

The Works
of
George Whitefield

Volume 1
Letters 1735-1742

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THE
WORKS

OF THE REVEREND

GEORGE WHITEFIELD, M. A.

Late of PEMBROKE-COLLEGE, OXFORD,
And Chaplain to The Rt. Hon. the Countess of HUNTINGDON.

CONTAINING

All his SERMONS and TRACTS
Which have been already published:

WITH

A SELECT COLLECTION of
LETTERS,

Written to his most intimate Friends, and Persons of Distinction, in
England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, from the Year 1734 to 1770,
including the whole Period of his Ministry.

ALSO

Some other PIECES on IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,
never before printed; prepared by Himself for the Press.

To which is prefixed,

An ACCOUNT of his LIFE,
Compiled from his Original PAPERS and LETTERS.

VOLUME I.

LONDON:

Printed for EDWARD and CHARLES DILLY, in the Poultry;
and Messrs. KINCAID and BELL in Edinburgh.

MDCCLXXI

Entered at STATIONERS-HALL, agreeable
to Act of Parliament

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

THIS complete Edition of the late Rev. Mr WHITEFIELD's Works (printed under the Direction of his Executors) it is presumed, will be highly acceptable to all his Friends, as the just and proper Monument of his Memory and Merit; and both pleasing and useful to the Public in general, but especially to those who desire to cherish and promote the Spirit of primitive Christianity.

To the Sermons and Tracts formerly published, and which are now ranged in their proper Order, are also added other Pieces, on the most Important Subjects: together with a valuable Collection of Letters, selected and prepared by himself for Publication; in which is displayed, that native Spirit and Simplicity, so eminently conspicuous in his Life and Conversation. His Friends, and even his Enemies (should there be any such) will here openly behold his unwearied Diligence, undaunted Firmness, noble Disinterestedness, and exceeding Usefulness in the Work of the Ministry; also, his remarkable Fidelity in Friendship, exemplary Piety, and fervent Zeal for the Prosperity of pure and undefiled religion.

The Letters and Works can stand in no need of any Recommendation: Connected with the account of his Life, (now drawn from original Papers) they exhibit a plain and undisguised View of the worthy Author, in all Parts of his public Service, as well as in his private Retirements, and inward Trials; faithfully showing the Whole of that *living Temple*, which was sacred to God, and happily instructing Mankind in the Ways of Godliness and eternal Life.

L E T T E R S .

LETTER I.

To Mr G. H.

Dear Sir,

Oxon., July 18, 1734.

HAVING heard the melancholy news of your brother's death, I could not help sending you a line, to let you know how much I am concerned. Indeed, I cannot say, I am so much grieved on his account, as for that sorrow, which the loss of so valuable a youth must necessarily occasion to all his relations. No! I rather envy him his blessed condition. He unquestionably is divinely blessed, whilst we are still left behind to wrestle with unruly passions, and by a continued looking unto JESUS and running in our Christian race, to press forward to that high prize, of which he, *dear Youth*, is now in full fruition. These are my true sentiments about his death; I leave you to judge then, whether I had need be concerned on his account; and surely was it to be put to your choice, whether so religious a young man should live or die, no one could be so cruel, as to wish to detain him from his wished-for glory. Be not then too much concerned at his death, but let us rather learn that important lesson, which his whole life taught us: "That there is nothing

LETTER I. Letters to the Harrises of Gloucester are numerous for the period 1734-39 but scanty for later years. It is not always clear whether they are addressed to Gabriel Harris Snr, or to his son, Gabriel Harris Jnr, Whitefield's boyhood friend—the majority, we judge, were sent to the former—but this has little importance for the reader of today.

Gabriel Harris Snr was the leading bookseller of his city. He also held civic office over a period of years as sheriff, alderman, and mayor. His son followed in his steps.

comparable to an early piety." I thought to have spent many agreeable hours with him in Christian and edifying conversation, when I came to *Gloucester*; but he is gone to more agreeable company, and long before now has joined the heavenly choir.

