

George Whitefield and Preached Calvinism

It is the commonly received view that Calvinism is incompatible with authentic evangelism, that its central tenets cut the throat of all vigorous evangelistic endeavours.^[1] But the towering figure of George Whitefield in the 18th Century should be sufficient to silence such a view once and for all. Whitefield did not have to engage in 'double think' - putting his Calvinist principles to one side while he got on with the practical task of evangelism; indeed, as we shall see, Whitefield's deep doctrinal convictions provided the oxygen which enabled his evangelism to burn with such white hot intensity.

That George Whitefield was a Calvinist is not in doubt: 'From first to last,' Professor Harry Stout says, 'he was a Calvinist who believed that God chose him for salvation and not the reverse.'^[2] Writing on February 20, 1741, to Anne Dutton, Whitefield refers to his settlement in Georgia and says, 'My family in Georgia was once sadly shaken, but now, blessed be God, it is settled, and, I hope, established in the doctrines of grace.'^[3] Whitefield's own claim was that his Calvinism was not 'second hand', having been derived from a reading of John Calvin, but from his own reading of Scripture with the aid of Matthew Henry.^[4] 'I embrace the Calvinistic scheme,' he said, 'not because Calvin, but Jesus Christ has taught it to me.'^[5] Elsewhere he asserted, 'I am a staunch Calvinist.'^[6] 'I profess myself a Calvinist as to principle.'^[7]

While there may be little to dispute concerning the applicability of the term 'Calvinist' to George Whitefield^[8], a number of questions are raised which centre upon Whitefield's Calvinistic beliefs: What was the nature of Whitefield's Calvinism? When did such beliefs begin to be embraced and how genuine were they? How did Whitefield's Calvinism find expression, especially in his preaching, which by any standards was formidable? These are some of the questions this paper seeks to explore together with a brief consideration of the relevance of Whitefield's convictions for Gospel ministry today.

Which Calvinism?

The term 'Calvinism' was first used by Lutheran theologians to refer to what they regarded as the peculiar views of Christ's real presence at the Lord's Supper held by John Calvin and his followers. Since then, the term has taken on significantly different meanings. In some instances it denotes the entire theological system of Calvin as found in the four books of his *Institutes*. More commonly it refers to the understanding of the doctrine of salvation as found in the first three books. There is a difference between the two in that the fourth book, which many consider to be the climax of his thinking, develops his views of ecclesiology and the relation between church and state.^[9] In terms of church government, this is decidedly Presbyterian, and in relation to the state, the magistrate is considered to be God's minister. Clearly, Whitefield, being an ordained minister in the Church of England was not the former, but in terms of his beliefs regarding the nature and means of salvation he certainly was the latter. In short he was a 'doctrinal' Calvinist.

Here we come to the heart of the Calvinist system, which was captured by the terms used by Whitefield to which we have already referred, namely, 'the doctrines of grace'. The rallying cry is 'salvation by grace alone.' As we shall see by reference to his preaching, Whitefield followed Calvin 'from a distance' as it were, in so far as Calvin followed Augustine who in turn followed the teaching of the apostle Paul. This was clearly recognised by his one-time friend and theological opponent John Wesley, who, in his memorial sermon for Whitefield declared, 'His fundamental point was, "Give God all the glory of whatever is good in man;" and "In the business of salvation, set Christ as high and man as low as possible."' With this point he and his friends at Oxford, the original Methodists, so called, set out. Their grand principle was: 'There is *no power* (by nature) and *no merit* in man. They insisted, all power to think, speak or act aright, is in and from the Spirit of Christ.'^[10]

Paul Helm asks whether there is a test for whether someone understands and accepts the gospel of grace understood in this Pauline, Augustinian, Calvinistic sense. He doubts that a 'fool-proof' test exists, but nonetheless puts forward the following as a reliable guide:

