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## Introduction

**M**Y AIM IN THIS book is to compare various facets of the written and spoken sermons of two leading eighteenth-century itinerant field-preachers, Methodist contemporaries, and professed “men of one book,” John Wesley and George Whitefield. One of the principal ways in which Wesley and Whitefield manifested their desire to be “men of one book” was through a life-long commitment to itinerant preaching. Indeed, it was especially in their capacity as “preachers of one book” that Wesley and Whitefield featured so prominently in an evangelical revival that spanned not only England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the American colonies, but also included Calvinists and Arminians.

Although Whitefield’s theatrical pulpit oratory differed from Wesley’s comparatively scholarly preaching style, in some degree reflecting their different personalities and upbringing, they shared much else in common. For instance, Whitefield followed Wesley in joining the Holy Club (the original so-called “Methodists”) at Oxford, and then also as a missionary in Savannah, Georgia with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. But when it came to the contentious matter of field-preaching, it was Wesley who followed Whitefield and accepted the younger man’s invitation to continue the ministry he had begun in the Bristol region in February 1739. Their shared history also included dramatic conversion experiences that became paradigmatic for their own proclamation of the necessity of regeneration and of being justified by faith, not works.

But despite the many similarities that existed between Wesley and Whitefield, there is a conspicuous paucity of intentionally comparative studies that focus on the preaching ministries of these two Church of England clergymen. Another dominant feature of the secondary literature relating to both preachers is its frequently partisan nature. This trend

has perhaps been most prominently expressed in the way doctrinal differences held by the Calvinist Whitefield and the Arminian Wesley have been accentuated, especially regarding the nature of predestination. This has afforded occasion for some Wesley and Whitefield biographers to assert not only the superiority of their respective champion's *theology*, but also their *moral acumen*, especially at the expense of the other preacher.

The polarized and partisan nature of Wesley and Whitefield studies warrants not only a re-evaluation of the legitimacy of conclusions regarding their respective conceptions of foundational evangelical doctrines, but also provides a compelling endorsement for an intentional comparison of their wider preaching ministries. Although itinerant preaching occupied a privileged place in the efforts of Wesley and Whitefield to further evangelical revival, their public ministries did not consist wholly of spoken sermons. Instead, both deliberately pursued a “print and preach” ministry, where their published sermons complemented and reinforced the sermons they preached. In order to remain sensitive to their dual commitment to the spoken and printed word, on the one hand we will endeavor to compare Wesley's and Whitefield's style, delivery and rationale for field-preaching, paying particular attention to the influence of Scripture on these facets of their spoken sermons. In addition, we shall also compare various aspects of their sermons as they appear in printed form. This will include comparing the function of their published sermons within their wider public ministries, and how their printed sermons reflected the way they used, applied and interpreted the Bible, and also understood its prominent doctrines. As we seek to expand the scope of this comparison beyond the narrow confines of their respective doctrinal positions, we shall observe that Wesley and Whitefield manifested their singular desire to be men of one book through preaching ministries that were by no means identical, yet equally committed to the spread of the gospel throughout the transatlantic world.

#### INTRODUCING WESLEY AND WHITEFIELD, MEN OF ONE BOOK

John Wesley was born on June 28, 1703, in Epworth, England, and died on March 2, 1791, in London. He was raised in a home environment that cherished the Bible as the authoritative word of God. His high esteem for Scripture was one of many theological convictions he inherited from his parents, Samuel and Susanna Wesley. Wesley's desire to be a “man of

one book” is especially evident in the preface to his *Sermons on Several Occasions*, first published in 1746. When Wesley used this expression, he implied not so much an absolute commitment to eschew all literature apart from Scripture. Instead, it was a way of conveying that, in relation to all other sources of authority, the Bible and the way of salvation it sets forth, occupied a position of unparalleled importance in his life.<sup>1</sup> Wesley declared,

To candid, reasonable men I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen—I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven—how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*.<sup>2</sup>

George Whitefield was born on December 16, 1714, in Gloucester, England, and died on September 30, 1770, in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Whereas Wesley was reared in an avowedly High Church Anglican rectory, Whitefield was raised by his mother in the environs of Gloucester’s Bell Inn, his father having died when George was two years of age. Whitefield’s conversion experience in 1735 coincided with his resolve to “lay aside all other books” in preference for “the Book of God”; that is, his experience of the “new birth” was accompanied by a desire to henceforth

1. As Weeter observes, Wesley “studied, read, and wrote voluminously and encouraged his preachers to do likewise. The fact remains, however, that in all aspects of his instruction the one book he exalted was the Bible,” such that he might well be described as a “Man of a Thousand and One books.” Weeter, *John Wesley’s View and Use of Scripture*, 155, 118. Compare Weeter’s choice of phraseology with the similar evaluation offered by James R. Joy in an article entitled “Wesley: Man of a Thousand Books and a Book,” 71–84. Likewise, Williams declares that “by *homo unius libri* [Wesley’s] . . . point is that the final authority in matters of religion is the Bible, and all other writings must be judged in the light of this once-for-all revelation.” Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today*, 24–25. See also Arnett, “John Wesley: Man of One Book” and “John Wesley and the Bible,” 3–9; Boshears, “Books in John Wesley’s Life,” 48–56, and Albert C. Outler, who insists that “there was never a thought that [Wesley] should restrict his reading to biblical text alone. It was, instead, a matter of hermeneutical principle that Scripture would be his court of first and last resort in faith and morals.” Outler, *Works*, 1:57.

2. Outler, *Works*, 1:104–5.

be a “man of one book.”<sup>3</sup> He directly identified the “abundant success” granted to him by God as being intimately connected with his decision to meditate “day and night,” and to the exclusion of all other literature, on the “the book of Divine laws.”<sup>4</sup> In his sermon “Walking with God,” Whitefield declared, “If we once get above our Bibles, and cease making the written word of God our sole rule, both as to faith and practice, we shall soon lie open to all manner of delusion; and be in great danger of making a shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.”<sup>5</sup> Statements such as these encapsulate the normative authority and primacy of the Bible in Whitefield’s theology and practice.

One of the foremost ways in which Wesley and Whitefield manifested their desire to be “men of one book” was through their life-long commitment to itinerant preaching. Many of the portraits of Wesley and Whitefield produced during their lifetime depict them as preachers, often with Bible in hand. For instance, Nathaniel Hone portrays Wesley in a field wearing clerical robes, preaching with a Bible in his left hand and his right hand slightly raised. Hone’s Wesley is considerably less demonstrative than the Whitefield portrayed by John Wollaston (1742) and John Greenwood (1768), who depict him preaching with both arms dramatically outstretched and Bible laying before him.<sup>6</sup> These visual

3. Whitefield, *Journals*, 60. Whitefield described how during this period he “began to read the Holy Scripture upon [his] knees,” thereby intentionally adopting a physical posture that reinforced his thoroughgoing submission to the Bible’s authority and author.

4. Whitefield, *Journals*, 48. In his sermon “The Knowledge of Jesus Christ the Best Knowledge,” Whitefield indicated that it was not his intention to “condemn or decry human literature” in and of itself. Gillies, *Works*, 6:209. That being so, he did remain highly suspicious of the pursuit of any knowledge, activity or reading material that did not, in his opinion, directly promote “the heart of religion” or further an “experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ.” Whitefield, *Journals*, 48. In the midst of his conversion experience Whitefield provocatively declared that he derived “more true knowledge from reading the Book of God in one month, than I could *ever* have acquired from *all* the writings of men.” Whitefield, *Journals*, 60. His statements elsewhere were more nuanced, but the essential content remained unchanged: human literature “ought to be used only in subordination to divine; and that a Christian, if the Holy Spirit guided the pen of the Apostle, when he wrote this epistle [1 Corinthians], ought to study no books, but such as lead him to a farther knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Gillies, *Works*, 6:207. See also Whitefield’s sermon, “The Duty of Searching the Scriptures,” where he declared the “danger, sinfulness and unsatisfactoriness of reading any others than the book of God, or such as are wrote in the same spirit.” Gillies, *Works*, 6:87–88.

5. Gillies, *Works*, 5:27.

6. See Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits*, 1:297–306.

representations afford insight into the way in which, despite their differing temperaments and homiletical styles, Wesley and Whitefield did not simply aspire to be *men of one book*, but more particularly *preachers of one book*.

The longevity and productivity of Wesley's preaching ministry was truly staggering. It is estimated that over the course of an itinerant preaching ministry than spanned more than 50 years, he traveled over a quarter of a million miles and preached 40,000 sermons.<sup>7</sup> Considering these phenomenal statistics, Downey observes that even though Wesley is well known for his role as an "author, editor, translator, hymnist, physician, teacher [and] organizer," beyond all of these activities, "[s]upremely, he was a preacher."<sup>8</sup> Whitefield's preaching record was no less impressive. Throughout his 35 year public ministry as a transatlantic evangelical revivalist, he preached 18,000 formal sermons, often to audiences exceeding 20,000 people. As Packer observes, "Preaching the grace of God in Christ was Whitefield's life, both metaphorically and literally."<sup>9</sup>

Although the "moral tone" of the familial setting in which these two preachers of one book differed widely, many aspects of the lives of Wesley and Whitefield are remarkably similar.<sup>10</sup> For instance, both were educated at Oxford University; Wesley graduated from Christ Church in 1724, whilst Whitefield graduated from Pembroke College in 1736. After Wesley returned to Oxford in 1729 as Fellow of Lincoln College, he assumed leadership of the so-called "Holy Club." Whitefield joined this small religious society during his studies at Oxford, and was profoundly influenced by the spiritual oversight provided by John and Charles Wesley, whom he describes as being "spiritual fathers" of the original "Methodists."<sup>11</sup> Wesley and Whitefield both strived to be diligent Anglicans. They understood themselves as being part of a movement that was constructively critical of the Church of England and regarded

7. See Clifford, *Atonement and Justification*, 56.

8. Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*, 189. See also Collins, *Faithful Witness*.

9. Packer, "Spirit with the Word," 167. Packer continues, "It has been estimated that during his ministry he preached to combined audiences of over ten million, and that four-fifths of America's colonists, from Georgia to New Hampshire, heard him at least once—something that could be said of no other person." Packer, "Spirit with the Word," 167–68.