I shall only add, that as your brother imitated our blessed SAVIOUR in his life, so I pray GOD, he may resemble him in his death, and be a means, like his beloved Redeemer, of reconciling all former animosities, which is the hearty wish of, dear Sir,

Your sincere friend and humble servant,

G. W.

LETTER II.

To Mr G. H.

Dear Sir,

Bristol, Sept. 10, 1734.

THIS morning I wrote to you in haste, expecting Mr *I.* would soon be going; but to my great satisfaction, he came hither this night, and soon afterwards, your very much wished-for letter was brought to hand; which (after ten thousand thanks for so many repeated favours) I shall now beg leave to answer. You tell me "Mr *P.* likes *N.*" GOD be praised! That he hath recommended something to my perusal. I'll read it, GOD willing, with care, at my return. "That he wants to know my quality, state, condition, circumstances, &c." Alas! that any one should enquire after such a wretch as I am. However, since he hath been so kind, pray tell him, that as for my quality, I was a poor, mean drawer; but by the distinguishing grace of GOD, am now intended for the ministry. As for my estate, that I am a servitor; and as to my condition and circumstances, I have not of my own any where to lay my head. But my friends, by God's providence, minister daily to me, and in return for such unmerited, unspeakable blessings, I trust the same good Being will give me grace to dedicate myself without reserve to his

LETTER II. "a poor mean drawer": a barman in the Bell Inn, Gloucester.

: a servitor: undergraduate at Oxford University, assisted from college funds and performing menial duties in return.

: "my brother". We do not know to which of his brothers Whitefield here refers, probably to either James (a sea captain) or to Richard (who remained at the Bell Inn).

service. To “spend and be spent” for the welfare of my fellow-creatures, endeavouring to promote the gospel of his Son as much as lies in my poor power. But “observe his humility,” says Mr *H.* Aye, catch an old Christian without profound humility, if you can. Believe me, Sir, it is nothing but this flesh of ours, those cursed seeds of the proud apostate, which lie lurking in us, that make us to think ourselves worthy of the very air we breathe. When our eyes are opened by the influences of divine grace, we then shall begin to think of ourselves as we ought to think, even, that GOD is all, and we are less than nothing. Well, you may cry, O happy temper, could I but learn of CHRIST to be meek and lowly in heart, I should certainly find rest to my soul. May GOD, for his dear SON’S sake, give it to you, to me, and to all our dear friends! “Some like, some dislike the extract,” you say. I did not do it, to please man, but GOD. Mr *W.* is too much engaged in temporals.” Is he? Oh dear Sir, pray that when I enter the ministry, I may be wholly engaged in spirituals: But “Mrs *H.* has been ill, and is now recovered.” GOD be praised for both! Our Saviour, *Sir*, learnt obedience by the things which he suffered, so must we. Pain, if patiently endured, and sanctified to us, is a great purifier of our corrupted nature. It will teach us excellent lessons. I hope Mr *H.* has been enabled to learn some of them. So much in answer to your kind letter. You say “it was too long.” Believe me, *Sir*; it was much too short; but a line is more than I deserve. However, I have made out in mine, what was wanting in yours. *My Mother’s* journey to *Gloucester*, I fear, is spoiled by the weather. GOD’S blessed will be done! I hope to be with you about next *Tuesday* sevensnight. “I am missed,” you say; and you may well miss such a troublesome guest. Well, GOD will reward you richly, I trust. Never despair of *my brother*; when GOD acts upon the soul, he makes quick work of it. Be pleased to tell Mr *M.* that his remissness hath occasioned me many a sigh, and his return from his relapse, matter of abundant thanks to GOD in his behalf. Oh let us young, unexperienced soldiers, be always upon our guard; the very moment we desert our post, the enemy rushes in; and if he can but divert our eyes from looking heavenward, he will

soon so blind us, that we shall not look towards it at all. A great deal may be learned from a little fall. But I must not detain you any longer, than to assure you how much I am, *Dear Sir,*

Your and Mrs *H.*'s sincere friend and
servant, in our common LORD,

G. W.

LETTER III.