In his wonderful letter to the Romans Paul reaches the peak of his exposition of God's grace in Jesus Christ in Romans 8. Before that (in, roughly, Chapters 3-5) he expounded our salvation as founded on God's justification of the ungodly (Rom 4:5). This is inseparably connected with our sanctification, a new life of union with Christ as we are buried with him in his baptism and raised with him in newness of life (Ch. 6). It is characterised by a never-ending struggle between the old sinful nature (the 'flesh' as Paul puts it) and the 'new man' (the spirit) (Ch. 7). The Romans 8 climax is like a chain (the 'golden chaine', as earlier Reformed types called it).^[11] Beginning in Romans 8:29 with God's eternal purpose, *For those whom he foreknew* (his knowledge of whom he will save), *he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son* (his actual destining of his chosen ones to be conformed to the image of his Son Jesus Christ). Paul goes on, *And those whom he predestined he also called* (effectually called ...) *and those whom he called he also justified* (pardoned and reckoned righteous in Christ); *and those whom he justified those he also glorified... What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* (ESV). From first (foreknowing) to last (glorifying) Paul says that the work is God's work, and the chain from the first to the last is unbreakable, (note the 'also's'), holding the people of God steady and secure in God's grace from first to last. Is there a test of being 'Reformed' or being 'Calvinistic' in the muddled and confusing Christian world of [today]? I say that if we feel the need of one, there is. It's the unqualified recognition of Paul's golden chain of Romans 8.^[12]

If this guide is reliable, then we can say that Whitefield was a full-blooded doctrinal Calvinist of the first order.

As we have seen, the beliefs Whitefield held were not adopted because of a prior allegiance to the teachings of John Calvin *per se*, but because he believed that they were the plain teaching of Scripture itself. However, while Whitefield held to the Reformed principle of *sola Scriptura* he did not follow the leanings of some evangelicals today towards *sola exegesis*.^[13] He valued the wisdom and the 'systematised' theology expressed within the articles of his own church. Here he found clear backing for his Calvinist beliefs, he writes, 'This is my comfort, the doctrines I have taught are the doctrines of Scripture, the doctrines of *our own* and of other reformed churches.'^[14] Whitefield's certainty that he had the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England on his side is also revealed in a letter he wrote against a sermon preached by John Wesley on free grace: 'Thirdly, in your sermon, on page 137 paragraph 12, "This doctrine tends to destroy the comforts of religion, the happiness of Christianity, &c." But how does Mr Wesley know this, who never believed in election? I believe they who have experienced it, will agree with

our 17th article. '[15] J. I. Packer is therefore quite correct to conclude that Whitefield was

an Anglican Calvinist of the Puritan type. He embraced the sovereign-grace teaching of the Thirty-Nine Articles with regard to personal salvation (especially Articles 9-13 and 17), affirmed the developed federal theology of the seventeenth century, and insisted that sovereign-grace teaching, with its rejection of salvation by self-effort in all its forms, bears directly on the purity or otherwise of the believer's devotion.[16]

As Whitefield's sermons testify, his was no narrow, strict predestinarian form of Calvinism but one which, using today's theological terminology, could be described as *complementarian*[17] holding together in unsatisfied tension God's sovereignty and human responsibility, such that,

[f]or Whitefield and the Calvinistic Methodists it was this embryonic tradition of evangelical Calvinism, with its twin emphases on conversion and heart nurture, which proved compelling. Indeed, in many respects, Whitefield was to be the most energetic champion of evangelical Calvinism in the eighteenth century, with the result that by the end of his life it had become the dominant expression of Reformed orthodoxy favoured by Calvinist-inclined evangelicals almost everywhere.[18]

An Authentic or Opportunistic Calvinist?

In 1876, Luke Tyerman put forward the theory that George Whitefield in the earliest years of his ministry was an Arminian.[19] Tyerman argued that he switched his position for purely pragmatic reasons, namely, to gain the patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon and more readily elicit the support of Dissenting ministers.