10. Reist, "John Wesley and George Whitefield," 26.

11. Whitefield, *Journals*, 48–49.

the Methodists as providing a means of fostering its reform.<sup>12</sup> Although they experienced strained relationships with the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church of England, both retained their status as ordained clergymen throughout their itinerant preaching ministries.<sup>13</sup> Reist also observes that, on a less flattering note, both “had somewhat cold, sub-romantic marriages.”<sup>14</sup> Other important similarities include their service as missionaries with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Savannah, Georgia and their intense spiritual experiences of divine forgiveness prior to commencing itinerant field-preaching ministries in England in 1739.

### POLARIZATION

But despite these many similarities, there is a conspicuous paucity of intentionally comparative studies that focus on the preaching ministries of John Wesley and George Whitefield. Another dominant feature of the secondary literature relating to both preachers is its frequently partisan nature.<sup>15</sup> This is especially evident in the manner in which Wesley has often been adopted as an idealized theological champion for the cause

12. The term “Methodism” has acquired multiple usages over time. “Methodism” as a modern-day denomination, most often associated with the legacy of John Wesley, ought to be distinguished from “Methodism” understood in eighteenth-century terms as a “reform movement within pre-existent” Anglicanism. See Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xxiv. Contending for the priority of Whitefield’s public ministry in the rise of Methodism as an eighteenth-century reform movement, Kenneth E. Lawson suggests that although “Wesley is usually cited as the founder of Methodism,” in actuality “the name Methodist endured primarily because Whitefield called himself a Methodist in remembrance of his Holy Club days. While the strict, disciplined life of the Oxford Holy Club Methodists predated both John Wesley and Whitefield, the evangelical Methodist revival was distinctly based on Whitefield’s preaching on the new birth.” Lawson, “Who Founded Methodism?” 39, 45. For a discussion of the origins of the term “Methodist,” especially the way in which it was appropriated as a badge of honor after being initially applied as a pejorative title, see Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory* and Whitefield, *Journals*, 48.

13. Wesley was ordained as a deacon in 1725 and then as a priest in 1728. See Green, *John Wesley*, 15, 18. Whitefield was ordained as a deacon in 1735 and then as a priest in 1738. See Henry, *George Whitefield*, 200–201.

14. Reist, “John Wesley and George Whitefield,” 27. See especially Doreen Moore’s *Good Christians, Good Husbands?* which compares the impact of the public ministries of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and John Wesley on their respective marriages.

15. As James L. Schwenk observes, “Historically, one’s own theological predisposition determined which protagonist was supported in print.” Schwenk, *Catholic Spirit*, 46.

of Arminian Methodism, whilst Whitefield has often been co-opted as an idealized theological champion for the cause of Calvinism. This pattern is especially evident when observing descriptions of the very public breach of relationship between Wesley and Whitefield over the nature of predestination—the so-called “free grace” episode. Without wishing to exhaustively rehearse the details of this period, the seed of strained fellowship between Wesley and Whitefield was first sown on April 29, 1739, when Wesley preached a sermon entitled “Free Grace” at the Bowling Green in Bristol. Within two weeks the first printed edition of his strident exhortation of the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election appeared. It was tempered by a brief preface that called for any ensuing response to be delivered “in charity, in love, and in the spirit of meekness” such that antagonistic third-parties eager to pounce on evidence of division within the ranks of Methodism might “see how these Christians love one another.”<sup>16</sup> By the time Whitefield departed England in late 1739, embarking on his first preaching tour of the American colonies, both preachers had reached an agreement to refrain from disputing publicly over the doctrine of predestination. But the appearance, however, of an anonymously published tract entitled “Free Grace Indeed! A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, relating to his sermon against absolute election; published under the title of Free Grace” in June 1740, prompted Wesley to break his silence and republish his “Free Grace” sermon. When Whitefield in turn issued a response to Wesley’s “Free Grace” sermon in the form of a letter intended for public distribution, any prospect of their doctrinal disagreement over the nature of predestination remaining a private matter quickly evaporated.<sup>17</sup> Although Wesley and Whitefield

16. Outler, *Works*, 3:544.

17. Whitefield’s response, “A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley in Answer to his Sermon entitled Free Grace,” was composed in Bethesda, Georgia on December 24, 1740. Whitefield, *Journals*, 569–88. On February 1, 1741, the very same day that Whitefield had written to Wesley forewarning him of his decision to publish his December 24 letter, a number of Whitefield’s overzealous supporters had distributed an advance copy of this letter without his consent. In early April 1741, Whitefield published an authorized version of this response to Wesley’s “Free Grace” sermon in the first edition of “The Weekly History.” After allowing Whitefield to publish first, John and Charles Wesley responded with a vigorous anti-predestinarian preaching and printing campaign of their own. John preached a new sermon “On Predestination” during April and May, 1741, and Charles preached on universal redemption throughout the same period in Bristol. Further, they distributed a series of tracts and pamphlets. These were distillations of critiques of unconditional election offered by, amongst others, William Barclay and Thomas Grantham.

would reach a degree of personal reconciliation in 1742, the Methodists would thereafter be permanently divided along Wesleyan Arminian and Whitefieldian Calvinist lines.

Descriptions of the “free grace” episode produced by Calvinists often differ from those produced by Wesleyan-Arminians. On the one hand, Joseph Tracy evaluates the unfolding controversy from a Calvinist theological vantage point, contrasting Whitefield’s unimpeachable character with the “cold-hearted selfishness of Wesley.”<sup>18</sup> The evaluations reached by Wesleyan-Arminian authors, however, are often diametrically opposed. McConnell presents Wesley as the victim of Whitefieldian theological partisanship, suggesting that it was Wesley who acted magnanimously to restore a relationship that had been threatened by Whitefield’s betrayal. He concludes, with other Methodist historians, that throughout the “free grace” episode, “Wesley shows at a considerable advantage over Whitefield.”<sup>19</sup> That is, theological partisanship has led some Wesley and Whitefield biographers to assert not only the superiority of their respective champion’s *theology*, but also their *moral acumen*, especially at the expense of the other preacher.<sup>20</sup>

18. Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 258. Similarly, the contrast between the Calvinist D. M. Lloyd-Jones’ portrayal of the character of Whitefield and Wesley is highly polarized. He describes Wesley as a shrewd self-promoter who skillfully engineered the perpetuation of his fame by laying the foundations for the establishment of Methodism as a separate denomination. Lloyd-Jones then proceeds to describe Whitefield’s contrasting humility, which he isolates as the primary reason why “people are so ignorant about Whitefield . . . He was, like Calvin, a most humble man. He said, ‘Let the name of George Whitefield be forgotten and blotted out as long as the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ is known.’” “John Calvin and George Whitefield,” 106–7.

19. McConnell, *Evangelicals, Revolutionists and Idealists*, 82–83. Similarly, Fitzgerald records the breach between Wesley and Whitefield in terms that unequivocally lay the blame with the Calvinist Whitefield. Once again, supposed moral indiscretions are held to be the result of erroneous doctrinal commitments. Observe the polarizing language: “Whitefield’s one lapse from brotherliness and charity was due to his adoption of Calvinism . . . In England, John Cennick . . . was infected with similar views . . . The spread of these doctrines led Wesley to preach and publish his sermon on ‘Free Grace,’ a noble defence of the universality of Christ’s redeeming work. Whitefield . . . wrote a reply, which was certainly lacking in courtesy and good feeling . . .” Fitzgerald, “George Whitefield,” 267.

20. There are exceptions to this trend. Julia Wedgwood’s even-handed distribution of “blame” for the breach of relationship between Wesley and Whitefield is noteworthy. Whilst she suggests Wesley “does not once confront the difficulties which must be accepted by any one who from his point of view should reject predestination,” nevertheless she characterizes Whitefield’s decision to separate from Wesley as “an irreparable



The conspicuously polarized and partisan nature of Wesley and Whitefield studies provides a compelling endorsement for an intentional comparison of their respective preaching ministries. After all, as Timothy L. Smith observes, “Aside from Luke Tyerman, a nineteenth-century Methodist, few historians have read and pondered the writings of both George Whitefield and John Wesley. Most have belonged, as Tyerman did, to one or the other partisan camp and allowed their knowledge of that tradition to guide their judgments. Preoccupation with supposed preeminence or priority has distorted their view of the two men’s early cooperation.”<sup>21</sup>

Smith’s *Whitefield and Wesley on the New Birth* provides one notable exception to the pattern he describes, insofar as it deliberately juxtaposes not only the conversion narratives of Wesley and Whitefield, but also a representative selection of their sermons. His primary purpose is to demonstrate their shared commitment to proclaiming the need to experience the new birth in Christ, despite increasingly divergent views on the nature of grace and perfection.<sup>22</sup>

More recently, James Schwenk has produced an intentionally comparative study of Wesley and Whitefield that explores their roles as promoters of what he styles “evangelical ecumenicity.” He observes that “while Whitefield sought to bring evangelicals together under the banner of ‘conversion’ and Wesley sought to accomplish it under ‘connection,’ the greatest quest for evangelical ecumenism was the one involving the two great personalities of early Methodism.”<sup>23</sup> Regarding the permanent division of the Methodist societies along Wesleyan-Arminian and Whitefieldian-Calvinistic lines following the “free grace” episode, Schwenk suggests that “while theology surely played some role in the

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blunder,” and his “evil hour.” Wedgwood, *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century*, 220–39. See also the conclusions reached by Shipley, “Wesley and Some Calvinistic Controversies,” 198. Far from lamenting the outcome of the “free grace” episode, H. M. Hughes concludes that “there was a providential purpose” in their separation: “They were to do even greater works apart . . . Wesley’s gifts and temperament (not to mention English Arminianism) were pre-eminently adapted for the awakening in England; Whitefield’s theological outlook no less than his eloquence secured for him a hearing, and contributed largely to the influence of the Revival in Scotland, Wales, and America.” Hughes, *Wesley and Whitefield*, 49–60.

