

Sir, you may make what Use you please of these Lines, I profess them to be the fixed Sentiments of my Soul, and am ready to defend them, oppose them who will: Forasmuch as I firmly believe, that neither my Station, or Youth, or any other Thing can possibly excuse me, if I should refuse to appear to Day for God's Cause; to stand up for the Lord against the Mighty, of whatever

Rank, Age, or Station they be. But if I have written any thing that is unjustifiable, when I am conceived of it, I will not be ashamed to acknowledge to the World that I was in an Error. If any Man will be offended, and drawn away from Christ, I cannot help it; I pray that God may open his Eyes.

I am, Sir, Yours, etc.

SAMUEL FINLY.

29. Overheated Passions: Charles Chauncy, *A Letter . . . to Mr. George Wishart*, 1742

[(Charles Chauncy), *A Letter from a Gentleman in Boston, to Mr. George Wishart, One of the Ministers of Edinburgh, Concerning the State of Religion in New-England* (Edinburgh, 1742), 5-15, 17-24]

Reverend Sir,

I Perceive by a printed Letter from a Friend in *Edinburgh*, containing *Excerpts of Letters concerning the Success of the Gospel in these Parts*, that marvellous Accounts have been sent Abroad of a most glorious Work of Grace going on in *America*, as begun by Mr. *Whitefield*, and helpt forward by those in his way of preaching and acting. I should be glad there had been more Truth in those Accounts. Some of the Things related are known Falsehoods, others strangely enlarged upon; and the Representations, in general, such, as exhibit a wrong Idea of the religious State of Affairs among us. I had Thoughts of sending you the needful Corrections of that *Pamphlet*; but my Circumstances being such, at present, as not to allow of this, must content myself with giving you the following *summary* Narration of things as they have appeared among us.

The Minds of People in this Part of the World, had been greatly prepossessed in Favour of Mr. *Whitefield*, from the Accounts transmitted of him, from time to time, as a *Wonder of Piety*, a Man of

God, so as no one was like him: Accordingly, when he came to *Town*, about two Years since, he was received as though he had been an *Angel of God*; yea, a *God come down in the Likeness of Man*. He was strangely flocked after by all Sorts of Persons, and much admired by the *Vulgar*, both *great* and *small*. The *Ministers* had him in Veneration, at least in Appearance, as much as the People; encouraged his Preaching, attended it themselves every Day in the Week, and mostly *twice* a Day. The grand Subject of Conversation was Mr. *Whitefield*, and the whole Business of the Town to run, from Place to Place, to hear him preach: And, as he preach'd under such uncommon Advantages, being high in the Opinion of the People, and having the Body of the Ministers hanging on his Lips, he soon insinuated himself still further into the Affections of Multitudes, in so much that it became dangerous to mention his Name, without saying something in commendation of him.

His Reception, as he past through *this* and the neighbouring Governments of *Connecticut* and *New-York*, till he

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And here you will doubtless be disposed to enquire, what was the *great Good* this *Gentleman* was the Instrument of?

In answer whereto, I freely acknowledge, wherever he went he generally moved the *Passions*, especially of the *younger* People, and the *Females* among them; the Effect whercof was, a great Talk about Religion, together with a Disposition to be perpetually hearing Sermons, to neglect of all other Business; especially, as preach'd by those who were Sticklers for the *new Way*, as it was called. And in these things chiefly consisted the Goodness so much spoken of. I deny not, but there might be here and there a Person stopp'd from going on in a Course of Sin; and some might be made really better: But so far as I could judge upon the nicest Observation, the Town, in general, was not much mended in those things whereto a Reformation was greatly needed. I could not discern myself, nor many others whom I have talked with, and challenged on this Head, but that there was the same Pride and Vanity, the same Luxury and Intemperance, the same lying and tricking and cheating, as before this Gentleman came among us. There was certainly no *remarkable* Difference as to these things: And 'tis vain in any to pretend there was. This, I am sure of, there was raised such a Spirit of bitter, censorious, uncharitable judging, as was not know before; and is, wherever it reigns, a Scandal to all who call themselves Christians: Nor was it ever evident to me, but that the greatest Friends to Mr. *Whitefield* were as much puffed up with Conceit and Pride as any of their Neighbours; and as to some of them, and the more eminent too, I verily believe they possess a *worse Spirit*

