

Foreword

As Ian Maddock's PhD supervisor, I am delighted that his work is now being published and I am very happy to commend it. Although this is the published version of a doctoral thesis, no one should be deterred by that. Dr. Maddock writes well and clearly, avoiding jargon and "in house" language, thus making the work accessible to non-specialists.

Dr. Maddock is an able academic who has reached his conclusions on the basis of careful scholarship, involving serious study of the primary sources, as well as showing familiarity with the very large volume of secondary material. His now published research constitutes a notable contribution to the study of John Wesley and George Whitefield. His comparison of Whitefield and Wesley displays not only a solid acquaintance with the intellectual biography of each man but also a real grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of their preaching and writing ministries. I know of no other work which deals with their spoken and written work in this comparative way. Anyone with an interest in the Eighteenth Century Revival, the rise of Methodism (both Wesleyan and Calvinistic), the origins of "field preaching" or the history of evangelicalism will find this book to be valuable.

There has been considerable interest over the years in the life and ministry of John Wesley, not least by Wesleyan and Nazarene scholars. Similarly, within the Calvinistic tradition, Whitefield has had his place in the pantheon. The problem has been that those whose primary interest has been in Wesley, often show much less interest in Whitefield and vice versa. Indeed, many of the studies produced on these great men have been partisan, either arguing for Wesley's Arminianism or for Whitefield's Calvinism. This partisan treatment has often given the impression that that which divided Wesley and Whitefield was far more significant than that which united them. Dr. Maddock has not only avoided the parti-

sanship of some earlier studies but has gone to considerable lengths to demonstrate the many similarities and common concerns of Wesley and Whitefield. He has not, however, tried to blur their real differences in theology and style in the interests of accentuating these similarities. The work is thus fair and balanced and the end result is a stimulating and thought-provoking thesis which will be valued by both sides in the on-going debate concerning the relative merits of the two men.

The fact that Wesley and Whitefield were “men of one Book” is a pervasive theme of this work and Dr. Maddock rightly highlights their shared commitment to the authority of Scripture. Whether or not we accept Professor David Bebbington’s thesis that evangelicalism began in the eighteenth century, it is very clear that a commitment to the Scriptures as the final word on matters of faith and doctrine became a defining mark of the burgeoning evangelical movement. The way in which their shared commitment to Scripture illuminated and influenced their preaching is one of the strengths of this volume.

The “preach and print” strategy of Wesley and Whitefield is also highlighted as being one of the main reasons for their success and worldwide influence. Whether a sermon was preached in Bristol or in Savannah, it soon became available to those on the other side of the Atlantic, thus hastening a growing trans-Atlantic revival. Dr. Maddock would be the first to recognise, of course, that revival is a sovereign work of God the Holy Spirit and cannot be created, managed or engineered by human beings. Nevertheless, the “preach and print” strategy was clearly used by God to further his own gracious purposes.

As we read this book, we enter into the world of two very different preachers, each of whom was mightily used by God. Each believed that Scripture ought to determine not only the content but also the style of delivery, although their styles were contrasting. Whitefield was the more dramatic and histrionic in his language, gestures and delivery, whereas Wesley sought clarity and simplicity. This reminds us that God is able to use preachers of different backgrounds, styles and methods, so long as they are faithful, committed and Scriptural in their approach. If this book helps preachers to listen more carefully to the voice of God speaking by his Spirit through his Word and thus to be better preachers of the Gospel, it will make a significant pastoral as well as an academic contribution.

It is a pleasure to write a Foreword to such a useful, helpful and stimulating volume and I commend it, hoping that it will receive the careful study it deserves.

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