

George Whitefield's Advice for Creating Community

Ho Kwon, Ph. D. in progress
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, Texas

ABSTRACT

George Whitefield showed how to create community through preaching. Whitefield transformed the traditional sermon into something different: a dramatic type of preaching capable of competing for public attention outside the arena of the churches. Whitefield testified that preaching could be both attracting and saving soul. In the mid-eighteenth century, Whitefield's preaching was instrumental in British and American churches, as they experienced profound revivals. Though his preaching, Whitefield cooperated with and had a profound impact on various communities and churches of many traditions—Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist. This paper presents Whitefield's perennial homiletic methods for creating community.

WHITEFIELD'S FOOTPRINT

In the mid-eighteenth century, George Whitefield was instrumental in British and American churches, as they experienced profound revivals. From his Oxford graduation in 1736 until his death at Newburyport, Massachusetts, in 1770, Whitefield preached more than eighteen-thousand sermons -an average of five hundred a year, or ten a week. At a time when London had a population of less than seven-hundred thousand, he preached before an estimated two-thousand people at once in public parks. He made a preaching tour through England which lasted for almost seven years. He traveled to Scotland fourteen times and visited Wales repeatedly. He toured Ireland three times, traveled to Spain and to Holland once each, and crossed the Atlantic Ocean thirteen times (Henry, 1957, 7-9).

Though the Church of England ordained him, Whitefield cooperated with and had a profound impact on people and churches of many traditions—Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist. Whitefield was an extensive letter writer. Many of his sermons and writings have survived in some form, and many of his sermons have been reprinted several times.

For thirty-four years his voice resounded on both sides of the Atlantic. In England, he charmed the young and old, rich and poor, and dignitaries and coal miners. In America, his preaching was a major influence on the First Great Awakening (1730-1755). Whitefield preached like a lion and his preaching was powerful and dramatic. He has been called the “Demosthenes of the pulpit” and is remembered as “the greatest preacher” that England ever produced (Larsen, 1998, 370).

Recognizing Whitefield's unprecedented homiletic achievement, this paper examines his homiletic contribution for British and American communities in his time. To pursue this purpose,

the paper will explain 1) how he preached beyond the Anglican churches' refusals for people who would have never been in a church, 2) why he adopted various preaching methods, and 3) what main subjects of his preaching were. The last part of each topic provides evaluations on Whitefield's preaching ministry and perennial homiletic applications to build community.

PREACH THE WORD WITHOUT LIMITATION

Refusal from the Church of the England

Although George Whitefield was an eminent preacher, he experienced several refusals from Anglican churches in his early ministry. Whitefield entered Pembroke College, Oxford, on May 7, 1732. After he finished his degree at Oxford, Bishop Benson ordained him on June 20, 1736. Whitefield preached his first sermon at St. Marly-le-Crypt, the church where he was baptized. From the first time of his preaching, Whitefield was an enthusiastic preacher. He described his first preaching experience as follows: "As I proceeded, I perceived the fire kindle, till at last....Some few mocked, but most for the present seemed struck, and I have since heard that a complaint has been made to the Bishop that I drove fifteen mad the first sermon" (Whitefield, 2000, 18-19). Whitefield's sermons made him a noted preacher. Remembering back upon a specific preaching experience, Whitefield noted : "As I went up stairs almost all seemed to sneer at me...but they soon grew serious and exceedingly attentive, and, after I came down showed me great token of respect, blessed me as I passed along" (Whitefield, 2001, 78).

However, many local Anglican pastors refused Whitefield's fervent preaching style. For instance, St. Martin's parish in London rejected his already scheduled sermon on February 4, 1739. In Whitefield's time, Anglican preachers considered enthusiasm as shameful, and they insisted that "Better stodgy than hearty!" (Old, 2004, 153). Consequently, many ministers of the Church of England refused to allow him to preach in their churches because of his enthusiastic preaching.

