

The Great Awakening

DOCUMENTS ON THE REVIVAL
OF RELIGION, 1740-1745

Edited by

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6. George Whitefield, *Journals*, 1740

[George Whitefield's *Journals*: A new edition containing fuller material than any hitherto published ([n.p.], 1960), 420-425, 457-458, 460-462, 469-470, 472-477]

PHILADELPHIA

Saturday, May 10. Though God has shewn me great things already in this place, yet to-day I have seen greater. I preached twice, and to larger congregations than ever. In the evening, I went to settle a Society of young women, who, I hope, will prove wise virgins. As soon as I entered the room, and heard them singing, my soul was delighted. When the hymn was over, I desired to pray before I began to converse; but, my soul was so carried out, that I had not time to talk at all. A wonderful power was in the room, and with one accord, they began to cry out and weep most bitterly for the space of half an hour. They seemed to be under the strongest convictions, and did indeed seek Jesus sorrowing. Their cries might be heard a great way off. When I had done, I thought proper to leave them at their devotions. They continued in prayer for above an hour, confessing their most secret faults; and, at length, the agonies of some were so strong, that five of them seemed affected as those who are in fits. The present Captain of our sloop going near the waterside, was called in to a company, almost in the same circumstances; and, at midnight, I was desired to come to one who was in strong agonies of body and mind, but felt somewhat of joy and peace, after I had prayed with her several times. Her case put me in mind of the young man whom the devil tore, when he was coming to Jesus. Such-like bodily agonies, I believe, are from the devil; and, now the work of

God is going on, he will, no doubt, endeavour by *these* to bring an evil report upon it. O Lord, for Thy mercy's sake, rebuke him; and, though he may be permitted to bite Thy people's heel, fulfil Thy promise, and let the Seed of the Woman bruise his head! Amen, Amen!

Sunday, May 11. Preached to about fifteen thousand people in the morning. Went twice to church, and heard myself taken to task by the Commissary, who preached from these words: "I bear them record, they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." I could have wished he had considered the next words: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Had he considered these words, I might justly have said, "Speaketh Mr. Commissary of this false zeal in reference to himself, or of some other man?" He exclaimed loudly against me in the pulpit, and, I soon found, obliged many of his hearers to do what they were before inclined to do, *viz.*, resolve to leave me entirely. I bear him record, that experience will soon convince him, that whatever mine may be, his own zeal is by no means according to knowledge. After he had done, I preached my farewell sermon to very near twenty thousand hearers. Though the Commissary's sermon was chiefly of personal reflections, I thought it not proper to render railing for railing. However, I considered it my duty, in an especial manner

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to recommend the Messrs. Tennents and their associates, being most worthy preachers of our Lord Jesus. One passage out of the Second Lesson for the morning, much affected me: "And the Lord had compassion on the multitude, because they were scattered, as sheep having no shepherd." I then reminded them of our Lord's command, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He may send out labourers into His harvest." For though "the harvest is plenteous, the labourers are few."

The poor people were much concerned at my bidding them farewell; and, after I had taken my leave, many came to my lodgings, sorrowing that they were to see my face no more for a long season. Near fifty negroes came to give me thanks for what God had done to their souls. How heartily did those poor creatures throw in their mites for my poor orphans. Some of them have been effectually wrought upon, and in an uncommon manner. Many of them have begun to learn to read. One, who was free, said she would give me her two children, whenever I settle my school. I believe masters and mistresses will shortly see that Christianity will not make their negroes worse slaves. I intended, had time permitted, to have settled a Society for negro men and negro women; but that must be deferred till it shall please God to bring me to Philadelphia again. I have been much drawn out in prayer for them, and have seen them exceedingly wrought upon under the Word preached. I cannot well express how many others, of all sorts, came to give me a last farewell. I never saw a more general awakening in any place.

NOTTINGHAM

Wednesday, May 14. Got to a Quaker's house, which lay in our way to Nottingham, about midnight [May 13],

Religion is all the talk; and, I think I can say, the Lord Jesus hath gotten Himself the victory in many hearts. I have scarce had time to eat bread from morning to evening; some one or other was generally applying to me under deep soul-concern, and others continually pressing upon me to baptise their infants. I did comply with as many as I could; but I was obliged sometimes to say, "The Lord sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel."

Many of the Quakers have been convinced of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and openly confess the truth as it is in Jesus; for which, I believe, they will shortly be put out of their synagogues. Some of their head men are zealous against me, and are much afraid their foundation will be sadly shaken. Great numbers of the inhabitants would have built me immediately a very large church, if I would have consented; but the Lord, I am persuaded, would have His Gospel preached in the fields; and building a church would, I fear, insensibly lead the people into bigotry, and make them place the Church again, as they have done for a long time, in the church walls. For these reasons I declined it; though notwithstanding, I believe they will build some place. What I mostly fear is, now there is such a general awakening, the people will not know where to go for proper food, and thereby fall into different sects and parties. Lord Jesus, look upon them, and let not Satan divide them again; but raise them up pastors after Thy own heart. Amen and amen.

and met with a hospitable reception. Preached at Nottingham both morning and evening, with such demonstration