

George Whitefield's Doctrine of Christ

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Introduction

George Whitefield (1714-1770) is generally known as a renowned preacher and one of the leading revivalists in eighteenth-century England.¹ However, it is a mistake to evaluate him solely on the basis of these two aspects of his career. Whitefield was also an eminent theologian. While he never wrote a formal theological treatise, his sermons remain one of his primary contributions to subsequent generations and are full of outstanding theological discussions. Even though differing formally from the typical theological works, transcripts of his sermons and letters provide insight into his systematic and logical analysis of theological topics.² Certainly, considering these, Whitefield's theology is one of the most important sides of his life and ministry.

Nevertheless, Whitefield's theological thought is still under-explored and somewhat neglected.³ In this regard, the study of his theology is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of Whitefield's life and thought, and the purpose of this essay is to contribute to meeting this very need by providing a thorough analysis of his theology through examples of his treatments of theological topics. Since a full investigation

of his theological thought would require a significant monograph, this work will consider only Whitefield's doctrine of Christ as an illustration of the way in which he discusses theological topics, and it will focus on his ideas of the person and the work of Christ.⁴ The doctrine of Christ is an ideal place to examine the theological principles and emphases which this great preacher held because his writings contain extensive exposition of his Christology and discuss highly provocative theological issues in his days, such as whether Christ is fully divine.⁵

The examination of his writings will permit us to observe three things in detail. First, following the Nicene and Chalcedonian tradition, Whitefield endorses the union of the full deity of Christ and the true and complete humanity of Christ in one person. Second, in line with the classic Puritan and Reformed tradition, he employs the idea of Christ's three-fold role of king, priest, and prophet. However, in Whitefield's thought, Christ's office as a priest appears as the most central work of Christ for human salvation, and the ideas of vicarious satisfaction and the imputation of Christ's righteousness particularly serve to explain the nature of Christ's priestly office. Third, contrary to the arguments put forth in previous scholarship, Whitefield's sermons demonstrate that he does not "blithely" pass over theological and exegetical discussions regarding Christology.⁶ Instead, Whitefield still retains a balance between doctrinal, exegetical, and devotional concerns in his sermons.

Whitefield on the Person of Christ

The Deity of Christ

The divine nature of Christ, or more specifically, the vindication of the deity of the Son, receives considerable attention in Whitefield's work.⁷ Such emphasis on the deity of Christ in Whitefield's writings is historically expected considering the fact that during the Post-Reformation era, orthodox Christianity battled against heresies, especially those concerning the constitution of the person of Christ.⁸ The core of the Christological controversies at that time lies in whether Christ is fully divine.⁹ In this context, Whitefield was often polemical, and faithfully insisted on the orthodox understanding of the divinity of Christ in his writings. For example, in opposition to the Socinians and Unitarians, who maintained that Christ was merely a man and had no existence before he was born of Mary; and in opposition to the Arians, who, though they admitted the pre-existence of Christ, maintained that he is a creature, and possesses only a subordinate divinity;¹⁰ Whitefield argues the following:

My brethren, Jesus Christ is coequal, coessential, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father, very God of very God; and as there was not a moment of time in which God the Father was not, so there was not a moment of time in which God the Son was not.¹¹

In a similar vein, Whitefield elsewhere clearly acknowledges Christ's full equality with God the Father as follows:

But I hope, my brethren, he is to you, what our creed makes him, God of God, very God of very God, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father; that as there was not a moment of time in which God the Father was not, so there is not a moment of time in which God the Son was not.¹²

In these statements regarding the deity of Christ, Whitefield clearly maintains that Christ not only existed before his incarnation but was from all eternity the Son of God, of one substance, and equal with the Father. In addition to these statements, in line with the traditional orthodox belief and teaching, Whitefield consistently and faithfully teaches the full deity and pre-existence of Christ which was denied by the Arians and Socinians of the time.¹³

To prove Christ's divinity Whitefield thoroughly relies on the Holy Scriptures. He does not appeal to the authority of any individual thinker or church tradition. Instead, the principal source for Whitefield's defense of Christ's divinity is the Bible itself. For example, in his defense of Christ's divinity against the Arians and the Socinians, Whitefield employs Isaiah 9:6, Revelation 1:8, and John 1:10:

Arians and Socinians deny this Godhead of Christ and esteem Him only as a creature: The Arians look upon Him as a titular Deity, as a created and subordinate God: but if they would humbly search the Scriptures, they would find Divine homage paid to Christ. He is called God in Scripture, particularly when the great evangelical prophet says, "He shall be called the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the government shall be upon His shoulders:" and Jesus Christ Himself says, that He is "the Alpha and the Omega;" and that "the world was made by Him." But though this can be ever so plain, our gay airy sparks of this age will not believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be equal with the Father, and that for no other reason but because it is a fashionable and polite doctrine to deny His Divinity and esteem Him only a created God.¹⁴

In addition to these texts, Whitefield's scriptural proof of the deity of the Son includes standard texts such as Matthew 28: 19-20, John 1:1, John 8:58, and John 10:30.¹⁵

Whitefield generally does not provide a detailed interpretation of these verses in his sermons. Nevertheless, when necessary, he does not hesitate to expound on the text in order to refute the ideas of his opponents and support his argument for Christ's deity. For instance, in his sermon on Jeremiah 23:6, entitled, "The LORD our Righteousness," he expounds in detail the meaning of the phrase, "The LORD our Righteousness." First, Whitefield shows that the "righteous branch" in Jeremiah 23:5 undoubtedly refers to Jesus Christ. Given this, the title "the LORD" in verse 6 may properly belong to Jesus Christ. Second, Whitefield claims that "the LORD" is "Jehovah", which in the original Hebrew is "the essential title of God himself." On the basis of these exegetical considerations, Whitefield insists that "it is plain, that, by the word Lord, we are to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, who here takes to himself the title of Jehovah, and therefore must be very God of very God; or, as the Apostle devoutly expresses it, 'God blessed for evermore.'"¹⁶ Indeed, according to Whitefield, the application of the title of LORD to Christ in the text clearly testifies to Christ's full divinity, and therefore, the Socinian or Arian idea that Christ was a mere man or a created being cannot be warranted at all. Moreover, in addition to this text, there are many more places in the Scriptures where the LORD is ascribed to Christ. Thus, he holds that the appellation of Christ as LORD in the Scriptures is such powerful evidence of the deity of Christ that "if there were no other text in the Bible to prove the divinity of Christ, this is sufficient."¹⁷ In short, since the incommunicable names of God such as the Lord, Jehovah, and God are frequently applied to the Son, for Whitefield Jesus Christ is certainly very God.

