

The George Whitefield Of Nova Scotia
by Greg Gordon

A FLAME OF FIRE

Henry Alline is virtually unknown to modern day Christians but is well known in heaven. His life was fully spent for God on this earth as he laid up treasures in heaven. The life of Henry Alline is a contradiction to the compromising, convoluted, comfortable Christianity we see in today. Alline "lost all for God" and cared little for the opinions of men. His short life of ministry did more for the cause of the Gospel than hundreds of ministers in his day. His life was consumed with eternity. Alline cared not for this life and spent his health, money, time and energy to serve God acceptably. On horseback he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to an entire province of souls in less than ten years. Known as the "George Whitefield Of Nova Scotia." he was the instrument God used to send a Great Awakening to this part of Canada.

Professor Benjamin Rand shares: "Like a flame of fire he swept through the land at a period when there brooded over Nova Scotia a spirit of darkness." During the times of the Great Awakening in America; God raised up a man who had his view set firmly on eternity. Alline did not just preach a gospel but rather a everlasting gospel in which he pleaded for men to justly believe. Alline was a man who burnt out of God, laboring till he could labor no more. Oh how we need to see men again in our generation full of energy and usefulness to God. Alline fully committed all of himself to the work of God leaving nothing for himself. His conversion in Nova Scotia, Canada marked a time that the land would never forget. As his entire ministry, his conversion experience was drastic and bold. There was years of time passing before he came to a full assurance of calling into the ministry and peace with God. His calling into ministry and shouts of victory echoed into the darkness as demon's shuddered at the full resignation of a will to God: "My soul was set at liberty, the land discovered to me my labor in the ministry and call to preach the gospel. I cried out Amen, I'll go, I'll go, send me, send me." His cry was continually: "O eternity, eternity, unfathomable eternity! The joy of the righteous but the dread of the wicked." Such a mindset and ministry was effective to bring multitudes into the kingdom of God. One stanza to a hymn of Alline's five hundred which he published in his lifetime reflects this truth: "O what a day! how ill the wicked stand. What scenes immortal open to their view? All time deserted, mortal changes past. And they awake, before the awful Bar, where grace and hope to them are know no more."

SOULS KEPT BLIND

A frowning world is such that any true gospel preacher approaches. A world that crucified Christ and hates God. The Scriptures share this sobering reality: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." Henry Alline experienced this "hatred" from the lost souls that he pleaded to and more from the religious established elite. Yet amidst such opposition Alline could joyfully write in his journal: "Although there was much opposition from earth and hell, the work of God was still reviving." and again: "I preached very often, and the peoples seemed to be alarmed and greatly attentive to the gospel. I returned through Horton again, where I met with some opposition. But God was kind to me, and gave me strength to face a frowning world."

Alline preached a uncompromising standard and Biblical Gospel that made many in his day raise their arms in protest. He found a principle very quickly in his ministry and stated it repeatedly in his journals: "O the damage that is done by unconverted ministers, and legal professors. I have found them in my travels more inveterate against the power of religion than the open profane." These unconverted ministers, false professors, unregenerate priests stood firmly against the preaching of repentance, holiness and a conversion experience. To allude to the fact of any of their congregates being un-regenerate would put their preaching in question so therefore they labored to silence Alline many times.

"Thousands of souls are kept blind, until they are gone beyond all recovery. To carry on this infernal scheme, a number of anti-christian ministers are laboring night and day to prove that a feeling knowledge of redemption in the soul is not to be attained and that all such pretensions are a vain imagination and a delusion; and tell their hearers, if they do so and so, and are baptized, join the church, come to the Lord's table, and do their best in those outwards things, all will be well. And thus they are murdering the precious and immortal souls about them. O that God would awaken and convert them, or remove them. And O that all mankind would believe that they need to be redeemed."

Alline agreed with the views and urgency that Gilbert Tennent preached towards unconverted ministers and their lack of ability to convert souls to God. Here is a excerpt of a sermon by Tennant which Alline could have read in his day: "I am verily persuaded the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ; and the reason why congregations have been so dead is, because they have dead men preaching to them. O that the Lord may quicken and revive them fro his own name's sake. For how can dead men beget living children?"