The view that Whitefield's thinking about Reformed soteriology was not settled until after 1739 has also been espoused by Arnold Dallimore, while nonetheless observing that as early as 1737 his outlook was moving in a decidedly Reformed direction, as evidenced by one of his earliest sermons which refers to justification, election, preservation of the saints, and particular or 'limited' atonement. Yet Dallimore is of the opinion that these did not constitute the core of Whitefield's teaching at this point, but acted as indicators that he was simply moving along a Reformed trajectory as, 'he was not fully clear in his own understanding of it.' [20] Whilst for Tyerman, Whitefield appears to be something of an opportunist, for Dallimore, he is a work in progress.

Jared Hood convincingly argues that both Tyerman and Dallimore have wrongly evaluated the evidence and misjudged Whitefield.[21] Hood argues that with the controversy with John Wesley becoming more intense and more public by mid-1739, Whitefield simply had to consider his ground on predestination more carefully than he had before.[22] In both his correspondence with John Wesley and Ralph Erskine, there is no indication that Whitefield believed that he had changed his position. Hood observes that, 'there may be a flurry of statements on the issue of election in 1739-1740, but one will not find the opposite kinds of statements in the pre-1739 period. The movement is from quiet expression to more dominant expression and that is all. There is no warrant for concluding that prior to 1739, Whitefield had not been preaching Calvinism.' [23] Indeed, in the quotation from Wesley's memorial sermon referenced above, it would seem clear that Wesley himself recognised Whitefield's Reformed principles from the very beginning of his Methodism at Oxford.

George Clarkson makes much of the oft quoted statement of Whitefield to John Wesley that he had 'never read Calvin', leading him to conclude, 'nor was he a follower of Calvin or John Knox as

such.^[24] The alleged denial by Whitefield of reading Calvin appears in a letter to John Wesley dated August, 25th, 1740,

I cannot bear the thoughts of opposing you: but how can I avoid it, if you go about (as your brother Charles once said) to drive *John Calvin* out of *Bristol*. Alas, I never read anything that *Calvin* wrote; my doctrines I had from Christ and the apostles; I was taught them of GOD; and as GOD was pleased to send me out first, and to enlighten me first, so I think he still continues to do it.^[25]

How is this statement to be evaluated?

First of all, it would be a mistake to underrate Whitefield's flair for the dramatic as he was first and foremost a *preacher*. Thus, the use of hyperbole to make a dramatic polemical point should not come as a surprise. The fact that Whitefield adds colour to his argument by drawing a parallel between himself and the apostle Paul in Galatians 1 would suggest that it may be that he is downplaying Calvin's influence on his thinking in order to highlight the dominant shaping effect of Scripture. Thus, like Paul he had not learned his theology from 'mere men,' it had come from God's own revelation in Scripture. Hood is surely correct in claiming that, 'Whitefield may not have read Calvin in his Oxford days, but the "never read" statement cannot be relied upon too heavily.'^[26]

Secondly, there is evidence that after 1740 Whitefield did make some attempt to wrestle with Calvin, but only on an occasional basis. And so Clarkson comes to the conclusion that he viewed Calvin as 'a prominent person in Christian history, not as a theologian.'^[27] In 1741, Whitefield writes that he had 'several of Calvin's books.'^[28] And again, with some rhetorical flourish echoing the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3, he relativizes the influence and importance of Calvin by stating, 'You remember what I have often told you about Calvin ... But what is Calvin or what is Luther? Let us look above names and parties; let JESUS, the ever-loving, the ever-lovely Jesus, be our all in all.'^[29]

Hood concludes that this and similar statements parallel the 1740 'never read Calvin' statement, and goes on to offer a more cautious assessment, that 'whilst it cannot be shown that Whitefield had read Calvin prior to 1740, neither can the letter to Wesley be used in evidence that he had not.'^[30]

Preached Calvinism

George Whitefield's Calvinism was *preached* Calvinism and so *applied*. Whilst the 'thunder and the lightning' of Whitefield's preaching cannot be recaptured, we can still hear echoes of that thunder and perceive glimpses of the lightening which accompanied such unparalleled preaching through his sermons preserved in print. It is possible to trace the 'golden chain' of Romans 8 referred to by Helm, in order to demonstrate that Whitefield was indeed a doctrinal Calvinist, that the doctrines of grace adorned his preaching as he sought by his preaching to adorn the doctrines of grace, or to be more precise, adorn his gracious Saviour. Whitefield was aware that all doctrinal points were inter-related, operating in mutual support so that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts.