Besides the application of the divine title to Christ, Whitefield presents two more evidences for the deity of Christ on the basis of the examination of Scriptural texts. First, Whitefield insists that divine activities ascribed to Christ prove his full deity. He particularly mentions the work of creation. In Whitefield's thought, the creation of all things out of nothing is a work particular to God. Thus, upon the basis of John 1:3, he maintains that since Christ is the creator of heaven and earth, he is God.¹⁸ Second, in Whitefield's view, the eternity, or the eternal generation, of the Son is another significant example which vindicates his full deity.¹⁹ Even though he does not discuss the topic in detail, Whitefield

argues on the basis of Scripture texts such as John 8:58, John 10:30, and Revelation 1:8 that Jesus Christ not only existed prior to his incarnation but is the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father.²⁰ In spite of the inconceivably mysterious nature of the eternal generation of the Son, Whitefield is certain that the eternity of the Son or the eternal generation of the Son is confirmed by many passages of Scripture and that it necessarily implies the Son's equality with the Father. We can clearly see from these arguments that regardless of whether Whitefield provides a detailed interpretation of the text or discussion of the doctrine, the main foundation for Whitefield's demonstration of the full deity of Christ is thoroughly based on the Scriptures.

Even though Whitefield relies on texts from various parts of Scripture, based on the number of citations his favorite text for the demonstration of Christ's divinity is certainly the Gospel of John. He even argues that the main purpose of John's Gospel was to prove the deity of Christ:

I have more than once had occasion to observe, that the chief end St. John had in view, when he wrote his gospel, was to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ, (that Word, who not only was from everlasting with God, but also was really God blessed for evermore) against those arch-heretics Ebion and Coriuthus, whose pernicious principles too many follow in these last days. For this purpose, you may take notice, that he is more particular than any other Evangelist in relating our Lord's divine discourses, as also the glorious miracles which he wrought, not by a power derived from another, like Moses and other prophets, but from a power inherent in himself.²¹

As he puts it, "These and a great many more places might be brought to prove the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ."²² Thus, since the Bible clearly and consistently testifies to the divinity of Christ, to deny the divinity of Christ is "to disprove the authority of the Holy Scriptures."²³ In the face of such overwhelming biblical evidence, the rejection of this doctrine is an assertion against divine revelation.²⁴

Besides the defense of the traditional view of Christ's divinity, Whitefield also refutes the ideas of those who were undermining its doctrinal foundation. Whitefield argues that the doctrine of the deity of Christ is required by the Scriptural evidence. Thus, his sermons that provide information about his Christology are often polemical. Of course, since they are sermons rather than theological disputations or treatises, they

do not deal with his opponents' views in detail. Nevertheless, when necessary, Whitefield tries to expose his opponents' faulty reasoning or the logical fallacies. For instance, in order to show the problem of their views, he argues two things in his sermon on Matthew 22:42. First, the Arians' argument that Christ is only a created God is a "self-contradiction." That is, it is logically absurd that a created being can be called God. Second, if Christ were no more than a mere man as the Socinians claim, Whitefield argues that Christ becomes "the vilest sinner that ever appeared in the world." It is so because Christ accepts divine adoration which should be ascribed only to God from the man who had been born blind as shown in John 9:38, "And he said, Lord I believe, and worshipped him."²⁵

Whitefield's criticism of the Arians and the Socinians is also found in his sermon on Jeremiah 22:6. First, Whitefield points out the absurdity that even though the Arians do not admit the full deity of Christ, they worship him. In Whitefield's perspective, that makes them "as much idolators, as those that worship the Virgin Mary." How can a created being who is not truly God be worshipped? Whitefield urges the Arians to accept the doctrine of the full divinity of Christ and worship him as truly God. Otherwise, they cannot avoid the charge of idolatry. Second, he argues that the Socinians are "accursed" according to their own principles, especially because they profess that Christ was a mere man, and yet claim that he is their savior. Whitefield specifically cites Jeremiah 17:5, 'Cursed is he that trusteth on an arm of flesh.'²⁶ Presenting these two problems which are inherent in the views of "such monsters," Whitefield finally states that "after these considerations, they would be ashamed of broaching such monstrous absurdities any more."²⁷

Why is it so critical for Whitefield to demonstrate the full deity of Christ? Because for Whitefield the doctrine of Christ's divinity is the fundamental foundation for the salvation of fallen human beings. Specifically, he argues that "it was our Lord's divinity that alone qualified him to take away the sins of the world."²⁸ He elaborates this further as follows:

... he [Christ] could never have made satisfaction for our sins if he had not been God as well as Man. As Man he suffered; as God he satisfied; so was God and man in one person ; he took our nature upon him, and was offered upon the cross for the sins of all those who come unto him, which if he had not been God he could never have satisfied for. It may be proved, even to a demonstration, that the Lord Jesus Christ is God, and that he is equal with the Father.²⁹

Truly, for Whitefield, “if Christ be not properly God, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins: for no created being, though of the highest order, could possibly merit any thing at God’s hands.”³⁰ Furthermore, if Christ is not God, then he does not need to preach the gospel any longer:

My brethren, if Jesus Christ be not very God of very God, I would never preach the gospel of Christ again. For it would not be gospel; it would be only a system of moral ethics: Seneca, Cicero, or any of the Gentile philosophers, would be as good a Saviour as Jesus of Nazareth. It is the divinity of our LORD that gives a sanction to his death, and makes him such a high-priest as became us, one who by the infinite merits of his suffering could make a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction and oblation to infinitely offended justice. And whatsoever minister of the church of England, makes use of her forms, and eats of her bread, and yet holds not this doctrine (as I fear too many such are crept in amongst us) such a one belongs only to the synagogue of Satan. He is not a child or minister of God: no; he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing; he is a child and minister of that wicked one the devil.³¹

With the Socinian claim in mind, Whitefield firmly argues denying the full deity of Christ is divests his obedience and sufferings of their inherent value, and consequently subverts the grand doctrine of the redemption of the Church by his blood.³² As evidenced in the above quotation, therefore, Whitefield is severely critical of those who undermine the full deity of Christ. He firmly insists that they are “not Christians.”³³ Instead, in Whitefield’s view, they are “more than the unbelievers of this generation,” “arch-hereticks ... are now reserved to the judgment of the great day,” and “greater infidels than the devils themselves.”³⁴

The Humanity of Christ

The rapid growth of Unitarianism during the eighteenth century led Whitefield to place more emphasis on the divinity of Christ than on his humanity.³⁵ Thus, in comparison to the treatment of the deity of Christ, Whitefield’s discussion of the humanity of Christ is relatively brief in his writings.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the doctrine of Christ’s humanity was still an important topic for Whitefield’s Christology. Concerning the humanity of Christ, Whitefield faithfully maintains that even though Christ is God, he assumed, in the fullness of time, a complete human nature in union with the divine. More specifically, Whitefield

teaches that this human nature of Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary and was formed of her substance.³⁶ Thus, the human nature which the Son of God took upon himself is a real and genuine humanity. In a word, God the Son really became the man Jesus!³⁷

Whitefield does not develop any issue of Christ's humanity as a separate topic as he did in regard to Christ's deity. He discusses the human nature of Christ in the context of Christ's mediatorial work, focusing on the reason why Christ assumed a human body and its significance in the mediatorial work of Christ for human salvation. For example, Whitefield states as follows:

What love is this, what great and wonderful love was here, that the Son of God should come into our world in so mean a condition, to deliver us from the sin and misery in which we were involved by our fall in our first parents! And as all that proceeded from the springs must be muddy, because the fountain was so, the LORD JESUS CHRIST came to take our natures upon him, to die a shameful, a painful, and an accursed death for our sakes ; he died for our sin, and to bring us to God; he cleansed us by his blood from the guilt of fm, he satisfied for our imperfections; and now, my brethren, we have access unto him with boldness ; he is a mediator between us and his offended Father.³⁸

Additionally, interpreting the phrase, "the seed of woman," of Genesis 3:15 in his sermon, entitled, "The Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent," Whitefield states as follows:

But to proceed: By the seed of the woman, we are here to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though very God of very God, was, for us men and our salvation, to have a body prepared for him by the Holy Ghost, and to be born of a woman who never knew man, and by his obedience and death make an atonement for man's transgression, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, work in them a new nature, and thereby bruise the serpent's head, i.e., destroy his power and dominion over them. By the serpent's seed, we are to understand the devil and all his children, who are permitted by God to tempt and first his children. But, blessed be God, he can reach no further than our heel.³⁹

In Whitefield's thought, Christ partook of a true human nature "to put

an end to these disorders, and to restore us to that primitive dignity in which we were at first.”⁴⁰ In his human body Christ performed complete obedience to the law of God fulfilling the covenant of works in our stead. Ultimately he became subject to death, even death upon the cross in order that as God he might satisfy divine justice, and as man he might obey and suffer, and being God and man in one person, might once more procure a union between God and our souls.⁴¹ Whitefield writes:

Man is permitted to fall, and become subject to death; but Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of light, very God of very God, offers to die to make an atonement for his transgression, and to fulfil all righteousness in his death. And because it was impossible for him to do this as he was God, and yet since man had offended, it was necessary it should be done in the person of man; rather than we should perish, this everlasting God, this Prince of Peace, this Ancient of Days, in the fulness of time, had a body prepared for him by the Holy Ghost, and became an infant.⁴²

Besides these characteristics of Whitefield’s discussion of the humanity of Christ, he does not specifically oppose the heretical ideas of his day as he did in his discussion of Christ’s divinity. Interestingly enough, he also hardly provides any specific biblical texts to vindicate the humanity of Christ. These features may result from the fact that the human nature of Christ was not a serious theological issue in his day. Regardless, he is generally content with presenting a general treatment of Christ’s humanity and its relation with Christ’s mediatorial work in his writings.

The Mystery of Two Natures in One Person

Having discussed Christ’s deity and humanity, the critical question now is how these two distinct natures can be joined together. Whitefield teaches that Christ is both very God and very man, having two distinct natures but yet one person. He writes:

But, Secondly, What think you of the manhood or incarnation of Jesus Christ? For Christ was not only God, but he was God and man in one person. Thus runs the text and context, “When the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David, How then, says our divine master, does David in spirit call him Lord?” From which passage it is evident, that we do not think rightly of the person of Jesus Christ, unless we believe

him to be perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. For it is on this account that he is called Christ, or the anointed one, who through his own voluntary offer was set apart by the father, and strengthened and qualified by the anointing or communication of the Holy Ghost, to be a mediator between Him and offending man.⁴³

From this statement, we can see two things concerning the doctrine of the two natures of Christ.⁴⁴ First, he strongly maintains that the Son of God assumed the human nature in union with the divine, so that two distinct natures are inseparably joined together in one person. Second, Whitefield teaches that the incarnation did not result in either subtraction from Christ's deity or the absorption of his human nature. Though this is an intimate union, the two natures are not confounded; each retains its own essential properties. Accordingly, his teaching on the constitution of Christ's person is clearly distinguished from that of the Nestorians who held to the two persons of Christ and the Eutychians who insisted on only one nature in Christ.⁴⁵

In his discussion of the two natures of Christ, however, Whitefield does not delve further into the sophisticated theological issues of the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras, such as the communication of properties (*communicatio idiomatum* or *communicatio proprietatum*) and the nature of the person (*hypostasis*) in Christ.⁴⁶ Of course, these omissions do not mean that Whitefield departed from the traditional Chalcedonian formula or the Reformed view of the relation between the two natures of Christ. Once again, it should be noted that he did not write a comprehensive systematic theological treatise on Christology and our information on his view of Christ's nature is gathered from his sermons and letters.

At any rate, following the Western church tradition, Whitefield distinguishes between the two natures of Christ as both consubstantial (*homoousios*, "the same in substance") with humanity and consubstantial with the Father, and this preservation of the integrity of Christ's full deity and true humanity is fundamental to the truth of the gospel and to every doctrine contained in it. For Whitefield, Christ was really human, and it was necessary that he should be so, in order that he might suffer.⁴⁷ At the same time, Christ was really God, and it was equally necessary that he should be so, in order that he might satisfy divine justice and pay the penalty of sin.⁴⁸ In Whitefield's thought, if either of the two natures of Christ are ignored or denied, it would result in the conclusion that Christ could not properly have made atonement for fallen humanity.

Whitefield on the Work of Christ

Christ as the Mediator

Along with the person of Christ, the other essential component of Whitefield's Christology is the work of Christ. In his writings he provides a detailed look at Christ's work as the mediator between God and human beings. Whitefield's idea of Christ's mediatorship arises in connection with the doctrines of creation and the fall. He teaches that Adam and Eve were made after the image of God in righteousness and holiness.⁴⁹ In the covenantal relationship with God, they maintained the "perfect" integrity in their nature in the Garden of Eden.⁵⁰ Therefore, before the fall there was no need for a mediator between God and humanity.

However, the fall altered this situation. Adam and Eve sinned against God by their free choices, and their sin broke the covenantal relationship with God. As a result, God was indeed dishonored and highly offended, and humans were subject to the curse of "spiritual" death. In other words, excluded from all hope of salvation, all human beings became heirs of wrath, the slaves of Satan, and captive under the yoke of sin.⁵¹

How, then, can this broken relationship between God and human beings be reconciled? Whitefield affirms that this reconciliation cannot be achieved from the human side. In the fall, the human soul was totally corrupted in every part and human free choice particularly became enslaved by sin. Then, since the fallen human beings lost the ability to yield any acceptable obedience unto God, they could not satisfy the claims of the divine law which they had violated.⁵² Whitefield therefore argues that this restoration cannot be done by human beings themselves through a return to God in obedience, or by rendering satisfaction for themselves through their own works.⁵³

In this desperate situation, fallen humankind needed a mediator to bridge the gap between God and human beings and procure reconciliation between the two parties at variance. Thus, Whitefield claims that in order to fulfill this mediatorship, Christ in his compassion condescended to human beings' level and assumed human flesh to save fallen humanity.⁵⁴ Ultimately, Christ offered himself to the Father in his death on the cross as an expiatory sacrifice and discharged all satisfaction duly to God through this sacrifice.⁵⁵ As mediator, Christ has appeased God's wrath and the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God. On this very foundation, God and human beings are reconciled, and human beings can now experience peace with God.

