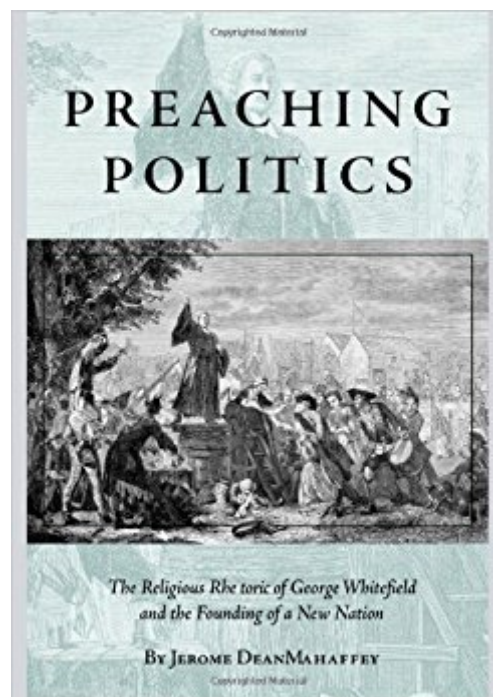


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# Preaching Politics: The Religious Rhetoric Of George Whitefield And The Founding Of A New Nation (Studies In Rhetoric And Religion)



## Synopsis

The third volume in the Studies in Rhetoric & Religion, Preaching Politics traces the surprising and lasting influence of one of American history's most fascinating and enigmatic figures—George Whitefield. Jerome Mahaffey explores George Whitefield's role in creating a "rhetoric of community" that successfully established a common worldview among the many colonial cultures. Using a rigorous method of rhetorical analysis, Mahaffey cogently argues that George Whitefield directed the evolution of an American collective religious identity that lay underneath the emerging political ideology that fueled the American Revolution.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This study of the convergence of religion and politics in 18th-century America is an altogether satisfying presentation suitable for use by undergraduate and graduate students alike...

Recommended."—CHOICE"Though the famed eighteenth-century itinerant evangelist, George Whitefield, has received considerable attention over the past two decades, surprisingly few studies focus directly on the 100 plus sermons Whitefield preached and published from a rhetorical vantage point. Happily, that lacunae is now filled with Jerome Mahaffey's impressive new book, Preaching Politics. Besides exploring the rhetoric underlying Whitefield's dynamic sermons, this book also looks at Anglo-American politics and deftly locates Whitefield's words in the question for an independent American political identity. A must-read for students of eighteenth-century religion

and politics alike." — Harry S. Stout, Jonathan Edwards Professor of Religious History and Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Yale University "Professor Mahaffey has established in a conclusive manner the contribution that George Whitefield made to the unifying of American political thought through his preaching and writing. He has also shown in a detailed way the political influence of Whitefield in England. This book is required reading for an explanation of the forces that led to American independence." — Thomas H. Olbricht, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Religion, Pepperdine University "This excellent study sheds new light on George Whitefield as an orator and argues convincingly for his role, and the role of evangelical Protestantism, in the formation of an American identity. This significant contribution to the rhetorical, religious, and political history of the colonial period adds much to our understanding of the underpinnings of the American Revolution." — James R. Andrews, Editor, *Sources of Identity in British-American Colonial Rhetoric*, *The Rhetorical History of the United States*

Jerome Dean Mahaffey (Ph.D. University of Memphis) is Lecturer in the School of Communication at Northern Arizona University and the author of *The Accidental Revolutionary: George Whitefield and the Creation of America*.

This writing is a good stepping stone into the history of the early forefathers and their conviction that God is with them.

This is a great book on the history of God's men who spoke up when a time of moral clarity was needed.

Great

An excellent, very readable, and entirely sympathetic and engaging reading of Whitefield's spiritual and rhetorical agenda, as well as his importance in creating nascent ideas of community in the scattered colonies. Mahaffey (a fellow Memphis grad! huzzah!) offers strong close-readings of primary sermons, writes a captivating narrative about Whitefield's place as a central figure in early American ideology, and breaks down the Methodist and Establishment controversies that circled around his presence both in America and England. At first, when seeing the title, I thought this would be a reading that associates (à la Elie Halevy and his followers) the Methodist connection with a kind of lower-class submission to stabilizing values; or that it would attempt to discern a

"political theology;" but it's really much more about Whitefield's ability to navigate the nascent political channels by rhetorically applying the political and social philosophy that was available to him in subtle, influential ways throughout his ministry, and the way he used this understanding to unify disparate groups. As studies of the "Great Awakening" go, this one is focused, not particularly polemical, and challenges interpretative debates by sticking to a central figure, his writings, and the responses to them. An excellent resource for specialists, but some chapters (particularly those that synthesize biographical sources) would also be valuable for pastors and students.

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