Against Empty Formality

To appropriately understand why Anglican churches refused Whitefield's enthusiastic preaching style, one needs to be familiar with the Church of England in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. The religious life of England in these times was decadent and filled with moral corruption and spiritual darkness (Ditchfield, 1998, 39-56). In 1662, nearly two-thousand Nonconformists (among whom were Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists) who did not submit to the "Act of Uniformity" were ejected and persecuted (Gibson, 1999, 31-35). After this "Great Ejection" they regained liberty under the "Act of Toleration," which restored freedom of worship to Nonconformists in 1689. For a while, churches in England seemed to be vitalized, but they soon stagnated. During these years, religious rationalism known as Deism was introduced in England. This Deism, characterized as "natural religion," carried out various attacks against Christianity with its supernatural belief. The god of Deism was far removed from the God of the Bible whom the Puritans preached. Instead, Deism proposed a vague deity revealed in nature. Deism gradually prevailed in England and became a major influence on theology.

Confronted by the challenge of Deism, the Church of England replied with intellectual responses (Dallimore, 1979, 21). These intellectual rebuttals effectively adhered to the biblical trusts, but sometimes these reactions were so intellectual that many people could not understand them.

Under the influence of Deism, many people forsook their faith, and ministers turned their eyes away from Scripture and to society, preaching social messages. The pulpits were cold, and discord was the chief feature of the various denominations. The majority of the people believed that the Church of England was just a necessary support for the monarchy and a key factor in maintaining peace. Thus, empty formality became characteristic of the early eighteenth-century religious life, and an urgent need arose for fervent spiritual revival.

Whitefield's Resolution

Confronting the Anglican churches' refusals, Whitefield never lost his passion for preaching. He went out from the churches to the field to find his audiences. In 1739, he began preaching to coal miners in the suburbs of London. Whitefield first preached in the open air on Saturday, February 17 for the coal miners of Bristol, who would have never been in a church. The small audience numbered around two hundred. Preaching Matt 5:1-3, Whitefield saw the miners' "white gutters made by their tears which plentifully fell down their black cheeks" (Hardy, 1938, 119). Having invited Whitefield to preach in a church at Islington on Friday, April 27, at the last minute, the church wardens did not allow him to enter the pulpit. Whitefield, however, decided to preach in the churchyard. Two days later, he preached at Moorfields and then at Kennington Common, where no less than thirty-thousand people are thought to have been present.

The amazing responses in the field preaching changed the avenue of Whitefield's preaching ministry. Whitefield went over the limitation, refusals of the Church of England. He preached everywhere: in the fields, on hills, in the courtyard, in the marketplaces, in the squares, and even on a ship. He preached to everyone: to the student, the poor, the prisoner, the soldier, and the illiterate.

Beyond Limitations

Whitefield preached beyond the limitation of churches of the England. Whitefield preached the gospel everywhere he could, and he helped people to start believer's community.

Nowadays many pastors confine their preaching ministry within their churches. Whitefield, however, challenges modern preachers to cross over the limitation if they want to create a new community. Most preachers today have no chance to be in contact with the secular world because they tend to stay in their churches during the week. Though familiar with the culture of their churches, preachers, however, tend to lose an understanding of the society in which the common people live. If preachers would sometimes leave their churches and preach in nonecclesiastic places like prisons, orphanages, schools, and other countries, they would have new opportunities to share the gospel.

Whitefield not only preached the gospel everywhere, but he also preached the gospel to everyone. He urges modern preachers to preach to different peoples. When preachers have the chance to share God's word with non-believers, preachers will face many rejections against the church and Christianity. When confronted by these rejections, preachers will understand the various obstacles preventing people from coming to church. The more contact a preacher has with non-

believers, the more he can realize the hindrances and find effective ways to overcome them. It is time to preach to various peoples if we wish to evangelize them and create a new community with them.

PREACH THE WORD WITH VARIOUS METHODS

Whitefield preached everywhere and to everyone. At the same time, he used every possible homiletic method if it could be effective for proclaiming the gospel. One can categorize his numerous homiletic methods into three categories: theatrical method, rhetoric method, and printing method. Whitefield's purpose in adopting these homiletic methods was to help people to receive God's message and to become members of the faith community.

Theatrical Method

The first homiletic tool which Whitefield utilized in his preaching was the theatrical method. Whitefield displayed his theatrical talent on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Whitefield utilized various theatrical methods like trained voices, dynamic gestures, and even hiding a "trumpeter to peal fort suddenly after a sermon on the second coming for precipitating a panic and hysteria" (Kendal, 1984, 87). Whitefield's theatrical characteristic came from his early outstanding ability to memorize and imitate. His constant reading, seeing, and practicing plays were essential elements for the maturation of his theatrical characteristic. Among his many theatrical methods, this section provides two theatrical elements found in Whitefield's preaching.

