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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHITEFIELD.

BY THE REVEREND ARTHUR W. CLEAVES,
NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

The eighteenth century in English history was crowded with events, but none of them were more important at the time or more significant for the years to come than what is known as the Evangelical revival. And no man had a larger part in making this religious movement what it finally became than George Whitefield, the first evangelist of his time and perhaps of all times. Above the materialism of his day, above its dim ideals and expiring hopes, above a society in which cold reason dominated the intellect, the will and the passions, above a politics which was absolutely self-centered and self-interested, above a philosophy which had become critical and objective, above the unreasonable self-complacency of the men who strut through the courts of the Georges, his voice is heard, asking, nay demanding, that men shall remember that no one of them lives by bread alone, and that all is lost if the heavens speak to them merely of the stars and not at all of a living and ever-present God. Nor did this man cease his crying in the wilderness until there were set in motion forces which were to remake England and work out finally in the social interests and enthusiasms of our own day.

To understand Whitefield, it is not so necessary that the events of his life shall be repeated as that there shall be a clear understanding of the times in which he lived. For the political and social conditions and ideals of his day reacted upon the Church and upon religion, and Whitefield was an answer to this reaction, a reaction upon a reaction if you will. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to picture certain aspects of the life of his day, to touch very briefly upon the life and work of this great man, and to make certain comparisons and suggest certain inferences.

The first thing to be noted about the England of the eighteenth century, and especially of the first half of the century, is that her one great ambition and ideal was expansion. There had come to her the vision of what in these days we should call world-power, and all her might was directed to the attainment of this end. Add to the striving for colonial growth that for industrial and commercial expansion, which are really parts of the same movement, and you have at once the dominating characteristics of eighteenth century England. The contest for supremacy had narrowed gradually into a strife between two powers. Spain and Portugal which had once been serious contenders for world-dominion had dropped out of the race; Holland was yet to be reckoned with, but as the century wore on her energies became, through force of circumstances, more and more confined. England and France remained as the two contenders, and the eighteenth century, especially in the first half of it, witnessed a battle royal between the two.

War between France and England was a new thing. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the two countries had been by no means persistent enemies. In fact during the seventeenth century an Anglo-French alliance had been the rule. But the eighteenth century is a period of almost constant war between the two powers. During this period England is seven times in war. There is the European war, lasting from 1689 to 1697, in which she was involved by the Revolution of 1688. Then came the war of the Spanish succession, from 1702-13. Later was another war lasting from 1739 to 1748, in which occurred the battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy. The Seven Years' war was fought from 1756-63. In this took place the battle on the Heights of Abraham, the death of Wolfe, and the conquest of Canada. The American war was fought from 1775 to 1783. And the century closed with the two wars with revolutionary France, the one lasting from 1793 to 1802, and the other from 1803 to 1815. Nominally there was peace in the middle of the century, but actually

there was struggle. For during this period, the question of the boundary of the French and English settlements in America, of the limits of Arcadie and Canada was very acute. Between 1748-56, a period of peace, there occurred the well-known incidents connected with Fort Duquesne on the Ohio River and Braddock's defeat, and on the other side of the world the struggle of Dupleix and Clive in India, and the defense of Arcot.

The first impression of this whole period is one of confusion. In his "Expansion of England," however, Prof. Seeley gives the key. He shows that five of these wars are wars with France from the beginning and that the other two, beginning as wars with Spain and the American colonies, ended as wars with France. There were two great wars with France at about the juncture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; there were two more at the junction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Near the middle of the eighteenth century, there was another great war of England and France, and as prelude and afterpiece to this great war, there was a war with Spain which turned into a war with France, and a war with America which turned into a war with France. It was a period of gigantic rivalry between France and England.

The war of the Spanish succession was really a trade war. France threatened by establishing her influence in Spain to enter into the Spanish monopoly of the new world, and to shut England irrevocably out of it. The practical results to England of the war were the conquest of Arcadie and the Asiento Contract which for the first time made England a slave-trading power on a large scale. The triple war in the middle of the century is the decisive duel between France and England for the possession of the new world. They were rival candidates for a world-dominion and fought bitterly. France had begun her settlements in North America at about the same time as England. If England had colonies on the coast, France had the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi rivers. It was Frenchmen, moreover, who first conceived the design of

conquering India. The first Englishmen in that country found themselves in a state of hopeless self-defense. These two great lands represented the prize of almost incalculable value for which the two nations contested. England finally won, and yet the two wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century may rightly be viewed as despairing efforts of the vanquished to regain the prize. Through Egypt, France sought India, as possibly in later times through the Euphrates valley Germany was reaching out towards the same goal.