21. Smith, *Whitefield and Wesley*, 7.

22. See also Smith, “George Whitefield and Wesleyan Perfectionism,” 63–85.

23. Schwenk, *Catholic Spirit*, 2.

schism, the outspoken personalities of Whitefield and Wesley were the key factors.”<sup>24</sup> In contrast to approaches that pit the Arminian Wesley against the Calvinist Whitefield with a view to accentuating their differences, he concludes that they actually function as a “paradigm of evangelical ecumenicity, whereby evangelicals could work toward consensus-building, even though doctrinal and personal differences may not be completely rectified.”<sup>25</sup> As refreshing as Schwenk’s conclusion might be, his minimization of the differences between the theological positions held by Wesley and Whitefield as merely “apparent”<sup>26</sup> pleads for further evaluation, especially in view of the conclusions reached by McGonigle, Gunter and Coppedge, all of whom convincingly offer explicitly theological explanations for Wesley’s life-long dispute with numerous Calvinists, including George Whitefield.<sup>27</sup>

#### TRENDS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Just as there have been recent challenges to the portrayal of Wesley and Whitefield as polarized exemplars of Arminian and Calvinist theology respectively, so too both Wesley studies and Whitefield studies have undergone significant changes over the past two centuries. Before we proceed to outline the contours of this comparison of various facets of the itinerant preaching ministries conducted by Wesley and Whitefield, it is therefore important to be familiar with trends in the historiography that pertain to their respective preaching ministries.

24. Schwenk, *Catholic Spirit*, 3. See also Baker’s evaluation of the breach of relationship between Wesley and Whitefield. He concludes that “it brought about theological bitterness and recriminations into what might have remained a difference of doctrinal opinion between those who were equally sincere and successful in preaching the gospel of redemption” and that “their disagreements were magnified out of proportion.” Baker, “Whitefield’s Break with the Wesley’s,” 103–13.

25. Schwenk, *Catholic Spirit*, 18. See also Schwenk, “And the Holy Catholic Church,” 74–89.

26. Schwenk, *Catholic Spirit*, 23.

27. McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, Coppedge, *Shaping the Wesleyan Message* and Gunter, *Limits of ‘Love Divine’*: each explore Wesley’s theological disputes with numerous Calvinists (including Whitefield, Hervey, Toplady and Hill) concerning, amongst a variety of interrelated doctrines, the nature of predestination, perfection, imputation and faith.

### *Whitefield Studies*

Approaches towards evaluating and interpreting the preaching ministry of George Whitefield typically fall within two explanatory frameworks. Parallel to the historiographical trajectory that describes the transatlantic religious upheavals that took place during the 1730s and 1740s in terms of a single unified outpouring of grace, Whitefield is frequently championed as one of the foremost leaders of the greatest evangelical revival since the time of the Apostles.<sup>28</sup> Such interpretations view the “Eighteenth-Century Revival” as occupying a privileged place in a lineage of definitive eras in the Christian church that reaches back not only to the Reformation, but even as far as the establishment of the primitive church.<sup>29</sup> According to this evaluation, it would be as unthinkable to ignore the legacy of prominent revivalist preachers like George Whitefield as it would be to ignore the contributions of the Apostle Paul, Martin Luther or John Calvin.

Offering a rather different approach to this “religious” explanatory framework, an alternative evaluation of Whitefield’s popularity as an itinerant field-preacher tends to accentuate the role of sociological factors, especially his charismatic giftedness as an orator, his “innovative use of the techniques of publicity,” and his use of a highly effective transatlantic communications network.<sup>30</sup> For instance, if Arnold Dallimore offers a typical “evangelical” assessment of Whitefield’s success when he contends that, “Whitefield’s ministry was the one human factor which bound this work together in the lands it reached,”<sup>31</sup> O’Brien has responded that even though Whitefield’s preaching and printing exerted tremendous influence in extending the evangelical revival throughout the British Isles and the American Colonies, it is nevertheless unwarranted to reduce these transatlantic connections solely “to the activities of this wholly exceptional preacher.”<sup>32</sup> O’Brien also draws attention to the trend in Calvinist historiography, beginning with John Gillies’ *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel*,

28. Douglas, “George Whitefield,” 47.

29. For instance, see Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:14.

30. Walsh, “‘Methodism’ and the Origins of English-Speaking Evangelicalism,” 20–21. See also Durden, “Study of the First Evangelical Magazines, 1740–1748,” 255–75.

31. Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:14.

32. O’Brien, “Transatlantic,” 814. See also Lambert, “Great Awakening as Artifact,” 223–46.

which she contends uncritically interprets the eighteenth-century revival “as broad and sweeping, careless of national and church boundaries, and evangelical in character.”<sup>33</sup> She identifies this approach as representative of the broad disconnect between “secular” and “evangelical” interpretations of eighteenth century transatlantic religious revival. The result is that “because of their commitment to a God-inspired explanation [for revival], historians in the evangelical tradition have not carefully examined the human causes and agencies of connection and influence and consequently have had little influence on secular historians.”<sup>34</sup>

These two very different explanatory frameworks are perhaps best illustrated through a brief comparison of the historiography represented in the biographies of George Whitefield offered by Arnold Dallimore and Harry S. Stout. The title of Dallimore’s *George Whitefield: The life and times of the great evangelist of the 18th century revival* is highly suggestive of the methodological presuppositions and ambitions that shape his extensive two volume biography.<sup>35</sup> The reader does not have to wait long to recognize that Dallimore considers Whitefield’s “greatness” to have been illegitimately obscured and impoverished by a variety of mutually reinforcing factors, including “inadequate biography, poorly edited Works, lost documents, ineffective portraiture and the undue aggrandizement of his associate [that is, John Wesley].”<sup>36</sup> Dallimore’s tendency towards presenting Whitefield’s life, ministry and theology in a favorable light, often at the expense of Wesley, has not gone unnoticed.<sup>37</sup> Alan C. Clifford

33. O’Brien, “Transatlantic,” 814. O’Brien cites Joseph Tracy’s *Great Awakening* as emblematic of this trend in historiography.

34. O’Brien, “Transatlantic,” 814.

35. Rack describes Dallimore’s work as being “detailed” though “uncritical.” Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 565.

36. Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:12. Harry Stout also notes that since “virtually all of the Whitefield primary sources, such as private papers and diaries have been lost or destroyed” historical investigation is heavily dependent on “external sources including Whitefield’s own published writings and letters, contemporary diaries, letters, magazines, and, most important, newspapers.” Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xv. Commenting especially on the paucity of information regarding Whitefield’s “inner and private life,” Stout suggests that this silence supplies “important clues to the man.” He concludes that “Whitefield lived his life almost exclusively for public performance,” to the extent that “his public career” reveals “his innermost biography.” Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xv.

37. Leon O. Hynson comments that although Dallimore’s “intensive research on Whitefield deserves much praise,” it is nevertheless “flawed by the author’s compulsive need to assert Whitefield’s greatness by undercutting Wesley.” He continues, “Whitefield’s genius is assured and Dallimore’s affirmation by negation, contrary to his larger inten-

observes, “The author’s concern to compensate for the undue neglect of Whitefield’s contribution makes him unnecessarily critical of Wesley.”<sup>38</sup>

Dallimore’s biography is motivated by a two-fold penultimate agenda. *First*, he is particularly concerned to address the deleterious impact on Whitefield’s legacy caused by what he describes as the uncritical “admiration” and “unthinking veneration” shown towards Wesley by his early biographers.<sup>39</sup> These, he contends, collectively “proved incapable of viewing his [Wesley’s] career without bias,” and have created a semi-legendary image of Wesley that has not only been tenaciously defended by the Methodist rank and file, but has simultaneously obscured the contributions of fellow evangelists, most notably George Whitefield.<sup>40</sup> Given this assessment of the collective contemporary amnesia regarding Whitefield’s prominence, Dallimore’s initial aim is to restore some degree of parity between the Whitefield known to his contemporaries and the relatively anonymous Whitefield of today.<sup>41</sup>

*Second*, Dallimore aims to fulfill this first objective in such a manner so as not to succumb to the “legend-making” he accuses Methodist scholars to have perpetuated in their biographical treatment of John Wesley. He states, “I have endeavored to give my portrait of Whitefield

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tion, does not give Whitefield the recognition he deserves. The author’s special pleading detracts from the objective picture of Whitefield which is needed by students of the second great awakening.” “George Whitefield and Wesleyan Perfectionism,” 86–93. See also Ronald N. Frost’s review of Dallimore’s *George Whitefield*.

38. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification*, 52. Even if, as Packer hints, Dallimore is hardly subtle in his desire to re-establish Whitefield’s “greatness” as his long suppressed “due,” he nevertheless observes approvingly that “interest has grown in Whitefield in recent years.” He even follows Dallimore when he suggests that the “greatness and significance that is Whitefield’s due is coming to him at last.” Packer, “Spirit with the Word,” 169. Despite this optimism, Rack suggests that of all the prominent contributors to eighteenth-century evangelical revival, “Whitefield remains the most important figure to lack modern editions of his works or a fully satisfactory biography.” *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 565.

39. Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:12.

40. *Ibid.*, 1:12–13.

41. This aspect of his methodology is summed up in Dallimore’s opening sentence: “George Whitefield as the eighteenth century knew him, and George Whitefield as he is thought of today, are two widely different persons.” Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:5. Packer echoes these sentiments closely when he laments that in contrast to the “celebrity status” achieved by Whitefield during his lifetime, “Today, however, Whitefield’s pastoral pioneering, like so much about him, is largely forgotten; which is, to say the least, an injustice and a pity.” Packer, “Spirit with the Word,” 168–69.

both reality and depth. I make known, not only his accomplishments and abilities, but also his foibles and his mistakes.” In short, Dallimore self-consciously pursues an “objective” evaluation of Whitefield’s character from the primary sources available.<sup>42</sup>

Yet in the same paragraph that Dallimore acknowledges his desire to pursue his task objectively, he also confesses his inability to comprehend and articulate Whitefield’s “greatness.”<sup>43</sup> In so doing, Dallimore betrays the considerable extent to which his biographical impulses are shaped by a qualified “hermeneutic of admiration.”<sup>44</sup> This biographical desire is betrayed as early as Dallimore’s introductory quotation from Isaac Taylor in 1860, who argued that whereas, “Wesley is spoken of with fairness, and perhaps with commendation, a line of reluctant praise, coupled with some ungracious insinuation, is the best treatment Whitefield can obtain.” Taylor urged, “And now is it not the time that the world should deal righteously with itself as to its ancient quarrel with one like Whitefield? The world has a long score to settle on this behalf, for it pursued him, from first to last, with a fixed malignity.”<sup>45</sup>

On one level Dallimore’s sympathetic portrayal of Whitefield’s character and ministry offers a belated response to Taylor’s plea. Yet it is important to observe that the dual objectives of promoting Whitefield as “the great evangelist of the 18th century revival” without creating a plaster-saint of his biographical subject actually service his *ultimate* ambition, which is to encourage zeal for a contemporary evangelical revival.

42. Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:15.

43. *Ibid.*, 1:15.

44. Dallimore is by no means alone in adopting this biographical posture. For instance, Spurgeon stated, “There is no end to the interest which attaches to such a man as Whitefield. Often as I have read his life, I am conscious of a distinct quickening whenever I turn to it. *He lived*. Other men seem to be only half alive; but Whitefield was all life, fire, wing, force. My own model, if I have any such a thing in due subordination to my Lord, is George Whitefield.” Quoted in Drummond, *Spurgeon Prince of Preachers*, 219. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who proof-read much of Dallimore’s work prior to its eventual publication, was similarly affected: “I could imagine no greater privilege, than to speak on George Whitefield.” Lloyd-Jones, “John Calvin and George Whitefield,” 102. Likewise Packer, who attended Whitefield’s old school, the Crypt School in Gloucester, indicates that “I read both volumes of Luke Tyerman’s 1876 biography, and the career of the great Gloucesterian made a tremendous impression on me, securing him pride of place in my private heroes’ gallery.” Packer, “Spirit with the Word,” 169. Again, Packer stated in an editorial piece entitled “Great George,” “I look at Whitefield, and love him.” *Christianity Today*, 12.

45. Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:4.

That is, while Dallimore certainly seeks to uncover the Whitefield of the eighteenth century, he does not wish to leave him there as an abstract museum piece. By presenting Whitefield as an exemplar of piety and evangelistic zeal, Dallimore's explicit aim is that his presentation of Whitefield will stimulate a yearning for modern-day events reminiscent of "the Great Awakening."<sup>46</sup>

The biographical methodology of Stout's *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* self-consciously sets itself apart from what he styles the "hagiographic" and "filiopietistic" impulses of Whitefield's "admirers."<sup>47</sup> Whereas Dallimore set himself the ambitious aim of providing an exhaustive (in Packer's estimation, "big and painstaking"<sup>48</sup>) "life and times" of Whitefield, Stout limits his task to demonstrating the thesis that the "theatre, newspapers and the actor's psyche provide keys to the interpretation of Whitefield's greatness."<sup>49</sup> Without wishing to "supplant or subvert traditional accounts of Whitefield's piety"<sup>50</sup> that explain his success and appeal in terms of unprecedented, apostolic-like divine blessing,<sup>51</sup> much less suggest that Whitefield's dramatic preaching style was evidence of disingenuous

46. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xvi. The conclusion to Dallimore's introductory remarks certainly betrays an a priori commitment to finding in favor of Whitefield's "greatness" in the interests of a "filiopietistic" agenda: "this book goes forth with the earnest prayer that, amidst the rampant iniquity and glaring apostasy of the twentieth century God will use it toward the raising up of such men [as Whitefield] and toward the granting of a mighty revival such as was witnessed two hundred years ago." Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:16. Dallimore's interest in promoting revival through the medium of a biography of Whitefield is by no means unique. For instance, see Hardy, *George Whitefield: The Matchless Soul Winner*.

47. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xvi.

48. Packer, "Spirit with the Word," 169.

49. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xxiv.

50. Ibid.

51. For example, see Basil Miller, who contends that the "source of [Whitefield's] power lay exclusively in that "God gave [him] a mighty voice, a magnetic personality, and a tender soul." *God's Great Soul Winners*, 13.

“play-acting,”<sup>52</sup> Stout does seek to situate Whitefield’s success within the context of a burgeoning eighteenth century consumer culture.<sup>53</sup>

Stout’s portrayal of Whitefield has elicited a plethora of responses. Whereas some have expressed concerns at what is perceived to be his unsympathetic “characterization of Whitefield the man,”<sup>54</sup> others commend Stout’s efforts to write “a biography, not a brief for canonization.”<sup>55</sup> Still others are ambivalent in their assessment of *The Divine Dramatist*; Packer, for instance, describing it as “not-so-filipottistic but shrewd.”<sup>56</sup> This diversity is unsurprising, especially given that Stout’s characterization of Whitefield differs markedly from that offered by prominent nine-

52. Stout could not be more complementary towards Whitefield’s sincerity as he closes his introductory chapter: “Beyond living a life for the public, Whitefield embodied the spiritual roles he played. Unlike many charismatic performers who followed in his footsteps, he remained undistracted by the allure of sex or wealth. If he was not a good family man, neither was he a hypocrite or one who merely ‘played’ at spiritual roles for ulterior reasons. His personal character matched the biblical saints he portrayed, and his vast charitable efforts left him perennially near bankruptcy. It was his integrity that won the admiration of skeptics like Benjamin Franklin, who in time became his staunchest American supporter. In this sense, Whitefield was his own finest convert to the Christian lifestyle he proclaimed.” *Divine Dramatist*, xxiv.

53. See also Lambert, “*Pedlar in Divinity*.”

54. Erik Carlsson is highly critical of Stout’s portrayal of Whitefield’s character. Review of *Divine Dramatist*, 238–47. Likewise, David White’s review contends that “this biography is not written in the spirit of its subject nor with the spiritual insight necessary to do justice to so worthy a servant of God. It assumes that sociological factors wholly shaped the man . . . The student of Whitefield and his period would better invest in the far more reliable biography by Arnold Dallimore.” Review of *Divine Dramatist*, 115–16. Charles Yrigoyen anticipates Carlsson’s critique: “some will argue that Stout presents Whitefield too much from the perspective of a self-serving actor-preacher.” Review of *The Divine Dramatist*, 188. By contrast, Hardman concludes in his review that “Stout is basically sympathetic with his subject,” though [Stout] also “points out several problems of Whitefield, such as his youthful vanity.” Review of *The Divine Dramatist*, 570.

55. Gaustad, Review of *The Divine Dramatist*, 356–358. Johnson concurs with Stout’s isolation of the theatre as a primary influence on Whitefield’s career: “in the end the theater won the contest for his personality just as Methodism won the contest for his soul.” Review of *Divine Dramatist*, 442. Other positive reviews of Stout’s *The Divine Dramatist* are offered by Marsden, Review of *Divine Dramatist*, 62; Sachs, Review of *The Divine Dramatist*, 104–5; Van Dyk, Review of *Divine Dramatist*, 637 and David Bundy, who contends that the “refreshing and provocative” nature of Stout’s new interpretation is such that “it will, of necessity, be considered in all future work on the evangelist and will probably be the vehicle by which most students of American religious culture meet Whitefield.” Review of *Divine Dramatist*, 77–79.

56. Packer, “Spirit with the Word,” 169.



teenth and twentieth century biographers, particularly Luke Tyerman,<sup>57</sup> John Gillies,<sup>58</sup> R. Philip,<sup>59</sup> E. N. Hardy,<sup>60</sup> and John Pollock.<sup>61</sup> Commenting on this biographical consensus, Davis observes that “[g]enerally speaking, there is little difference among the major biographical treatments of Whitefield’s life. Most present the same anecdotes as found in the other works and only rarely offer any new insight into his character, oratorical style, and evangelistic results.”<sup>62</sup> Whereas Dallimore and Tyerman are critical of Whitefield’s actions on isolated occasions,<sup>63</sup> Stout portrays Whitefield’s dramatic preaching as a strategic device in the service of winning converts in a marketplace that aggressively competed for people’s attention and money.<sup>64</sup>

Insofar as Stout isolates Whitefield’s dramatic preaching “to be his most distinctive contribution to his times,”<sup>65</sup> he shares much in common with the conclusions of other biographers who also focus on Whitefield’s ability to command the attention and affections of vast audiences.<sup>66</sup> Whitefield studies have thus historically focused on “the Grand

57. Tyerman, *Whitefield*.

58. Gillies, *Memoirs*.

59. Philip, *George Whitefield*.

60. Hardy, *George Whitefield*.

61. Pollock, *George Whitefield*.

62. Davis, “George Whitefield’s Doctrine of Scripture,” 18.

63. See Tyerman, *Whitefield*, 1:220, 275, 361–64, 381, and Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:333–56 for instances where the evaluation of Whitefield’s actions results in qualified criticism.

64. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xv–xvi. See also James Downey, who contends that “Whitefield enjoyed many of the gifts of a great actor.” *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*, 168–69. Downey cautiously adopts the conclusions reached by Stuart Henry, when he affirms that “Whitefield’s appeal and success may be best explained in terms of the theatre,” before quoting Henry himself: “The place at which Whitefield’s dramatic ability touched the lives of his audiences was that of the human predicament. He spoke to man’s eternal question: What shall I do to be saved?” *Wayfaring Witness*, 177–78. Henry’s biography is notable for its appraisal, offered from an Arminian vantage point, of the function of Whitefield’s Calvinistic theology in the place of his itinerant field-preaching ministry.

65. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, xv.