Consequently, in Whitefield's mind, the main purpose of the coming of Christ into the world lies in the salvation of sinners.⁵⁶ This is the core of the office and work assigned to Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and humanity. Now, since Christ expiated the guilt of human beings and laid the foundation for the reconciliation between them, those who believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior are not condemned but saved.⁵⁷

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In his discussion of Christ's mediatorship, Whitefield consistently emphasizes Christ's sole mediatorship between God and human beings. For example, sincerely urging the unbelievers to come to Christ in his sermon entitled, "The Folly and Danger of Being not Righteous Enough," Whitefield argues that Christ is the only way to the Father:

There is no salvation but by Jesus Christ; there is no other name given under heaven amongst men, whereby we may be saved, but that of the Lord Jesus. God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire; therefore strive for an interest in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ; take him on the terms offered to you in the gospel; accept of him in God's own way, lay hold on him by faith.⁵⁸

For Whitefield, unless one is wholly dependent on Christ, one cannot come to God and be restored to peace with God.

To sum up, Whitefield's idea of Christ as mediator is an essential aspect of his Christology. For him, in order to bridge the gap between God and human beings, mediation was required, and it was enacted by Jesus Christ as mediator.⁵⁹ In a word, "Jesus Christ came down to save us, not only from the guilt, but also from the power of sin."⁶⁰ This idea that Christ partook of human flesh and suffered the punishment from God's righteous judgment in our stead confers on Whitefield's entire Christology an enormous soteriological orientation.

In this soteriological emphasis in his Christology, Whitefield's position is essentially identical to that of the Reformed thinkers in both the Reformation and the Post-Reformation eras. For example, in his famous work, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Francis Turretin (1623-1687) devotes a large portion of the treatise to discussing Christ's mediatorship and

amply develops the idea that the purpose of the incarnation was to fulfill the office of mediator.⁶¹ Indeed, far more than the limited scope of this chapter can fully address, numerous other Reformed theologians employed this soteriological framework in their discussions of Christology. This consequently implies the intimate similarity between Whitefield and the Reformed tradition in the doctrine of Christ.

The Priestly Office of Christ

Now, we need to explicate in further detail the nature of Christ's mediatorial work in Whitefield's thought. In order to explain Christ's mediatorial work, Whitefield employs the traditional Reformed view of the threefold office of Christ.⁶² Regarding this, he states that "he [Christ] was anointed by the Holy Ghost at his baptism, to be a prophet to instruct, a priest to make an atonement for, and a king to govern and protect his church."⁶³ Even though he frequently and substantially deals with Christ's priestly office in his writings, however, Whitefield does not discuss his offices of king and prophet in further detail. Considering this, the most important office for Christ is certainly that of priest in Whitefield's mind. Arguably, for him, Christ's work as priest is foundational to a proper understanding of his role as mediator.⁶⁴ In particular, a couple of key theological ideas, Christ's satisfaction and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, permeate Whitefield's exposition of the priestly work of Christ. In order to grasp Whitefield's doctrine of Christ's office of priesthood, each needs to be examined in detail.

Christ's Satisfaction

In Whitefield's writings, Christ's work as a priest is vividly presented as the substitutionary sacrifice for the full restoration of sinners to God. Christ himself died in our stead and became an expiatory sacrifice in order to reconcile human beings to God. Concerning this, he states the following:

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of light, very God of very God, offers to die to make atonement for his [humankind's] transgression and to fulfill all righteousness in his stead ... In this body [of Jesus] He performed a complete obedience to the law of God; whereby He in our stead fulfilled the covenant of works, and at last became subject to death, even the death upon the cross: that as God He might satisfy, as man He might obey and suffer; and being God and man in one person, might once more procure a union between God and our souls.⁶⁵

As shown above, Whitefield regards Christ's death as a vicarious sacrifice, and thus Christ's atoning activity for fallen humankind is essentially substitutionary in its nature. According to him, since the holy and righteous God cannot tolerate or overlook sin, it is absolutely necessary to satisfy God's holy standards before human beings can be right with God.⁶⁶ However, once captive to sin, human beings lost the ability to satisfy the holy God. Thus, there was no hope of human salvation arising from the side of fallen humanity.⁶⁷ In this desperate situation, Christ's substitution became essential for human salvation.⁶⁸ Accordingly, Christ willingly, that is, by his Father's appointment and his own voluntary engagement, undertook the office of mediator. In this context, Christ who was innocent took our punishment by offering himself as a bloody sacrifice, and thereby his sacrifice satisfied God's justice and the law.⁶⁹ Regarding this nature of Christ's satisfaction of God's justice, Whitefield writes as follows:

How am I lost to think that God the Father, when we were in a state of enmity and rebellion against Him, should notwithstanding yearn in His bowels towards His fallen, His apostate creatures: and because nothing but an infinite ransom could satisfy an infinitely offended justice, that He should send His only and dear Son Jesus Christ (who is God blessed forever and who had lain in His bosom from all eternity) to fulfil the covenant of works, and die a cursed, painful, ignominious death for us and our salvation!⁷⁰

In this way, in Whitefield's view, the forgiveness of human sin in the face of God's unchanging justice comes only through Christ's satisfaction which was the result of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross.⁷¹ Christ's humiliation through his vicarious death is the key to his redemptive work of Christ. In that divine forgiveness must satisfy divine justice, that is, God cannot simply forgive sin without the satisfaction of the demands of the law and the justice of God, and in that Christ actually obeyed and suffered on our behalf in order to satisfy these requirements, the nature of Christ's atoning work can be essentially categorized as vicarious or substitutionary satisfaction in Whitefield's thought.

Whitefield's view of Christ's vicarious satisfaction indicates that his position stands firmly in continuity with the Reformed tradition. As with Whitefield, the classic Reformed thinkers commonly relied on the doctrine of Christ's vicarious satisfaction to explain Christ's mediatorial

work for human salvation. For example, John Calvin (1509-1564) states that Christ did bear the punishment of human sin and that it truly satisfied God the Father:

Christ interceded as his [man's] advocate, took upon himself and suffered the punishment that, from God's righteous judgment, threatened all sinners; that purged with his blood those evils which had rendered sinners hateful to God; that by this expiation he made satisfaction and sacrifice duly to God the Father; that as intercessor he has appeased God's wrath; that on this foundation rests the peace of God with men; that by this bond his benevolence is maintained toward them.⁷²

In addition to Calvin, a great number of Reformed thinkers insist that Christ, as the representative of those whom the Father had given unto him, made a true and proper satisfaction of divine justice by enduring in their stead the very punishment which their sins deserved. Indeed, further examples in the Reformed tradition that employ the idea of substitutionary satisfaction in the discussion of Christ's priesthood are too numerous to mention them all. Hence, Whitefield's idea of Christ's satisfaction clearly reflects that he faithfully follows the traditional Reformed view regarding the doctrine of Christ's priestly office.

