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Who Founded Methodism? Wesley's Dependence upon Whitefield in the Eighteenth-Century English Revival

Kenneth E. Lawson

The history of Methodism has not suffered from neglect since its origin in the eighteenth century. Hundreds of volumes have been published which focus on the main personalities of the movement, John and Charles Wesley. John Wesley is usually cited as the founder of Methodism. His brilliant leadership and organizational abilities solidified the movement once it had begun. Without John Wesley, there would never have been a formal, organized Methodist Church. However, a closer examination of the early roots of the evangelical revival show that John Wesley was in fact a follower, not a leader. Furthermore, if it had not been for the prior ministry of George Whitefield, John Wesley's name may have joined a long list of noble, but forgotten, reformers in the English church. The purpose of this article is to examine closely the roots of the evangelical revival and to illustrate the dependence John Wesley had on the ministry of George Whitefield.

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My approach to this subject will be divided into five sections. Each section covers a key point or event which affected the evangelical revival and later the Methodist Church. The outline is as follows: 1) The formation of evangelical societies, 2) The ministry of open-air preaching, 3) The "Founder of Methodism," as George Whitefield was called by his contemporaries, 4) The early organization of Methodism, 5) The spread of the revival to Scotland, Wales, and the America Colonies.

The Formation of Evangelical Societies

In November 1729, John Wesley became a full-time tutor at Oxford. His younger brother Charles, as a student at Oxford, met regularly with other serious students for Bible study, prayer, and weekly attendance at Holy Communion.

Because John was older and had prestige as an Oxford tutor, he became the natural leader of the small religious study circle.¹ This so-called Holy Club, led by John and Charles Wesley, was not evangelical. Its members knew nothing of the new birth. Rather, members attempted to merit salvation through acts of benevolence and personal piety.

When Whitefield attended Oxford in 1732, he accelerated his personal search for God. He became more outwardly pious than he had ever been, yet he lacked personal relationship with Christ. He recorded, "I now began to pray and sing Psalms thrice every day, and to fast every Friday; and to receive the Sacrament at a parish church near our college ... once a month."² Whitefield longed to be acquainted with this group on campus known for their strict living. His initial contact with the Holy Club came through Charles Wesley, who had noticed Whitefield's devotion to God and separation from the amusements of the world. Yet Whitefield could not find the salvation of his soul through the disciplined life of this Oxford group. A biographer of Whitefield writes, "Its members knew nothing of the inward miracle of the new birth, and in their search for spiritual satisfaction, turned increasingly to outward ritual."³

The evangelical message of the new birth was not to be found in the Oxford Holy Club. Whitefield's search for salvation made him increasingly dissatisfied with the attempts of the Wesleys and other Holy Club members to earn their salvation. Upon coming to the end of his human abilities and resources, Whitefield was born of the Spirit and came to personal faith in Christ. What he had been trying to earn for years he now received as a free gift in Jesus Christ. The exact date of his conversion is not certain. It is clear, however, that by February 1735, he fully understood salvation by grace alone. In a letter to a friend, Whitefield asserted:

True religion does not consist in anything besides an entire renewal of our natures into the image of God.... How wretchedly most people do err ... who suppose it to be nothing else ... but a mere model of outward performance.⁴

This message of the new birth, which was essential for the evangelical revival and the founding of Methodism, was not known by John and Charles Wesley during their Oxford Holy Club days. "The Holy Club members had worried already over Whitefield's excesses; he took matters too far and his meanderings about 'the new birth' puzzled them, since all were baptized members of the Church of England."⁵ The Holy Club as founded by the Wesleys was clearly distinct from the evangelical revival for the following reasons:

1) The Holy Club was not famous nor popular. It was reserved for a small band of men associated with Oxford University, and no one else.

2) The theology of the Holy Club was not evangelical. The Holy Club members knew nothing of the new birth. They sought spiritual satisfaction through outward ritual and charitable acts.

