

Profiles in Evangelism: A Comparative Study  
of Henry Alline, Joseph Dimock and Isaiah Wallace

by

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In the years 1775 to 1900 rural Nova Scotia periodically experienced intense and influential revivals of religion. Intimately bound up in these revivals were three men whose lives lived in sequence span these critical times in Maritime history. Henry Alline, 1748-1784, a Congregationalist, the "apostle of Nova Scotia", beginning his ministry in Falmouth, extended the New Light influence in all of the present-day counties west of Colchester, north into Cumberland, beyond into the St. John River Valley and east to Isle St. Jean. He died on a mission to New England in 1784. Joseph Dimock, born in 1768 in Newport and who almost certainly had listened to Alline's preaching, began his ministry in 1790 and, although soon to become a settled pastor in Chester until his death in 1846, nevertheless carried on an itinerant, evangelistic outreach throughout much the same area covered by Alline. The third of the trio, Isaiah Wallace, upon graduation from Acadia College in 1855, began a varied career as home missionary, pastor, and revivalist again throughout much of the area of his predecessors until the present century.

Each of these men, although coming from different backgrounds and facing different circumstances, was in possession of that particular gift and character which saw the strengthening of existing churches, founding of new congregations, and establishing in the religious consciousness of many of the people of their day those views and principles which are known as Baptist. The differences of temperament, education, and socio-economic climate between these men was far outweighed by the remarkable similarities of their ministries. There was much of the Olympic relay race in their ministries in which the torch of Divine revelation and experience was handed from the one to the other throughout more than a century of strenuous pioneer expansion and growth in Nova Scotia. Although not alone in promoting revivals, each of the three came to symbolize in his day what vital Christian experience meant, what spiritual freedom involved and what organized religion should be about. They stood out against the established order of religion with its formality, vested interests, and neglect of the needs of the common man. In contrast, they represented that fervour, enthusiasm, and spiritual concern for the hard-pressed pioneer family which so characterized the circuit rider of frontier days. Much of what they taught, organized, and effected had secular implications for the pioneers as well. The gospel of these itinerant evangelists with its emphasis on personal liberty and expression in Christ unwittingly accorded favourably with much of the social,

economic, and political ambitions of Nova Scotians throughout the transition from a backward colony to an independent province in an independent country. The revivals, then, of Aline, Dimock, and Wallace can be viewed as remarkable convergences of human need and aspiration and Divine intention and fulfillment.

Each of these evangelists fitted into a particular evolving historical context which he influenced and which influenced him. To present anything more than a cursory survey of this historical background is beyond the scope of this paper. And what is presented emphasizes those circumstances affecting Henry Aline. It was his spiritual legacy bequeathed to him by the Great Awakening in New England which basically was the legacy of Joseph Dimock and Isaiah Wallace.

Rural Nova Scotia sociology following 1775 formed a context critical to the nature and outcome of the revivals under Henry Aline and his successors. Replacing the expelled Acadians, New England "Planters" brought with them in the 1760's a vibrant experience of revivalism from the Great Awakening under Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield in the mid 1700's. In a sense history was about to repeat itself. These immigrants, their fathers and grandfathers, had been through the struggle of pioneer life in their own land in which the split between settled clergy and laity had widened, where Calvinist theology had lost touch with the immediate experience of wilderness conditions characterized by immense exertion, equality, opportunity, exploitation, individual success, and faith in the common man. A good many of these New Englanders could remember the conflicts, resentment, and alienation between the laity and their clergy as the influence of deism and the Age of Reason fostered a sense of independence, unrest, and outright rejection of Divine Prerogatives. The hard living, hard drinking, self-reliant people had demanded a religion better suited to their own life-styles. These conditions coupled with deep unrest among the committed as to what constituted genuine church membership, those regenerate or those merely "owning the covenant", and the worsening economic situation of inflation, depression, and indebtedness prepared a people ready for the revivals of the Great Awakening. Men like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield had spoken to the decline of morality, the increased reliance upon the external forms of religion, the rise of rugged individualism, and the democratic ideals of the common man. Although Calvinists, Edwards and Whitefield had emphasized God's love and grace rather than God's logic in justice. Theirs was a gospel of consolation rather than judgment and terror, of mercy and favour rather than depression and fear.