To Mr H.

Dear Sir,

Oxon., Sept. 17, 1734.

I had the favour of your letter last *Friday*, which brought me the agreeable news of your and Mrs *H.*'s welfare, together with the much-desired account of your approving the scheme, enclosed in my last. Indeed, I did not doubt of its meeting with a candid reception, from all those persons to whom it was recommended. Their known concern for religion, giving me sufficient assurance, that nothing can be unacceptable to them, which any way tended to promote their improvement in the divine life. It must be confessed, indeed, as you very justly observed, that we must make a great progress in religion, and be inured by frequent prayer and meditation, to the ecstatic contemplation of heavenly objects before we can arrive at true heavenly-mindedness; and, perhaps, after all our endeavours, whilst our souls are immersed in these fleshly tabernacles, we shall make but very small advances in so delightful and glorious an undertaking. But believe me, *Sir*, you cannot imagine, how vastly serviceable the constant use of all the means of religion will be, in acquiring this blessed habit of mind. Such, as an early rising in the morning, public and private prayer, a due temperance in all things, and frequent meditation on the infinite love and purity of that unparalleled pattern of all perfection, our dear Redeemer. As for your mentioning, *Sir*, the degeneracy of the age, as the least objection against our making further advances in any religious improvement, I cannot by any means admit of it. The Scriptures (as I take it) are to be

LETTER III. Mr Law's *Christian Perfection*. Published in 1726, a third (12 mo) edition in 1734.

the only rules of action. And the examples of our blessed LORD and his apostles, the grand patterns whereby we are to form the conduct of our lives. It is true, indeed, that instances of an exalted piety are rarely to be met with in the present age, and one would think, if we were to take an estimate of our religion, from the lives of most of its professors, that Christianity was nothing but a dead letter. But then it is not our religion, but ourselves that are to be blamed all this while. Would we live as the primitive Christians did, we might no doubt have the same assistance vouchsafed us, as they had. God's grace is never restrained, and though we should not arrive at those heights of heavenly-mindedness, as some of the primitive Christians were eminent for, yet, methinks we should imitate them as far as we can, and rely on the divine goodness for grants of such a supply of grace, as he, in his good pleasure, shall judge most convenient for us. Be pleased to send for Mr *Law's Christian Perfection* for me against my coming into the country, if printed in a small edition. I am, with due respects to self, spouse, and all other friends,

Yours sincerely,

G. W.

LETTER IV.

To the Same.

Dear Sir,

Oxon., Dec. 4, 1734.

I am heartily glad to hear that the *country parson* has had so good an effect upon you, and that you are resolved to set in earnest, about working out your salvation: Be sure quench not these first motions; but go on vigorously and manfully, without the least regard to what the world may say; if you can once break with that, you are safe. The *prayers*, I hope to send you next week. Only let me give you this caution, not to depend

LETTER IV. "the *country parson*" seems to be a reference to George Herbert's *Country Parson* published in 1652 and often reprinted.

: "The *prayers*": probably refers to *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for every Day in the Week* printed for J. Wesley in 1733. It was his first publication and intended for the use of students in Lincoln College, Oxford.

on any advice or book, that is given you; but solely on the grace of GOD attending it. The book which I have sent to my brother, and would recommend to you and all my *Gloucester* friends, will soon convince you how dangerous it is to be a lukewarm Christian, and that there is nothing to be done without breaking from the world, denying ourselves daily, taking up our cross, and following JESUS CHRIST. These things may seem a little terrible at first, but believe me, they are nothing but suggestions of our enemy to deter us from getting out; and if you can credit me, mortification itself, when once practised, is the greatest pleasure in the world. But hold, I shall transgress the time prescribed me, therefore give me only leave to add my hearty prayer for your successful progress in religion, and to subscribe myself in great haste, *Dear Sir,*

Your sincere friend and humble servant,

G. W.

LETTER V.

