

almost meaningless in a racist society? Moore cites the well-known example of a planter who freed his slaves after being converted (though not by Simpson). But he was the exception; slavery persisted because it was the master key to economic gain and social status in South Carolina. Hence the emphasis in Moore's narrative of the 'paradox' of Simpson's ministry and of Evangelicalism in general: aspiring to convert everyone, but failing to do so.

The sobering specifics of Simpson's encounter with slavery notwithstanding, he also detailed in his diaries how he approached the final stages of life. In a superb chapter, Moore describes Simpson's understanding of death as a moment for confronting someone's identity as a sinner and securing (hopefully) the repentance that would signal the sincerity of a conversion. It is rare to encounter a devotional practice so richly described as it is here. Unexpectedly, the contradictions of the slave system give way to the contradictions of Evangelicalism itself. Indeed, this biography is full of surprises, another of them is the account (which I pass over) of Simpson's ministry in Scotland. For anyone interested in discerning first-hand the workings of ministry in a colonial slave society, this book is the place to begin.

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*Wesley, Whitefield, and the 'Free Grace' controversy. The crucible of Methodism.* By Joel Houston. (Methodist Studies Series.) Pp. xiv + 196. New York–London: Routledge, 2020. £120. 978 1 138 31725 2

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Joel Houston continues the trend in comparative studies in early Methodism with this fine new contribution. It follows Ian Maddock's two recent works, *Men of one book: a comparison of two Methodist preachers* (Cambridge 2012), *John Wesley and George Whitefield* (2018) and his edited volume, *Wesley vs. Whitefield or Wesley and Whitefield* and Sean McGeever's *Born again: the Evangelical theology of conversion in John Wesley and George Whitefield*. Houston's book is a highly readable revision of his Manchester PhD dissertation.

An introductory chapter sets the stage by examining the nature of doctrine, advancing Houston's thesis that theological principles actually create boundaries that are significant in the identification of specific groups and movements. He argues that to properly understand any doctrinal dispute one must delve deeper than the traditional intellectual arguments to probe the social and political factors that influenced the debate. In this book the author contends that the primary driving force is the manner in which predestination shaped the identity of the early eighteenth-century Methodists. In other words, doctrine not only establishes theological principles of what a group believes to be true but also shapes its adherents with an identity that sets them apart from others who do not claim the same beliefs. When Whitefield sailed to American in 1739, he naively relinquished the leadership of his Bristol and London religious societies to John Wesley. While Whitefield revealed some awareness of Wesley's resistance to predestination in cautioning him not to preach against the doctrine, he had little sense of the damage that Wesley could inflict upon his followers. Yet one can grasp Wesley's position in light of Houston's helpful treatment. It was necessary for Wesley to ignore Whitefield's request due to Wesley's abhorrence of predestination and the

urgent need that he felt to establish his own leadership and believers shaped by his own position of conditional election.

The remainder of this book is divided into two parts. The first section provides a broad historical overview of predestination, tracing it through Augustine to Calvin to Beza. Houston observes that Beza extended Calvin's understanding and developed a supralapsarian position not present in the Genevan reformer. This contributed to Wesley's confusion in misunderstanding Whitefield's moderate position of infralapsarianism, casting him in the same light as Beza.

Houston implies that this confusion was potentially inherent in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England since article 17, on predestination, was broad enough to accommodate both Calvinists and Arminians.

The second part focuses on the battle on predestination between Wesley and Whitefield. This section comprises over half the length of the book. Houston thoroughly investigates the chronological unfolding of the details surrounding this situation from the moment that Whitefield sailed to Georgia in 1739 until his return to England. Many readers will likely find Houston's careful analysis of Wesley's 'Free Grace' sermon that initiated these theological fireworks and an equal meticulous review of Whitefield's response to be one of the primary contributions of this work. More central to Houston's thesis is his dating of the resolution of the 'Free Grace Controversy' to 1749. Scholars are in agreement regarding the 1739 origin but various dates have been offered for its conclusion. Some place it as early as 1741 or 1743 but Houston dates it to 1749. His evidence is based on the date when Whitefield removed himself from leadership of the Calvinist Methodist movement and developed his relationship with Selina, countess of Huntingdon, as her chaplain. Since Whitefield was no longer actively leading the Calvinist Methodists it removed the impetus of predestination as a means of identification for his followers. In the same way Wesley's Arminian approach could now develop unheeded and continue to shape the nature of his Wesleyan movement.