Presented with enthusiasm, liberty of speech and grace, in sharp contrast to the dull, dry approach of their regular clergy, whole communities yielded to the confession of personal sin, faith and freedom in the spirit. Such experiential Christianity was the spiritual legacy brought to Nova Scotia by many of the immigrants, among whose company were the family of Henry Alline and the parents of Joseph Dimock.

Settling around the coastline of South Western Nova Scotia and in larger numbers in the Annapolis Valley, these New Englanders soon revealed another legacy of their homeland background: the growing sense and skill in local self-government and their deepening distrust and dissatisfaction with colonial domination in any form whether political, economic, or religious. Great Britain ruled the province through a Governor and Council to which representation was usually by proxy as direct representation was almost impossible under the primitive conditions. Financially, the pioneer families were at best a struggling often desperate lot. Education was almost non-existent until 1811 and frequently of poor quality when dependent upon unworthy itinerant school masters. Only in the larger centres were religious institutions of any consequence formed. Besides, the Church of England was the established Church, receiving Government sanctions in terms of finances, property and clergy prerogatives. The Presbyterians fared better as they were supported from Scotland. Dissenters were only just tolerated. Lamented one Anglican missionary to Nova Scotia in 1776: "I found the lower orders of the people, nearly to a man, Presbyterians or fanatics."<sup>1</sup> Great distances separated small communities, and as the homesteaders moved onto their own hand, the population became even more scattered. Transportation was of the most basic, horseback for the most part on roads no better than bridle paths, or snow shoes, or by river boat. As the sea offered the easiest mode of transit communities sprang up near the shore. By 1783 Nova Scotia's population had reached about 15,000.

The American Revolution added another dimension to the already complex sociological situation in Nova Scotia. Portions of the New England population in the province went home in support of their fellow rebels, among them most of the Congregational ministers. Those settlers who remained found themselves in an extremely strained position. Regarded with suspicion on the one hand by their British government and having severed ties with their homeland on the other,

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1. Edgar McInnis, Canada, A Political and Social History, Rinehart and Company, Inc., Toronto, 1954, p. 180.

they felt like people without a country. This sense of rootlessness contributed in no small way to their embracing Henry Alline's emotional other-worldly religion. Isolated at home politically, geographically, economically, and socially, threatened at sea by American privateers and set adrift spiritually with the departure of most of their ministers and the coldness of the established religious orders, these people with their memory of warm revivals were naturally drawn to the dedicated and enthusiastic Henry Alline. His fiery and emotional messages spoke of another order which substituted one set of tensions and pain, political and social, with another, the spiritual, for which God had provided remedy and relief in the Gospel. These revivals were a concurrence of human need and Divine provision in which peace in the spiritual crisis meant patience and forbearance in the natural. In the settling of the soul's crises and in the formation of local assemblies much of the democratic aspirations of the people were unwittingly met. As the people yielded to the Divine calling, came out, and found peace so they separated themselves from staid religious institutions and formed their own local autonomous fellowships with all the attendant searchings and resolvings of principles and polity so characteristic of political states. Henry Alline himself was an example of this. Denied political opportunity in his own county and in Halifax, he repudiated man's government and preached God's. In so doing, he created groups of people who needed shepherding and institutionalizing for the sake of growth and stability. Often he was called in on disputes and controversies, thereby fulfilling perhaps his repressed political interests.

The social-political situation changed rapidly with the coming of the Empire Loyalists. Of the 30,000 who settled in the Maritimes, nearly half settled along the Bay of Fundy and up the St. John River Valley, while the remainder filled out the coastal communities of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The majority of the Loyalists, Tory and staunch supporters of the Church of England, swelling the ranks and leadership of the Established Church, greatly stimulated its influence politically as well as religiously. Under the militant leadership of Bishop Inglis, the Anglican Church entered a period of expansion throughout the provinces. Many of the Loyalists who were Dissenters and Separatists and having more in common with the pre-Loyalist settlers joined their fellowship.

Strong political lines were being drawn between the newcomers and the older settlers. Having been roughly uprooted by the war, and having experienced

a firm closing of the door by restrictive legislation in their former home states, the Loyalist exiles were determined to preserve their lot in their new environment. They naturally regarded resident ex-New Englanders with suspicion and hostility. Being at odds with the earlier settlers over land distribution, and being at a great distance from Halifax, the seat of government and the law courts, and at a disadvantage with regard to the primitive communications of the day, there soon emerged a movement to establish a separate colony. These views, dovetailing with Britain's policy of keeping potentially rebellious colonies weak and loyal, saw in 1784 the division of Nova Scotia and the establishment of New Brunswick.

