

Peter Charles Hoffer. *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Printed Word* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). Pp. 168. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$55.00.

When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield is part of The Johns Hopkins University Press series “Witness to History,” of which Peter Charles Hoffer is an editor. These books are short, secondary source–based volumes geared toward an undergraduate audience. In that genre, Hoffer’s book works well. It is deeply attuned to the scholarly literature, not only on Franklin and Whitefield, but on the eighteenth-century Atlantic world generally.

Hoffer is adept at packaging the current state of the historiography in ways that will remain interesting to students; for instance, in an evocative section on London as the key hub in the Anglo-American commercial empire, Hoffer tells us that “coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate, and other imported caffeinates and energy sources kept the middle classes at their desks longer. . . . Sugar made tea and coffee as popular as alcoholic beverages, and far more likely to keep one awake and busy than beer” (47). Such passages have abundant citations in endnotes, not just to books in general, but to specific references within them.

Franklin and Whitefield are representative, for Hoffer, as ambitious, self-fashioning men of the eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic world. Franklin is the great advocate of Enlightenment, Whitefield of Awakening. Given the nature of the book, few details here will surprise scholarly experts, but Hoffer comfortably weaves Franklin and Whitefield’s life stories with the Atlantic histories of Philadelphia, Boston, London, Bristol, and other significant locales.

Hoffer paints a convincing picture of Franklin and Whitefield’s friendship and respective worlds, but while he overtly admires Franklin, he never seems quite comfortable with Whitefield. Much of this is a matter of tone. The “needy” Whitefield, a “master of manipulating the emotions,” preached out of his “neediness,” Hoffer contends, winning over people whose middle-class “anxiety . . . bred the need to find and adhere to evangelical preaching” (41, 47, 64).

More substantially, Hoffer suggests that even as Whitefield “clung” to the prescriptions of his Calvinist theology, the preacher was surprised that Calvin’s stern God would save so many in the Great Awakening (20, 48). I see no evidence that Whitefield’s (or Edwards’s, or others’) surprise about the revivals was shaped by Calvinism. Calvinists do not profess to know how many people God intends ultimately to save. But this book holds that

Whitefield wittingly or unwittingly undermined Calvinist theology by preaching, in Hoffer's words, that "rebirth was the first step that a person could take on the road to salvation" (91).

This reflects a common misunderstanding of Calvinism: critics have often been perplexed at how Calvinists could preach a gospel of free grace, when they knew that only the elect could respond. But that theological tension was evidently no problem for Whitefield, Edwards, or the Calvinist evangelicals who dominated America's Great Awakening. Rebirth, they preached, was not a "step" that anyone could take him- or herself, nor did that experience put the reborn on the "road" to salvation; it was salvation itself, accomplished by God's grace and power.

Some of Hoffer's approach to evangelicals seems informed by present concerns: he tells us that because Whitefield believed in the divine origin and authority of Scripture, he would be termed a "fundamentalist" if he were around today (58). Similarly, from his "modern perspective," Hoffer asserts that Whitefield's childhood sins, meticulously described in the itinerant's account of his early life, simply mean that he was a "normal child—craving attention and acting out to get it." But, in Hoffer's reading, we don't know whether Whitefield's autobiography reflects his "actual experience" anyway (38). Ultimately, Whitefield's piety here is a "mask" and an "affectation" (49). Because of these skeptical assessments of the itinerant, the book struggles to explain what made Whitefield so driven, and so compelling.

Yet Hoffer does see merit in Whitefield. The itinerant's real significance actually lies within his ostensible, unstated rejection of Calvinism, which made him the "ultimate democrat" of his time, even more than Franklin (124). He and Franklin both knew the power of print media, an understanding that helped seal their long-term friendship and business relationship, with Franklin happily printing Whitefield's journals and sermons in spite of his theological objections to them. Both were masters of rhetoric, Franklin of the written word, Whitefield the spoken.

It is clearer why Franklin matters to Hoffer. He is emblematic of a secular, scientific, pragmatic, optimistic mindset that represents, in Hoffer's unabashedly modernist view, the best of the American tradition. Whitefield's primary legacy lies in America's sheer religiosity, which Hoffer tells us we can see "Sunday morning on the roads" in northeast Georgia and across the Bible Belt (129). Megachurches with packed parking lots and high-tech productions—these are Whitefield's most enduring contributions today.

Unfortunately, Hoffer intones in his concluding paragraph, in some of those churches “religious belief once again has turned to harsh judgments of those who are not among the saved” (131).

THOMAS S. KIDD

Baylor University

David Schuyler. *Sanctified Landscape: Writers, Artists, and the Hudson River Valley, 1820–1909* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). Pp. xii, 206. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$29.95.

Seen from a car passing over the Tappan Zee Bridge or an overlook in one of the towns that hug its shores, the Hudson River presents a deceptive sense of calm and timelessness. It is an essential part of the furniture of American history, providing a reliable scaffolding for episodes that are often recalled dutifully, if a bit dimly: the Revolutionary War, the invented Knickerbocker history of Washington Irving, and the group of nineteenth-century artists now known as the Hudson River School. David Schuyler's book, a study of the literary and visual culture created by an elite group of writers, artists, and other tastemakers in the Hudson Valley between 1820 and 1909, helps overturn that deathless and static image. His book bristles with odd and surprising details that make clear how intensely human activity shaped those landscapes. Irving's cottage in Tarrytown, New York, for instance, boasted a lake in the shape of the Mediterranean and a “vaguely Spanish” pagoda (53). Just as telling is Irving's indignant reaction as his “snuggery” was invaded by the “infernal alarum” of a railway line (56).

Schuyler argues that the Hudson River's landscapes were “sanctified” by writers, artists and tourists, and this material makes up much of the first half of his book. He begins with a chapter on tourism, focusing on its paradoxical “pattern of exploitation and development” (25), and follows with a chapter on “The Artist's River,” looking at Thomas Cole's prescient objections to the depredations of industry, particularly in and around his beloved Hudson River. Two more chapters (“The Writer's River” and “The River in a Garden”) examine the efforts of two writers, Irving and Nathaniel Parker Willis, and a landscape gardener, Andrew Jackson Downing, to domesticate the landscapes of the Hudson River with charming estates that took advantage of the area's natural beauty. These topics have been frequently addressed,