The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness

As with the motif of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, the idea of the imputed righteousness of Christ is also a fundamental theme in Whitefield's discussion of the nature of Christ's mediatorial work. His doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness especially arises in connection with his view of the effects or benefits of Christ's priestly work for human beings. What are the ends gained, or the effects accomplished, by the obedience and sacrifice in Christ's office of priest? According to Whitefield, the ultimate benefit of Christ's priestly office is the reconciliation of sinners to God.⁷³ In other words, thanks to Christ's satisfaction of the justice of God the Father, the cause of the enmity and separation between God and human beings is actually removed. Now, those who believe in Christ as their Savior and Lord are no longer under condemnation but freed from the curse of the law and its punishment.⁷⁴ Believers are forgiven of all their sins and trespasses, and on the basis of Christ's imputed righteousness to them, they are justified and declared righteous before God.⁷⁵

In this process of the reconciliation between God and human beings, the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness is particularly significant because it determines and formulates the nature of the justification of sinners. According to Whitefield, the righteousness of the fallen human beings is "but as filthy rags."⁷⁶ That is, they are all sinners and cannot do any spiritual good which truly pleases God.⁷⁷ Thus, standing in continuity with the classic Reformed view, Whitefield strongly argues that the imputation of "the perfect all-sufficient righteousness of Jesus Christ" is the sole ground of the justification of human beings.⁷⁸ For instance, he states as follows:

From hence we may learn the nature of true, justifying faith. Whoever understands and preaches the truth, as it is in Jesus, must acknowledge, that salvation is God's free gift, and that we are saved, not by any or all the works of righteousness which we have done or can do: no; We can neither wholly nor in part justify ourselves in the sight of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness; and if we are accepted with God, it must be only in and through the personal righteousness, the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ his beloved Son. This righteousness must be imputed, or counted over to us, and applied by faith to our hearts, or else we can in no wise be justified in God's sight; and that very moment a sinner is enabled to lay hold on Christ's righteousness by faith, he is freely justified from all his sins, and shall never enter into condemnation notwithstanding he was a fire-brand of hell before. Thus it was that Abraham was justified before he did any good work: he was enabled to believe on the Lord Christ; it was accounted to him for righteousness; that is, Christ's righteousness was made over to him, and so accounted his.⁷⁹

For Whitefield, while sinners' guilt is legally transferred to Christ, Christ's righteousness is imputed to them. And the righteousness of Christ credited to believers enables them to be justified before God.⁸⁰ Hence, in Whitefield's thought, the imputation of Christ's righteousness plays a key role in the doctrine of the justification of the sinners.

What, then, is Christ's righteousness founded upon? Whitefield maintains that Christ's righteousness results from his active and passive obedience as the mediator.⁸¹ According to Whitefield, Christ's active obedience was displayed in his life, and his passive obedience was manifested in his death:

In this body [of Christ] He performed a complete obedience to the law of God; whereby He in our stead fulfilled the covenant of works, and at last became subject to death, even the death upon the Cross: that as God He might satisfy, as man He might obey and suffer; and being God and man in one person, might once more procure a union between God and our souls.⁸²

In Whitefield's view, Christ's righteousness entirely rests upon his perfect obedience to the law and God's will which ultimately leads him voluntarily to give himself up on the cross on behalf of sinners in order to make perfect satisfaction to God the Father.⁸³ To put it another way, Christ's complete blood-atonement (his passive obedience) and perfect law-obedience (his active obedience) fully satisfy God's offended justice.

As with the case of Christ's satisfaction of divine justice, the concept of Christ's twofold obedience also serves as a good example of how Whitefield inherited Christology from the Reformed and Puritan perspective of previous centuries. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that most Reformed thinkers, especially since the middle of the seventeenth century, characteristically emphasized the scholastic distinction of active obedience and passive obedience in their discussion of Christ's imputed righteousness.⁸⁴ Whitefield's employment of the twofold obedience of Christ clearly shows that his view of Christ's obedient work as the mediator stands in strong continuity with the Puritan and Reformed position on the foundational issue of imputed righteousness.⁸⁵

Whitefield's continuity with the Reformed tradition is also manifested in his idea of the mode or manner of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. How can this righteousness be imputed to sinners? Whitefield firmly insists that it is made possible only through faith.⁸⁶ More precisely, Christ's righteousness is imputed to sinners purely by God's grace through faith in Christ alone. According to Whitefield, fallen human beings' own merit and worthiness are of no use in availing themselves of Christ's merit and worthiness.⁸⁷ Instead, faith is the only "instrument" which makes this resource available to human beings.⁸⁸ Ultimately, however, faith is bestowed only to "the elect" whom God has chosen by his sovereign will irrespective of their merit.⁸⁹ Namely, even though human beings are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone, faith is a "free, rich, and sovereign" gift of God.⁹⁰ Accordingly, Whitefield's doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness is thoroughly founded upon the Reformed doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone.

Even though he insists that the merit of human salvation is ultimately

dependent on God's sovereign grace, Whitefield does not deny the necessity of human responsibility in the process of human salvation. For instance, unlike hyper-Calvinistic preachers who ignore human responsibility, Whitefield consistently urges ministers to "offer" or "preach" the gospel to unbelievers.⁹¹ What is more, Whitefield never ignores the significance of good works in the Christian life. Instead, he attributes the proper place to good works as follows:

We are justified by faith alone, as faith the article of our church; agreeable to which the apostle Paul says, "By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Notwithstanding, good works have their proper place: they justify our faith, though not our persons; they follow it, and evidence our justification in the sight of men.⁹²

Arguably, in Whitefield's mind, while sinners are justified "freely through faith in Jesus Christ without any regard to any work or fitness foreseen in them," good works are to be regarded "as an evidence of the sincerity" of their faith.⁹³ Consequently, given his view of good works and the use of means such as a minister's preaching of the gospel, the Hyper-Calvinistic or antinomian tendency which ignores or weakens human responsibility along with the extreme stress on the sovereign grace of God does not appear in Whitefield's thought at all.⁹⁴

In sum, in Whitefield's thought, justification is a judicial or forensic declaration of the believer's status before God's tribunal. For believers, God reckons the unrighteousness of the ungodly to Christ's account and the righteousness of Christ to the ungodly sinner's account. In the justification of sinners, therefore, God pronounces believers to be righteous and acceptable to him on the basis of the righteousness of Christ, which is granted and imputed to them by grace alone and received by faith alone.

Christ's Mediatorial Work from the Trinitarian Perspective

The previous discussion of Christ's mediatorial work undoubtedly indicates that Christ's office of priesthood constitutes the framework of the essential soteriological structure of Whitefield's Christology. The fundamental significance of Christ's atoning work through his priestly office, however, does not mean that Whitefield stresses only the second person of the Trinity to the exclusion of the others. Whitefield also understands the idea of Christ's mediatorial work in the context of the Trinity. For instance, following the tradition of Reformed federalism,

Whitefield employs the idea of *pactum salutis*, which indicates “an eternal contract between the Father and the Son” concerning the salvation of fallen humanity. By using this concept, Whitefield shows that God the Father is the source and initiator of this atoning work.⁹⁵

Likewise, Whitefield also argues that even though Christ the Son fulfilled his role as the mediator, its effectivity depends upon God the Father and the Holy Spirit. That is, God’s saving grace is bestowed to the elect through the Holy Spirit in accordance with the sovereign will of God.⁹⁶ In this Calvinistic sense, the application of the benefit of Christ’s atoning work of salvation comes from the Father through the regenerating work of the Spirit.