What developed in all the Maritime provinces as a result of Loyalist Tory domination in the Legislature were conflicts between the privileged pro-Church of England office holders and those seeking both more representative government and religious toleration. Throughout a good deal of the nineteenth century, the struggle between the Church of England entrenched in government and court, and the Dissenters was to be difficult and marred by religious intolerance. Against such a backdrop, the Baptist Fathers, one of whom was Joseph Dimock, though not always up to the erudition of their Anglican counterparts but every bit their equal in spiritual drive and initiative, continued the work of founding churches and institutions of higher learning, organizing Associations, Mission Boards and the Maritime Convention, and carrying on the struggle for religious freedom in all aspects of society. In the process they laid the foundations of the Baptist denomination in these provinces.

The early life histories of these revivalists, although differing in circumstances, nevertheless reveal a similar Divine moulding. Alline, born on June 14, 1748, in Newport, Rhode Island, spent his early youth in a social-economic atmosphere of a large bustling Puritan seaport. He gained some formal education, but the major impression made upon his tender soul was the oppressive weight of strict, extreme Calvinism. So exercised was young Alline in the doctrines of Divine Sovereignty, election, wrath and judgment that his youth with its natural gaiety became a sham. His family's emigration to Falmouth, Nova Scotia, in 1760 when he was twelve, meant a complete change in Alline's outward circumstances but no relief to his growing inner struggles. Denied formal education or anything like organized spiritual instruction, Alline wrestled not only with rough pioneer farming but also with his fears of death, sense of hopelessness, guilt and damnation. As he developed into a popular

leader among the youth of his area, he lived a double life with all its tensions, fears, and torments until his conversion at the age of twenty-seven.

Joseph Dimock was born to godly parents twenty years after Alline in 1768 at Newport, Nova Scotia, east of Falmouth. The same desperate, hand-to-mouth pioneer existence as Alline's was his experience as well. With no formal schooling he did manage to learn to read and to write with reasonable skill and often with moving power, although his journal reveals a regrettable lack of knowledge of the mechanics of language. In comparison, Henry Alline is seen to be all the more remarkable in his command of language, imagery and expression. As for all the early Congregational and Baptist pioneers in Nova Scotia the Bible was the textbook used for parental instruction of the young in the basics of the Christian experience. God "had placed me in a land of Bibles - committed me to the care of Christian parents - my father, a Baptist preacher who taught me the need of a Saviour and how undone I must be without him - gave me a common education though small, beyond any one of my associates in the village where I lived."<sup>2</sup> In addition, part of Joseph Dimock's education was a thorough knowledge of the Assemblies' Catechism. Perhaps in the area in which Alline and Dimock grew up there was a small circulating "library", for both the writings of these men hint of a background acquaintance with such classics as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Alline more obviously than Dimock had access to some source of books, such as William Law's Spirit of Prayer and John Milton's Paradise Lost, which greatly stimulated his already active intellect. Joseph Dimock also travelled under the same Calvinistic burdens as did Henry Alline, and found relief through conversion when seventeen years old in 1785.

In distinct contrast to his predecessors, Isaiah Wallace, born in the Baptist parsonage at Coverdale, New Brunswick, in 1826, enjoyed much easier circumstances and educational opportunities. He attended public school, the New Brunswick Baptist Seminary in Fredericton, and Acadia College in 1851 in preparation for the ordained ministry. His early religious experience seems to have had none of the extreme spiritual turmoil Henry Alline experienced, rather he simply became increasingly aware that he was a sinner in need of salvation. However, no complete commitment was made until he was twenty-three while studying in the Brunswick Baptist Seminary.

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2. Joseph Dimock, quoted by George Levy. The Diary of Joseph Dimock, Ed. George Levy, Lancelot Press, Hantsport, N.S., 1979, p. 9.

