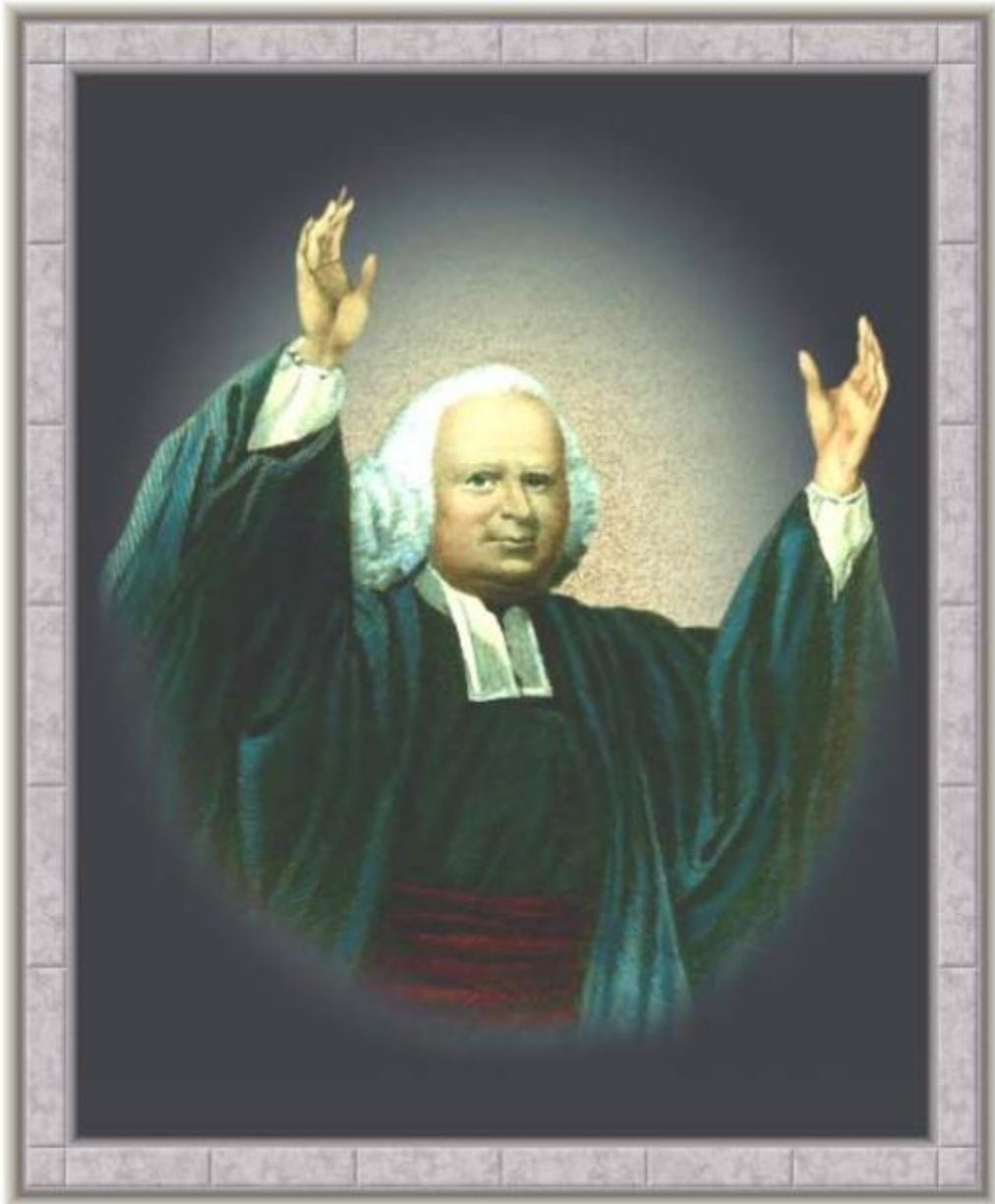


George Whitefield (1714-1770)



Key Designation:

- “The Backbone of the First Great Awakening”
- “The Father of Open Air Evangelism”

Key Background Info:

- ◆ An Anglican, he attended Oxford where he met the Wesleys, founders of the Methodist Movement in England
- ◆ Rejected by traditionalists in England because of his evangelical preaching, he headed to America.

- ◆ Preached up and down the colonies, and was especially effective in Georgia, where Whitfield county, just below Chattanooga, is named in his honor.
- ◆ An amazing open-air preacher, Ben Franklin said that his voice could be heard a mile away, and that as many as 30,000 gathered to hear him at once.
- ◆ In his Journals, he often preached 7 times in one day
- ◆ Franklin was so impressed with Whitefield that he not only published his sermons for free, but led a movement to build an auditorium in Philadelphia that would hold all those wishing to hear him preach. The building became the first on for the later University of Pennsylvania, and a statue to Whitefield's honor remains there today. Franklin also believed that it was Whitefield's preaching that united the radically divided colonies, making the War for Independence possible.
- ◆ After an illness and reading Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Whitefield was under conviction of sin, trusted in Christ alone to save him, and was converted in 1733, which to him was "Joy---joy unspeakable---joy that's full of, big with glory!" Contrary to critics, Whitefield preached a gospel of joy and freedom.
- ◆ Preached over 18,000 sermons in his lifetime
- ◆ One of the first known to have preached to the enslaved

Key Events:

- ◆ 1738- became parish priest in Savannah, Georgia, which he later turned over to John Wesley.
- ◆ A key founder of the "Holy Club" which evolved into what we know as the Methodist Church. They believed in "methods" of holiness, thus they received their name.
- ◆ 1739- gathered funds for what would be the first orphanage in America, and to this day the Bethesda Orphanage is the oldest charity in America.
- ◆ 1740- begins a series of revivals in America. Beginning in New England, he traveled what at that time was the longest distance by horse of any colonist, from New York to Charleston.
- ◆ 1742- as many as 30,000 heard him at Cambuslang, Scotland

Key Ideas:

- ◆ Believed in the Calvinist doctrine of Predestination, in contrast to John Wesley
- ◆ Believed that adult conversion first required repentance from sin, which often resulted in emotional responses as a result of sadness (brokenness) over one's sins.
- ◆ Believed in instantaneous conversion based on calling on Christ in faith for salvation
- ◆ Believed in and exemplified the humane treatment of slaves, but also believed that for the time it was necessary, especially in Georgia, for the labor force. He had slaves that worked in the Bethesda Orphanage.
- ◆ Printed sermons help grow the impact of the Awakening
- ◆ Handbills were often passed out in towns announcing his coming

Key Works:

- ◆ *A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend George Whitefield*, 1740, is a personal account of his conversion and early work.
- ◆ *A Further Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend George Whitefield*, 1747, provides insights into his early ministry.
- ◆ *The Journals of George Whitefield*. A breath-taking personal account of his revival ministry, was not re-published until 1938. Upon its first release in his lifetime, many of the old-school traditionalists criticized him for being to "apostolic."

Key Results:

Whitefield's dynamic preaching led to the bulk of the converts during the First Great Awakening. In contrast to figures like Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield was not isolated to one section of the country, such as New England, or to one particular denomination, such as the Congregationalists. Whitefield helped unite the colonies by telling stories of what God was doing in other sections of the country, as he traveled to new territories. Without question, he is the most important spiritual leader of the 18th Century in America, and has often been called "The Billy Graham of his Era" (or maybe we should say that Billy Graham is the George Whitefield of the Twentieth Century).