3) The Holy Club was not the beginning of the revival. These men were without the gospel of the grace of God. Their religion was essentially private and personal, without expressed concern for bringing others to Christ.⁶

The first true evangelical societies which were formed in direct connection to the revival were organized by George Whitefield in 1737. Whitefield began preaching the message of the new birth immediately after his conversion. Multitudes soon gathered to hear his unique message and to enjoy his distinct oratorical abilities. Whitefield recorded:

I preached as usual about five times a week; but the congregation grew, if possible, larger and larger.... Persons of all denominations flocked to hear. Persons of all ranks not

only publicly attended my ministry but gave me private invitations to their houses. A private society or two were erected.⁷

An argument could be made for dating the first evangelical societies from as early as 1735. Whitefield recorded the forming of such a group as follows:

God made me instrumental to awaken several young persons, who soon formed themselves into a little Society, and had quickly the honor of being despised at Gloucester, as we had been before them at Oxford.⁸

Whichever date is chosen for the origin of the evangelical societies, three things are certain: 1) They were a result of George Whitefield's preaching; 2) They were completely distinct from the Oxford Holy Club; and 3) Their origin was separate from the Wesleys, who at this point were still unconverted and serving as missionaries in Georgia.⁹

The Ministry of Open-Air Preaching

The idea of open-air preaching did not originate with Whitefield himself. Even a casual reading of the New Testament shows that the apostles preached out-of-doors, in theaters, public market-places, and various and sundry open spaces. Yet Whitefield's immediate influence toward open-air preaching came from an evangelical Welshman named Howell Harris.¹⁰ On Saturday, February 17, 1739, Whitefield preached his first sermon in the open air. He recorded the event as follows:

My bowels have long since yearned toward the poor colliers, who are very numerous, and as sheep having no shepherd. After dinner, therefore, I went up to a mount, and spoke to as many people as came to me. There were upwards of two hundred. Blessed be God that I have now broken the ice! I believe I was never more acceptable to my Master than when

I was standing to teach those hearers in the open field. Some may censure me; but if I thus pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.¹¹

This topic of open-air preaching and the evangelical revival is somewhat controversial for Wesleyan scholars. Some readily admit that Whitefield was the originator of open-air preaching in eighteenth-century England. Others are silent on the matter, while other historians attribute the open-air preaching ministry to John Wesley. This particular issue is a good example of the mythological tendencies followers of Wesley have shown for centuries. He is automatically assumed to have originated the ministry of open-air preaching, when in fact he actually learned it from Whitefield. John Wesley recorded in his own journal, April 31, 1739:

In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.¹²

George Whitefield was in 1739 a sensational open-air preacher. Tens of thousands flocked to the fields when the established churches refused to allow him into their pulpits. John Wesley was at this time openly sympathetic to the practice of open-air preaching, but he himself had not yet actually preached in this manner. Whitefield taught, encouraged, and provided opportunities for Wesley to be introduced to open-air preaching. The following is again a quote from Wesley's journal:

Thursday, June 14, 1739
I went with Mr. Whitefield to Blackheath, where were, I

believe, twelve or fourteen thousand people. He a little surprised me, by desiring me to preach in his stead, which I did (though nature recoiled) on my favorite subject, "Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption."¹³

Some Methodist historians have overlooked the fact that without Whitefield, John Wesley may never have become an open-air preacher. An example of this is seen in Frank Baker's book, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, where he completely glosses over this fact.¹⁴ Others have been more thorough in their research. An example is the *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, which properly shows the dependence Wesley had upon Whitefield in this area. It says, in part, that "He [i.e., Whitefield] persuaded the Wesleys to join him in field preaching from April 1739, although he saw John Wesley's main value as one to 'confirm those who are awakened' into societies."¹⁵