Educational, social or environmental circumstances notwithstanding, the conversion experiences of these men are critical to understanding their effectiveness in later years. For Henry Alline the inner sense of utter desolation wrought upon his sensitive conscience by an overweening Calvinism was swept away by an overwhelming awareness of Divine love and acceptance. Few descriptions of conversion crises convey such drama as does Henry Alline's recorded in his Life and Journal. Although Joseph Dimock does not give any account of his conversion it can be deduced from his Diary that it was no less traumatic and far-reaching than Alline's. For him too, darkness, sterile formality, and the frightening abyss of eternity were stark realities to be avoided at all costs in an utter abandonment to a loving and merciful God. Both men realized that the sufferings and pain of their own preconversion experiences were but the obverse experiences of an all-loving Saviour on their behalf. Although Isaiah Wallace was more reserved in his description of Divine favour at his conversion, nevertheless he knew what it was to have the fountains of his heart broken up, his head bowed, and to weep freely as a true penitent.<sup>3</sup>

The conversion of Alline was typical of New England Puritanism. As the faith and practice of parents and grandparents could be traced to the Great Awakening of the 1740's this is not surprising. The Allines and the Dimocks realized, taught, and expected conversions to follow the typical pattern of knowledge of God and sinfulness through church attendance, catechism, family worship and personal study; of conviction of a personal hopeless state leading to despair and fear; of grace wherein a God-given desire and will to repent and to believe in Christ meant saving faith; of combat in which doubt and despair wrestle with faith; and of assurance in which the believer finds a rest in the eternal forgiveness and security of God. Such was the pattern in general for all three evangelists. And all three realized that although conversion was instantaneous, conviction was often prolonged and assurance frequently tended to be clouded by doubt and a sense of distance from God. The fact that the intensity of the conversion experience was so real and vital enabled the evangelists in later years both to recognize the shallowness of the religious experience about them and to know and proclaim the steps leading to a genuine religious experience. The intensity and liberation of genuine conversion could not be stressed enough. For Alline it signified a departure

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3. Isaiah Wallace, Autobiographical Sketch and Reminiscences of Revival Work, John Burgoyne, Halifax, 1903, p. 9.

from the rigid form of Puritanism as experienced in Nova Scotia which failed to emphasize the new birth. Alline and Dimock both realized that the Calvinistic conception of God as vengeful and retributive contrasted with their experience of Him as infinitely patient, loving and merciful. Isaiah Wallace would have heartily agreed. Nor did their conversion experience support that cardinal doctrine of predestination and election which so underlined man's inability to act on behalf of his own salvation.<sup>4</sup> Rather the opposite held true: for Alline the discovery was a mixture of regret and joy. "O what a wretch have I been to stand it out against such love. I have longed and often wondered, that God did not have mercy on me and convert me; but now I saw it was my own fault, and wondered why he waited so long upon such miserable rejectors of his grace."<sup>5</sup>

The conversion experience had another ramification for all three revivalists. It signified to varying degrees for each man an almost mystical, existential awareness of Deity. This mysticism was most acute in Henry Alline leading to a theology that attempted to walk a narrow line between Arminianism and Calvinism. For Alline, salvation did not depend upon any outward act of man, nor upon any decree of God but upon "the union of the inner man to" and "the turning of the inmost soul after God." Conversion is Christ's "changing and taking Possession of the inmost soul."<sup>6</sup> That such mysticism could lead to the charge of Antinomianism may be inferred from the statement "At the hour of Conversion the Son of God takes possession of the inmost Soul, or inmost Mind, but leaveth the fallen immortal Body in its fallen State still."<sup>7</sup> As revealed in his writings Two Mites, or some of the most important and much disputed Points of Divinity (1781) and the Anti-Traditionalist (1783), in revolting against the harshness of Calvinism and the too humanistic views of other critics of Calvin, Henry Alline based his thinking to a great extent on the mystics William Law, John Fletcher and Jacob Boehme.<sup>8</sup> His theology

4. These points regarding H. Alline's experiences contrasting with orthodox Puritanism are found in J.M. Bumsted, Henry Alline, Canadian Biographical Studies, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1971.

5. H. Alline, Life and Journal, Gilbert & Dean, Boston, 1806, p. 35.

6. H. Alline, Two Mites, or some of the most important and much disputed Points of Divinity, A. Henry, Halifax, 1804, p. 94 ff.

7. Ibid.

8. Maurice W. Armstrong, The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia 1776-1809, The American Society of Church History, Hartford, Conn., 1949, chap. 4.



eventually led to such a separation of body and soul that the former was to be "burnt up and dissolved" while the spiritual only was to be blessed in the resurrection.