66. For example, see Newlin, *Philosophy and Religion in Colonial America*, 72–74; Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*, 155–88; Kenney, “George Whitefield,” 75–93; May, *Some Eighteenth Century Churchmen*, 55; Nuttall, “George Whitefield,” 316–27; Walter Douglas, “George Whitefield,” 46–53; E. Tipple, “Whitefield’s Divine Gift,” 721–37; and Miller, *God’s Great Soul Winners*, 7–15 and *Ten Famous Evangelists*, 7–13. Tresch

Itinerant's" emotive manner of preaching. By contrast, scant attention has been paid to the influence of Scripture on either the style and delivery of Whitefield's spoken sermons, or his rationale for pursuing an itinerant field-preaching ministry, much less given to comparing these facets of his public ministry with that of his contemporary, John Wesley.<sup>67</sup>

Further, although Whitefield's preaching style has been the subject of widespread and effusive praise, the theological content of his sermons has received little positive attention.<sup>68</sup> The fact that Whitefield focused his energy on preaching conversion-oriented sermons by design is frequently overlooked. Instead, Downey blames an exhausting preaching schedule that afforded little opportunity for preparation as the reason for the "inevitable sameness" of Whitefield's sermons.<sup>69</sup> Others reduce Whitefield's Calvinism to that of an intuitive theological preference, in contrast to the carefully considered, nuanced position held by Jonathan Edwards with a "tightness of grip" not evidently shared by Whitefield.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Stout suggests that Whitefield's catholicity emerged from a pragmatic desire to maintain the "broad-based appeal" for his itinerant

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suggests that "although Whitefield's preaching was most frequently cited as the reason for the popular response he elicited [with particular reference to the southern colonies], doubtless his ethical positions were also contributing factors. On his first visit to Georgia he endeavored to alter the moral life of the town of Savannah . . . he was more admired in the South than in the North." Tresch, "Reception Accorded George Whitefield," 25.

67. The contrast is often made, however, between Whitefield's gifts as a dramatic preacher with Wesley's emphasis on the formation of Methodist societies as vehicles for the spiritual nurture of those converted under his evangelistic preaching. For instance, Swain describes John Wesley as "The Great Organizer," whereas Whitefield is characterized as "The Awakener": "his native endowments contributed to his effectiveness." *Messengers On the Mountains*, 9–14. Likewise, Fitzgerald contends that "Whitefield was first and foremost a preacher: Wesley not only preached, but organized." "George Whitefield," 266–67.

68. For instance, James Downey contends that Whitefield "was not known for his theological acumen" and that "his own theological concepts were few and remarkably ingenuous." *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*, 156. David Crump observes that "Whitefield has been the brunt of more than one joke concerning the content of his sermons. An old jibe is that Whitefield must have been eloquent indeed to make such utterances as his seem eloquent." "Preaching," 19. For a more generous evaluation of the content of Whitefield's sermons, see Conrad's "Preaching of George Whitefield."

69. Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*, 156–57, 167.

70. McConnell, *Evangelicals, Revolutionists and Idealists*, 83.

field-preaching ministry, rather than any explicitly theological basis for his evangelical ecumenicity.<sup>71</sup>

By way of exception to this concentration on the style of Whitefield's preaching at the expense of the content of his sermons, David Crump has explored the problematic nature of the transmission of Whitefield's sermons, before turning towards an analysis of his usage of Matthew Henry's *Commentary*. He convincingly demonstrates that "Puritan theology, passed on as it was through the writings of Matthew Henry, may well have enjoyed the period of its greatest influence during the ministry of George Whitefield."<sup>72</sup> Marion D. Aldridge sees no reason to forge a disjunction between the homiletical style and content of Whitefield's sermons, and challenges the prevailing notion that his dramatic flair and eloquence alone are sufficient explanations for "the eighteenth-century spiritual renaissance."<sup>73</sup> Further, although Barry C. Davis suggests that "Essentially, George Whitefield was an orator, perhaps the most influential orator of his day," he nevertheless seeks to demonstrate that his sermons are invaluable windows into Whitefield's orthodox doctrine of Scripture.<sup>74</sup> These contributions notwithstanding, whereas Wesley's conception, use and interpretation of Scripture has been the subject of recent description and evaluation,<sup>75</sup> scant attention has been given to describing either Whitefield's hermeneutical methodology or charting the variety of ways in which he utilized the Bible in his sermons. In addition, there is a marked absence of deliberate attempts to compare these facets of the respective preaching ministries of Wesley and Whitefield, deficits this study will begin to address in chapter four.

71. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 203. See also Schwenk, "And the Holy Catholic Church," 74–75 and Lambert, "Great Awakening as Artifact," 223–46.

72. Crump, "Preaching," 24. Outler declares that "as a popular spokesman for the prevailing Puritan piety, [Whitefield] had no peer in his time." *Works*, 2:327.

73. Aldridge, "George Whitefield," 55–64.

74. Davis, "George Whitefield's Doctrine of Scripture," 17–32.

75. Arnett, *John Wesley*, and Weeter, *John Wesley's View and Use of Scripture*, both provide largely descriptive studies of the extent to which the language of Scripture permeated Wesley's writings. Jones is more deliberate about evaluating the extent to which Wesley's use of Scripture accorded with his high view of the Bible. *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*. In addition, significant attention has been given to evaluating the place of Scripture in relation to other sources of authority in Wesley's theology and practice. For instance, see Outler, "Wesleyan Quadrilateral," 7–18; Campbell, "Wesleyan Quadrilateral," 87–95; Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* and Gunter, *Limits of "Love Divine."*

*Wesley Studies*

Reminiscent of trends in Whitefield studies, from the time of his death through the nineteenth century, the nature of the secondary literature pertaining to John Wesley and his public ministry was dominated almost exclusively by biographies.<sup>76</sup> In common with many accounts of Whitefield's preaching ministry, Maddox contends that far from "being detached scholarly accounts, these biographies were typically triumphalist panegyrics and/or defenses of Wesley—offering loving accounts of 'Wesley the Dynamic Evangelist,' 'Wesley the Tireless Church Founder,' 'Wesley the Pious Christian' and so on. In short, they were hagiography."<sup>77</sup> Likewise, after commending Tyerman's "monumental" 1870 work as a "landmark in Wesleyan biography, not so much for its interpretive value as for the sheer volume of material that he gathered into these three volumes," Richard Heitzenrater nevertheless observes that "a thoroughgoing Methodist triumphalism emanates from every page" and this despite the author's intentions to look "at the specks as well as the sunshine in John Wesley's history."<sup>78</sup> In this respect, Tyerman's biographical generosity towards Wesley appears largely congruent with that adopted by Dallimore towards Whitefield. Tyerman does admit that "Wesley was not faultless" but seeks to explain away, in Heitzenrater's estimation, "nearly every questionable action and thought."<sup>79</sup>

Although Wesley continues to be the subject of considerable biographical interest, some of his many contemporary biographers have

76. Wesley studies have grown exponentially in recent years, prompting a spate of efforts to chart trajectories in their development. For example, see Heitzenrater, *Elusive*, 2:159–212 and "Present State," 221–33; Baker, "Unfolding John Wesley," 44–58; and Rack, "Some Recent Trends in Wesley Scholarship," 182–199.

77. Maddox, "Reclaiming an Inheritance," 214. Heitzenrater concurs: "For many decades after Wesley's death, 'Wesley studies' consisted solely of biographies. These were generally by Methodists and for Methodists; the triumphalist tone was inevitable. The first appearance of more circumscribed topical studies was in the latter part of the nineteenth century." "Present State," 227. Reminiscent of the hagiography that has characterized much Whitefield biography, George Eayr described Wesley as his "human hero." *John Wesley*, 50.

78. Heitzenrater, *Elusive*, 184–85.

79. *Ibid.*, 186. For example, Tyerman praises Wesley without inhibition, suggesting that his "physique, his genius, his wit, his penetration, his judgment, his memory, his beneficence, his religion, his diligence, his conversation, his courteousness, his manners, and his dress—made him as perfect as we ever expect a man to be on this side of heaven." Quoted in *ibid.*, *Elusive*, 186.

distanced themselves from this legacy of hagiography.<sup>80</sup> Just as Stout introduced an innovative element of complexity into the prevailing character of Whitefield biographies by portraying him as an *eighteenth century* itinerant preacher, so too Wesley's recent biographers have explicitly sought to explain his theology, ministry and character in relation to the influence exerted by a complex amalgam of familial, philosophical, cultural and religious forces.<sup>81</sup>

The enhanced diversity and sophistication of Wesley biography has also extended to a growing interest in Wesley's unique contribution as a theologian. This was not always the case. If the style of Whitefield's preaching has been the subject of wide acclaim, often at the expense of the content of his sermons, in a similar fashion, up until the mid-twentieth century, John Wesley's contributions as a *practitioner of revival* have been accentuated at the expense of his contribution as a *theologian*.<sup>82</sup> Baker's summary is commonplace: "In some circles, even theolog-

80. For instance, Stephen Tomkins summarizes Wesley's character, theology and ecclesiology as a "web of contradictions." He characterizes Wesley as a sincere, though pragmatic, revivalist, for whom the "practical needs of the work of the Lord" functioned as his ultimate authority. *John Wesley*, 195, 160. Observe also Clifford's assessment: "Wesley was a paradox. A devoted son of the Church of England, he fathered a break-away church. An Oxford don, he became a preacher to the illiterate masses. An unbending Tory, he was a friend of the poor and enemy of slavery." *Atonement and Justification*, 51. The title of Henry Rack's *Reasonable Enthusiast* is suggestive of his portrayal of Wesley's complex theology and personality.

81. For instance, see the theological biographies offered by Ayling, *John Wesley*, Collins, *Real Christian*, Green, *Young Mr. Wesley* and *John Wesley*, Lee, *Lord's Horseman*, Snyder, *Radical Wesley* and Waller, *John Wesley*. Bready, *England: Before and After Wesley*, Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*, Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, Turner, *John Wesley*, Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, Murray, *Wesley and Men Who Followed*, and Hempton, *Methodism* all to some extent endeavor to situate Wesley not only within his wider historical, philosophical and theological world, but also in the context of eighteenth-century evangelical revival.