This struggle marked very strongly the national life and character in England. Materialism became dominant. Wolfe's victory at Quebec, as has been said, was "one of a long series which to contemporaries seemed fabulous, so that the nation came out of the struggle intoxicated with glory, and England stood upon a pinnacle of greatness which she had never reached before." The Englishman's boast was

"That Chatham's language was his mother tongue
And Wolfe's great heart compatriot with his own."

As might have been expected, this period marked the establishment and growth, in England and on the Continent, of standing armies, out of which most important and perhaps disastrous effects have come to posterity.

A second prominent feature of the life of this period is found in the increasing industrial prosperity and in the consequent growth of the cities. England was a very different land from what it had been in the days of the Tudors and the Stuarts. Trade had wonderfully increased and was claiming an ever increasing place in the thought of the nation. The great manufacturing industries were springing up, stimulated in part by the enlarging colonial possessions. England was no longer supplying her own needs alone; she had become, or was fast becoming, the supply-house for colonies situated all over the world. Mines were being opened in regions which

before had been lonely country wastes. The natural result was the bringing together of large populations. Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Newcastle, which formerly had been little more than villages were fast becoming large and important towns, while in some sections of the country, both north and south, great colliery districts were growing up. These towns did not take on the proportions which they began to assume in the latter part of the century, after the coming of machinery had again revolutionized industry, but the growth was large and had a marked effect upon the thought and customs of the time. As so often happens a time of enlarging cities and of increasing commercial prosperity becomes a time of religious deadness.

A third general condition needs to be mentioned in any survey of the period. This is the extremes of condition which the society of the time provided. On the one side was extreme wealth; on the other abject poverty. On the one hand was a cultured and idle wealthy class; on the other, an ignorant, over-worked, brutalized, irreligious laboring class. To picture accurately the conditions among the working classes is difficult. Life was very hard and rough in these growing towns and collieries. There were no laws for regulating either factories or collieries. Children of nine and ten years of age, apprentices, were little more than slaves. Women worked, almost naked, in the coal pits. Fighting, bear-baiting, and drinking were the only amusements the people knew. Day schools were lacking, except for a few grammar schools founded at the time of the Reformation, and for a few middle-class academies conducted by the Non-conformist ministers. For fifty years hardly a new church had been built, the one little parish church serving now for a population of thousands, many of whom were growing up in a neglected, brutal, ignorant life such as we can hardly imagine today.

Mention was made of the criminal code. Probably an age may be known by its treatment of criminals, and

so a few details are to the point. In London, there was a public execution of criminals every six weeks. The condemned were taken through the streets in carts, each man or woman dressed in his best clothes, with white gloves and button-hole bouquets. Those that died merrily were said to die like gentlemen. Applause from the crowd was frequent in the case of a particularly reckless or care-free criminal. Public opinion did not for some reason approve of hanging in the case of women, and consequently women who murdered their husbands, or who were guilty of certain other offenses, were publicly burned, under a law which was not repealed until 1790. A stake 10 or 11 feet high was planted in the ground; an iron ring was fastened near the top, and from it the culprit was hung while the fagots were kindled under her feet. The law enjoined that she should be burnt alive, but in practice that sentence was usually mitigated, and she was strangled before the fire reached her body. The law which condemned a man guilty of high treason to be cut down, when half hanged, to be disembowelled, and to have his bowels burned before his face, was still executed in ghastly detail.

If conditions were thus among the baser elements of the population, they were equally unfortunate in the Court and among the higher classes. The time was marked by a passion for gambling. Get rich quick schemes followed one another in rapid succession, a typical one being the South Sea bubble; all kinds of wild speculation were rife. The coarseness of the Courts of George I and II has not been too strongly pictured by Thackeray and others. The novels coming from this period bear their own witness.

During the early years of Sir Robert Walpole's administration, there was no joke which obtained greater currency among the upper classes of society than one to which Lady M. W. Montague refers in a letter to the Countess of Mar (1723)—one which asserts that certain statesmen were then engaged in "cooking up a Bible at

a hunting-seat in Norfolk," for the purpose of excising the word "not" from the Decalogue and inserting it in every clause of the creed. "It certainly might be carried on with great ease," she says, "honor, virtue, and reputation, which we used to hear of in our nursery, are as much laid aside as crumpled ribbons."