We now turn to give samples of preached Calvinism which illustrate the 'five-pointed' nature of Whitefield's Calvinistic framework (Total depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited or Particular Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints), and consider how such beliefs undergirded Whitefield's preaching and gave it convictive power.

The federal covenantal framework of Whitefield's beliefs is wonderfully illustrated by his sermon, 'The Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent', based on Genesis 3:15, and published in 1742. [\[31\]](#)

It is only a declaration of a free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. God the Father and God the Son had entered into a covenant concerning the salvation of the elect from all eternity, wherein God the Father promised that if the Son would offer his soul a sacrifice for sin, he should see his seed ... The truth is this: God, as a reward of Christ's sufferings, promised to give the elect faith and repentance, in order to bring them to eternal life. And both these and everything else necessary for their everlasting happiness and infallibility secured to them in this promise ... [P]eople should be taught that the Lord Jesus Christ, was the Second Adam with whom the Father entered into covenant for fallen man. That they can do nothing of or for themselves and should therefore come to God, beseeching them to give them faith, by which they will then show forth by their works, out of love and gratitude to the ever blessed Jesus, their most glorious Redeemer, for what he has done for their souls. This is a consistent scriptural scheme. Without holding this, we must run into one of those two bad extremes, I mean Antinomianism on the one hand, and Arminianism on the other. From both of which may the good Lord deliver us. [\[32\]](#)

This sermon pinpoints the view that the eternal covenant made between the members of the Trinity inextricably involves particular election and effectual calling. 'The truth is this,' said Whitefield, 'God, as a reward of Christ's sufferings, promised to give the elect faith and repentance' [\[33\]](#)

Such an election is with specific people in mind, those whom God 'foreknew'. Thus Whitefield remarks in 'The Righteousness of Christ an Everlasting Righteousness':

when Christ's righteousness is here spoken of we are to understand "Christ's obedience and death", all that Christ has suffered for an elect world, for all that will believe on him ... Hence it is, that the Lord Jesus when he calls his elect people up to heaven, says, "Come, ye blessed of my father." And what follows? "Receive the kingdom prepared for you." How long? "From the foundations of the world." All that we receive in time, all the streams that come to our souls, are but so many streams flowing from that inexhaustible fountain, God's electing sovereign, God's distinguishing, God's everlasting love. [\[34\]](#)

Also note how Whitefield in this sermon holds together without apology or embarrassment the twin doctrines of God's electing sovereignty and human responsibility, for all that *will* believe on him.

The doctrine of election magnifies God's majesty as well as his mercy. Here, we see Whitefield doing precisely what Wesley said he unceasingly wished to do, 'making Christ as high as possible.' But the coherence of the golden chain of Romans 8 can only be held together with the complementary doctrine of grace, namely, that man is to be seen as 'low as possible'. Not that this was a contrived and, therefore, false assessment of man's condition, but one to which both Scripture and experience testify. In the sermon 'Walking with God' he says,

Perhaps it may seem a hard saying to some but our own experience daily proves what the scriptures in many places assert, that the carnal mind, the mind of the unconverted natural man, nay, the mind of the regenerate, so far as any part of him remains unrenewed, is enmity, not only an enemy but enmity itself, against God so that it is not

subject to the law of God neither can it be.[\[35\]](#)

In anyone believed in Total Depravity, it was George Whitefield!