In this way, in several passages of Whitefield’s writings, Christ the Son is depicted as the accomplisher of what should be done, God the Father is portrayed as the source and initiator of this atoning work, and the Holy Spirit is credited as the one who makes Christ’s accomplishment available and effective in the faithful.⁹⁷ Thus, in spite of Whitefield’s emphasis on Christ’s mediatorship regarding the atoning work, it is certain that for Whitefield, the work of human salvation is not just the work of Christ but also the work of the Father and the Spirit.⁹⁸

Criticism of Previous Scholarship on Whitefield’s Christology

The foregoing discussion of Whitefield’s treatment of Christology enables us to deal with the arguments of previous scholarship on the issue. So far, Daniel L. Pals and Collin B. Sherriff are the only ones who have taken up the matter of Whitefield’s Christology. Nevertheless, as noted already, since neither substantially provide any substantial analysis of Whitefield’s position, their discussions are not sufficiently conducive to the understanding of Whitefield’s doctrine of Christ.

Furthermore, Pals’ argument regarding Whitefield’s treatment of Christology in his sermons is particularly problematic. According to Pals, Whitefield was hardly interested in “any matrix of dogma or intricacies of exegesis which surround it [biblical passages concerning Christ].”⁹⁹ Instead, he argues that Whitefield’s concern was to turn the narratives of Christ in the gospel into spiritual analogies for homiletical purposes and convenience.¹⁰⁰ Pals calls this tendency in Whitefield’s sermons “evangelical moralism:”

More pervasive than melodrama, however, is Whitefield’s constant recourse to preaching by incident and example. Perhaps nothing is more

regularly apparent in his discourses than the way in which he blithely passes over scriptural exegesis or doctrinal exposition to indulge this recurring device. It can be best described as a simple—often simplistic—evangelical moralism, in which incidents from the scriptures, especially the life of Christ, are transported directly out of the Biblical age into the present circumstance to furnish pious examples and warnings for daily need.¹⁰¹

Pals further argues that “he [Whitefield] refused every invitation to argue or explicate them [any doctrines], lest they come to obscure the great and affectingly simple truths of the Savior and his dying love.”¹⁰² Accordingly, concerning the Revivalists’ treatment of Christology, especially during the eighteenth century, Pals concludes that unlike other traditional revivalists, such as Theodore J. Frelinghuysen (1691-1747), who maintained a balance between dogma and devotion, Whitefield was “drawn to less traditional paths.”¹⁰³

However, a careful examination of Whitefield’s sermons indicates Pals’ argument does not hold for Whitefield’s treatment of Christology in his sermons, especially due to the following three reasons. First, if necessary, Whitefield does not hesitate to deal with theological issues at length in his sermons. Thus, he frequently commits himself to extensive doctrinal exposition in them. For example, Whitefield wholly devotes two sermons to discussing the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ in most detail: sermons on Jeremiah 23:6 and Daniel 9:24, entitled “The LORD our Righteousness” and “The Righteousness of Christ an everlasting Righteousness,” respectively.¹⁰⁴ In them, on the basis of the Reformed scholastic view of the doctrine, he systematically discusses at length the theological issues, such as the definition and nature of righteousness, the state of fallen human beings and the necessity of Christ’s righteousness for them, the nature of the active and passive obedience of Christ, the manner and mode of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the human beings, the chief objections against the doctrine, and the problematic consequences of the denial of the doctrine. In addition to these sermons, Whitefield substantially deals with the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness in the conventional fashion in various places.

Second, contrary to Pals, biblical interpretation still held abiding concern in Whitefield’s discussion of Christ’s person and work in Whitefield’s sermons. The clearest evidence of Whitefield’s concern for an exegetical presentation of the biblical text can be observed in his sermon on Jeremiah 23:6, entitled, “The LORD our Righteousness.” Here,

Whitefield assigns substantial portions of his sermon to expounding the meaning of the phrase, “The LORD our Righteousness,” in the text. By doing so, as already discussed in detail, Whitefield attempts to prove the full deity of Christ against various heretical ideas.¹⁰⁵

Third, Whitefield’s discussion of Christology in his sermons is quite disputatious in nature. In dealing with doctrinal issues in his sermons, he often criticizes his theological opponents, such as the Socinians, the Arians, the Arminians, and the antinomians. For instance, in his sermon on Matthew 22:42, entitled, “What think ye of Christ?” in order to defend Christ’s full divinity, Whitefield firmly refutes the ideas of the Socinians and the Arians through detailed theological and exegetical arguments.¹⁰⁶

Given this evidence, Pals’ argument that Whitefield’s Christological concern in his sermons has little to do with the doctrine and exegesis cannot be warranted at all. In opposition to Pals’ insistence, a comprehensive look at Whitefield’s sermons reflects that his sermons still furnish an apt exhibit of the conventional blend between piety and dogma. That is, in his published sermons, piety and doctrine are equally stressed, and the former appears in close association with the doctrinal frame. For Whitefield, devotion is clearly the companion of doctrine, never its rival or adversary. In this regard, Whitefield’s treatment of Christology does not really depart from the Puritan and Reformed tradition in which the dual needs of devotion and dogma were generally held in balance.

Concluding Remarks

The examination of Whitefield’s discussion of Christ’s person and work permits us to present a few conclusions regarding his Christology. First, in line with the Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy, Whitefield affirms the full deity and humanity of Christ in one person. Second, following the classic Reformed tradition, at the very center of his doctrine of Christ’s mediatorship he places Christ’s satisfaction of divine justice through the substitutionary death on the cross and the imputation of his righteousness to sinners through the twofold obedience. Third, contrary to Pals’ assertion, Whitefield’s treatment of Christology in his sermons shows that he makes clear the devotional and spiritual design of the sermons, yet he is equally concerned to explicate the doctrine of Christ through the detailed theological and exegetical analysis of the Scriptures. Truly, the formal theology and biblical exegesis has held still abiding interest in his sermons.

Two implications can be drawn regarding Whitefield’s doctrine of

Christ. First, in his handling of the aspects of the person and the work of Christ, there is without question a vividly and substantially formulated theology. Thus, Whitefield should be re-evaluated not only as an eminent preacher or revivalist but also as a notable theologian of the eighteenth-century England, at least concerning the doctrine of Christ.

Second, theologically speaking, the doctrine which Whitefield preaches is faithfully orthodox. More precisely, as a theologian, Whitefield closely follows the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed tradition in continuity with those of the patristic and the medieval periods.¹⁰⁷ To be sure, evaluated in the broader context of intellectual history, Whitefield's doctrine of Christ's person and work is not unique or distinct at all. Nevertheless, considering the fact that he lived in an era when the orthodox doctrine of Christ was constantly threatened by many heresies, his faithful adherence to classic orthodox Christology, especially classic Reformed Christology, and his deliverance of it to his hearers would have contributed not only to the preservation of the sound teachings on Christ's person and work but also, ultimately, to the restoration of the spiritual vitality among the British churches in his time.

¹ On Whitefield's life see Stuart C. Henry, *George Whitefield: Wayfaring Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957).