Men's religious views are very much influenced by the character of their times. Custom helps to make morals even as morals create customs. Unless the religious spirit is very much alive, it soon becomes a replica of the spirit prevailing in the community. This was true in eighteenth century England. I am aware that it is very difficult to picture the religious temper of another day. The evil flaunts itself while the good endeavors that its light shall not be flaringly conspicuous. And yet the testimony regarding the period under discussion is all of one sort, and we probably must concede its truth.

The truth seems to be that there was a public adherence to the forms of religion and a private ridiculing of its substance by a large portion of the governing class. There was a kind of benevolent neutrality between rival religions. What religious interest there was, was almost entirely intellectual. Even Butler seemed to think of religious controversy as something comforting to himself rather than as useful to others. Of religion as a matter of thought and of disputation there are many evidences. Of religion as a life, there are few signs either in the higher or lower classes.

The corruption which pervaded Parliament also pervaded the appointments of the Established Church, while dissenting churches and others were occupied in trying to hold what they had, without making any impression. The lower clergy were scandalously underpaid and had low social rank. "Church preferment was bestowed chiefly in regard to some family or political influence. The occupants of the episcopal bench would seem to have had no consciences in the disposition of their patronage, or, if they had any, they

stified them. They regarded it simply as a means of benefiting their family and friends. To cures of souls and cathedral stalls, it was their customary plan to present their sons and their nephews, and, in default of these, their examining chaplains, or their college friends. Clerical non-residence was the rule, and the pastoral care of the parishioners was confided to a curate, whose services were enlisted at a stipend oftentimes far lower than that which was received by a groom or coachman."

Many pictures have been given of the heavy-drinking, fox-hunting country parson. All were not such, happily, and yet this type was too common. The best that can be said of the town clergy is that they were indolent and worldly. They made it their aim to preach sermons to the "refined understanding," and the presence of the "unsavory multitude" was often resented. "When a popular preacher brought the poor flooding into the church, the wealthier members fled, locking their pews behind them to keep out the poor, the church-wardens would cut off the light, and the pulpit be illumined by a solitary candle in the hand of the preacher. Such was the recorded experience of William Romaine, lecturer at St. George's, Hanover Square, and at St. Dunstan's, Fleet St.—a man of blameless life and devoted character. Even if this incident is not typical, it is difficult to ignore the force of Chesterfield's solemn private warning to his son that it was a vulgar error to regard clergymen as necessarily hypocrites,—or of Voltaire's published assertion that England was the most irreligious of countries." (Camb. Modern History.)

As late as the closing decades of the century, the poet Cowper could say of the average parish priest that he is

"Loose in morals, and in manners vain,
In conversation frivolous, in dress
Extreme: at once rapacious and profuse,
Frequent in park with lady at his side,

Ambling and prattling scandal as he goes,
But rare at home and never at his books."

while in another place he speaks of

"The things that mount the rostrum with a skip
And then skip down again, pronounce a text,
Cry, 'hem,' and reading what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene."

Meanwhile the great multitudes were growing up, concerned with the expanding industrial, commercial and political greatness of England, but irreligious to the backbone, and oftentimes ignorant and brutalized.

In the American colonies matters were somewhat different, and yet they were decidedly not encouraging. Politically a time of peace was displaced by restlessness which was beginning to foretell revolution. Walpole's plan was to create a great colonial empire. The colonies should raise the raw material; the mother country should manufacture them. Consequently he put tariffs on manufactured goods introduced into England and took them off raw products. France had an idea that there might be a scheme which would mutually benefit colonies and mother country. England was concerned with the mother country alone. Her diplomacy at this time was entirely selfish. Measure after measure emphasized this. One of the most important, though not often quoted, was the Colonial Manufactures Prohibition Act of 1750 which forbade the manufacture of bar or pig iron in the American colonies, and provided for the abolition of colonial slitting mills, tilt hammers, and iron furnaces. A preference was, to be sure, given to colonial raw iron as against continental, but this act, seriously affecting a growing New England industry, marks the active beginning of New England opposition to Old England. In the minds of the colonists, from tariff tyranny to kingly tyranny was but a slight step, and when the second did not exist, they

could easily imagine it. There was, therefore, in the colonies a political ferment whose effect is generally to deaden religion.

Religiously, it seems to be true that the "slack calm of scepticism" prevailed. "The high consciousness and citizenship of the first generation, the lofty sense of a peculiar mission had degenerated into petty, local strifes, mere wordy disputes about trifles."