82. As Langford observes, "Wesley has frequently been put forward as a model of methods of evangelization and spiritual formation. By contrast, positive evaluation of his precedent in theological method has been quite rare . . . one senses that a major motivating force in the development of later Methodist theologies was the desire to compensate for what were perceived as Wesley's inadequacies." "Theological Method," 35. Evidence for Langford's conclusion is certainly observable in Humphrey's contention that the absence of a Methodist scholastic systematic theology, and especially John Wesley's failure to provide such a work, rendered Methodism "unworthy of serious consideration." *Our Theology*, 68. Humphrey apparently did not consider Watson's *Theological Institutes* nor William Carpenter's *Wesleyana* worthy attempts at providing Methodism with a work that adjusted "all its parts into a consistent and systematic whole." Humphrey, *Our*

ical circles, there has long been skepticism as to whether John Wesley's name should be included among the theologians: an evangelist, yes; a church founder and leader, yes; but surely not a theological thinker!"<sup>83</sup> In a similar vein, though emerging from a Reformed orientation, Iain H. Murray's recent biography of Wesley perpetuates this dichotomy between "Wesley as practitioner" over and against "Wesley as theologian" when he suggests that "it is *not in his theology* that his real legacy lies . . . the eighteenth century evangelicals were primarily men of *action* . . . and it is to him in that role that we need to turn."<sup>84</sup>

Prior to the publication of George Croft Cell's *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* in 1935,<sup>85</sup> Coppedge is thus surely correct to conclude that Wesley's contribution as a theologian "received scant attention."<sup>86</sup> Beginning even with Wesley's contemporaries, the claim that his theology was internally consistent has long been contested.<sup>87</sup> In response to this disregard of Wesley as a legitimate theologian, Albert C. Outler's identification of Wesley as a "folk-theologian" marked a significant development in Wesley studies.<sup>88</sup> Outler's label was by no means intended as

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*Theology*, 69. A later nineteenth century effort to supply Methodism with a systematic treatise was supplied by Pope's *Compendium of Christian Theology* which in Langford's estimation provided "the best formulation yet achieved of Methodist Arminianism." Langford, "Theological Method," 42–43.

83. Baker, "Practical Divinity," 7. Likewise, Henry Rack observes that "Non-Methodist and even Methodist writers have often almost disregarded John Wesley as a theologian. He has been seen rather as an evangelist, organizer of a religious movement, and unwitting church founder." "Some Recent Trends in Wesley Scholarship," 183.

84. Murray, *Wesley and Men Who Followed*, 79. Emphasis supplied.

85. Cell, *Rediscovery of John Wesley*.

86. Coppedge, *Shaping the Wesleyan Message*, 7. Since this time, however, Coppedge observes that "significant attention has been given to Wesley's views on grace, faith, sin, justification, sanctification, Christology, the sacraments and Christian perfection," whilst his own attention has been directed towards Wesley's theology of predestination in "relation to his thought and ministry." Coppedge, *Shaping the Wesleyan Message*, 7.

87. See Outler, *Works*, 1:62, for a catalogue of the critics and their criticisms leveled at the perceived internal inconsistencies within Wesley's theology. Outler observes that despite these far ranging critiques, "Wesley stoutly maintained that his teachings *were* consistent." Outler, *Works*, 1:62.

88. See Outler, "John Wesley: Folk Theologian," 150–60. While David L. Cubie agrees that Wesley "wrote for the people" instead of "writing for theologians" he nevertheless prefers to categorize Wesley as a "pastor-theologian" since it captures the essence of Outler's "folk-theologian" while being "less subject to misinterpretation." "Wesley's Theology of Love," 122.

a slight on Wesley's theological acumen.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, as Maddox observes, by the mid 1980s Outler had applied this term as high praise of Wesley's "ability to simplify, synthesize, and communicate the essential teachings of the Christian gospel to laity."<sup>90</sup> Outler wrote,

In the history of Christian doctrine the front rank is rightly reserved for the great speculative theologians—that select company of systematic thinkers who have managed to effect major mutations in the Christian mind. Wesley has no place in this company—nor did he aspire to one. He was, by talent and intent, a *folk*-theologian: an eclectic who had mastered the secret of plastic synthesis, simple profundity, the common touch. He was an effective evangelist guided by a discriminating theological understanding, a creative theologian practically involved in the application of his doctrine in the renewal of the church . . . Wesley's theology emerges clear and consistent and integral . . . Many other theological systems are bolder, subtler, more massive—but none has a more intense and sustained evangelical concern.<sup>91</sup>

89. Outler insisted that Wesley ought to be valued as a major theologian in his own right. "Towards a Re-appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian," 5–14. See also Outler, "John Wesley as Theologian," 63–82.

90. Maddox, "Reclaiming an Inheritance," 225. Elsewhere, Maddox observes that "Wesley's theological activity [can] only be appropriately understood and assessed in terms of the approach to theology as a practical discipline (*scientia practica*) which characterized the pre-university Christian setting and remained influential in eighteenth-century Anglicanism." "Reading Wesley as a Theologian," 18. He contends that within such a prevailing theological climate, "the primary (or first-order) literary forms of 'real' theological activity were not Systematic Theologies or Apologetics; they were carefully-crafted liturgies, catechisms, hymns, sermons and the like" and that under these conditions Wesley's status as a "serious" theologian gains considerable weight. Maddox, "Reading Wesley as a Theologian," 18. See also Maddox, "John Wesley—Practical Theologian?" 122–47; Baker, "Practical Divinity," 7–15; and Outler, "New Future for 'Wesley Studies,'" 126–42.

91. Outler, *John Wesley*, 119–20. Regarding the "eclectic" nature of Wesley's theology, Outler suggests that although "few of [Wesley's] doctrinal views are abstruse and none is original," yet "it is their sum and balance that is unique." He continues, "The elements of his theology were adapted from many sources: the prime article of justification by faith, from the reformers (Anglican) of the sixteenth century; the emphasis on the assurance of faith, from the Moravian pietists; the ethical notions of divine-human synergism, from the ancient Fathers of the Church; the idea of the Christian life as devotion, from Taylor, a Kempis, Law (and Scougal), the vision and program of 'perfection,' from Gregory of Nyssa via 'Macarius.' These diverse motifs . . . he brought and held together within the liturgical framework of the Book of Common Prayer, the Articles and the Homilies. But their development in his mind was ordered by the *practical exigencies* of the Revival itself." Outler, *John Wesley*, 119. Emphasis supplied. Wynkoop is not nearly

Outler's insights have been particularly helpful in explaining why a prolific author and editor such as Wesley avoided writing a definitive Methodist systematic theology. Building on Outler's conclusions, Smith insists that this omission was intentional: "Wesley was persuaded that his sermons, hymns, public letters, prefaces, and essays, some of them being historical, most didactic, and a few prophetic, would preserve better than a creedal statement the loyalty of the Methodists to the 'plain teachings' of Scripture."<sup>92</sup> Likewise, Frank Baker contends that "*All* [Wesley's] writings constitute his theological monument . . . he was an *occasional* theologian . . . one who instinctively brought his profound thinking about God to bear on every experience of every day; he was, in fact, a *perpetual* theologian."<sup>93</sup> Although Smith and Baker acknowledge this tremendous variety of mediums Wesley exploited in order to communicate theological truth, the preached and printed sermon *in particular* has been convincingly proven to be Wesley's primary vehicle for disseminating what Langford styles Wesley's desire for "practical divinity."<sup>94</sup> Wesley might

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as impressed with Wesley's capacity as a theologian, but does praise his single-minded desire to advance the work of evangelical revival: "the lure of Wesley is not primarily his theology. That was traditional enough. He was not an innovator. The contribution of Wesley is in his ability to put theology into flesh and blood." Wynkoop, "Hermeneutical Approach to John Wesley," 14.

92. Smith, "John Wesley," 252. Smith continues that Wesley was "content to let the Scriptures, in all their varied literary forms and settings, stand as the Christian's textbook in systematic theology." This explains not only the absence of any scholastic treatment of Methodist doctrine amongst Wesley's writings, but also the reason why his "Notes were not theological commentaries of the traditional sort at all, but brief explanations of the sense of each passage." Smith, "John Wesley," 252. See also Smith, "Notes on the Exegesis of John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes On the New Testament*," 107–10. Horst follows Smith and declines any attempt to provide an apologetic on behalf of Wesley's method, assuming his approach to have been intentionally chosen: "Much of the secondary literature seems intent on demonstrating that Wesley really is a learned scholar even though he does not write like one. The scholarly task becomes a matter of supplying the footnotes which Wesley neglected. But if there is something intentional about the method of his thought, then maybe all that scholarly apparatus is less significant. Perhaps Wesley's neglect of it is itself as significant a feature of his work as the information he leaves out." "Experimenting with Christian Wholeness," 22.

93. Baker, "Unfolding John Wesley," 55.

94. Langford, *Practical Divinity*. Amongst those who have focused on the function of Wesley's sermons in his public ministry, see Bishop, "John Wesley as a Preacher," 264–73; Harper, "Wesley's Sermons As Spiritual Formation Documents," 131–38; Heitzenrater, "Plain Truth," 16–30 and "John Wesley's Principles and Practice of Preaching," 89–106; Maddox, "John Wesley—Practical Theologian," 122–47; Maser, "Problem in Preaching," 110–17; Mullen, "John Wesley's Method of Biblical Interpretation," 99–108; Parkes, "John



not have been a conventional theologian, but the extent to which his sermons betray discernible theological coherence and consistency has also been convincingly demonstrated.<sup>95</sup>

The task, however, of determining the precise locus of Wesley's theological activity has proven to be more difficult. A variety of suggestions have been put forward, each sympathetic with William R. Cannon's helpful clarification that even though "Wesley was not systematic in the arrangement of his doctrines [this] does not warrant the assumption that he was inconsistent or contradictory in his theological opinions."<sup>96</sup> Outler declined to reduce Wesley's theology to a singular core, and instead identified a plurality of complementary concerns, suggesting that Wesley ought to be understood as a folk-theologian with an evangelical soteriology committed to holy living.<sup>97</sup> Features of Outler's description appear amongst a plethora of alternative scholarly suggestions. For instance, Thomas A. Langford isolates "human salvation" as Wesley's "primary concern" and the "hub" around which "his thought was extended like spokes,"<sup>98</sup> while Wood locates evangelism as Wesley's singular ambition: "John Wesley was an evangelist. If one word must be selected to describe his calling, this is it."<sup>99</sup> Numerous commentators accentuate

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Wesley: Field Preacher," 217–34; Tripp, "Standard Sermons," 97–116; Tyson, "Essential Doctrines," 163–79.

95. For instance, Maddox contends that throughout Wesley's sermons "one can find treatments of almost every theological issue. Moreover, the topics and arrangement of his second series of sermons resemble the classical Protestant 'salvation history' model of a dogmatic theology text." Maddox, "Responsible Grace," 24–34. See also Thomas Oden's *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, which presents Wesley's writings within the matrix of discrete doctrinal categories. While Oden's approach seeks to elevate Wesley as a theologian in his own right, it runs the risk of presenting his theology in an a-historical light, and thus is open to charge of being rhetorically foreign to the frequently polemical and occasional purposes of Wesley's sermons.