For Joseph Dimock the mystic aspect of his conversion simply led him into a deeply personal monitoring of his walk with the Saviour and in his task of presenting the Gospel to his fellows. His impressions of both God's will and man's condition was intuitive, dependent not so much on any logic or reasoned observation on his part but upon his emotional sense.

I never felt any relief till after I woke the next morning when I felt relieved from that weight of Darkness, but not much sence of God or souls but in dismissing of the table after breakfast I felt a heart to go to God with submission to plead for Dawning of the Day once more when in a moment the cloud burst in sunder & a small beam of light broke into mind & caused my soul to cry 'O how good God is!' O how soon was all that hardness, Darkness, torment of mind Blasphemy of heart done away...<sup>9</sup>

Nothing could further confirm the mystic in Joseph Dimock than his statement when he is at his Uncle's house: "...I felt a weight of truths that flow'd right from the Eternal God into my soul which he enabled me to communicate to others a sence (sic) of God..."<sup>10</sup>

Of the three, Isaiah Wallace was the least influenced by mystical experiences, perhaps because of his more thorough education and the more settled social conditions in which he laboured. Nevertheless, his early religious experiences, if not as dramatic as Henry Alline's, were just as intense and instructive. A dream about his father's passing pointed him to the ministry and a Sunday afternoon's walk wherein "all nature around me and above me seemed vocal with praises to God, and for the first time in my life, I had some comprehension of the language of Isaiah 55:12..."<sup>11</sup> continued with him throughout life. In addition, like his predecessors and all revivalists the revival itself was a mystical experience in the sense in which God was seen to act in a direct and personal way upon the souls of those seeking reality in Divine things. Always throughout his career did he look, as did Henry Alline and Joseph Dimock, for this direct experience of God in the hearts of his listeners.

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9. Joseph Dimock, Diary, Ed. George Levy, Lancelot Press, Wantsport, N.S., 1979, p. 35.

10. Ibid., p. 62.

11. Wallace, op.cit., p. 11.

The mystical aspects of the Christian experience have always interacted with the emotional side of human nature. Upon conversion and in their Christian walk all three men enjoyed a hearty emotional life. That this is important is to note the sharp contrast between their experience and that of most of their contemporaries who held to a form of religion but missed its power. The gloom of severe Calvinism, the stagnation of the established churches, the spiritual coldness of most settled ministers, who forever read pedantic sermons on ethical topics, the sheer drudgery of the pioneer existence, the unrest and discontent of the recent immigrants, and the sense of utter isolation all but demanded emotional release. In their conversion experiences, these men rediscovered the joy and enthusiasm of the Christian Faith. They discovered the victory side of the atonement; realizing God's irresistible, irrepressible power they yielded themselves up to His will. Religion then meant a stirring of the deepest emotions, the warming of the hardest hearts, the awakening of the darkest soul to the light of God's love in Christ Jesus. Revival signified more than just the acknowledgment and removal of sin, it indicated a whole new joyful experience of God in life. This truth would have profound effects in many communities throughout the Maritimes.

When comparing the baptismal experiences of these men a possible anomaly emerges. Joseph Dimock was baptized by immersion in 1787 two years after his conversion, not by his father oddly enough, but by the resident minister of Horton, the Rev. Nicholas Pierson. Isaiah Wallace received baptism shortly after his profession of faith in 1848. But nowhere in the writings pertaining to Henry Aline is it stated he was baptized. Although instrumental in the forming of the Horton Baptist church in 1778 and a frequent preacher for its growth and edification, he was excluded from communion because he was not baptized.<sup>12</sup> It can only be assumed that the Horton Baptist church, practicing close communion for the first years of its existence, failed to recognize the Congregationalist custom of infant baptism and later acceptance into church membership upon the candidate's public confession of faith.

Henry Aline's insistence upon the inward light and regenerative experience of Christ led him to repudiate all outward props of religion, including the practice of baptism. Very early in his career in 1776 he had helped to form the church in Newport comprising in membership both Baptists and Congregationalists. As other churches were formed this controversy over membership, baptism, and attendance of the Lord's Table caused no little grief.

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12. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 69.