New England Puritanism was fast becoming a matter of memory alone, and in its place was found what has been aptly described as "polite religion which disturbed no man's conscience and excited no man's sensibilities." The boundaries between the church and the world were almost broken down. The church was filled with men and women who gave no evidences of conversion. Discipline was a thing of the past and immorality in the church no longer called forth the oldtime censures. The vitality was gone from faith, and preaching was colorless and without discrimination.

The ministers were like their people. Some of them were noble men, but many were not regenerate and were besides skeptical in regard to fundamental doctrines. Being perfectly secure in their position, they took life as easily and pleasantly as possible. Shining exceptions were to be found but the most "had settled down into a dull routine of Sabbath-day performances, and were spending their week-day hours, when not engaged in the preparation of their hasty discourses, in the improvement of their parsonage lands, the indulgence of their literary tastes, or in friendly correspondence and social intercourse with each other, and with those distinguished men in civil life who courted their society, and respected their respectability, or sought to avail themselves, for their own purposes, of their unbounded influence."

This same complaint is voiced in the report of the Associated Churches of Connecticut to the Governor, Council, and General Court of 1715. After due inquiry, they reported a lack of Bibles in some families, and of

“domestical government”; great neglect of public worship, also of “catechizing”; irregularity in commutative justice; “tale-bearing, defamation, and intemperance,” “calumniating and contempt of authority and order, both civil and ecclesiastical.” Their remedy was to make more laws and to strengthen the administration. In fact, when religion is dead, people generally become very anxious about the minutiae of conduct, and there ensues an absurd exaggeration of little things. What we should think matters of manners, these people made matters of morals. Their conscience was oppressed by these petty crimes until they were becoming sore in their heart, and ready to respond to any appeal which would promise freedom.

Possibly, in connection with this, Whitefield’s note in his journal on Boston may be of interest. “Boston is a large, populous place (18,000 in 1742), very wealthy. Has the form of religion kept up, but has lost much of the power of religion. Ministers and people are obliged to confess that the love of many is waxed cold. Both, for the generality, seem to be too much conformed to this world. There’s much of the pride of life to be seen in their assemblies. Jewels, patches, and gay apparel are commonly worn by the female sex, and even the common people I observe dressed up in the pride of life. And the little infants that were brought to baptism were wrapped up in such fine things, and so much pains taken to dress them, that one would think they were brought thither to be initiated into, rather than renounce, the pomps and vanities of the wicked world. One thing Boston is very remarkable for, the external observance of the Sabbath.”

Into conditions such as this, George Whitefield came, and the effect upon people, moulded by such influences as I have described, of his simple preaching was most startling. It is not the purpose of this paper to give a review of his life. The main events of his life, including his relation to the “Holy Club” at Oxford, his influence upon the Wesleys and the whole Methodist movement, his journeys to America and his interest in his Georgia or-

phanage, his wonderful evangelistic tours of this country and of England, I assume to be well known. At the beginning he was a great stickler for form. Like Wesley he was inclined to feel that it were better that men should not be saved at all than that they should not be saved in Church. Later, pushed out of the Church of England pulpits, although an ordained clergyman of that communion, he began his field preaching, becoming an apostle to the multitudes, and so influenced Wesley that the latter finally noted in his journal that he had consented to be "yet more vile" by preaching elsewhere than in a church.

Inasmuch as this field preaching set the keynote of the new movement some description of it is in order. I quote from Lecky an account of it which is almost identical with that which I have found in several places.

"At a time when he was himself excluded from the pulpits of Bristol, and was thus deprived of the chief means of exercising his talents, his attention was called to the condition of the colliers of Kingswood. He was filled with horror and compassion at finding in the heart of a Christian country, and in the immediate neighborhood of a great city, a population of many thousands, sunk in the most brutal ignorance and vice, and entirely excluded from the ordinances of religion. Moved by such feelings, he resolved to address the colliers in their own haunts. The resolution was a bold one for field preaching was then utterly unknown in England, and it needed no common courage to brave all the obloquy and derision it must provoke, and to commence the experiment in the midst of a half-savage population. Whitefield, however, had a just confidence in his cause, and in his powers. Standing upon a hillside, he took for his text the first words of the sermon which was spoken from the Mount, and he addressed with his accustomed fire an astonished audience of some 200 men. The fame of his eloquence spread far and wide. On successive occasions, five, ten, fifteen, and even twenty thousand were present. It was February, but the winter sun shone bright and clear.