Trained voice. George Whitefield had a marvelous voice described as resembling an "organ, a flute, a harp, all in one" (Fant and Pinson, 1971, 111). He seemed to have inherited a good voice. But several records indicate Whitefield trained his voice for effective performance (Whitefield, 2001, 37-49). He was especially well-known for his thundering voice (Aldridge, 1980, 55-64). In the eighteenth-century English theater, if an actor wanted to make his lines audible to his audience, he had to train his voice. Whitefield was no exception to this practice. By training his inherited good voice, he came to have a thundering voice and acquired various vocal skills as well. Benjamin Franklin wrote in his autobiography about his experiment to make a careful calculation of how far Whitefield could be heard preaching and came to believe that "the newspaper accounts of his having preached to twenty-five thousand people in the fields, and to the ancient histories of generals haranguing whole armies, of which I had sometimes doubted (Labaree, Ketcham, Boatfield, and Fineman, 1964, 175-76).

Whitefield was a fortunate preacher blessed with an innately good voice, but he also was a diligent preacher who trained his voice for effective delivery. While training his voice as a school actor, the young Whitefield began his outstanding preaching ministry. From the beginning of his preaching ministry, it was said that "his voice startled England like a trumpet blast" (Belden, 1930, 37).

Expressive gesture. Another of Whitefield's striking theatrical characteristic in his preaching is expressive gesture. When he preached, Whitefield's gestures were active and vigorous like those of an actor on the stage. The manuscripts of his sermons demonstrate verbal cues (words such as "Oh!" "Hark!" "Behold!" and "Alas!"), indicating body language. These words "were the

scaffolding over which the body stomped, cavorted – to startle and completely overtake his listeners” (Stout, 1991, 41). Whitefield did not attempt to show calmness and dignity as his contemporary Wesley did. Rather, he proclaimed his burning message with expressive gestures.

Rhetorical Method

The second homiletic tool which Whitefield incorporated into his preaching was rhetorical method. As all people, Whitefield, too, was influenced and shaped by the education of the University in which he studied. In the eighteenth century, Oxford provided several classic studies. Students who wanted to be matriculated at Oxford had to master Greek and Latin in order to read classical literatures. The University required students to participate in the declamation of themes in rhetorical practice in both written and oral forms. Under Oxford’s classical rhetorical curriculum, Whitefield developed his oratorical talent. This rhetorical influence left a mark on his preaching

Whitefield’s preaching shows several rhetorical characteristics. These rhetorical features were sometimes interwoven with theatrical ones. For instance, Whitefield’s expressive gesture is categorized as the theatrical characteristic. Although classic rhetoric also deals with the proper way of gesture during oration, the effective skill of gestures was studied systematically in the modern era and applied early on by theatrical fields (Quintilian, 1951, 85). Whitefield’s rhetorical characteristic was shown in his use of emotion, introduction, and question, which are the most significant topics in classic rhetoric.

Overflowing emotion. Whitefield preached with great pathos, often proclaiming the Good News with tears. As Cornelius Winter, a friend who accompanied him on many of his preaching journeys, observed, “Whitefield seldom preached without weeping at some point in the sermon” (Fant and Pinson, 112). Based on several sources written by Whitefield’s followers, Loane portrays the weeping preacher as follows:

There was an element of pure pathos in all his preaching, and men could not mistake the note of yearning which made him sob aloud. He (Whitefield) felt such an intense love and longing for those whom he addressed that his feelings found an outlet in tears. One who knew him well and often heard him preach said that he hardly ever knew him to preach without weeping; his voice would be choked with sobs and his flow of words interrupted with involuntary tears. This forced weeping silence on the preacher’s part was at times most effective; few could withstand the sight. It woke up affections and touched the hidden springs of the heart as nothing else could ever do; men could not hate one who loved and wept for their souls (Loane, 1950, 60-61).

Aristotle teaches how emotion is important to both orators and audiences. Natural emotion from the orator affects audiences’ minds and induces them to make judgments. Aristotle points out: The primary rhetorical function of account is apparently to provide a speaker with an ability to arouse these emotions in an audience and thus to facilitate the judgment sought” (Aristotle, 1991, 122). Understanding the importance of emotion, Whitefield made congregations laugh, groan, and weep: “He swayed them like reeds in the wind” (Larsen, 1998, 371).