To the Same.

Dear Sir,

Oxon., Feb. 20, 1735.

I BELIEVE you think me a strange sort of a person, for not being so good as my word in coming down this winter; and what is worse, in not letting you have a line to acquaint you of my reasons for it. And, indeed, I am not as yet determined; providence having ordered (I hope) that this seeming unkindness shall, in the end, prove very serviceable on all sides. However, though I have been thus hindered, yet, I think you heard from me last, and am really surprised to find you should, now so long since, have desired that *collection of prayers*, and be wholly unconcerned about them ever after. Indeed, they will be of no service to you, unless you grant me this one postulatam: "That we must renounce ourselves." What the meaning of this phrase may be, the preface

LETTER V. "postulatam": demand, request.

Life of GOD in the Soul of Man: written by Henry Scougal of Aberdeen, 1677. A work used by GOD to bring Whitefield into gospel light. Scougal died in 1678 at the age of 28. His book was published by Gilbert Burnet (later Bishop): republished 1958 (see *Dallimore* p. 72fn).

to the prayers will best inform you. I did not doubt of its meeting with but a cold reception, it being (at first view) so very contrary to flesh and blood. For, perhaps, you may think, that this renouncing of ourselves, must necessarily lead us (as it certainly does) to acts of self-denial and mortification; and, that we probably may be saved without them. And lest you should after all imagine, (which I trust you will not) that true religion does consist in any thing, besides an entire renewal of our natures into the image of GOD; I have sent you a book entitled, *The Life of GOD in the Soul of Man*^t written by a young, but an eminent Christian, which will inform you, what true religion is, and by what means you may attain it. As likewise, how wretchedly most people err in their sentiments about it, who suppose it to be nothing else (as he tells us page 3rd) but a mere model of outward performances; without ever considering, that all our corrupt passions must be subdued, and a complex habit of virtues, such as meekness, lowliness, faith, hope, and the love of GOD and of man, be implanted in their room, before we can have the least title to enter into the kingdom of GOD. Our divine master having expressly told us, that “unless we renounce ourselves, and take up our cross daily, we cannot be his disciples.” And again, “unless we have the spirit of CHRIST, we are none of his.” You will scarce have time, I imagine, before Mr *H.* leaves *Gloucester*, to revise, what I have recommended to your perusal. However, be pleased to let me hear from you by him, together with an account of your free sentiments about this matter. I trust (by God’s grace) we shall, at last, rightly understand one another’s meaning. I should be glad to hear too, whether you keep morning prayers, and how often you receive the holy communion, there being nothing, which so much be-dwarfs us in religion, and hinders our progress towards the heavenly Canaan, as starving our souls by keeping away from the heavenly banquet. I have nothing more to add at present on this subject, till you favour me with a line, which, I hope, you will not fail doing by Mr *H.* who will willingly bring it to, Dear Sir,

Your sincere friend and very humble servant,

G. W.

LETTER VI.

To the Same.

Dear Sir,

Oxon., March 6, 1735

I HAD the favour of your letter by Mr *H.* and, as desired, I have made enquiry about the post-masters and clerks of Merton. As to the former, I hear, that the five senior fellows have each a power to elect one in his turn, and that there is now a vacancy, but one ready on the spot to supply it, and no likelihood of there being another this long while. The latter, are solely in the power of the warden, and though all the places are at present filled up, yet, there will be a vacancy next term, so that, perhaps, by a reasonable application, your brother may get a friend in. Thus much for business. As for the other particular, specified in the latter part of your last; I find by what I can gather from your own and my brother's expressions, as well as from Mr *H.*'s discourse, that my late letters have met with but a cold reception; and that you seem desirous of hearing no more of so seemingly ungrateful a subject, as submitting our wills to the will of GOD; which, indeed, is all that is implied in that phrase (which our enemy would represent as so formidable to us) *of renouncing ourselves.* Alas, Sir! what is there that appears so monstrously terrible in a doctrine that is, (or at least ought to be) the constant subject of our prayers, whenever we put up that petition of our Lord's: "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.*" The import of which seems to be this. 1st. That we do every thing that GOD wills, and nothing but what he willeth. 2ndly, That we do every thing he wills, *only* in the manner he willeth. 3ndly, That we do those things he willeth, *only because* he willeth. This is all, Sir, I have been endeavouring to inculcate in my late letters; and though it seems as clear as the light, upon an impartial and considerate view, yet, our grand impostor (whose very corruption is having a will distinct from, and therefore contrary to God's) would fain set it out in the most