O may the time come when Ephraim shall no more vex Judah, nor Judah envy Ephraim, and that there might never more be any disputes about such non-essentials, as water baptism; the sprinkling of infants, or baptising of adults by immersion, but every one enjoy liberty of conscience. <sup>13</sup>

Later, Alline went further in stating that such emphasis upon water baptism was a return to fallen Adam, who tried to hide himself with an external fig leaf. The difference between sects and denominations were to be compared to the differences between the voices and looks of individuals, simply an accident of nature. It is interesting to note that later the Horton Baptist church did open its communion to Congregationalists but never felt entirely at home in the arrangement.

Joseph Dimock, as pastor of the Chester church, had somewhat similar experiences, although, as a Baptist, he was on the other side of the controversy. He had inherited a mixed Baptist and Congregationalist fellowship from the Rev. John Seccombe in 1793. Over the next eighteen years, "there came about a sifting of the membership" in which the Baptist stream emerged predominant.<sup>14</sup> That the process was attended by much soul searching may be read between the lines of the letter written by Joseph Dimock to the Associated Baptist churches meeting in Onslow in 1811. That these issues of baptism, church membership, and participation at the Lord's Supper continued to divide both community and church throughout the nineteenth century is attested to by the controversies in Isaiah Wallace's ministry.

Isaiah Wallace had a very settled view of baptism. While concurring with Henry Alline on his definite emphasis upon regeneration and the new birth experience, he had none of Alline's indifference as to the mode of baptism. For Wallace it was immersion and his controversies were not so much within the ranks but with those without the ranks inquiring after the meaning of baptism or opposing the Baptist work altogether. His journal is nothing if it is not a record of the classic pattern of the early church - hear the Gospel, believe, repent, confess faith, be baptized. When asked once what does baptism mean, regeneration, salvation, or what? his reply was an exposition of 1 Peter 3:21, showing that it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience."<sup>15</sup>

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13. Alline, op. cit., p. 67.

14. George E. Levy in his introduction to the Diary of Joseph Dimock, Lancelot Press, Hantsport, N.S., 1979, p. 14.

15. Wallace, op. cit., p. 104.

The ministries of Henry Alline, Joseph Dimock, and Isaiah Wallace were apostolic in nature. Each man experienced a definite call to proclaim essentially that same Gospel which was to make "its way progressively into sinners' hearts in convincing their reason that there is nothing of so great importance - as religion or the affairs of their souls and another world."<sup>16</sup> Not only were they itinerant evangelists, but they also established churches, pastored them in varying degrees, counselled, ordained, baptized, and administered the flocks. As revivalists their aim was continually to encourage the faithful, to call upon sinners to repent and to debate as apologists with the opposition over the essentials of Divine ordained religion. The essence of their work was the actualization of a genuine conversion experience among their auditors. Their own conversions provided both the insight into the spiritual condition of the people and the standard to which others were to attain. In all of this they echoed much of the Apostle Paul in his trials, exhortations and pleadings as recorded in the New Testament.

In comparing the ministries of these three there is a progression of diversity and complexity. For Henry Alline, the main thrust was itinerant evangelism to backward, isolated communities. As a result he was involved to a certain degree with basic church founding and organization. Had he lived longer, no doubt he would have been even more involved in post-evangelistic consolidation requiring the formulation of church and inter-church organizational and doctrinal structures. These latter were very much a part of Joseph Dimock's labours. As the province and his people moved into more stable, prosperous times, Dimock spent more of his time as an active participant in established congregation and inter-congregational affairs. Although he was often absent from Chester on evangelistic tours and founding churches in Lunenburg, Sherbrooke, and St. Margaret's Bay, he also promoted and upon several occasions, chaired, the Baptist Association which was organized in 1800. Again there is little doubt that Dimock had a hand in launching in 1814 a home mission programme under the auspices of the Association. His presence and influence can be traced in other church projects such as the founding in 1827 of the first Baptist publication in British North America, the Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. He was on the committee charged with looking into a joint effort with the Presbyterian Synod to establish a seminary, the eventual Horton Academy. And later in 1838 his name appeared as one of the founders of Acadia College from which in 1855 would graduate Isaiah Wallace.

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16. Dimock, op. cit., p. 33.