Clear introduction. Most of Whitefield’s sermons are distinguished by their clear introductions.

Whitefield provided a preview so that the audience could understand the rest of the sermon easily. Classical rhetoric instructs that the introduction, though it is simple, should be prepared carefully. Quintilian argues that a faulty “proem” (introduction) looks like a scarred face and that he will certainly be thought a very bad helmsman who let the ship strike in going out of the harbor (Quintilian, 1951, 61). To provide clearly the direction of his sermon, Whitefield usually told the audience his sermon structure at the introduction, saying “from the words of the text, I shall endeavor to show these three things: First...Secondly... Thirdly...” or “I shall in the following discourse: First...Secondly...Thirdly...” When Whitefield delivered the body of his sermon, he repeated the numeral marker (first, secondly, thirdly) according to his introduction. Occasionally, extemporaneous preaching is accused for its illogical and digressive characteristics.

By presenting the structure of the sermon in the introduction and verbalizing numeral marks again in the body, Whitefield maintained his homiletic direction from the beginning to the end.

Rhetorical question. Whitefield frequently employed rhetorical questions in his sermons. By using proper rhetorical questions, he effectively created audience participation in his preaching (Bizell and Herzberg, 2001, 26). Aristotle recommends orators use “interrogation” (rhetorical question) in the conclusion to create powerful persuasion (Aristotle, 1991, 282). Sometimes Whitefield asked a question at the beginning of sermon to introduce the main topic. For example, in his sermon entitled “*The Potter and the Clay*,” Whitefield asked his audience an introductory question to discover Jeremiah’s response when God spoke to him: “Perhaps, near the morning, when he (Jeremiah) was slumbering or musing on his bed. For the (God’s) word came to him, saying, Arise! And what must he do when risen?” (Whitefield, 1841, 171). After providing the answer to that question - “He must go,” Whitefield introduced the main subject of the sermon, God’s sovereignty. In many more cases Whitefield used a rhetorical question in the last part of the sermon to raise the audience’s emotion and to induce a proper response. A typical example is found in the last part of his sermon “*The Almost Christian*.”

Let us give to God our whole hearts, and no longer halt between two opinions: if the world be God, let us serve that; if pleasure be a God, let us serve that; but if the Lord he be God, let us, O let us serve him alone. Alas! why, why should we stand out any longer? Why should we be so in love with slavery, as not wholly to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, which, like so many spiritual chains, bind down our souls, and hinder them from flying up to God. Alas! what are we afraid of? Is not God able to reward our entire obedience? If he is, as the almost Christian’s lame way of serving him, seems to grant, why then will we not serve him entirely? For the same reason we do so much, why do we not do more? (Whitefield, 1841, 498-99)

By employing rhetorical questions, Whitefield effectively held his audience’s attention, introduced the main subject of the sermon, raised people’s emotions, and encouraged them to obey God’s message.

Franklin recorded in his autobiography an amusing anecdote of Whitefield’s rhetorical powers. Whitefield planned to build an orphanage in Georgia and tried to raise money in Philadelphia and other colonies. Franklin, however, believed that Whitefield should build his orphanage in Philadelphia and insisted that he move the children there. Whitefield, however, refused to change his plans, and Franklin determined to contribute no more money toward the cost of the

orphanage. After this disagreement occurred, Franklin heard Whitefield preach a sermon:

Returning northward, he preached up this charity, and made large collections, for his eloquence had a wonderful power over the hearts and purses of his hearers, of which I myself was an instance. I did not disapprove of the design, but, as Georgia was then destitute of materials and workmen, and it was proposed to send them from Philadelphia at a great expense, I thought it would have been better to have built the house here, and brought the children to it. This I advised; but he was resolute in his first project, rejected my counsel, and I therefore refused to contribute. I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me, I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all (Labaree, Ketcham, Boatfield, and Fineman, 1964, 177).

Printing Method

The last tool which Whitefield adopted in his preaching ministry was the printing method. Central to Whitefield's adoption of print was his conviction that peoples everywhere should hear God's message. Whitefield's use of print obviously distinguished him from his evangelical predecessors. Whitefield used printing methods to introduce his ministry for revival movement. For instance, he used newspaper articles and pamphlets to convey his message for a mass audience. Adopting this method, Whitefield exceeded boundaries of local communities and pastors for the intercolonial revival movement. To understand why Whitefield utilized this printing method one needs to understand the historical situation in early America.