John Wesley himself is to blame for the historical ambiguity which exists concerning the question of the origin of open-air preaching in the evangelical revival. Wesley wrote some historical recollections of the roots of Methodism after Whitefield's death in 1770. In his zeal to solidify his own leadership in the various branches of Methodism, certain statements he made seem quite inaccurate. By 1777, numerous pamphlets were circulating which questioned the accuracy of Wesley's statements. Wesley found himself on the defensive. Men were still alive who remembered that Whitefield had begun an open-air ministry as early as 1739, prior to John or Charles Wesley. Wesley responded to one such critic by asserting, "It may be observed, (if it is worth observing), that I preached in the open-air in October, 1735. Mr. Whitefield was not then ordained."¹⁶ This statement by Wesley borders on being scandalous. First, Wesley does not mention the incident by name. Second, this event was three years before his own conversion. Third, attaching this

event to the evangelical revival begun three years later is simply not honest. Fourth, Wesley completely overlooks the fact that his own journal records of 1739 showed that he followed Whitefield's example in preaching in the fields, being initially opposed to the idea, and only by Whitefield's mentoring being able to become a successful open-air preacher.

Whitefield Was Called "The Founder of Methodism" by His Contemporaries.

The term "Methodist" predates both John Wesley and George Whitefield. Although the exact origin of the word is uncertain, it was generally applied to people who acted methodically or according to method. The term had an early association in the field of medical studies.¹⁷ It was Charles Wesley, as a student at Oxford before John Wesley and Whitefield arrived, who was the recipient of this not-too-complimentary nickname. Charles accepted it as a testimony of the studious and devotional rule of life he and his friends observed. Many other unflattering names were also associated with the group, such as "Sacramentarians," "Enthusiasts," "Bible Moths," and one name that endured along with "Methodist," "The Holy Club."

The early concept of Holy Club Methodism needs to be distinguished from the evangelical revival movement which also bore the name Methodist. The two groups are separate and distinct. 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.

It is normally assumed that John Wesley founded Methodism, or the evangelical Methodist movement.¹⁸ How-

ever, the contemporaries of both Wesley and Whitefield in the eighteenth century overwhelmingly attribute the origin of the movement to Whitefield. For example, the Countess of Hertford, writing in 1739 to the Countess of Pomfret, said:

"I do not know whether you have heard of our new sect who call themselves Methodists. There is one Whitefield at the head of them—a young man under five and twenty."¹⁹

Dallimore provides numerous other examples of the contemporary eighteenth-century opinion that Whitefield founded Methodism. Dallimore quotes a historical narrative from the year 1739, which stated:

This year was distinguished by the institution of a set of fanatics under the name of Methodists, of which one Whitefield, a young clergyman, was the founder. . . . Striking in with the common fanatical jargon and practices of enthusiasm, he soon found himself at the head of such a number of disciples as might have been dangerous to the public response, had they attempted to disturb it.²⁰

Several other articles and publications during the lives of Whitefield and Wesley show Whitefield's dominant position in terms of leadership within the burgeoning Methodist movement. A false report of Whitefield's death in 1748 designated him, "Whitefield, the Founder of Methodists." An essay written in 1781 made mention of "pure Methodism" as it was founded by Whitefield. Finally, those who opposed the revival often wrote their malicious pamphlets directed at Whitefield as the head of the Methodist movement. Two such titles were, "The Methodists: An Humorous Burlesque Poem Addressed to Mr. Whitefield" and, "The Rest of His Brethren, the Methodists."²¹

The overwhelming testimony of the mid-eighteenth century was that Whitefield was the leading figure and founder of a sect called Methodists. Careful modern historians have not overlooked this fact. For example: "A scrutiny of the

contemporary records will reveal that in the eighteenth century itself the name of Whitefield figures most prominently of all; . . . Whitefield was regarded as the primate of the new movement and even the founder of Methodism."²²