came to *Philadelphia*, was after much the same Manner; save only, that he met with no Admirers among the *Clergy*, unless here and there one, any where but in *Boston*: And, whether the Ministers here in general, really thought better of him than they did elsewhere, I will not be too positive to affirm. 'Tis possible, they might act as tho' they had a great Veneration for him, and so as to lead People into such an Apprehension, from *Cowardice*, Affection of Popularity, or a rigid Attachment to some Sentiments in *Divinity*, they might imagine there was now an Advantage to establish and propagate: And I would not undertake to prove, that they might none of them be under an undue Influence from some or other of these Motives.

Much began to be now said of a *glorious Work of God* going on in the Land. *Evening-lectures* were set up in one Place and another: no less than six in this Town, *four* weekly, and *two* monthly ones, tho' the Town does not consist of above 5000 Families at the largest Computation. At some of these Lectures, it was common to mention Mr. *Whitefield* by Name, both in the *Prayers* and *Sermons*; giving God Thanks for sending such an *extraordinary* Man among us, and making him the Instrument of such *extraordinary* Good to so many Souls. He was indeed spoken of, as the *angel flying through Heaven with the everlasting Gospel*, and such Honours sacrificed to him as were due to no meer Man: Nay, to such a Height did this Spirit rise, that all who did not express a very high Thought of Mr. *Whitefield*, were lookt upon with an evil Eye; and as to those who declared their Dislike of what they judged amiss of the Times, they were stigmatised as *Enemies of God* and *true Religion*; yea, they were openly reprobated, both from the *Pulpit* and the *Press*, as in danger of committing the

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Samuel Finley, n, Sir, Yours, etc.

A Letter from a Gentle-*man*, Concerning the *new-England* (Edinburgh).

was like him: Accord-*me* to Town, about he was received as in an *Angel of God*; *own in the Likeness of* gely flocked after by, and much admired th *great* and *small* him in Veneration, nce, as much as the his Preaching, at- es every Day in the twice a Day. The *onversation* was Mr. whole Business of from Place to Place, the Opinion of the y the Body of the n his Lips, he soon till further into the grous to mention saying something in m. s he past through *ing* Governments *New-York*, till he

than before they heard of his Name, and it had been as well for them if they had never seen his Face.

But I have only entred as yet upon that Scene of Things, which has made so much Noise in the Country. A Number of Ministers, in one Place and another, were by this Time formed into Mr. *Whitefield's* Temper, and began to appear and go about preaching, with a Zeal more flaming, if possible, than his. One of the most famous among these was Mr. *Gilbert Tennent*, a Man of no great Parts or Learning; his preaching was in the *extemporaneous* Way, with much Noise and little Connection. If he had taken suitable Care to prepare his Sermons, and followed Nature in the Delivery of them, he might have acquitted himself as a *middling* Preacher; but as he preached, he was an *awkward Imitator* of Mr. *Whitefield*, and too often turned off his Hearers with *mere Stuff*, which he uttered with a Spirit more bitter and uncharitable than you can easily imagine; all were *Pharisees, Hypocrites, carnal unregenerate Wretches*, both Ministers and People, who did not think just as he did, particularly as to the Doctrines of *Calvinism*; and those who opposed him, and the Work of God he was sure he was carrying on, would have opposed *Christ Jesus himself* and *his Apostles*, had they lived in their Day. This Gentleman came from *New-Brunswick* in the *Jersies* to *Boston*, in the Middle of Winter, (a Journey of more than 300 Miles) to *water the good Seed sown by Mr. Whitefield* in this Place. It was indeed at Mr. *Whitefield's* Desire, and in consequence of a Day of *Fasting and Prayer*, kept on purpose to know the Mind of God as to this Matter, that he came among us; the *Ministers in the Town*, though *fourteen* in Number, being thought insufficient to carry on the *good Work* he had begun here in the Hearts of People. And though the

