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Teaching Notes

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A.C.T.S. Heroes of the Faith

George Whitefield (1714-1770)

Preaching a Great Awakening

Nathan Cole, a farmer and carpenter of Kensington Parish (now Berlin, Connecticut), lived about 12 miles from Middletown, where George Whitefield was to preach on October 23, 1740.

I was in my field at work; I dropped my tool that I had in my hand and ran home to my wife, telling her to make ready quickly to go and hear Mr. Whitfield [sic] preach at Middletown, then run to my pasture for my horse with all my might, fearing that I should be too late....As I came nearer the road, I heard a noise something like a low rumbling thunder and presently found it was the noise of horses' feet coming down the road.... Every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of souls. It made me tremble....I turned and looked towards the Great River [Connecticut River] and saw the ferry boats running swift backward and forward bringing over loads of people....The land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses. All along the 12 miles I saw no man at work in his field, but all seemed to be gone. When I saw Mr. Whitfield come upon the scaffold, he looked almost angelical—a young, slim, slender youth before some thousands of people with a bold, undaunted countenance. And my hearing how God was with him everywhere as he came along, it solemnized my mind and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach. For he looked as if he was clothed with authority from the Great God, and a sweet solemn solemnity sat upon his brow, and my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound. By God's blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.

Major Events of George Whitefield's Life

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| 1714 | (December 16) Born at Bell Inn, Gloucester, England |
| 1726 | Sent to St. Mary de Crypt school, Gloucester |
| 1732 | Servitor at Pembroke College, Oxford |
| 1733 | Introduced to Oxford Holy Club by Charles Wesley |
| 1735 | Converted to Christ after severe self-privations |
| 1736 | (June 20) Ordained to the ministry in the Anglican Church; preached 1 st sermon a week later |
| 1737 | “Preaching that startled a nation”; thousands hear him in Bristol and London |
| 1738 | Mission to Georgia |
| 1739 | (Saturday, February 17) Preached in the open air to Kingswood, Bristol coal miners |
| 1739 | (Sunday, April 29) Begins open air preaching in Moorfields, London |
| 1739 | (October 30) Arrives in America for start of preaching that led to Great Awakening |

- 1740 (April) Establishes orphanage in Georgia; preaches in Philadelphia; (Summer) back in Georgia; (Fall) New England preaching tour
- 1741 (March) Arrives in England; great hostility against him b/c Wesley's attack on Calvinism; (November) Marries widow Elizabeth James
- 1741-1742 Preaches widely through England and Scotland
- 1743 Helps form Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Association
- 1744 4-month-old son, John, dies; George is attacked in bed and almost killed; (August) Sails with his wife for America, arrives ill in October, but soon resumes preaching.
- 1745-1748 Third visit to Colonies; bitter opposition, tremendous wave of revival; preaches in Bermuda
- 1748-1751 Lady Huntington appoints Whitefield as her chaplain; ministers throughout England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland; long ministry at Moorfields Tabernacle; persecution slackens.
- 1751-1752 **Fourth visit to Colonies**; financial crisis over orphanage forces him back to England
- 1752-1754 Tours Wales, returns to London for the opening of a new, brick Tabernacle.
- 1754-1755 **Fifth trip to the Colonies**, with preaching from Boston to Georgia
- 1755-1763 Preaches often in London, as well as in countless towns; briefly to Holland for his health
- 1763-1765 **Sixth trip to the Colonies**; weak in health, ministers with difficulty in New York, Boston, and other places, generally with greater acceptance than ever
- 1765-1769 Devotes attention to London ministries; *August 1768*: Wife, Elizabeth, dies
- 1769-1770 **Seventh and final trip to the Colonies** is a difficult voyage. Arrives in Charleston and preaches for 10 days to large congregations.
- 1770 (May) Begins tour from Philadelphia, preaching as often as frail body permits
- 1770 (September 29) New Hampshire: preaches final sermon as candle burns down; dies; 6000 gather for funeral

- I. 1739: An Amazing Year
- II. The Great Awakening
- III. The Controversy with Wesley
- IV. Whitefield's Orphanage
- V. Zeal Until Death
- VI. A Whitefield Sermon