John Wesley was apparently not comfortable with the idea that history would remember George Whitefield as the founder of Methodism. In 1739, John Wesley was a discouraged minister who had just returned from a failed missionary endeavor to Georgia in the American colonies. All around him he saw amazing success attending the ministry of George Whitefield. Wesley, still essentially a disciple of Whitefield at this time, was being taught in the work of open-air preaching. Years later Wesley presented his own opinion as to who founded Methodism. Wesley reported in a sermon preached in 1777: "When my brother and I returned from Georgia . . . we and our friends were the only persons to whom that name [i.e., Methodist] was affixed. Thus far, therefore, all the Methodists were firm to the Church of England."²³

This statement is inaccurate and misleading for several reasons. First, the Methodism Wesley understood when he left for Georgia was only the legalistic variety practiced by the Holy Club at Oxford. Second, Wesley was at this time still unconverted. It is therefore misleading that he would associate himself with the evangelical Methodist movement which was born under Whitefield as the Wesleys were in America. Third, it is clearly wrong that Wesley and his group "were the only persons to whom that name [i.e., Methodist] was affixed." Numerous examples already cited call this conclusion into serious question.

A second illustration of Wesley's desire to essentially rewrite the history of early Methodism is revealed in his *Works*. Wesley stumbled upon a book contemporary to his day which was very simply called *History of England*, by Dr. Smollet. In this work, Whitefield is listed ahead of John and

Charles Wesley as founders of Methodism. The order of wording which so disturbed Wesley is as follows: "Weak minds were seduced by the delusions of a superstition, styled Methodism.... Many thousands were infected with this enthusiasm by the endeavors of a few obscure preachers, such as Whitefield, and the two Wesleys...."²⁴

It is interesting to note that even a non-liturgical historian such as Dr. Smollet saw the pre-eminence of Whitefield in early Methodism. Wesley responded, "Poor Dr. Smollet! Thus to transmit to all succeeding generations a whole heap of notorious falsehoods."²⁵

George Whitefield was accurately called "The Founder of Methodism" by his contemporaries, and still deserves such recognition today.

The Early Organization of Methodism

The modern organizational system of the Methodist church clearly owes its origin to John Wesley. He was a masterful superintendent and a skilled organizer. The development of bands, class meetings, societies, and formal circuits all trace their origin to John Wesley. On this there is unanimous agreement.

Because of John Wesley's skill as an organizer and administrator, it is often assumed that he was the initial organizing force in the evangelical Methodist revival. A closer examination, however, shows once again that this is not the whole story. During the earliest years of the revival, George Whitefield was the primary planner and organizer of the young movement. Many of the ideas and procedures normally attributed to John Wesley actually originated with Whitefield.

Whitefield's success as an evangelical revivalist affected the religious societies in England tremendously. Not only were some of the older societies strengthened, but numerous new groups also formed as a result of Whitefield's

preaching. Dallimore observes:

"Previous to Whitefield's ministry the Societies had been separate bodies, scarcely conscious of any mutual relationship. But now in their new zeal and strong allegiance to evangelical doctrine, bonds of fellowship were formed between them...."²⁶

The early, primitive stage of organization in the evangelical revival belonged to the societies which united under Whitefield's leadership. John Wesley was at this time uncertain of his own future, as he ministered in small congregations that were first influenced by Whitefield.

The first conference that can be identified within the Methodist revival movement was held on January 5, 1739. Conferences have always been a trademark of Methodism. The usual assumption is that John Wesley founded the tradition of meeting for periodic councils. However, the first evangelical Methodist conference was directed by Whitefield, not John Wesley. Whitefield recorded that event in his journal, where he wrote:

Friday, January 5, [1739]

Held a conference at Islington, concerning several things of very great importance, with seven true ministers of Jesus Christ, despised Methodists, whom God has brought together from the East and the West, the North and the South.²⁷

It also should be noted that Whitefield participated in the Welsh Calvinist Methodist Conference in January 1743. This conference met a year and a half before John Wesley's first conference in 1744.²⁸

In November 1781, eleven years after Whitefield's death, John Wesley wrote *A Short History of the People Called Methodists*. Wesley looked back over the years and recorded his perspective of the early organization of Methodism. His personal bias is striking. He wrote:

The first rise of Methodism, so called, was in November 1729, when four of us met together at Oxford. The second was at Savannah in April 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house; the last was at London on 1 May, 1738, when forty or fifty of us agree to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to a free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer.²⁹

Again, we find Wesley misrepresenting historical facts in order to solidify his personal leadership over the whole movement of Methodism. First, Wesley connects the 1729 Oxford Holy Club's origins to the evangelical revival, when they had nothing in common. Next, he mentions a meeting in Savannah, Georgia, in 1736, which is totally unrelated to the origins of the revival in England. Finally, Wesley cites the Wednesday evening fellowships he developed as a final link in the origin of Methodism. Yet Wesley was not himself converted until the end of May 1738. All the above examples cited by Wesley himself were clearly prior to his own conversion and are thus essentially unrelated to the evangelical revival itself. Yet in his own words he calls these examples, "The first rise of Methodism." Not even a whisper is made of Wesley's dependence on Whitefield, or the societies and conferences Whitefield developed before John Wesley attended his first such meeting. Nor does Wesley even mention that Whitefield taught him regarding open-air preaching, gave him the use of buildings constructed by Whitefield's friends, and entrusted the supervision of the early revival ministry to him after Whitefield left to preach in the American Colonies in 1740.

The Spread of the Revival to Scotland, Wales, and the American Colonies

Whitefield first visited Scotland in July 1741. His success in this new arena was nothing short of sensational by all accounts. The strict Calvinism of the Scottish churches had

left them cold and stagnant. Yet the people of Scotland attended church, read their Bibles, and were generally a God-fearing people. Those few ministers who preached with zeal and longed for revival urged Whitefield to come to Scotland.

Certain evangelical pastors, realizing that their chapels were too small to accommodate the masses of people who admired Whitefield, arranged for him immediately to preach in the open air. Whitefield recorded some of the response to his ministry in Scotland as follows:

Edinburgh, August 8, 1741

You will see, my dear brother, by the following, what God is still doing for me. On the Sunday evening, I preached in a field near the orphan house, to upwards of fifteen thousand people; and on Monday, Friday, and Saturday evening, to nearly as many. On Tuesday I preached in the Cannongate church; on Wednesday and Thursday at Dumferning; and at my return of Friday morning, at about eight o'clock, I preached at a town called Queens Ferry, seven miles from Edinburgh. Everywhere the authorities were large and very attentive. Great power accompanied the Word. Many have been brought under conviction; and I have already received several invitations to different places, which, God willing, I intend to comply with.³⁰

Whitefield's ministry in Scotland created an evangelical movement that grew and developed for years after his departure. One minister in Edinburgh informed him:

Since you left Scotland, numbers in different corners have been awakened.... New meetings for prayer and spiritual conference are erecting everywhere. Religious conversation has banished slander . . . and Christians are not ashamed to own their Lord.³¹

In contrast to Whitefield's success in Scotland, John Wesley first came to the same area in 1751, ten years after

the revival began under Whitefield's ministry. Wesley had only minimal success among the Scots, primarily because of his dislike for the doctrines of Calvinism. One historian states that Wesley's visits to Scotland were "relatively impotent" and that his failure "resulted because of people's insensitivity to Wesley's character and to his ideals [doctrine]."³² In contrast to Wesley's failures, the Associate Presbytery in 1743 declared a public fast in respect for the labors of George Whitefield among them. The revival in Scotland in the 1740s would not have been possible without Whitefield.