The lanes were filled with the carriages of the more wealthy citizens whom curiosity had drawn from Bristol. The trees and hedges were crowded with humbler listeners, and the fields were darkened by a compact mass. The voice of the great preacher pealed with a thrilling power to the very outskirts of the mighty throng. The picturesque novelty of the occasion, and of the scene, the contagious emotion of so great a multitude, a deep sense of the condition of his hearers and of the momentous importance of the step he was taking, gave an added solemnity to his eloquence. His rude auditors were electrified. They stood for a time in rapt and motionless attention. Soon tears might be seen forming white gutters down cheeks blackened from the coal-mine. Then sobs and groans told how hard hearts were melting at his words. A fire was kindled among the outcasts of Kingswood, which burnt long and fiercely, and was destined in a few years to overspread the land."

Such scenes were repeated all over England. Whitefield did not stop to gather up the fruits of his work. That was left for men like Wesley. He was an agitator, whose business it was to stir the divine fires, and to this task he gave himself utterly. He seems to have been able to stir all sorts and fashions of men.

Possibly I could not better show the effect of such preaching in this country than by quoting at length from Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography what that rather cold-blooded individual has to say about him.

"In 1739, arrived among us from Ireland the Reverend Mr. Whitefield who had made himself remarkable there as an itinerant preacher. He was at first permitted to preach in some of our churches; but the clergy taking a dislike to him, soon refused him their pulpits, and he was obliged to preach in the fields. The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was a matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers, and how much

they admired and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them, by assuring them that they were naturally half beasts and half devils. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through the town on an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.

He had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his words and sentences so perfectly, that he might be heard and understood at a great distance, especially as his auditors, however numerous, observed the most exact silence. He preached one evening from the top of the court house steps, which are in the middle of Market Street (Philadelphia), and on the west side of Second Street which crosses it at right angles. Both streets were filled with hearers to a considerable distance. Being among the hindmost in Market Street, I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be heard, by retiring backwards down the street towards the river; and I found his voice distinct till I came near Front Street, when some noise in that street obscured it. Imagining then a semi-circle, of which my distance should be the radius, and that it were filled with auditors, to each of whom I allowed two square feet, I computed that he might well be heard by more than 30,000. This reconciled me to the newspaper accounts of his having preached to 25,000 people in the fields, and to the ancient histories of generals haranguing whole armies, of which I had sometimes doubted.

By hearing him often, I came to distinguish easily between sermons newly composed, and those which he had often preached in the course of his travels. His delivery of the latter was so improved by frequent repetitions that every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice was so well placed and so perfectly turned, that, without being interested in the subject, one could not help being pleased with the discourse; a pleasure of much the same

kind with that derived from an excellent piece of music.”

On his second visit to New England, Whitefield was much criticized. I am persuaded, however, that this was not so much his fault, inasmuch as the testimony is that his preaching “was in the manner moving, earnest, winning, melting,” as it was that of certain men who had tried to imitate him. The worst of these was James Davenport, minister of Southhold on Long Island, who went about “telling the people that they were imperiling their souls by listening to an unconverted minister. He waited on the ministers as he journeyed, asked them for a recital of their religious experience, which, if his request were granted, he often found unsatisfactory, and denounced them accordingly, as well as when they declined to gratify his curiosity. In a prayer on Copp’s Hill, he said, “Good Lord, I will not mince the matter any longer with thee, for thou knowest that I know that most of the ministers of the town of Boston and of the country are unconverted, and are leading their people blindfold to hell.” Whitefield thought that possibly he had not been careful enough, as he wrote to a friend, “Wild fire will necessarily blend itself with the pure fire that comes from God’s altar. It broke out and spread itself by the instrumentality of many good souls, who, mistaking fancy for faith and imagination for revelation, were guilty of great imprudence. Some unguarded expressions, in the heat of less experienced youth, I certainly did drop. I was too precipitate in hearkening to and publishing private information, and Peter-like, cut off too many ears.” He thought that possibly he had been “too unguarded” in his censures of ministers. He assured the Faculty of Harvard College of his sorrow that he had published his private informations, though from credible persons, concerning the Colleges, to the world.