Of the three, the ministry of Isaiah Wallace is the most complex. He began as a teacher, jumped to colporteur work, and then in 1851 began studies at Acadia College. While there he was caught up in a work of revival which no doubt laid the experiential foundation for the main thrust of his life. "I then received a strong uplift in my Christian life, and rejoiced in renewed evidences of my acceptance with God. Whatever of success may have attended my life's work...is traceable in some degree...to that gracious renewing in 1855."<sup>17</sup> Then began a varied career centred mainly in his evangelistic labours for various Home Mission Boards, interrupted by pastorates in such places as St. John, Lower Granville, Berwick, and Kentville, and a stint as a teacher once again and as a fund raising agent for Acadia College. Upon having had to give up his appointment to go to Australia as a missionary under the auspices of the Maritime Baptist Convention, he worked as a missionary first under the New Brunswick Home Mission Society in northern New Brunswick, then under the Nova Scotia Baptist Home Missionary Union conducting revivals and touring the province to ascertain and report on its needs to the Union, and finally for twelve years under the newly formed Convention Board of Home Missions as their General Missionary. Even when not engaged in any pastorate or mission board, Isaiah Wallace "made many evangelistic tours in various parts of these Provinces, as Providence opened the way and my strength would permit."<sup>18</sup>

In promoting revivals each man's method followed a similar, basic pattern. As a basis and undergirding all their labours was the unshakeable assurance of God's love for lost men. Having themselves experienced in the most complete way redeeming grace, they spent themselves in bringing religion to the people. They were themselves in their self-consuming zeal, devotion, and courage a living demonstration of the verbal message they proclaimed. Such sacrificial single-mindedness under the most trying of personal as well as social and environmental conditions created respect and a ready ear among even the most hardened pioneers. The total disregard for personal welfare and circumstances contrasting sharply with the concerns of the settled clergy for regular salaries and "creature comforts" likewise struck a responsive chord among people walking an economic tightrope. Here were men who thought far more of souls than themselves. Coupled to zeal was mobility. Constantly moving from one community to another, the evangelist brought a freshness, an intensity, to his ministry that caught attention and quickened interest. In addition, this

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17. Wallace, op. cit., p. 17.

18. Ibid., p. 145.

mobility spread the news of revival from community to community, thereby stimulating interest and curiosity. Also basic to the revivals of all three evangelists was the predisposition for revival among many of the people. The memory and experience of revival could be traced from the time of the Reformation through John Wesley to the Great Awakening in America to Nova Scotia with the Planters and from generation to generation throughout the ministries of such men as Alline, Dimock, and Wallace. These men assumed and tapped this "revival consciousness", fully expecting renewed spiritual vitality among people "darkened" and "back sliden".

Preaching was the main tool employed by the evangelists to effect a revival. Proof that "a feeling knowledge of redemption in the soul is to be attained"<sup>19</sup> was the recurrent theme, designed to garner dramatic conversions. Spontaneous and highly emotional, Henry Alline's revival messages covered such subjects as the work of grace, sin, guilt, ignorance of the soul's darkness, the burdened mind, the hard heart, the stubborn will, convictions, conversion, soul awakening, the love of God, His atoning work, and vital church membership. Gathering from his Diary, Joseph Dimock's themes were similar to those of Henry Alline. "I found some enlargement and freedom in speaking from those words...pointing out the Disordered State the soul of Man is in by nature - the glorious provision made by the Great Phycitian - on the sovereign remedy provided in the Merits of Christ for restoration of health to the soul of Man - and how this reconciled us to God..."<sup>20</sup> For Isaiah Wallace, "Regeneration was our theme, its Nature, Importance, and Evidences".<sup>21</sup> He considered preaching that lifted up Christ the most prominent factor in revival success. Echoing the Apostle Paul, Wallace affirmed that the Gospel was the power unto salvation. Like all good revivalists, including Alline and Dimock, Wallace adapted Biblical truth to the necessities discovered in local visitation. Considering the verbal skill, the breadth of Biblical knowledge, the deep prayer life, and the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is not surprising that the preaching of these men was extemporaneous, often developing on the spot a sermon on a given text, couching in Biblical idiom their standard set of points about the need for the new birth experience.

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19. Alline, op. cit., p. 89.