² For instance, Whitefield's letter to John Wesley deals with the issue of predestination and other allied doctrines in detail. George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley: In Answer to Sermon, Entitled, Free-Grace* (London, 1741).

³ Modern scholarship has usually paid most attention to the characteristics of Whitefield's ministry and preaching as a leading revivalist. Concerning this, Sherriff states, "Several biographies of Whitefield have been written, chiefly in the nineteenth century, but none of them endeavors to reveal his theology in any extensive fashion." Collin Bedford Sherriff, *The Theology of George Whitefield (1714-1770)* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1950), i. So far, strictly speaking, Sherriff's work was the only attempt which has been made to reflect the theology of Whitefield as a whole.

⁴ Scholars have given less attention to Whitefield's doctrine of Christ. There have been two scholarly works which deal with Whitefield's Christology. First, Sherriff allots one section of his thesis to the work of Christ. However, this part does not substantially analyze the work of Christ as a whole. It focuses on the doctrine of regeneration in general rather than that of Christ in particular. Second, Pals attempts to explicate Whitefield's Christology by comparing him with that of three other major revivalists in his era. Nevertheless, Pals also does not provide a detailed analysis of Whitefield's Christology. Instead, he concentrates on Whitefield's preaching style and the connection between his idea of Christ and piety. Daniel L. Pals, "Several Christologies of the Great Awakening," *Anglican Theological Review* 72:4 (1990): 412-27.

⁵ Cf. Sherriff states, "The work of Christ in all its varied aspects was central to Whitefield's theology." Sherriff, *The Theology of George Whitefield*, 72.

⁶ Contrary to, Pals, "Several Christologies," 425.

⁷ Sherriff, *The Theology of George Whitefield*, 42.

⁸ For a general account of the polemical situation in Whitefield's time, see Richard A. Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. IV. *The Trinity of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 2003), especially 275-332; Alan P. F. Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600-2000* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 22-88. Concerning the debates particularly on Christology in eighteenth-century England, see Richard Daniels, *The*

- Christology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 22-48; Alan P. F. Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600-2000* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 22-88. For the Christological controversy in the European continent in the eighteenth century, see Colin Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought, 1778-1860* (Durham, North Carolina: The Labyrinth Press, 1985); Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology, 1750-1990* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).
- ⁹ Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1998), 151. Cf. Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 22-60.
- ¹⁰ George Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield... Containing All his Sermons and Tracts... With A Select Collection of Letters*, Vol. 5 (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1772), 330-31, 357; idem, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield... Containing All his Sermons and Tracts... With A Select Collection of Letters*, Vol. 6 (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1772), 293-4. For more detailed information on the Christological thought of Arians, Socinians, and Unitarians, see Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 5; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1 (trans., Charles E. Hay; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), 201-18; Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)*, vol. 4 of *The Christian Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 322-32 and passim; H. John McClachin, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951); Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (n.p., 1937; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002), 189-91.
- ¹¹ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 293.
- ¹² Ibid., vol. 5, 330.
- ¹³ See also ibid., vol. 5, 136, 196 and vol. 6, 62, 392.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 6, 293.
- ¹⁵ For example, see ibid., vol. 5, 357.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 5, 218.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 5, 218. Cf. Regarding the application of the title of LORD to Christ, Whitefield also states, "You can call Christ, Lord, by the Holy Ghost, and thereby have an internal, as well as external evidence of the divinity, both of his person, and of his holy word" (Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 279).
- ¹⁸ Ibid., vol. 5, 330.
- ¹⁹ Christ's eternal Sonship was a hotly debated issue during the Reformation and the Post-Reformation eras. Concerning this, see Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. IV, 283-88.
- ²⁰ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 330, 357 and vol. 6, 293.
- ²¹ Ibid., vol. 6, 64.
- ²² Ibid., vol. 5, 330. Cf. Whitefield insists that nevertheless "our modern infidels" deliberately evade those scriptural proofs for the full deity of Christ. Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 357.
- ²³ Ibid., vol. 6, 96.
- ²⁴ Ibid., vol. 6, 96.
- ²⁵ Ibid., vol. 5, 357.
- ²⁶ Ibid., vol. 5, 218.
- ²⁷ Ibid., vol. 5, 218. Cf. In his sermons, Whitefield also confirms the deity of the Holy Spirit. For example, see Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 91. Here, affirming the triunity of God, he states, "This is an unspeakable mystery, but a mystery of God's revealing, and, therefore, to be assented to with our whole hearts."
- ²⁸ Ibid., vol. 5, 357.
- ²⁹ Ibid., vol. 5, 330. Cf. ibid., vol. 6, 91.
- ³⁰ Ibid., vol. 5, 357.
- ³¹ Ibid., vol. 5, 356-57.
- ³² Ibid., vol. 5, 356-57. Cf. Whitefield often employs the term "atonement" and, to avoid confusion, its meaning should be highlighted. As evidently shown in the works of many British Reformed thinkers such as Samuel Rutherford and James Ussher, the English verb "to atone" or its noun form "atonement," in English theological works of the early modern era, "typically refers to Christ's objective sacrifice for sin universally considered, namely, according to its sufficiency, or with reference to texts in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the crucifixion understood as blood sacrifice or sin offering after the manner of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood." Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Works of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 75. Certainly, Whitefield uses the term "atonement" in this nuance. The modern use of the terms, "limited" and "unlimited atonement" do not appear in Whitefield's writings at all. Concerning the problem of the modern concept of limited and unlimited atonement as it has been retrojected onto early modern theological debates concerning the sufficiency, efficiency, intention, and extent of Christ's satisfaction, see Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*, 70-106.
- ³³ Ibid., vol. 5, 357.
- ³⁴ Ibid., vol. 5, 357-58.
- ³⁵ Sherriff, "Theology of George Whitefield," 64.
- ³⁶ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 206. See also Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 16; 261; 422.

