

Lawson, Kenneth. *George Whitefield's Ministry in New England, 1740–1770.* Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2024. 487pp. + 29pp. (back matter).

Christians have long appreciated and studied the career of evangelist George Whitefield (1714–70). There are numerous valuable works about him, such as Arnold Dallimore's classic two-volume devotional biography (1970, 1980) as well as his one-volume abridgement (1990). More recently, Thomas Kidd has written a compact and sympathetic biography, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (2016). Now Kenneth Lawson has added to the literature, with a focus particularly on Whitefield's ministry in New England.

The author has had a long-time interest in Whitefield, and in fact he expanded this work from his master's thesis. The result is an extremely thorough account. Lawson explores Whitefield's visits to New England year by year, month by month, day by day, and town by town as much as he can from the surviving evidence. For each location Whitefield visited, Lawson combs through all available sources for details. Indeed, the book shows a wide acquaintance with literature old and new on Whitefield. The author uses primary sources (such as Whitefield's journals and letters and the accounts of other eyewitnesses), modern sources (to a degree), and local histories from New England with dates ranging from Whitefield's time to the present.

A valuable aspect of the work is the attention to the people Whitefield encountered. Regarding each location Whitefield visited, the author notes the people, friend and foe, whom the evangelist encountered, and he provides a biographical sketch of each. The author even gives due place to Whitefield's critics, quoting their arguments against Whitefield. The book is also profusely illustrated, with historic pictures and modern photographs, most of which were taken by the author.

The book seeks to be exhaustive, which can be both daunting and beneficial. The account is so full that most readers will want to read it in segments over several sittings, but the design of the book makes sampling in this way a good option. The chapters are relatively short and self-contained. Likewise, the extensive use of block quotations can slow the reading, but they also expose the reader to primary accounts from Whitefield and others that are not readily available for modern readers.

The author says his book is “essentially, a travelogue” as it journeys the roads with Whitefield. I recall how before I visited the British Museum I received a copy of Peter Masters's *Heritage of Evidence in the British Museum*, which took me room by room through the museum and described the exhibits that related to biblical history. In the same way, this book could serve as a guide to someone visiting New England to see what Whitefield did in each location and perhaps even highlighting places that one may still visit.

The book unsurprisingly displays an evangelical sympathy with Whitefield that makes for good devotional reading. However, there is also a valuable original historical contribution. Lawson provides descriptions of previously little-studied aspects of Whitefield's career such as Whitefield's tour of Rhode Island in 1745. The work also conveys the challenges of Whitefield's labors, his indefatigable travels even through foul weather and illness, and the human opposition he faced.

Lawson's book describes Whitefield's preaching, both the manner and its effects. Lawson conveys the evangelistic burden Whitefield felt as the evangelist sought, like Paul, to become “all things to all

men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22). Students of Whitefield in particular and of revival and evangelism in general will profit from this book.

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