It is the dead spiritual state of unregenerate man, whose state of mind is enmity (Romans 8:7), which makes effectual calling a necessary condition of a person's personal salvation. Thus we have Whitefield in his magisterial sermon, 'The Potter and the Clay':

If it be inquired who is to be the potter? And by whose agency this marred clay is to be formed into another vessel?I answer, not by mere dint and force of moral persuasion. This is good in its place. And I am so far from thinking, that Christian preachers should not make use of rational arguments and motives in their sermons, that I cannot think they are fit to preach at all, who either cannot, or will not use them. All this we readily grant. But at the same time, I would as soon go to yonder church-yard and attempt to raise the dead carcasses, with a 'come forth', as to preach to dead souls, did I not hope for some superior power to make the word effectual to the designed end..... Neither is this change to be wrought by the power of our own free-will. This is an idol everywhere set up but we dare not fall down and worship it. "No man (says Christ) can come to me, unless the Father draw him." Our own free-will, if improved, may restrain us from the commission of many evils and put us in the way of conversion. But after exerting our utmost efforts (and we are bound in duty to exert them) we shall find the words of our own church articles to be true, that "man since the Fall hath no power to turn to God". ... I inform you, that this heavenly potter, this blessed agent, is the Almighty Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, the third person in the most adorable Trinity, co-essential with the Father and the Son.[\[36\]](#)

In his preaching, Whitefield drove home to his hearers the rationale for the need for effectual grace,

All that Christ has done, all that Christ hath suffered, all Christ's active obedience, all Christ's passive obedience, will do us no good, unless by the Spirit of God, it is brought into our souls. As one expresses it, 'An unapplied Christ is no Christ at all.' To hear of Christ dying for sinners will only increase your damnation, will only sink you deeper into hell, unless you have ground to say, by a work of grace wrought in our hearts, that the Lord Jesus hath brought this home to us.[\[37\]](#)

This is a clear example of what Dr D Martyn Lloyd-Jones called 'logic on fire.' [\[38\]](#)

It was the deeply held belief in God's power to give life to the spiritually dead that enabled Whitefield to engage in evangelism with such confidence and tireless energy. Otherwise, to call upon people to repent would be as foolhardy as preaching to the residents of a graveyard!

For Whitefield, election also implied particular atonement as we see from this extract from his sermon, 'The Good Shepherd':

If you belong to Jesus Christ, he is speaking of you; for says he, "I know my sheep." "I know them;" what does that mean? Why, he knows their number, he knows their names, he knows every one for whom he died; and if there were to be one missing for whom Christ died, God the Father would send him down again from heaven to fetch him ... O come, come, see what it is to have eternal life; do not refuse it; haste, sinner, haste away:

may the great, the good Shepherd, draw your souls. [39]

This demonstrates that Whitefield did not draw unwarranted conclusions from his doctrines of grace, lapsing into a kind of fatalism that would not require any appeal to men and women to surrender their lives to Christ in faith. In a letter to Wesley dated in 1741, he says, 'Though I hold particular election, yet I offer Jesus freely to every individual soul.' [40] As seen in the extract from his sermon, 'The Potter and the Clay', Whitefield was aware that God had instituted certain means to achieve certain ends, hence the use of rational arguments to persuade. In other words, Gospel proclamation is needed to secure Gospel salvation. This, though necessary, is not sufficient to bring a person to a saving knowledge of Christ. There is needed the agency of 'the Almighty Spirit of God.' However, being aware of his hearers lacking such faith, Whitefield did not hesitate to appeal to them to seek God for it: 'Beg of God to give you faith. And, if the Lord gives you that, you will receive Christ, with his righteousness and his all.' [41]

In part, it was the positive nature of the doctrines of grace which of necessity led Whitefield to draw attention to the negative aspects of their opposite - Arminianism. Thus in his sermon, 'The Lord our Righteousness', Whitefield, in order to make a pastoral application rather than a polemical point, unpacks the consequences of Arminianism which he saw as being theologically disastrous and pastorally ruinous. He says,

Being once born under the covenant of works, it is natural for us all to have recourse to a covenant of works for our everlasting salvation. And we have contracted such devilish pride by our fall from God that we would, if not wholly, yet in part at least, to glory in being the cause of our own salvation. We cry out against popery and that very justly. But we are all Papists, at least I am sure, we are all Arminians by nature. And therefore, no wonder so many natural men embrace that scheme. [42]