Design this Gentleman professedly came upon, was a bare-faced Affront to the *Body of the Ministers*, yet not only the People, (which is not to be wondred at) but some of the Ministers themselves admired and followed him, as much as they had done Mr. *Whitefield* before him; and here he was, by their Encouragement, a great Part of the Winter, preaching every Day in the Week, to the taking People off from their Callings, and the introducing a Neglect of all Business but that of hearing him preach. He went from *Boston* to the *eastward*, to visit the Places where Mr. *Whitefield* had been; and on his Return home passed through the Country, preaching every where as he went along, in the same Manner, and with the same Spirit he did here in *Boston*.

And now it was, that Mr. *Whitefield's* Doctrine of *inward Feelings* began to discover itself in Multitudes, whose *sensible Perceptions* arose to such a Height, as that they *cried out, fell down, swooned away*, and, to all Appearance, were like Persons in *Fits*; and this, when the Preaching (if it may be so called) had in it as little well digested and connected good Sense, as you can well suppose. Scores in a Congregation would be in such Circumstances at a Time; nay some hundreds in some Places, to the filling the Houses of Worship with Confusion not to be expressed in Words, nor indeed conceived of by the most lively Imagination, unless where Persons have been Eye and Ear-witnesses to these Things. Though I may add here, that to a Person in possession of himself, and capable of Observation, this surprising Scene of Things may be accounted for: The *Speaker* delivers himself, with the *greatest Vehemence* both of *Voice* and *Gesture*, and in the most *frightful Language* his Genius will allow of. If this has its intended Effect upon *one or two weak Women*,

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People what we call here EXHORTERS; these are such as are esteemed to be *Converts in the new Way*. Sometimes they are *Children, Boys and Grls, sometimes Women*; but most commonly *raw, illiterate, weak and conceited young Men, or Lads*. They pray with the People, call upon them to come to Christ, tell them they are dropping into Hell, and take upon them what they imagine is the Business of preaching. They are generally much better thought of than any Ministers, except those in the *new Way*, I mean by the Friends to the *Extraordinaries* prevalent in the Land; and they are the greatest Promoters of them. 'Tis indeed at the *Exhortations* of these poor ignorant Creatures, that there is ordinarily what may be worth a particular Remark, 'tis *seldom* there are any great Effects wrought, till the Gloominess of the Night comes on. It is in the *Evening*, or more late in the *Night*, with only a few *Candles in a Meeting-house*, that there is the *screaming and shrieking* to the greatest Degree; and the Persons thus affected are generally *Children, young People, and Women*. Other Instances there may have been, but they are more rare; these bear the chief Part.

You may be ready perhaps to think I have here given you a romantick Representation of Things; but it is the real Truth of the Case without a Figure; yea, this has been the Appearance in all Parts of the Land more or less, and so known to have been so, that there is no room for Debate upon the Matter: Nay, those who are Friends to the *new Way* were *once* so far from being ashamed of these Things, that they boasted of them, and entertained an ill Opinion of all who did not speak of them as *Evidences of the wonderful Power of the Spirit of God*: I say, they at first