In such criticisms there is doubtless an element of truth, but they are to be judged in the light of mental habits of men writing. And always over against them is to be placed such a reformation as Franklin described in

Philadelphia, and to the fact that, both in this country and in England, the preaching of Whitefield is known to be the beginning of a new era for all the churches, which showed itself, not only in religious work at home, but also in all kinds of movements for bettering the condition of the poor, and also for sending the gospel to the heathen. The Evangelical revival would never have been what it became without the preaching of Whitefield. And without that revival, the history of the 19th century would have been very different from what it actually was. Political and social conditions in the 18th century brought religion to its lowest ebb. But out of those conditions God produced a Whitefield, and in addition a Wesley, whose work abolished the conditions which had called for them. The modern world hardly realizes what a debt it owes to these men. It is not my intent to picture it in detail. But there are several very significant lessons which are suggested by this history.

1. The first is that materialism has within it the seeds of an inevitable reaction to the deeper things. Beneath the surface there flows the deeper current of man's life. I have thought that modern times are similar in many respects to the first half of the eighteenth century. There has been, in Germany especially, the same striving for world-dominion which characterized England at that time; and its effect on religious life has been the same. There has been in England and in the United States the same strife for commercial and industrial expansion, the same eager running after new gods. And under its influence, religion has become cold and formal, needful for the well-being of society but hardly a vital thing. There has come in the train of these things the same loosening morality, the same devotion to politics and business on the one hand and to women and sex problems on the other. Fifty years from now we shall blush to read that which today lies on our library tables. The conditions, as I see them, are not at all dissimilar; points of likeness are striking. And I think that it is being demonstrated also,

notably by one man who recently shocked Philadelphia very much as Whitefield and Wesley and the early Methodists shocked their times, that materialism as a philosophy of life runs for about so long, and then falls again before the proclamation, in terms however rude, of the everlasting gospel.

2. The second thing I notice is that man's life is relatively simple, despite the variety of his clothes and environment; and responds to a few fundamental doctrines. Whitefield's preaching was exceedingly simple. He talked over and over again on half a dozen or a dozen themes. "He avoided all abstract reflections, all trains of reasoning, everything that could fatigue the attention, or rouse the intellect to question or oppose. His preaching was based upon the most confident assertions, and it dealt almost exclusively with topics which, if firmly believed, can hardly fail to have a deep influence upon men. The utter depravity of human nature, the eternal tortures which are the doom of every unconverted man, the free salvation of Christ, the imminence of death, the necessity to salvation of a complete supernatural change of character, were the main subjects of his preaching." There were no dissertations here upon the duties of man, or upon themes relating to the authority of revelation such as his contemporaries delighted in. Man a sinner—Jesus Christ a Saviour—this was the essential message of his ministry.

3. And the other, and perhaps the most important of all among these lessons, is that he made an appeal to the emotions in a time when religion had become a matter of the intellect alone. In the debate between culture and emotion, he took the side of emotion and won.

Possibly this was overdone. One is almost inclined to think so when he reads what happened during the sermons,—how many fell to the ground convulsed with paroxysms of agony, how some lay without sense or motion, how others trembled exceedingly, or rent the air with piercing screams; how others imagined themselves pos-

sessed with demons and indulged in all kinds of queer antics. We notice too, that in the intense religious enthusiasm that was generated, many of the ordinary relations of life were disordered. Children were contemptuous of the commands of their parents, and clergymen of the discipline of their church. The whole structure of life, and almost all the amusements of life, appeared criminal.

But one must remember against what Whitefield was fighting. In his time anything that savored of originality or of fervor was an object of alarm and suspicion. Enthusiasm was everywhere denounced. "The use of the word 'enthusiasm,' " says the historian, "in the sense of fanaticism in the eighteenth century is singularly characteristic of the age. Any ill-regulated impulse came under this head, and it was a favorite term for discrediting an opponent, especially a religious one."

But to depreciate feeling is dangerous. It is as dangerous in our time as it was in Whitefield's, and is the tendency of our time as of his. Feeling is as essential in man as is intellect and no man can come to the fullness of truth without giving it a chance for expression. It was the rehabilitation of feeling that re-established on the earth true ideas of justice, and liberty and humanity. It is what changes religion from a speculation into a life. And Whitefield was on fire. His enthusiasm was perfect and contagious. He set the world on fire religiously, which was just what was needed. He overthrew reason from its false throne and gave the will and the feelings a chance. When some man will do the same for our cultured and self-satisfied time, we shall be in a way to go forward once more. This age has particular reasons for being interested in George Whitefield and in the zeal which could lead him to say, "Had I a thousand souls and bodies, they should all be itinerants for Jesus Christ."