96. Cannon, *Theology of John Wesley*, 7–8.

97. Outler, *Works*, 1:63.

98. Langford, "John Wesley and Theological Method," 35. See also Mullen, who characterizes Wesley's method of biblical interpretation "as soteriologically motivated and pragmatically implemented." "John Wesley's Method of Biblical Interpretation," 102.

99. Wood, *Burning Heart*, 75. See also Hong, *John Wesley*. By way of contrast to this designation of Wesley as an evangelist, Kimbrell has convincingly demonstrated that although Wesley "did imply the work of an evangelist was being done by the pastors," he nevertheless "did not apply the term [evangelist] to any person in his day nor did he apply the title to any person in history. An evangelist was a rare, if not unknown, concept in the eighteenth century, unless used as a title for a Gospel writer." "Changing Concepts of an Evangelist," 95.

Wesley's general commitment to "practical divinity," especially as reflected in his pursuit of "holiness."<sup>100</sup> Timothy Smith suggests that Wesley "discovered the key to the Scriptures in the Bible itself" and came to the conclusion that "the living center of every part of inspired Scripture was the call to be holy, and the promise of grace to answer that call."<sup>101</sup> He styles Wesley's interpretive paradigm a "hermeneutic of holiness."<sup>102</sup>

Still others have located Wesley's distinctive approach towards explaining the divine-human relationship in salvation as the focal point of his theological enterprise. Maddox suggests that the "dialectic between grace and responsibility," which he styles "responsible grace," functioned as Wesley's "orienting concept." Maddox continues, "Wesley understood the essential Christian message to be one of God-given grace, but grace which both called for and empowered human response, thereby preserv-

100. For instance, Nicholson suggests that "Wesley's aim was to cultivate practical godliness and to spread scriptural holiness . . . his theology was that of 'practical divinity.'" "John Wesley and Ecumenicity," 68. Similarly, Langford contends that "Wesley understood theology to be intimately related to Christian living . . . and the proclamation of Christian faith. Theology is actualized in authentic living and true proclamation this was his 'practical divinity.' For Wesley, theology was not so much for the purpose of understanding life as much as for changing life; theology should help effect the love of God and neighbor." Langford, "John Wesley and Theological Method," 35. Cubie isolates the love of God as "the principle which gives coherence to Wesley's thought," tracing his focus upon this theme as the paradigm that controlled Wesley's theological activity back to his time as an undergraduate student at Oxford. "Wesley's Theology of Love," 123, 147.

101. Smith, "John Wesley and the Wholeness of Scripture," 246.

102. Ibid. Likewise, Ferguson suggests that "it is possible to reconstruct the assumptions behind [Wesley's] approach to scripture," and concludes that Wesley applied his Classical Reformation convictions regarding the inspiration, infallibility and ultimate authority of the Bible in the practical pursuit of piety, which was entrenched in his upbringing: "the Bible was a practical book which led the believer down the path of holy living toward perfection." Ferguson continues, "As Luther understood the central message of scripture to be justification by faith in Christ and read the Bible from this perspective, so Wesley perceived a primary message of scripture to be instructions in true piety and often interpreted scripture in light of this assumption." "John Wesley on Scripture," 241.

ing human responsibility.”<sup>103</sup> Lindström<sup>104</sup> and Cannon<sup>105</sup> also describe Wesley’s theology in synergistic terms, and in this respect at least, follow the conclusions reached by Whitefield during the “free grace” episode. By contrast, Cell<sup>106</sup> and Ireson<sup>107</sup> conclude that Wesley’s theology was monergistic. But in response to these approaches that characterize Wesley as being *either* a synergist *or* a monergist, other evaluations have insisted that the distinctiveness of Wesley’s theological method resided in his affirmation of *both* “faith alone” *and* “holy living.”<sup>108</sup> For instance, Coppedge suggests that, “Wesley’s doctrine of prevenient grace allowed him to hold both views simultaneously,” meaning that he “would be more accurately described as a synergist within a monergistic framework.”<sup>109</sup> Still more recently, Kenneth Collins has identified the “conjunctive flavor of Wesley’s theology” with its dual emphasis on both co-operant “holy love” and free “grace” alone. Collins has convincingly demonstrated that “more accurate readings of Wesley’s theology suggest that a synergistic paradigm, which contains both divine and human acting, must itself be caught up in an *even larger conjunction* in which the

103. Maddox, “Responsible Grace,” 29. Elsewhere Maddox contends that Wesley’s theological method is characterized by synergistic co-operation: “For Wesley it was . . . our responsiveness to God’s offer of restored pardoning relationship (Justification) that induces the gracious further regeneration of our human faculties in the New Birth.” *Responsible Grace*, 170. Maddox suggests that just as “justification by faith” gave coherence to Luther’s thought, and Calvin’s theology was organized around the theme of God’s sovereignty, so likewise “responsible grace” accurately captures Wesley’s orienting principle, which he defines as “an expression of often primarily implicit convictions and provides the integrative thematic perspective in light of which all other theological concepts and judgments are given their relative meaning or value.” “Responsible Grace,” 26.

104. Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 98, 215.

105. Cannon insists that “Wesley describes salvation as synergistic: it is a cooperative endeavor between God and a human being.” Cannon, “Methodism—Our Theology,” 6. See also Cannon, *Theology of John Wesley*, 113–15, 138.

106. Cell, *Rediscovery of John Wesley*, 270.

107. Ireson, “Doctrine of Faith,” 413.

108. Outler suggests that “It is easy for us to miss the originality of this Wesleyan view of faith alone and holy living *held together* . . . His critics were quick to notice this strange move and seize upon it as proof of Wesley’s inconsistency. Actually, it was yet another of Wesley’s characteristic ‘third alternatives’—maybe his most original one.” Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 71.

109. Coppedge, *Shaping the Wesleyan Message*, 222.

Protestant emphasis on the sole activity of God, apart from all human working, is *equally* factored in.”<sup>110</sup>

Despite this growing esteem for Wesley as a theologian, aside from the considerable attention that has been given to analyzing the very public conflict between Wesley and Whitefield over the nature of election during the “free grace” episode,<sup>111</sup> an event that Baker describes as “one of the most pregnant events in English church history,”<sup>112</sup> little attention has been devoted towards comparing how each preacher understood the doctrines they both considered to be the non-negotiable core of the gospel. In addition to addressing this comparative silence, chapter five of this study will also begin to address the question also how accurately Wesley and Whitefield understood each other’s conception of the doctrines of original sin, justification, and the regenerate life.

#### OUTLINE

Having briefly charted the contours and trajectories of Wesley and Whitefield studies, described the polarized and partisan nature of much of the literature devoted to these two eighteenth-century Methodist contemporaries, and demonstrated the conspicuous paucity of intentionally comparative studies devoted to these “preachers of one book,” it now remains for us to outline the shape of this ensuing comparison of their respective preaching ministries. Although itinerant preaching occupied a privileged place in their efforts to further evangelical revival, their public ministries did not consist wholly of spoken sermons. Instead, both deliberately pursued what Whitefield styled a “print and preach” ministry. While the sermons they preached and printed were not completely identical, either in terms of form or content, they did complement one

110. Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 12–13. Justifying the conjunction of holiness and sola fide as the “axial theme or orienting concern” of Wesley’s theology, Collins suggests that “what a synergistic model does not allow for, and what nevertheless was very much a part of Wesley’s full-orbed theology, drawing upon insights from the Reformation, was a place for the activity of God *alone*.” *Ibid.*, 6, 14–15.

111. See Baker, “Whitefield’s Break with the Wesleys”; Coppedge, *Shaping the Wesleyan Message*, 31–98; Harrington, “Friendship Under Fire,” 167–81; Henry, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of Free Will,” 200–204; Keefer, “Wesley’s Arminianism,” 88–100; McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, 107–52; Packer, “Arminianisms,” 25–42; Pask, “Influence of Arminius,” 258–63; Reist, “John Wesley and George Whitefield”; Sell, *Great Debate*; Shipley, “Wesley and Some Calvinistic Controversies.”

112. Baker, “Whitefield’s Break with the Wesley’s,” 103.

another, operated within the same homiletical orbit, and were indispensable components of their respective public ministries. As Lambert has observed, “preaching imposed obvious restrictions on the itinerant” since “at any given time he could appear at only one place.” By publishing printed versions of his spoken sermons, Whitefield was thus able “to extend the spatial and temporal dimensions of his mission, giving him an audience reaching far beyond the sound of his voice.”<sup>113</sup> In a similar fashion, Wesley’s published sermons also complemented his itinerant preaching ministry, especially, as we shall observe, as a means of delineating the doctrinal boundaries of Wesleyan Methodism.

In order to remain sensitive to the breadth of the “print and preach” ministries pursued by Wesley and Whitefield, on the one hand this study will endeavor to compare the style, delivery and rationale for field-preaching, paying particular attention to the influence of Scripture on these facets of their spoken sermons. On the other hand, in order to do justice to the full-orbed nature of their declaration of the gospel, we shall also compare various aspects of their sermons as they appear in printed form. This will include comparing the function of their published sermons within their wider public ministries, and how their printed sermons reflected the way they used, applied and interpreted the Bible, and also understood its prominent doctrines.

In chapter 2, entitled “A comparison of the itinerant field-preaching ministries of George Whitefield and John Wesley,” we shall compare the manner and extent to which the Bible, amongst a variety of influences, shaped their respective decisions to pursue an itinerant field-preaching ministry. We shall demonstrate that neither Whitefield nor Wesley made the highly contentious step of taking their sermons into “the streets and highways” spontaneously, Wesley in particular overcoming significant personal reservations regarding the ecclesiastical propriety of field-preaching. In due course, however, both became adamantly convinced that they had been commissioned to fulfill preaching ministries that were in some sense unique, exceptional and “extraordinary,” and both appealed to the Scriptures and used biblical vocabulary to buttress these convictions. We shall observe that although the content and location of their sermons aroused significant opposition from sources within and without the Church of England, far from diminishing their zeal for itinerant evangelism, both Wesley and Whitefield were emboldened to

113. Lambert, “*Pedlar in Divinity*,” 107.

pursue their field-preaching ministries after being systematically denied access to Church of England pulpits. Indeed, by declaring “the world to be their parish,” Wesley and Whitefield both situated their itinerant preaching ministries outside the normal parish structures of the Church of England.