Wales experienced revival years before Whitefield's first visit in 1739. Howell Harris and others were key figures in the Welsh awakening. Whitefield's first of several visits to this area lasted only one week. His itinerant ministry was quite successful. Whitefield recorded in his journal:

Friday, March 9 [1739]

Left Cardiff about six in the morning, and reached Newport about ten, where many came from Pontypool, and other parts, on purpose to hear me. The minister being asked and readily granting us the pulpit, I preached to about a thousand people. . . . I think Wales is excellently well prepared for the gospel of Christ. They have many burning and shining lights among both the dissenting and church ministers. . . . People make nothing of coming twenty miles to hear a sermon, and great numbers there are who have not only been hearers, but doers also of the Word; so that there is a most comfortable prospect of the spreading of the gospel in Wales.³³

Whitefield ministered in Wales in 1739 for one week. The revival work blossomed under his leadership and under those who followed his example. In 1743 Whitefield returned after the urgent request of Howell Harris and others for his assistance. Whitefield was immediately elected moderator of the Calvinistic Methodist Conference. The gathering was called in order to provide better organization and

oversight in the revival movement of Wales. Positions of authority, with definite territories delegated for oversight, were developed in this meeting. One Methodist historian has written, "It is a notable fact that the first Calvinistic Methodist Association was held eighteen months before Wesley held his first Methodist Conference."³⁴ Yet some historians still credit John Wesley with a pioneer work in Wales, making little or no mention of the Methodism which existed for ten years before his arrival.³⁵

In addition to Scotland and Wales, the evangelical revival spread to the American Colonies. John Wesley was virtually unknown in the Colonies. His only personal visit to the Colonies was to Georgia in the late 1730s. Wesley's labors in the Georgia Colony were largely unfruitful. George Whitefield, however, made seven trips to the Colonies between 1739 and his death (in Massachusetts) in 1770. Whitefield did not come to America to establish Methodism. Rather, he ministered broadly to various groups and churches by preaching the Gospel wherever possible. He majored on supporting the work of local revival preachers who had arisen during the Great Awakening.³⁶

Wesley was as dependent upon Whitefield in America as he had been in Scotland and Wales. When Whitefield learned that two men sent over to the Colonies by John Wesley had arrived in Philadelphia, he called on them, expressing personal satisfaction with their presence. In America, Wesley's name meant very little to the people; it was Whitefield who really opened the door for Methodism to take root and ultimately to prosper in this land. The very reason that Wesley sent missionaries to America initially was not to evangelize but to organize the converts who had been reached through the itinerant ministries of Whitefield. Wesley's utter dependence upon the prior labors of George Whitefield is obvious when the evidence is considered carefully. After lamenting the lack of organization among

the converts of Whitefield, Wesley recorded:

It is believed that they [i.e., Wesleyan missionaries] might confirm many that were weak or wavering, and lift up many that were fallen; nay, and that they would see more fruit of their labors in America than they had done either in England or Ireland.³⁷

Whitefield introduced the Colonies in America to his method of itinerant evangelism on a universal scale. In contrast, colonial revivalists would temporarily leave their local church pulpits to preach in surrounding towns and villages, returning later to their own parish ministry. Whitefield took abuse as an "itinerant enthusiast," as he was called by his opposers. He personally paid the physical cost with his own body in order to make itineracy universally known. When John Wesley's men arrived after 1769 and began their itinerant ministries, many of Whitefield's followers supported their work. In reference to Maryland one writes, "The people of the adjacent small communities, strongly influenced by Whitefield, had come into the Methodist orbit."³⁸ William Warren Sweet, well-known American church historian, sums up this point by writing, "The connecting link between the revival movement in England and America was George Whitefield."³⁹

The question of who founded Methodism remains confused in the minds of many. Until recently, it has been almost unanimously accepted that John and Charles Wesley founded this movement and were its vital, early pioneers. More recent historians have gone back to original sources more carefully and thus discovered that the Wesleys were very dependent upon George Whitefield for the foundation of the movement that they built a different sort of Methodism upon.⁴⁰ In John Wesley's zeal to maintain leadership and control over the Methodist revival, historical inaccuracies often appeared in his accounts. Especially after Whitefield's death in 1770, we see the historical information of the 1730s

and 1740s frequently realigned and reordered so that John Wesley would be remembered by later generations as the founder and principal force in the growing Methodist movement. I believe that due credit needs to be given to George Whitefield, for without him John and Charles Wesley may not have come to such an important role in English church history. Let us give thanks for the Wesleys, as we properly should. But let us also give due credit to the amazing, and until recently almost unknown, ministry of one of the greatest preachers of the Gospel who ever heralded Christ in our language, George Whitefield.