20. Dimock, op.cit., p. 40.

21. Wallace, op. cit., p. 92.



opponent's motivation and ill-founded basis for confidence. The issue for Isaiah Wallace was baptism, and in some of the more remote communities he ran into determined opposition although with none of the seething hostility that Alline met with upon occasion. Wallace's encounter with a certain Church of England clergyman or his experience in Meagher's Grant stands in sharp contrast to Alline's dangerous confrontation with angry Anglicans in Windsor. The times had changed, the rude customs of a pioneer society had given way to more genteel practices, the Baptists were a viable movement and no doubt differences in temperament of the evangelists account for the more laissez-faire attitude of Wallace's time. In contrast to Joseph Dimock and Isaiah Wallace, who remained consistently orthodox in their preaching and writings, Henry Alline's opponents found increasingly controversial material in his books and writings. Alline's speculative theology, not sufficiently tempered by the education of an Isaiah Wallace or the more gentle, cautious temperament of a Joseph Dimock or by other minds of his calibre and spiritual bias, led him into water perhaps beyond his depth.

Much of what would be in an assessment of the ministries of these three revivalists has already been said. Basically all three were evangelists first and church organizers second. Had Henry Alline lived longer and addressed himself to the problems of the emerging congregations they would have not either collapsed or gone over to the Baptists. Intent upon winning souls and reacting strongly to the formalism of existing churches, Alline failed to develop any coherent, thorough church principles and polity which would have provided structure to the increasing groups of new converts. It was not that he did not have any principles of church organization; he had, but they were not thought through sufficiently or applied in any consistent manner. An example was his concept of membership. Although he firmly believed in regenerate membership, and this based upon new birth or crisis conversion, yet he did not carry through the logic that regeneration implies the decision of a maturing adult and that therefore infant baptism was out of order. To dismiss this difficulty over baptism as being "a non-essential matter" was simply to sweep the problem under the carpet and to bequeath controversy and schism. Another concept not thought through was finances. It was one thing for an itinerant bachelor to live off any free will offerings given him, but quite another to support a stable, ongoing ministry necessary to consolidate and develop the work. Recalling the often bitter disputes within the standing churches over finances, Alline opposed any formal contract between churches



and ministers and mandatory giving which infringed upon the freedom of conscience of the individual. Without a consistent, adequate financial structure, married clergymen in particular could not function effectively. There were other weaknesses and gaps but it is interesting to note that just these difficulties were dealt with satisfactorily among the evolving Baptist congregations and associations during the ministries of Joseph Dimock and Isaiah Wallace. It is in Dimock's time that the Baptist Association, for example, sought to pay itinerant home missionaries to service the churches along the South Shore, and Isaiah Wallace certainly enjoyed sufficient pastoral and missionary support in his ministry.

These difficulties notwithstanding, Henry Alline's ministry had a profound effect upon the religious climate of his day. His message like that of his successors had an anti-authoritarian ring which had a levelling affect upon the class-ridden Established Church and society of his day.

Speaking out against war and the ensnarements of this world, Alline helped defuse a potentially explosive situation during the American Revolution. By emphasizing the process of self-election over and against that exclusive election of God in Calvinism, this evangelist kindled the fires of personal, spiritual freedom which inaugurated a more democratic Church. Simply, Henry Alline set afoot an evangelical pietistic movement which "survived, prospered, and grew to become a basic component of the Canadian ethos and way of life until well into the twentieth century."<sup>25</sup>

It remained for Henry Alline's successors to continue to promote and to adapt this movement to the new society emerging from the frontier. As has been noted in the description of Joseph Dimock's ministry, both evangelism and church founding prospered with the new element of the Baptist Association evolving. Joseph Dimock joined that company of capable men including James and Edward Manning, T.M. Chipman, Harris Harding, and Joseph Crandall now known as Baptist Fathers. That this tradition was abundantly deepened and extended under the ministry of Isaiah Wallace is best attested to by Dr. A.W. Sawyer's testimonial in a circular promoting Rev. Wallace's Autobiographical Sketches: "This book...will show how churches were planted and weak churches strengthened in the discouraging circumstances of former years by the labours of self-denying and godly ministers of the Gospel."<sup>26</sup>

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25. Dumsted, op.cit., pp. 100-101.

26. A.W. Sawyer, Circular promoting Isaiah Wallace's Autobiographical Sketches, Wolfville, N.S., July 1, 1902.

An inscription on Henry Alline's gravestone in Northhampton, New Hampshire, states: "He was a burning and shining Light, and was justly esteemed the Apostle of Nova Scotia." They were all, Henry Alline, Joseph Dimock, and Isaiah Wallace, shining lights and apostles of Nova Scotia.

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