He later goes on to say of Christ's particular atonement,

In that nature he obeyed and thereby fulfilled the whole moral law in our stead and also died a painful death upon the cross and thereby became a curse for, or instead of, those whom the Father had given him. [43]

But, he expostulates,

Arminian principles being antichristian principles, always did and always will lead to antichristian practices. And never as there a reformation brought about in the church but by preaching the doctrine of imputed righteousness ... But Satan (and no wonder that his servant imitate him) often transforms himself into an angel of light and therefore (such perverse things will infidelity and Arminian make men speak) in order to dress their objections in the best colours, some urge, 'That our Saviour preached no such doctrine; that in the Sermon on the Mount, he mentions only morality' and consequently the doctrine of imputed righteousness falls wholly on the ground.... For, if the whole personal righteousness of Jesus Christ be not the sole cause of my acceptance with God, if any work done or foreseen by God as an inducing, impulsive cause of acquitting my soul from guilt, then I have somewhat whereof I may glory in myself. Now boasting is excluded in the great work of Redemption. [44]

Wishing for his hearers to see the errors of false paths to belief, Whitefield also made it his business to enable them to see the positive value of right belief. Whitefield's preaching was

always intensely practical, designed to elicit a response of the whole person. Therefore, not surprisingly, he glories in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints:

[T]hanks be to God for that divine text, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Though God's people may fall foully. And though many of us are full of doubts and fears and say, "One day I shall fall by the hands of Saul" however your poor souls may be harassed, yet no wicked devil, nor your own depraved heart, shall be able to separate you from the love of God. God has loved you, God has fixed his heart upon you and having loved his own, he loves them unto the end. The Lord of life and of glory, the blessed Lord Jesus, will never cease loving you, till he hath loved and brought you to heaven when he will rejoice and say, "Behold me, O my Father and the dear children thou hast given me; thou gavest them to me; thine they were, I have brought them with my blood, I have won them with my sword and with my bow and I now will wear them as so many jewels of my crown."[\[45\]](#)

Elsewhere he explicitly links election with the security of all the blessings a believer receives in Christ,

But what shall I say? Election is a mystery that shines with such resplendent brightness, that, to make use of the words of one who has drunk deeply of electing love, it dazzles the weak eyes even of some of God's children; however, though they know it not, all the blessing they receive, all the privileges they do or will enjoy, through Jesus Christ, flow from the everlasting love of God the Father.[\[46\]](#)

As is evident from this sermon, Whitefield had a concern that such doctrines of grace be 'felt' and enjoyed as much as being assented to and believed. He wrote from Philadelphia in 1739,

Oh the excellency of the doctrine of election, and of the saints' final perseverance, to those who are truly sealed by the Spirit of promise! I am persuaded, till a man comes to believe and feel these important truths, he cannot come out of himself; but when convinced of these, and assured of the application of them to his own heart, he then walks by faith indeed, not in himself but in the Son of God, who died and gave himself for him. Love, not fear, constrains him to obedience.[\[47\]](#)

To John Wesley in 1740, he opened his heart: '[Of] the doctrine of election, and the final perseverance of those that are truly in Christ, I am ten thousand times more convinced of, if possible, than when I saw you last.'[\[48\]](#) Furthermore, it was these doctrines of grace, holding together in an unbreakable unity the golden chain of Romans 8 which was a sustaining tonic to his own soul: 'Surely I am safe, because put into his almighty arms. Though I may fall, yet I shall not utterly be cast away. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus will hold, and uphold me.'[\[49\]](#)

Conclusion

From this survey there are three characteristics of George Whitefield's Calvinistic preaching which can serve as lessons for preachers today who would see themselves as standing within this tradition.