the Shrieks catch from one to another, till a great Part of the Congregation is affected; and some are in the Thought, that it may be too common for those *zealous in the new Way* to cry out *themselves*, on purpose to move others, and bring forward a *general Scream*. *Visions* now became common, and *Trances* also, the Subjects of which were in their own Conceit transported from Earth to Heaven, where they saw and heard most glorious Things; conversed with *Christ and holy Angels*; had opened to them the *Book of Life*, and were permitted to read the Names of Persons there, and the like. And what is a singular Instance (so far as I remember) of the working of Enthusiasm, *laughing, loud hearty laughing*, was one of the Ways in which our *new Converts*, almost every where, were wont to join together in expressing their Joy at the Conversion of others. 'Tis scarce imaginable what Excesses and Extravagancies People were running into, and even encouraged in; being told such Things were Arguments of the *extraordinary Presence of the Holy Ghost* with them. The same Houses of Worship were scarce emptied Night nor Day for a Week together, and unheard of Instances of supposed Religion were carried on in them. In the same House, and at the same time, some would be *praying*, some *exhorting*, some *singing*, some *clapping their Hands*, some *laughing*, some *crying*, some *shrieking and roaring out*; and so invariably set were they in these Ways, especially when encouraged by any Ministers, (as was too often the Case) that it was a vain Thing to argue with them, to shew them the Indecency of such Behaviour; and whoever indeed made an Attempt this Way, might be sure beforehand of being called an *Opposer of the Spirit*, and a *Child of the Devil*.

At these Times there were among the

professedly Affront to not only Ministers showed him, Mr. White, by Part of the Day in the off from producing a that of hear- from Boston the Places; and on through the here as he manner, and did here in Whitefield's began to whose sen- o such a out, fell to all Ap- in Fits; and it may be the well di- ense, as you a Congrega- instances at ds in some es of Wor- d conceived d nation, un- en Eye and s. Though I on in posses- of Observa- of Things Speaker de- vest Vehem- ure, and in his Genius ts intended ak Women,

boasted of these Things, and some of them do so still; though the Generality have begun, for some time, to speak publicly of the *Subtilty of Satan*, to tell People he may appear as an *Angel of Light*, and to warn them against being carried away by his Devices. Nay Mr. *Tennent* himself, one of the main Instruments of all our Disorders, has, in a couple of Letters to some of his Friends, published in the *Prints*, expressed his Fears lest the Churches should be undone with a *Spirit of Enthusiasm*, and these *Exhorters* which have risen up every where in the Land. He seems indeed to have quite turned about: The Reason whereof may be this; the *Moravians* who came to *Philadelphia* with Count *Zinzendorf*, have been among his People, and managed with them as he did elsewhere, and brought the like Confusion among them; and now he cries out of Danger, and expresses himself much as those did, whom before he had sent to the Devil by wholesale.

Various are the Sentiments of Persons about this *unusual Appearance* among us. Some think it to be a *most wonderful Work of God's Grace*; others a *most wonderful Spirit of Enthusiasm*; some think there is a *great deal of Religion*, with some *small Mixture* of Extravagance; others, a *great deal of Extravagance* with some *small Mixture* of that which may be called *good*; some think the *Country* was never in such a *happy State* on a *religious account*, others that it was never in a *worse*.

For my self, I am among those who are clearly in the Opinion, that there never was such a *Spirit of Superstition* and *Enthusiasm* reigning in the Land before; never such *gross Disorders* and *barefaced Affronts to common Decency*; never such *scandalous Reproaches* on the *Blessed Spirit*, making him the Author of the greatest *Irregularities* and *Confusions*: Yet, I am of Opinion also, that the *Appearances* among us (so