LETTER VI. Merton College, Oxford. The younger Harris had written to Whitefield asking him to use his influence to obtain a post for him in Oxford (see *Dallimore* 79fn).

"postmasterships": scholarships.

hideous colours, as though we were “Setters forth of strange doctrines;” or proposing some higher degrees of perfection, than every ordinary Christian is obliged to aspire after; whereas, in truth, it is nothing but the simple and evident language of the gospel. It must be confessed, that through the corruption of our depraved nature, and that power, which self-will has, since the Fall, usurped in the soul, we must necessarily break through a great many obstacles. But, dear Sir, be not dismayed, the difficulty lies only in our first setting out. Be but vigorous at the first onset, and never fear a conquest. The renewal of our natures is a work of great importance. It is not to be done in a day. We have not only a new house to build up, but an old one to pull down. But then, methinks, this would be an odd way of reasoning, “Because a thing requires some pains, I therefore will never set about it.” No, Sir, rather up and be doing, Exert your utmost efforts at your first setting out, and take my word, your strength as well as resolution will increase daily. The means also which are necessary to be used in order to attain this end, our cursed adversary the devil would represent to us in the most hideous forms imaginable, But believe me, Sir, the difficulty here too, only lies in our first breaking from ourselves, and that there is really more pleasure in these formidable duties of self-denial and mortification, than in the higher indulgences of the greatest epicure upon earth. Give me leave, dear Sir, only to remind you of one particular, which, if duly observed, will vastly facilitate your future endeavours. Let the Scriptures, not the world, be your rule of action. By those you are to form your practice here, and to be judged hereafter. Upon this account, for the future, I should be glad, if you would communicate that passes between you and me, to none but my brother and your spouse, And if you have any, the least scruple, be pleased to send me word of it by a letter in an open, friendly manner; and, by God’s blessing, all things will be yet set right, only be fervent in prayer. As for what the Rev. Mr *Hoar* has been pleased to say, either to you or Mr *H.* it is not my business (out of deference, as he is so much my superior, as to the dignity of his office, his age, and his learning)

to make any reply. I shall only add, what I am sure I can prove, “That the gospel tells us that there is but one thing needful. That we cannot sit down content with just such a degree of goodness, and claim just such a proportionable degree of glory;” but that “we are to love the LORD with all our souls, strength, &c.” and that “he who endureth to the end, (and he only) shall be saved.” There is a little treatise lately come out, which I have made bold to send to Mr *Hoar*, where we may be fully convinced by argument deducible merely from reason, “that GOD is our sole end,” and that barely upon a principle of prudence, (supposing we could be happy without it) we ought to press forward, in order to attain the greatest degrees of happiness hereafter. Whether this letter, Sir, may prove as offensive as the former, is not my business to enquire. GOD’s will be done in all things. He, and he alone can (and indeed will, if we are desirous of it ourselves) work this conviction in our minds. Give me leave just to add, that I thought it my duty to answer these few objections, that have been raised against the difficulty of conforming our wills to the will of GOD, by showing that the greatest struggle lies only at our first beginning, and that it is no more than what is indispensably necessary for our salvation. As for the means to be employed for the attainment of this end, I shall be wholly silent: Being sensible, that if you are once fully convinced of the greatness of it you will be necessarily carried on to the use of such means as GOD hath constituted for that purpose. I hope my writing after this manner, Sir, will not be esteemed a piece of self-conceit, or be an instrument of unloosing our former band of friendship, which was once designed to be bound the faster, by tying it with a religious knot. But whether this proves to be the event, or not, of my telling my friends the truth, I wholly leave to GOD’s Providence. Be pleased however to favour me with a line in return, and give me leave to subscribe myself. Dear Sir,