Endnotes

- 1 Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 22.
- 2 George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 37.
- 3 Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, 1:71
- 4 George Whitefield, *Works of George Whitefield*, 1:6.
- 5 John Pollock, *George Whitefield and the Great Awakening*, 13.
- 6 Dallimore, *op. cit.*, 1:71-72.
- 7 Whitefield, *Journals*, 84.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 60.
- 9 Henry C. Rack, "Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 38:4, October 1987, 582-95.
- 10 Dallimore, *op. cit.*, 1:232-34, and Whitefield, *Works*, 1:46-47.
- 11 Whitefield, *Journals*, 216.
- 12 John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 1:185.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 1:203.
- 14 Baker, *op. cit.*, 62-68.
- 15 Henry C. Rack, "George Whitefield," *Encyclopedia of*

World Methodism, 2553-54.

- 16 Wesley, *op. cit.*, 10:447.
- 17 Henry Carter, *The Methodist Heritage*. Cf. also Emory Stevens Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, 1:15, where he and others indicate that the word was generic for any religious dissenter at the time.
- 18 William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, 27. He writes, "Methodism arose out of two great urges; the first was the religious experience of John Wesley; the second was the vast spiritual destitution of eighteenth-century England."
- 19 *Op. cit.*, cited in 1:381.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 1:381-82.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 1:382.
- 22 A. Skevington Wood, *The Inextinguishable Blaze*, 79.
- 23 Wesley, *op. cit.*, 7:429.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 4:148.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 4:148.
- 26 Dallimore, *op. cit.*, 1:166.
- 27 Whitefield, *Journals*, 196.
- 28 Bucke, ed., *op. cit.*, 15.
- 29 Wesley, *op. cit.*, 13:307.
- 30 Whitefield, *Works*, 1:309.
- 31 John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 80.
- 32 Samuel J. Rogal, *John Wesley's Mission to Scotland, 1751-1790*, 6-7.
- 33 Whitefield, *op. cit.*, *Journals*, 231.
- 34 Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 2:50.
- 35 Baker, *op. cit.*, 120-23 provides a good example.
- 36 Pollock, *op. cit.*, 262.
- 37 Wesley, *op. cit.*, 7:411.
- 38 Bucke, *op. cit.*, 1:137.
- 39 Sweet, *op. cit.*, 13.

40 Dallimore, *op. cit.*, 2:531 provides an especially helpful reflection here.

Author

Kenneth E. Lawson serves as a church planting pastor in North Andover, Massachusetts. He is also a chaplain in the Massachusetts Air National Guard.

Editor's Note

What difference does it really make who founded Methodism? In the *ultimate* sense I answer, "None whatsoever!" But since we still live in time and have inherited various notions about our own history and that of revivals and revival leaders, it does in fact make a difference for several reasons. First, it shows us the humanness of reformers and awakeners of the past. This, I believe, is both necessary and healthy. Second, it sets the record straight, to some extent, regarding a man (George Whitefield) for whom we should give considerable thanks. A proper appreciation for, and understanding of, George Whitefield might considerably aid our present situation regarding revival as well as itinerant evangelistic preaching. Third, since it is sometimes falsely claimed that genuine revival does not begin and develop among those who hold the historic doctrines of grace, or what is sometimes called Calvinism, setting this historical record straight shows that this is a cavil of major proportions. Finally, this story demonstrates that we need to consider sources more carefully when we study any movement or individual's role in revival. If modern Christians would read and think more critically, they would be better able to think, and thus live, more Christianly.