

## **Moments in Our History**

**(Excerpts from the Dissenting Church of Christ at St. John's 1775 – 1975)**

### **The Spiritual Pilgrimage of John Jones**

John Jones was born in Wales in the year 1737. In his journal, he tells us that he was “born and bred in the Dissenting principles and strictly reared therein, under which at fourteen and fifteen he experienced many devout affections and had much pleasure in religion, though in general thirsted after and committed heinous sins”.

To his parents Jones owed what little schooling he had and as he laments “might have acquired more had it not been for his natural wicked disposition which exceeded most people's”.

The other important spiritual influence in Jones' youth would have been the great revivalist movement which swept through Wales 1735-1742. Howell Harries, having been refused ordination in the established church and wearied of the “unreality and levity of Oxford” left the University and launched a preaching mission in his native Wales. ...Nothing could stop the movement. The thrilling sermons in town and on the hillsides - above all the emotional singing. All Wales was singing such hymns as Guide me, O Thy Great Jehovah. Such was Harries' legacy to Wales and John Jones.

At the age of twenty, Jones enlisted as a private soldier in the Royal Artillery. Here “he vied with his comrades in various kinds of profligacy.” Ruefully, Jones admits “that the Ox never drank water more greedily than he drank iniquity.” In 1765, his company was posted to St. John's, Newfoundland, “where he more than formerly rolled in all manner of abominations.” St. John's was a rough town, its inhabitants described as little better than savages. Contemporaries agree with Greatheed's (Rev. Samuel Greatheed, Jones' friend and biographer) summary of conditions in Newfoundland, that “there was scarcely any part of the world more destitute either of the power or form of Christianity. The population was half Irish “of the meaner sort”(!) and they were denied public worship or a resident priest to influence them for good.

(Next week, the Conversion of John Jones)