BODILY INFIRMITIES

Henry Alline was companions with suffering. His life followed the path of many of God's generals: Brainerd, Hyde, Mc'Cheyene and others. His life bore witness to the unchanging truth of Scripture: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short season." The list of the faithful in Hebrews 11 defined Alline's life when it says: "being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Bodily afflictions and infirmities were common place for Alline. For him to labor for the gospel was much more important than keeping perfect health or having no pain, such thinking today would not only border on legalism in many Christian circles, but fanaticism and even insanity.

Read some accounts from his journals showing the holy recklessness he had as the gospel march drew him onward in complete and utter abandonment to eternity and its values:

"Rode 30 miles and although I was so fatigued by riding in heavy rain, that I could scarcely walk, when I got from my horse. Yet when I began to preach, I had such a sense of the redeemer's cause, that I almost forgot my bodily infirmities."

"I preached so often and rode so much that sometimes I would seem almost worn out and yet in a few hours would be so refreshed, that I could labor again for twelve hours in discoursing, praying, preaching and exhorting, and feel strong on my lungs."

"About the first of September I was taken with a very sore throat, occasioned by swelling, which continued some days; so that I could swallow nothing but a few spoonfuls of liquids for my support. but was enabled to speak in public when at the worst, to my own astonishment and the astonishment of the others also."

The acute awareness that he had contracted tuberculosis drove Alline to labor for the Gospel even more intently. He "relentlessly" preached and traveled, crying to a deaf and blind humanity the cross of Christ. He became very ill by 1783 "he drove himself to the very end of his endurance." He died in New England after evangelizing the entire province of Nova Scotia in less than ten years! At 35 years young this fervent, pleading, robust man of God breathed his last. Only heaven knows the fruits of his labors. Alline lost his health for God.

A TOMBSTONE CRIES OUT!

W.B. Bezanson gave this testimony: "Henry Alline yielded his life in complete compliance to the plan of God." Oh cannot this be for us? cannot we surrender all in obedience to the precious gospel of our Saviour, the

Lord Jesus Christ. If he is not Lord of all, He is not Lord! "Yield yourselves unto God. as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Alline's last words were: "Now I rejoice in Jesus." After a short life of ministry with God he gave up the ghost. Do you think he is going to stand before the judgement bar of God ashamed at a life that was selfish and held onto its own through self preservation? Perhaps Alline's response to such a thought like this would be: Away with self! Crucify it! Put it to death. Oh the miserable thing of self! All to Christ, All to God, does He not deserve anything less?

After all the trials and tribulations he endured for the sake of the Gospel, Alline has entered his rest. Yet alas, Christians in our day are resting and "taking it easy" as a damned world slips into a hell without exits. Alline saw this reality and with the saintly Andrew Bonar cried in His spirit: "Oh they perish! they perish!" The Puritans were known to say that we must "go through hell to get to heaven." And how true that statement is, dear believer this is our hell, this earth, the wiles of sin, and the temptations of the devil are own hell. The worst the Christian will experience in this life is the myriad of the flesh, the world and the devil and then we will enter into all the joy's of heaven and God. Yet for the masses of mankind it is not so! May God sober us to realize not only our portion but the portion of the wicked also, as it says in the Proverbs: "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death."

Henry Alline's tombstone reads: "Henry Alline 1748-1784, died at the age of 35. Like a flame of fire he swept through the land. He was a burning and shining light. Zealous travels in the case of Christ. Languished on the way and cheerfully resigned his life. He was vastly esteemed the Apostle of Nova Scotia." His gravestone sits before us as a landmark of what a life can do for God in this earthly sojourn. It speaks loudly against our laxity, superficiality, liberalism and mediocrity in the things of God. It cries out to a lost mankind that is going to a eternal hell with everlasting burnings and torment. It laments over our lack of vigor to live and die for the Saviour of our souls giving lip service to the King and living as if there were no cross. Shall we stand before his tombstone and with tears in our eyes say "God make me such a flame for Thee?" Oh may God raise up more of these "flames of fire" in our generation to sweep across the land of Canada in revival fire. May it be so, Amen.