony of a few who were no mean judges of pulpit oratory:

Augustus Toplady calls him the "prince of preachers." John Newton, the friend of Cowper, said, "As a preacher, if any man were to ask me