much out of the ordinary Way, and so unaccountable to Persons not acquainted with the History of the World) have been the Means of awakening the Attention of many; and a good Number, I hope, have settled into a truly *Christian Temper*: Tho' I must add, at the same time, that I am far from thinking, that the Appearance, in *general*, is any other than the Effect of *enthusiastick Heat*. The Goodness that has been so much talked of, 'tis plain to me, is nothing more, in general, than a *Commotion in the Passions*. I can't see that Men have been made *better*, if hereby be meant, their being formed to a nearer Resemblance to the *Divine Being* in *moral Holiness*. 'Tis not evident to me, that Persons, generally, have a better Understanding of Religion, a better Government of their Passions, a more Christian Love to their Neighbour, or that they are more decent and regular in their Devotions towards God. I am clearly of the Mind, they are worse in all these Regards. They place their Religion so much in the *Heat* and *Fervour* of their *Passions*, that they too much neglect their *Reason* and *Judgment*: And instead of being more kind and gentle, more full of Mercy and good Fruits, they are more bitter, fierce and implacable. And what is a *grand discriminating Mark of this Work*, wherever it takes Place, is, that it makes Men *spiritually proud* and *conceited* beyond Measure, infinitely *ensorious* and *uncharitable*, to *Neighbours*, to *Relations*, even the nearest and dearest; to *Ministers* in an especial Manner; yea, to all Mankind, who are not as they are, and don't think and act as they do: And there are few Places where *this Work* has been in any *remarkable* manner, but they have been filled with Faction and Contention; yea, in some, they have divided into Parties, and openly and scandalously separated from one another.

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But I have exceeded already. He is the wildest *Enthusiast* I ever saw, and acts in the wildest manner; and yet, he is vindicated by some in all his Extravagancies. I now beg Pardon, Sir, for thus trespassing upon your Patience. As Mr. *Whitefield* has been in *Scotland*, and *human Nature* is the same every where; this Narration of the Effects he has been the Instrument of producing here, may excite your Zeal to guard the People in time against any such Extravagancies, if there should be Danger of them where you may be concerned. I am,
 Reverend Sir,
 With all due Regard, etc.
 Boston, August 4.
 1742.

were sent too soon; too soon, I am satisfied, to reflect Honour upon the Persons who wrote them: And they betray such a want of Judgment, as I was really sorry to see them falling into. There are few Persons now, perhaps none but such as are evidently over-heated, but begin to see that Things have been carried too far, and that the Hazard is great, unless God mercifully interpose, lest we should be overrun with *Enthusiasm*. And to speak the plain Truth, my Fear is, lest the End of these things should be *Quakerism* and *Infidelity*: These we have now chiefly to guard against.
 A particular Account of one Mr. *James Davenport*, with his strange Conduct in this Town and elsewhere, I doubt not would have been agreeable:

30. A Work of God: Jonathan Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks*, 1741

[Jonathan Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* . . . (Boston, 1741), 62-64, 66-79]

Dreadfulness of God's Anger, and causes in them a great Desire, and earnest Care and Endeavour to obtain his Favour. It is notorious, that it puts them upon a more diligent Improvement of the Means of Grace which God has appointed. It is also notorious, that in general, it works in Persons a greater Regard to the Word of God, and desire of hearing and reading of it, and to be more conversant with the holy Scriptures than they used to be. And it is notoriously manifest that the Spirit that is at work, in general, operates as a Spirit of Truth, making Persons more sensible of what is really true, in those Things that concern their eternal Salvation: As that they must die, and that Life is very short and uncertain; that there is a Great, Sin-hating God, that they are accountable to, and will fix them

As to this Work that has lately been carried on in the Land, there are many Things concerning it that are notorious, and known by every Body, (unless it be some that have been very much out of the Way of observing and hearing indeed) that unless the Apostle *John* was out in his Rules, are sufficient to determine it to be in general, the Work of God. 'Tis notorious that the Spirit that is at work, takes off Persons Minds from the Vanities of the World, and engages them in a deep Concern about a future and eternal Happiness in another World, and puts them upon earnestly seeking their Salvation, and convinces them of the Dreadfulness of Sin, and of their own guiltily and miserable State as they are by Nature. It is notorious that it awakens Mens Consciences, and makes 'em sensible of the

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The Great Awakening

DOCUMENTS ON THE REVIVAL
OF RELIGION, 1740-1745

Edited by

Richard L. Bushman



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