The first is that it is *convinced* preaching. Whitefield held to the doctrines of grace as a matter of deep conviction, convinced in his own mind and heart that these were nothing less than the teachings of Jesus himself. Whitefield is sometimes portrayed as a great dramatist in his

preaching.^[50] But the emotions displayed were not those of an actor of the stature of Garrick; they more closely resembled those of the Saviour, who himself believed that, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 10:44), and “Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him will come to me” (John 6:45). Those were the convictions shared by Whitefield and which were released through his preaching.

Secondly, Whitefield’s sermons display *confident* preaching. Having a realistic estimation of man’s spiritual inability to repent, Whitefield had an equally clear estimation of God’s ability to regenerate. God’s electing love displayed on the cross, worked out in regenerate hearts only to be consummated in glory, gave Whitefield confidence to preach to all without despairing and to continue to preach without tiring. The encouragement of God’s electing purpose given by God to strengthen the apostle Paul could equally apply to Whitefield,: “I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10).

Thirdly, this was *convicting* preaching. The great realities of heaven and hell, passionately held and powerfully proclaimed, together with the liberating force of the doctrines of grace energised by God’s Spirit, led to deep conviction on the part of many of Whitefield’s hearers. It was by presenting man at his lowest and Christ at his highest that many were left not only cognisant of their desperate plight but *feeling* it. Then, having come face to face with their own need and inability, when the doctrines of grace were presented they were welcomed in all their life transforming, God honouring, glory.

In an age of *PowerPoint* sermons and ‘what would Jesus do’ sound-bites, which do not seem to produce the effect of the sermons preached by Whitefield, perhaps ministers today would do well to return to ‘the old paths’ by holding on to and holding out the doctrines of grace which Whitefield proclaimed to such great effect in his day.

Endnotes

[1] See Roger E. Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011); chapter 6.

[2] Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), p. xxxiii.

[3] Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Revived Puritan: The Spirituality of George Whitefield* (Dundas, Ontario: Joshua Press, 2000), p. 127.

[4] Haykin, *The Revived Puritan*, p. 26.

[5] *The Letters of George Whitefield, 1734-42* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), p. 442.

[6] George Whitefield, ‘Additional Letters’ (Letter 29, May 21st, 1746), *The Works of George Whitefield* (Oswestry: Quinta Press, 2000), p. 39.

[7] George Whitefield, ‘Additional Sermons’ (Sermon LXII), *The Works of George Whitefield* (Oswestry: Quinta Press, 2000), p. 71.

[8] 'It is no accident that both George Whitefield and Howell Harris chose to deliberately define themselves as Calvinists. They were proud of the fact that they stood within a Calvinist tradition that, in Harris's words, "stretched back to the good old Reformers and Puritans.'" David C. Jones, Eryn M. White and Boyd S. Schlenker, *The Elect Methodists: Calvinistic Methodism in England and Wales, 1735-1811*, (Cardiff: The University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 2.

[9] See Paul Helm, 'The Many Shades of Calvinism', <http://paulhelmsdeep.blogspot.com/2011/03/many-shades-of-calvinism.html> [accessed 12.08.2015].

[10] Thomas Jackson ed., *The Works of John Wesley. Volume 6*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 178.

[11] Whitefield himself refers to the 'golden chain' in relation to the doctrine of perseverance in his sermon, 'Christ the Believer's Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption,' in Lee Gatiss ed., *The Sermons of George Whitefield. Volume 2*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), p. 220.

[12] Helm, 'Shades of Calvinism'.

[13] 'What has happened is that modern Evangelicalism has been shaped by what can be best called a policy of *sola exegesis*, not *sola Scriptura* as the Reformers understood it ... Anyone who tries to preach the results of exegesis (as distilled, for example, in the average modern commentary) will soon discover one of two things. Either he will end up lecturing on the meaning of a particular verse or passage - an activity which may appeal to an intellectual minority but is unlikely to make a lasting impression on anyone's life - or he will abandon any serious attempt to apply the text and retreat to the old stand-by of experience, using the text as an introduction to what he really wants to say' (Gerald Bray, 'Whatever Happened to the Authority of Scripture?', in Melvin Tinker ed., *The Anglican Evangelical Crisis* (Christian Focus Publications, 1995), pp. 62-67.