Throughout the 1720s, several evangelical awakening movements occurred from New England to New Jersey. In the late 1720s, the Dutch Pietist Jacob Frelinghuysen spurred a spiritual revival in New Jersey (Kidd, 2007, 83-94). At the same time, the Presbyterian ministers William and Gilbert Tennent led a vigorous spiritual awakening in New Jersey and New York (Heimert and Miller, 1967, 183-204). Jonathan Edwards succeeded them and prepared substantial steps for the Great Awakening (Baldwin, 1928, 56). These revivals were ardent, but were limited to specific regions and denominational boundaries.

When Whitefield arrived in America, he broadened the scope of a regional awakening to an intercolonial revival movement. In contrast to Edwards' approach which focused minimally on local communities and pastors, Whitefield's new tactic aimed for the intercolonial movement and embraced journalists. He publicized his ministry for intercolonial revival through "printing and preaching" by using pamphlets and newspapers (Lambert, 1994, 97). With his passionate sermons and proper printing methods, Whitefield extended spiritual revival from Georgia to South-Carolina, New York, Philadelphia, New England.

Beyond Triteness

Whitefield believed that churches can use various methods to awaken people. Hence, he did not hesitate to employ every possible means to proclaim biblical truth. Utilizing theatrical, rhetorical,

and printing methods, Whitefield transformed the traditional sermon into something different: a vivid style of preaching capable of competing for public attention outside the arena of the churches. Actually Whitefield testified that preaching could be both attracting and saving soul.

Whitefield's effort to proclaim effectively God's word with various methods inspires modern preachers. First, if we could eschew the danger of distorting the biblical message, preacher can use numerous homiletic methods. As Whitefield used theatrical method, modern preachers can use theatrical elements like stage, lighting, costume, and so on during the sermon. Second, classical rhetorical studies can be an effective method to enlarge homiletic ability. From Whitefield's academic experience at Oxford, one finds that rhetorical studies made his homiletic talent more mature. Even to modern preachers, classical rhetorical studies can be powerful studies to open their homiletic eyes and to sharpen preaching skills. Knowing this, Broadus tried to adopt classic rhetoric studies in his preaching classes. Third, modern preachers can employ media to deliver God's message for new generations. As Whitefield used newspaper which was media in his time to deliver his message, today preachers can utilize media like video clip, broadcasting, internet, and so forth.

PREACH THE WORD NOT WORLD

In England many people in Whitefield's time followed natural religion -Deism. Under the influence of Deism, people discarded their faith and ministers of England preached social messages. However, Whitefield directly preached biblical truth with bold assurance. When he came to America, he continuously delivered the same messages. When analyzing Whitefield's sermon content, one recognizes that he preached biblical truth. Preaching pure biblical messages, Whitefield made spiritual impact on the churches of America and England.

Spiritual Impact

Not content with confining his ministry to England, Whitefield sailed for America in 1738 to become a parish priest in Savannah, Georgia. This voyage was his first of thirteen Atlantic crossings Whitefield was to make. The number of people listening to the minister's sermons stood in stark contrast to that of England. The following year, Whitefield returned to England where he resumed his evangelical activity.

In the summer of 1739, Whitefield made his second crossing to America. Benjamin Franklin, at that time editor of the "Pennsylvania Gazette," was present and heard Whitefield's message when he preached in the old court house at Philadelphia. On Whitefield's first visit to Philadelphia and his powerful sermons, Franklin wrote:

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 in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street (Labaree, Ketcham, Boatfield, and Fineman, 1964, 175).

Impressed with Whitefield's preaching and charmed by his compelling personality, Franklin became Whitefield's life-long friend.

Secret of Whitefield's Powerful Preaching

As noted in the previous section, Whitefield's preaching provided a new spiritual impetus toward the Great Awakening. Recognizing the unprecedented impact Whitefield's homiletic had on revival movements, one naturally asks why his preaching was so influential. It is infeasible to find one reason that could completely explain the success of his preaching. However, several scholars (e.g. Dallimore, Lambert, Mahaffey, and Stout) agree that Whitefield's strong emphasis on biblical truths in his sermons gave him homiletic power. By analyzing his sermon contents, one can find that Whitefield frequently preached three topics (Dallimore, 1980, 533).