- ³⁷ Whitefield states that Christ's resurrection body is that of a man, as well: "It is plain that He ascended into Heaven with the body which He had here on earth." Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 197.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 252.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 16.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 164.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 16, 18, 236, 330.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 359.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 358.
- ⁴⁴ See also *ibid.*, vol. 5, 330 and vol. 6, 91.
- ⁴⁵ For more information on Nestorianism, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (Peabody: Prince Press, 2007), 310-30; Seeberg, *the History of Doctrines*, 261-66; John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 237-38; *idem*, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 126-75. For Eutychnianism, see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 330-43; Seeberg, *the History of Doctrines*, 260-71; 131-32; McGuckin, *Patristic Theology*, 132-33; *idem*, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 229-32 and *passim*.
- ⁴⁶ Concerning the issues of the communication of properties and operations, and the relation of Christ's humanity to the person of the Son of God during the Reformation and the Post-Reformation eras, see Muller, *Dictionary*, 72-74, and Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 337-40.
- ⁴⁷ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 359.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 359.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 358.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 358.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 204.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 211.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 211.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 252.
- ⁵⁵ Cf. Whitefield consistently employs the term "satisfaction" or its verbal form "satisfy" with reference to the death of Christ. Certainly, it is his primary doctrinal descriptor for the work of Christ on the cross. Nonetheless, Whitefield does not use the older scholastic distinction of the sufficiency and efficiency of Christ's satisfaction. It is uncertain whether he accepted this traditional, scholastic idea, which is generally found in many Reformed thinkers' discussions of the limitation of Christ's work. Concerning the use of the traditional sufficiency/efficiency formula, see Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*, 70-106. Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 271-73.
- ⁵⁶ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 99.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 99.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 138.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 6, 99.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 99.
- ⁶¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 2 (ed., James T. Dennison, Jr.; trans., George Musgrave Giger; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), XIV, I-XVIII, 375-499. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed., John T. McNeill; trans., Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), II.XII.I-IV (464-68).
- ⁶² Concerning the use of the threefold office in the Reformed tradition, see Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 63-76; Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated From the Sources* (ed., Ernst Bizer; trans., G. T. Thomson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 448-87; Muller, *Dictionary*, 197-98. Beeke & Johns, *A Puritan Theology*, 347-358; Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 1999), 459-609. Indeed, numerous Reformed theologians, including the eighteenth-century British Particular Baptists, generally used the concept of Christ's threefold office to explain the nature of Christ's mediatorship in detail. Whitefield's discussion of the threefold office of Christ also evidently indicates this traditional category and theme developed by Calvin, his associates and the immediate successors of the Reformed tradition. Accordingly, Whitefield's doctrine of Christ unquestionably aligns with the Reformed tradition and can be distinguished from other theological traditions concerning the idea of Christ's mediatorship.
- ⁶³ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 204.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 254, 396.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 359.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 289.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 220.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 289-90, 220.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 164, and vol. 5, 243.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 224. See also *ibid.*, vol. 6, 31-32, 164.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 18.

⁷² Calvin, *Institutes*, II.XVI.II (505). See also Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, vol. 1 (trans., Bartel Elshout; Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992), 586-87; Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, XIV, X, VI-VII (418-19); John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity in The Collected Writings of John Gill* [CD-ROM] (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 2007), 837. See also Gill, *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 846-47, 857, 878, 885.

⁷³ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 137.

⁷⁴ Cf. In his writings, Whitefield does not clearly address whether or not Christ suffered and died only for a definite number of humankind. In fact, he shows little interest in speaking to the issue of the limitation of the efficacy of Christ's satisfaction. As already noted, Whitefield does not clearly use the sufficiency-efficiency distinction that one finds in the writings of many Reformed theologians. Nevertheless, for Whitefield, although the sacrifice of Christ was propounded to all indifferently or indiscriminately, Christ's work is by divine intention effective for the elect only. See, for example, Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 15; idem, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, 31-34. In this regard, even though Whitefield did not speak directly to the issue, his writings imply the limited application of Christ's satisfaction to the elect only. Whitefield does not say like the Reformed that Christ did not die for all. However, it is certain that the divine intention in the accomplishment of Christ's saving work was the salvation of the elect only and not the hypothetical universal extension of Christ's work or the universal salvation of humankind.

⁷⁵ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 190.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 432.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 294.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 432.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 49-50.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 135-39, 267.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 294 and vol. 5, 136. For a more detailed discussion of the Reformed view of Christ's twofold obedience during the Reformation and the Post-Reformation eras, see Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 458-79; Muller, *Dictionary*, 205-06.

⁸² Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 359.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 24.

⁸⁴ Cf. Cornelis P. Venema, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness: Another Example of 'Calvin against the Calvinists?'" *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 20 (2009): 18. There was "a minority of Reformed theologians" who claimed that "the imputation of Christ's righteousness was restricted to his obedience in making satisfaction for the sins of his people." However, by the early seventeenth century, the Reformed tradition reached the consensus that "this righteousness consists both in Christ's active obedience to the requirements of God's law and his passive obedience in enduring the penal sanction of the law." *Ibid.*, 17. For an extensive survey of this debate, see Heber Carlos de Campos, "Johannes Piscator (1546-1625) and the Consequent Development of the Imputation of Christ's Active Obedience" (Ph.D. diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2008), 32-118, 194-248. Concerning the history of imputed righteousness since the Reformation, see Michael Bird, "Incorporated Righteousness: A Response to Recent Evangelical Discussion Concerning the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness in Justification," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47/2 (2004): 253-56.

⁸⁵ Whitefield briefly discusses the doctrine of imputation in the context of a covenantal scheme. Distinguishing between the covenant of works and that of grace, he argues that under the condition of the latter, human beings are saved only through the imputed righteousness of Christ. Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 15-16. In the Reformed tradition, the doctrine of imputation is inseparably linked to the framework of covenant theology. Cf. Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*, 2 vols. (n.p.: 1677; reprint, Kingsburg, CA: den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1990).

⁸⁶ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 136.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 405 and vol. 6, 8, 56, 362.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 136.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 15, 302. In this sense, for Whitefield, the salvation of fallen humanity is "all from God, from the beginning to the end." Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 24. Cf. Regarding Whitefield's detailed discussion of the absolute nature of divine grace in the matter of human salvation, see Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, 10-17.

⁹¹ For example, see *ibid.*, vol. 5, 420; Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, 18-19.

⁹² *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 50.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 50, 360. Cf. Concerning Whitefield's view of the relation between justification, faith, and good works, see his sermon on Matthew 22:41, entitled "What think ye of Christ?" He discusses the issue of the good works at length in this sermon. Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 353-72. For Whitefield's refutation of the doctrine of the fore-known election, see Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, 6-10.

⁹⁴ Whitefield does not evidently deal with hyper-Calvinism of his day in his writings. However, he often strongly refutes the idea of antinomianism in them. For example, see Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 195.

⁹⁵ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 187-88. Muller defines the doctrine of pactum salutis as “the pretemporal, intratrinitarian agreement of the Father and the Son concerning the covenant of grace and its ratification in and through the work of the Son incarnate.” Muller, *Dictionary*, 217. For a good discussion of the idea of *pactum salutis* in Reformed tradition, see Bertus Loonstra, *Verkiezing-Verzoening-Verbond: Beschrijving en beoordeling vand de leer van het pactum salutis in de gereformeerde theologie* (The Hague, 1990); Richard A. Muller, “Toward the Pactum Salutis: Locating the Origins of a Concept,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 18 (2007): 11-65; idem, “The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill’s Critique of the Pactum Salutis,” *Foundations* 24 (1981): 4-14.

⁹⁶ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 6, 120, 137, 187.

⁹⁷ See, for example, *ibid.*, vol. 5, 251 and vol. 6, 120, 137.

⁹⁸ Cf. Sheriff states that in Whitefield’s writings, “The full doctrine of the Trinity is stressed in the face of the growing Unitarianism of the day.” Sherriff, “Theology of George Whitefield,” 42.

⁹⁹ Pals, “Several Christologies,” 426.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 425.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 426-27.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 414.

¹⁰⁴ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 216-234; 235-250.

¹⁰⁵ Besides this case, in many of his sermons, Whitefield first attempts to explicate the meaning of the texts and then, on the basis of the interpretation of them, he proceeds to discuss doctrinal issues or presents exhortations for the hearers.

¹⁰⁶ Whitefield, *Sermons*, vol. 5, 356-57.

¹⁰⁷ Pals, “Several Christologies,” 416.