[14] Letter CXV, *The Works of George Whitefield. Volume 1* (Oswestry: Quinta Press, 2000), p. 129, and other similar statements from the same day; emphasis supplied.

[15] From Georgia, December 24th, 1740, *The Works of George Whitefield. Volume 4* (Oswestry: Quinta Press, 2000).

[16] J.I. Packer, 'The Reformational Revivalism of George Whitefield,' in *Honouring the People of God, The Collected Shorter Writings of J.I. Packer. Volume 2* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), p 47.

[17] For a defence and exposition of this position, see Melvin Tinker, *Intended for Good: The Providence of God* (Nottingham: IVP, 2012), pp. 31-43.

[18] Jones, White, and Schlenker, 'Elect Methodists', p. 3.

[19] Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Revd George Whitefield, B.A., of Pembroke College, Oxford. Volume I* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), p. 275.

[20] Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the*

18th Century Revival. Volume 2 (Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), pp. 25-26.

[21] Jared C. Hood, "'I never read Calvin"; George Whitefield, a Calvinist Untimely Born', *Churchman* 125/1 (2011), pp. 7-20.

[22] Hood, 'I never read Calvin', p. 10.

[23] Hood, 'I never read Calvin', p. 11.

[24] George E. Clarkson, *George Whitefield and Welsh Calvinist Methodism* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), p. 21.

[25] Whitefield, *Works, Vol. 1*, p. 232.

[26] Hood, 'I never read Calvin', p. 17.

[27] Clarkson, *Whitefield and Welsh Calvinist Methodism*, pp. 24-25.

[28] Whitefield, *Works, Vol. 1*, Letter CCLXVIII, p. 283.

[29] Whitefield, *Works, Vol. 2*, Letter DCCCCXII, p. 433.

[30] Hood, 'I never read Calvin', p. 17.

[31] Lee Gatiss ed., *The Sermons of George Whitefield. Volume 1* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), pp. 41-62.

[32] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, pp. 57-58.

[33] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, p. 57.

[34] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, p. 290.

[35] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, p. 65.

[36] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, pp. 258-259.

[37] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, p. 295.

[38] 'What is preaching? Logic on fire! Eloquent reason!' (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), p. 97.

[39] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 2*, p. 455.

[40] Haykin, *The Revived Puritan*, p. 145.

[41] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, p. 279.

[42] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, p. 262.

[43] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, p. 265.

[44] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, pp. 266-267.

[45] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 1*, pp. 291-292.

[46] Gatiss ed., *Sermons, Vol. 2*, pp. 212-213.

[47] Haykin, *The Revived Puritan*, pp. 71-72.

[48] Haykin, *The Revived Puritan*, p. 113.

[49] Haykin, *The Revived Puritan*, p. 76.

[50] Stout says 'the key to understanding him is "the amalgam of preaching and acting." Whitefield was "the consummate actor." "The fame he sought was ... the actor's command performance on centre stage." "Whitefield was not content simply to talk about the New Birth; he had to sell it with all the dramatic artifice of a huckster." "Tears became Whitefield's ... psychological gesture." "Whitefield became an actor-preacher, as opposed to a scholar-preacher." And, of course, this last statement is true, in one sense. He was an actor-preacher as opposed to a scholar-preacher. He was not a Jonathan Edwards. He preached totally without notes, and his traveling pulpit was more of a tiny stage than it was a traditional pulpit. Unlike most of the preachers in his day he was full of action when he preached. ... [Yet] Whitefield's "acting" was not acting in the theatrical sense at all' (John Piper, *I Will Not Be a Velvet-Mouthed Preacher!* The Life and Ministry of George Whitefield: Living and Preaching as Though God Were Real (Because He is)'; available at <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-will-not-be-a-velvet-mouthed-preacher> [accessed 12.08.2015]). That Whitefield was emotional in his preaching doesn't mean that he engaged in emotionalism as might an actor in order to elicit a response from his audience.



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John Calvin, Preaching, George Whitefield