Students of the 'Free Grace Controversy' are familiar with the mutual misunderstanding of Wesley and Whitefield. Wesley's view of predestination was shaped by the supralapsarianism of high Calvinism through which he incorrectly viewed Whitefield, preventing Wesley from grasping his opponent's moderate Calvinism and ability to preach the Gospel as widely as Wesley did himself (pp. 140, 142). Likewise, Whitefield never grasped the nuances of Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism and in particular, the nature of prevenient grace (pp. 141, 142). Within this discussion I was not convinced by Houston's depiction of Whitefield as a high Calvinist (pp. 138, 149) especially when earlier he observed that Whitefield did not reflect Matthew Henry, his favourite exegete, in his high Calvinist interpretation of Romans viii.30 (p. 83).

One of the gifts of Houston's finely-honed research is his ability to carefully parse individual scholarship and not to immediately discount an author's position simply because one aspect of his understanding has been deemed incorrect. Instead he patiently sifts through the arguments to discover valid insights that might lie hidden amid the layers of research. One example of this is Houston's review of the analysis by the Wesleyan scholar Alan Coppedge of Wesley's 'Free Grace' controversy. While Houston indicates aspects of Coppedge that miss the mark he is able to affirm other points that are on target (p. 183). This is a refreshing stance for a young scholar.

Houston concludes that Wesley was the winner of the 'Free Grace' controversy since he maintained his position of leadership. From one angle this is the natural conclusion; yet it appears to minimise Whitefield's expansive ecumenical spirit and his weariness of conflict over the deep divisions within the religious societies with his Wesleyan friend. Nor does it appreciate the unique nature of each person's gifts; Wesley's capacity for leadership and accountability that cultivated the growth of new followers and Whitefield's burning passion to preach the Gospel wherever and whenever he could. Despite these minor quibbles this is a valuable addition to early Methodist scholarship and deserves a wide reading and interaction. It also suggests insightful areas for future research including additional study on the theological background and development of Whitefield and the 'unique personalities of Wesley and Whitefield' and their fellow workers within early Methodism (pp. 185, 186).

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*Mary Hardy and her world, 1773–1809, III: Spiritual and social forces.* By Margaret Bird. Pp. xxxi + 796 incl. 329 black-and-white ills, 38 colour plates and 32 tables. Kingston-upon-Thames: Burnham Press, 2020. £38. 978 1 9162067 3 1  
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Margaret Bird has been working on Mary Hardy for thirty-two years. In 2013 she published the four-volume diary of Mary Hardy, a detailed daily record of Hardy's life as a businesswoman over thirty-six years. Now Bird has produced four volumes of 'Mary Hardy and her world', a series of thematic treatments of Hardy's family, business, religious and social world. It is difficult to decide whether Bird's or Hardy's is the greater achievement. Certainly in Bird, Hardy has gained an editor and biographer whose energy and thoroughness matches her own. Mary Hardy (*née* Raven) was born at Whissonsett, Norfolk and married William Hardy, a brewer of East Dereham and Letheringsett; so the book provides an extraordinarily rich portrait of Norfolk life in the final quarter of the eighteenth century. To the relief of this reviewer, Bird avoids the *cliché* of seeing Mary Hardy's religious life through the lens of Parson Woodforde. She recognises that an occasionally negligent parson did not represent the norm, and that 'bustling bishops' were more common than those of the caricatures. Indeed she makes a splendid assessment of the later Georgian Church of England rooted in the data garnered from ecclesiastical records. At the core of this picture is the centrality of the parish and of faith in this period. Secularisation, so beloved by historians from above, played little or no part when viewed from below. In chapters iii ('Roving preachers') and iv ('Wandering flock') Bird shows the strength of the Evangelical Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist pull on Norfolk people. In 1795 Mary Hardy joined the Wesleyan Methodists, which grew steadily in the county. It is clear that itinerancy brought the opportunity to see and hear a range of preachers and their energetic sermons were at the heart of the novelty of the Evangelical movement in Norfolk. Yet Hardy and her husband continued also to attend Anglican parish worship. Clearly in Norfolk, as in Wales and elsewhere,