Your sincere friend and most obliged
humble servant,

G. W.

LETTER VII.

To the Same.

My dear Friend,

Bristol, June 12, 1735.

LAST night about eight o'clock, your good spouse and myself came safe to our journey's end, and met with a very kind reception from all parties. After you left us, the ladies grew more serious, and at last by the assistance of *Mr Norris*, our discourse ran into a proper channel. My brother does not propose sailing this fortnight; but though he stays longer than he proposed, yet I hope to be at *Gloucester* on Wednesday, for methinks my heart is still there, though my body be at thirty miles distance. On whose account, I leave you to guess. I cannot help reflecting on Sunday. Did not those sighs, think you, Sir, proceed from some unusual meditations on the importance of religion? Were they not some infant strugglings after the new birth? Surely they were. And I trust ere long, after a few strugglings with corrupted nature, the Holy Ghost will replenish your heart with comfort and peace. Proper retirement and solitude are no bars; but rather great helps to a religious life. We find, our Saviour was led into a wilderness, before he entered on his public ministry, and so must we too, if we ever intend to tread in his steps. As for my brother; I trust the cares of the world, the desire of riches, &c. will not always choke the good seed. However, I hope you my dear friend will not defer so important a thing. But, why do I say hope, when I am assured you will not. Methinks, I would willingly undergo the pangs, so you might enjoy the pleasures of the new birth. But this must not be. All we can do is to sympathise with and pray for each other, which I hope will not be wanting on either side, as such a close friendship has commenced between dear *Mr H.* and

Your sincere friend and humble servant,

G. W.

LETTER VIII.

To the Same.

Dear Sir,

Bristol, Sept. 5, 1735.

HOW welcome is a line from a faithful friend? even as welcome has a shower of rain in a droughty season. But here's the misfortune, the very kindnesses of friends may be cruelty: Commendations, or even the hinting at them, are poison to a mind addicted to pride. A nail never sinks deeper than when dipped in oil. A friend's words may be softer than butter, and notwithstanding be very swords. Pray for me, dear Sir, and heal the wound you have made. To GOD alone give glory. To sinners nothing belongs, but shame and confusion. So much in answer to one part of your too kind letter. *Mrs Powell* you say continues very ill. No wonder, Sir; desperate diseases must have desperate remedies. Satan has desired to sift her as wheat; but CHRIST will pray for her, I trust, and then her faith will not fail. Oxford friends have not been wanting in letters, and I find I must not stay much longer here. For some are going to travel, some are dead, and one is married, so that we must join and warm one another, as well as we can in their absence. I hope to feast with you at *Crypt* next Sunday. Amazing, that ever sinners should sit with their Saviour! To what dignity has CHRIST exalted human nature. And how did he do it? Why, by humbling himself. Let us go and do likewise. Give me leave, with due respects to all friends, to subscribe myself,

Your and spouses very humble servant and
sincere friend,

G. W.

P. S. If Mr *Pauncefort's* petitions run after this manner for me, I should be thankful: "That God would finish the good work he has begun in me, that I may never seek nor be fond of worldly preferment; but employ every mite of those talents it shall please God to entrust me with, to his glory and the church's

LETTER VIII. *Crypt*: St Mary de *Crypt* (parish church), Gloucester.

: "Mr *Pauncefoot*": "a worthy minister of JESUS CHRIST" at Oxenham, seven miles from Gloucester. (see *Journal* 251).