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John Wesley - II

Lead: John Wesley returned from America in 1737 deeply dissatisfied with his performance as a clergyman and missionary. He was seeking something deeper and said he found it in a heart strangely warmed.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Wesley was a typical orthodox, apparently devout Anglican clergyman in 1737, but his purely intellectual commitment to Christianity and his failed performance as a missionary to the

colony of Georgia in the previous two years, awakened in him a powerful sense of despair and spiritual collapse. While in Georgia he had a chance meeting with a group of Moravians, a pietistic sect founded by German Count Nickolaus Zinzendorf. When Wesley returned to London he began to meet with the Moravians and in 1738 during a meeting in Aldersgate Street, had a spiritual encounter he later described as transformative. He recalled his intellectual conviction of the faith confirmed by a strangely warmed heart and a personal religious experience of grace.

From that point, Wesley saw his life's mission as an evangelical one,

preaching the need for that individual encounter with God. He preached wherever pulpits were open and when, because of his vigorous and enthusiastic manner the congregations of the Church of England were closed to him, he took his preaching into outdoor meeting where he spoke to thousands, many of whom were un-churched. As the decades passed especially in America Wesley began rely on dedicated laymen to carry the message and, when the Anglican Church refused, to ordain leaders of a new denomination, which took the name Methodist. Today Wesley's legacy is represented in numerous denominations and in the lives of millions of believers who claim their

pursuit of holiness is compelled beyond mere intellectual assent by a personal encounter with the divine described as “religion of the heart.”

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Hattersly, Roy. *The Life of John Wesley: A Brand from the Burning*. New York: Doubleday Publishing, 2003.

Monk, John C. *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1999.

Tomkins, Stephen. *John Wesley: A Biography*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003.

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/JohnWesley.htm>

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