Immediacy of a New Birth

During his early ministry, Whitefield heavily emphasized the necessity of "the new birth." His followers widely accepted and continued this emphasis. Whitefield's message of the necessity of a conversion experience was a crucial subject in his preaching ministry. His emphasis on a new birth derived from his personal experience in Oxford. He asserted that only God's action is sufficient to effect salvation through a "union of the soul with God" resulting in the new birth. Stressing true conversion and the "indwelling of Christ," Whitefield criticized that too many people in churches were "destitute of a true and living faith in Jesus Christ" and maintained only "head-knowledge without that of the heart." Whitefield passionately expressed the importance of a new birth before stressing God's impending judgment. In his sermon "Marks of a True Conversion," Whitefield invited people to the way of the new birth:

Precious souls, for God's sake think what will become of you when ye die, if you die without being converted; if ye go hence without the wedding garment, God will strike you speechless, and ye shall be banished from his presence for ever and ever. I know ye cannot dwell with everlasting burnings; behold then I show you a way of escape; Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, the Lord Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. It is his spirit must convert you, come to Christ, and ye shall have it; and may God for Christ's sake give it to you all, and convert you, that we may all meet, never to part again, in his heavenly kingdom; even so Lord Jesus, Amen and Amen (Whitefield, 1841, 280).

With this fervent message of the new birth, Whitefield frequently required people's immediate response, often resulting in conversions. Sometimes, Jonathan Edwards warned against instantaneous conversions (Edward, 1740, 325), and others wrote about these, in their opinion, spurious and doubtful conversions. Despite such skepticisms, Whitefield undoubtedly preached passionate messages which led people to the new birth.

God's Election and Justification

Whitefield also emphasized God's election and justification in his preaching. His fundamental doctrines can be summed up as "God's election" and "Justification by faith" (Pollock, 1972, 179-86). He preached his strong doctrine of election in several of his sermons. For instance, in his

sermon “*Christ, the Believer’s Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption*”

Whitefield assured his audience of the righteousness of the believer based on God’s election and justification:

It is Christ that justifies, who is he that condemns? Does sin condemn? Christ's righteousness delivers believers from the guilt of it: Christ is their Savior, and is become a propitiation for their sins: who therefore shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? Does the law condemn? By having Christ's righteousness imputed to them, they are dead to the law, as a covenant of works; Christ has fulfilled it for them, and in their stead. Does death threaten them? They need not fear: the sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but God has given them the victory by imputing to them the righteousness of the Lord Jesus (Whitefield, 1841, 502).

Salvation by Faith

Whitefield accentuated that, in Christ God has given man salvation. Jesus’ death was a vicarious sacrifice and precious atonement for human sin, and man’s part is nothing but to accept it by faith. It is not man’s “good deeds” but it is man’s “faith” that receives God’s salvation. In his sermon of Eccl 7:16 “The Folly and Danger of Being Not Righteous Enough,” Whitefield showed his strong belief in salvation by faith:

I say, salvation is the free gift of God. It is God’s free grace, I preach unto you, not of works, lest any one should boast. Jesus Christ justifies the ungodly; Jesus Christ passed by, and saw you polluted with your blood, and bid you live. It is not of works, it is of faith: we are not justified for our faith, for faith is the instrument, but by your faith, the active as well as the passive obedience of Christ, must be applied to you... Jesus Christ is the way; Jesus Christ is the truth; and Jesus Christ is the life (Whitefield, 1841, 128).

Although he accentuated salvation by faith, Whitefield also recognized the importance of a good Christian life during his younger years when he was a member of the Holy Club in Oxford. Throughout his entire ministry, Whitefield never overlooked man’s responsibility to help people and society with good deeds. He not only preached on the true Christian life, but also practiced his message by building orphanages and schools. Whitefield proclaimed this confidence, salvation by faith, in his sermons. He also demonstrated his faithfulness in every aspect of his ministry.

Beyond dispute

When Deism prevailed in England, and secularism took root in America, Whitefield did not reply with intellectual disputes but, instead, proclaimed biblical truth. Preaching this truth with strong confidence, Whitefield provided a crucial spiritual influence which caused the churches of America and England to experience revivals. In the modern pulpit, sometimes preachers hesitate to preach biblical truths like miracles, the resurrection, and existence of hell and heaven. Nowadays postmodernism has taken Deism’s place to assault Christianity. Biblical truths need to be preached again with a bold assurance mirroring that of Whitefield.