In chapter 3, entitled, “A comparison of the delivery, style and descriptions of sermons preached by George Whitefield and John Wesley,” we shall continue to compare facets of the spoken sermons proclaimed by these two preachers and men of one book. First, we shall compare the delivery of the sermons preached by Whitefield and Wesley. It shall be demonstrated that both preachers considered their sermon content and sermon delivery to be inextricably linked, and that there was nothing accidental about their chosen approach towards delivering their sermons. We shall observe that in Whitefield’s case, the urgency of the gospel message prompted his impassioned dramatic pulpit oratory that was always intended to convert individuals, and never to entertain an audience. Although Whitefield might well have been temperamentally gifted as an “actor-preacher,” ultimately he was unwilling to proceed with his chosen homiletical style apart from what he considered to be sufficient scriptural precedent. Likewise, we shall also observe that in Wesley’s estimation, the task of preaching was not simply about dispassionately conveying information, but rather about persuading listeners to repent of their sins and believe the Scripture way of salvation. Wesley believed that the Bible ought to regulate not simply the content of his sermons, but also their manner of delivery. He thus endeavored to imitate the clarity and simplicity of inspired authors, especially the Apostle John, and exhorted his Methodist lay preachers to do likewise. Although Whitefield’s preaching style appears to have been more dramatic than that adopted by Wesley, he was equally committed to homiletical clarity and simplicity. Both preachers recognized that in order to reach a demographically and spatially diverse audience with the gospel, they must of necessity preach in a way that was readily comprehensible.

Beyond any similarities and differences in their respective preaching styles, we shall also demonstrate that one of the most significant ways in which their pursuit of evangelical revival diverged was that whereas Whitefield focused his energies almost exclusively on the task of widespread evangelism, Wesley was convinced that itinerant preaching ought not to constitute the entirety of his public ministry. Wesley

considered the long term spiritual nurture and oversight of Methodist societies to be inextricably linked to his vocation as a field-preacher, whereas Whitefield deliberately eschewed any effort to organize those converted under his preaching ministry.

Second, we shall compare the manner in which the sermons preached by Wesley and Whitefield were described, both by themselves and by contemporaries who heard them preach. It will become apparent that whereas descriptions of Whitefield's dramatic preaching style tend to overshadow the content of his sermons, the content of Wesley's sermons tends to overshadow his comparatively reserved preaching style. Indeed, whereas Wesley's understated sermon delivery is often negatively compared with Whitefield's famous reputation for pulpit oratory, the content of Whitefield's sermons is often pejoratively dismissed.

Further, we shall observe that both Whitefield and Wesley were fond of describing their preaching events in terms of the effects they produced upon their audiences. Although Whitefield was not averse to briefly mentioning the scriptural content of his sermons, his tendency was to describe his spoken sermons in terms of the emotional outpourings that often attended his preaching events, the numerical success of his ministry, and the financial generosity of individuals towards the orphanage in Savannah. By contrast, we shall demonstrate that Wesley's descriptions of his sermons tend to be more explicit about their scriptural content. Like Whitefield, however, he also described his preaching events in terms of their demonstrable effects and attested to his perception of the spiritual genuineness of these events that accompanied his sermons by utilizing Biblical language to describe them. Whitefield was supremely confident that the events that accompanied his preaching events provided incontestable evidence of divine blessing upon his preaching ministry. By contrast, Wesley's evaluations of the emotional outpourings that occasionally attended his preaching events were more circumspect, reflected in his willingness to acknowledge the presence of counterfeit responses amongst those genuinely moved in response to God's word. These differences notwithstanding, it shall be observed that the approach adopted by Wesley and Whitefield towards describing their preaching events reflected their conviction that these discernible effects constituted essential divine validation of their itinerant preaching ministries.

In chapter 4, entitled, “A comparison of the use, interpretation and application of the inspired Word in the printed words of George Whitefield and John Wesley,” our attention will turn to how their high view of the Bible, the inspired word of God, influenced their practice of proclaiming the word of God through their printed sermons. First, we shall compare the motivations Whitefield and Wesley had for printing their sermons. We shall examine the function of their printed sermons within the context of their wider public ministries, and demonstrate that just as Wesley and Whitefield understood the nature of their public ministries in different ways, these differences were translated into their respective aspirations for their printed sermons. Whitefield regarded his printed sermons in large measure simply as a means of extending the scope of his evangelistic itinerant preaching ministry. By contrast, Wesley utilized his printed sermons as his foremost instrument for facilitating spiritual nurture amongst the Methodist societies.

Second, we shall compare the variety of ways in which Wesley and Whitefield used Scripture within their published writings, with special emphasis on their sermons. Beyond the multiple points of similarity in their use of Scripture, we shall observe that the spoken and printed sermons of Wesley and Whitefield differed in one important respect. Wesley used the Scriptures in a variety of ways, but in general it functioned as a text to be expounded and applied. While the Bible is also used in similar ways in Whitefield’s published writings, in addition scriptural narratives often functioned as his sacred script. These Whitefield would dramatically perform from the vantage point of his pulpit which became for him a sanctified stage. That is, we shall demonstrate that in addition to the textual, explanatory, definitional, narrative and semantic uses of Scripture observable in both preachers’ printed sermons, Whitefield demonstrated his high regard for the inspired word of God by embodying and dramatically representing scenes from the Bible.

Third, we shall compare the principles of scriptural interpretation adopted by Wesley and Whitefield. We shall observe that the hermeneutical methodology employed by both preachers was governed by a shared conviction that the Bible represents the divine charter of human salvation. It shall be demonstrated that Wesley and Whitefield both believed that faithful hermeneutics required interpretive humility and divine illumination; both were committed in principle to the literal interpretation of Scripture; and both sought in some measure to situate



their interpretive conclusions within the testimony of the wider historic church without compromising their commitment to the perspicuity of the Bible.

Last, in chapter 5, entitled, “A comparison of the core doctrines proclaimed by George Whitefield and John Wesley,” we shall discover that behind their use of often identical theological terminology lurk subtle but highly significant theological differences, out of which flow equally significant theological and pastoral implications.

First, we shall compare the respective anthropologies of Wesley and Whitefield, paying particular attention to their respective understandings of the origin, extent and nature of sin and how this conditioned their respective articulations of “free grace.” We shall demonstrate that biblical anthropology and soteriology were inextricably linked in the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. Their sermons everywhere presume that the divine command to repent and be justified by faith and born again will only be heeded by those who acknowledge that by nature they are spiritually dead in their transgressions. It will become apparent that even though their definitions of original sin share much in common, differences in their respective anthropologies were brought into sharp relief during the so-called “free grace” episode. Wesley and Whitefield were so concerned that non-negotiable components of the gospel were threatened by their respective definitions of “free grace” that an irreversible breach amongst the Methodist societies ensued. Whitefield understood the Bible to present a monergistic view of salvation, and insofar as Wesley’s articulation of salvation introduced a degree of synergism, he considered himself theologically justified in parting company from Wesley’s Arminian Methodists. Wesley also affirmed that salvation is by grace alone, but the nuances in his anthropology that differentiated him from Whitefield, especially his commitment to “prevenient grace,” reflected his concern to acknowledge the place of non-meritorious and divinely-enabled human liberty in the divine-human relationship without compromising his doctrine of original sin.

Second, we shall compare the way in which Wesley and Whitefield understood and applied the doctrine of justification by faith. We shall demonstrate that both preachers believed that an individual cannot contribute anything meritorious towards their own justification. Both believed that justification entails divine forgiveness through an active trust in the merits of Jesus Christ and his propitiatory sacrifice alone. Both

recognized that the doctrine of justification could issue in licentiousness and therefore they consistently preached that antinomian presumption is incompatible with genuine Christianity. We shall, however, observe that they differed markedly in their conception of the temporal scope of justification and the nature of imputation. The absence of public conflict over the nature of justification might give the appearance that Wesley and Whitefield were in complete theological agreement. Yet a careful comparison of their teaching on justification will indicate that this conclusion cannot be supported without ignoring or suppressing distinctive and cherished aspects of their definition of this doctrine.

Third, we shall observe that Wesley and Whitefield were agreed on the necessity of experiencing regeneration as an instantaneous inward transformation, whereby God brings a person from spiritual death to spiritual life. It will become apparent that both agreed that justification must precede sanctification, that regeneration marks the threshold of sanctification, and that the new birth entails victory over the dominion and power of sin. Both were committed to pursuing inward and outward holiness. But we shall also demonstrate that they disagreed regarding the extent to which the indwelling sin might be purged from the life of a regenerate individual during their earthly life, and especially over what precisely is implied by the notion of Christian perfection. While Whitefield appears to have misunderstood Wesley's definition of perfection as a dynamic, relational reality, this terminological disagreement ought not to obscure the reality that Wesley's definition of sin as "voluntary transgressions of a known law" clearly set him apart from Whitefield.

### CONCLUSION

The preaching ministries of Wesley and Whitefield have long lacked intentionally comparative studies. Considering also the conspicuously polarized nature of much of the literature devoted to these two Methodist contemporaries, what follows is intended to supply a response to this scholarly deficiency, not an attempt to reach a verdict regarding which of these two preachers could more justly claim to be a "man of one book." That is, our intention is to avoid reinforcing the partisan caricatures of their respective doctrinal commitments and character that are unhelpful at best, illegitimate at worst. Instead, through an empathic evaluation of their "preach and print" ministries, we shall demonstrate that

the full-orbed preaching ministries conducted by Wesley and Whitefield evince notable similarities and dissimilarities. Our intention is not to suppress the many differences that appear in terms of their doctrines and homiletical practices, nor to artificially accentuate their similarities in such a way as to reconfigure Whitefield as a Wesleyan-Arminian and recast Wesley as a Whitefieldian-Calvinist. Rather, it will become apparent that Wesley and Whitefield expressed their singular commitment to being men of one book through preaching ministries that were by no means identical, yet were equally committed to the spread of the gospel throughout the transatlantic world.

SAMPLE