It is also important to note that when Whitefield preached biblical truth, many churches cooperated beyond denominational barriers for revival movements. Because he focused on

biblical truth, Whitefield overcame various theological disputes. Though he was ordained a priest in the Church of England, Whitefield tried to encompass all denominations to serve Christ. Both sides of the Atlantic experienced Whitefield's attempts to cooperate with denominations. Today Christianity experiences denominational schism. Sometimes this schism is evitable, but many times it seems unnecessary. By focusing on biblical truth in sermons, preachers can work together as one evangelical community that crosses denominational barriers for God's kingdom.

CONCLUSION

Beyond denominational barriers, Whitefield preached everywhere and to everyone in order to save souls. His sermons were based on the traditional message of the gospel, but his preaching style was obviously unique. Whitefield used various homiletic methods to make his message come alive. Whitefield's message came to life due to his theatrical and rhetorical methods. With the printed press, he accelerated his preaching ministry. Whitefield firmly kept the essence of the message, but he freely changed delivery forms to capture his audience's attention and save their souls.

Fighting against the Deism and secularism of America, he always preached biblical truth. In this postmodern age which views everything relatively, modern preachers need to preach biblical truths so that our sermons provide unchangeable spiritual criteria to believers. Modern preachers need to learn from Whitefield how to convey sermons effectively. By applying the proper homiletic methods, preachers can effectively deliver sermons that will result in greater response to the gospel message. Ultimately Whitefield teaches that our preaching must stand on everlasting biblical truth and that effective homiletic method can be pivotal in making a spiritual impact for revival in our communities.

Works Cited

- Aldridge, Marion D. "George Whitefield: The Necessary Interdependence of Preaching Style and Sermon Content to Effect Revival." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23, no. 1 (1980): 55-64.
- Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, translated by George A. Kennedy. New York, Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Baldwin, Alice. *New England Clergy and the American Revolution*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1928.
- Belden, Albert D. *George Whitefield: The Awakener*. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1930.
- Bizell, Patricia Bizell and Bruce Herzberg., eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Boston: Bedford/ST. Martin's, 2001.
- Dallimore, Arnold A. *George Whitefield: The Life and Time of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, Vol. 1. Westchester: Cornerstone Books, 1979.
- _____. *George Whitefield: The Life and Time of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, Vol. 2. Westchester: Crossway Books, 1980.
- Ditchfield, G. M. *The Evangelical Revival*. London: UCL Press, 1998.
- Edward, Jonathan. *Thoughts on The Revival of Religion*. New York: The American Tract Society, 1740.
- Fant, Jr., Clyde E. and William M. Pinson, Jr. *Wesley to Finney: 1703-1875*. Vol. 3, of *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*. Waco: Word Books, 1971.
- Gibson, William., ed. *Religious and Society in England and Wales, 1689-1800*. London: Leicester University Press, 1999.
- Hardy, Edwin Noah. *George Whitefield: The Matchless Soul Winner*. New York: American Tract Society, 1938.
- Henry, Stuart C. *George Whitefield: Wayfaring Witness*. New York: Abingdon Press 1957.
- Kendal, R.T. *Stand Up and Be Counted*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- Labaree, Leonard W., Ralph L. Ketcham, Helen C. Boatfield, and Helene H. Fineman.

- Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.
- Lambert, Frank. *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Larsen, David L. *A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era*. Vol. 1 of *The Company of the Preachers*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998.
- Loane, Marcus L. *Oxford and The Evangelical Succession*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1950.
- Old, Hughes Oliphant. *Moderatism, Pietism, and Awakening*. Vol. 5, of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Pollock, John. *George Whitefield and the Great Awakening*. New York: Doubleday & Company INC, 1972.
- Quintilian. *Quintilian: The School Master: The Institutio Oratoria of Marcus Fabius Quintilianus*, Edited by Charles E. Little. Nashville: George Peabody College for Teacher, 1951.
- Stout, Harry S. *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.
- Whitefield, George. *The George Whitefield's Journals*. Edited by John Gillies. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001.
- _____. Whitefield. *Sermons on Important Subjects*. Edited by. Joseph Smith. London: William Tegg, 1841.
- _____. *The Works of Rev. 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 Selected Collection of Letter*. Edited by John Gillies. Meadow View, England: Quinta Press, 2000.