

Aflame for God



“Now let me burn out for God,” exclaimed Henry Martyn when he arrived in Calcutta, April 1806. Little did he think that his dedication to bring the gospel and the scriptures to India, and later to Turkey and Persia, would consume him in that flame in 6 short years by age 31.

A brilliant scholar, he translated the New Testament into Hindi and the Psalms as well as the New Testament into Persian, which was then widely known. He also did other translations and revised the Arabic New Testament. . . . All this in the few years allotted him, though often ill with tuberculosis and other illnesses. At the same time, he became an able preacher to the native population and established numerous schools for them at his own expense.

Deeply spiritual, he wrote, “I cast all my care upon Him who hath already done wonders for me, and am sure that, come what will, it shall be good, it shall be best. How sweet the privilege that we may lie as little children before Him! I find that my wisdom is folly, and my care useless, so that I try to live on from day to day, happy in His love and care.”

He was greatly influenced by reading the godly David Brainerd’s Journal.

“The Father of Modern Missions,” William Carey, who knew Martyn well, said of him that if he were in an area, no other missionary would be needed there.

His last written words were these, “There being no horses available, I had an unexpected repose. I sat in the orchard, and thought, with sweet comfort and peace of my God; in solitude my company, my friend and comforter.”

Years earlier he wrote, “Even if I never should see a native converted, God may design by my patience and continuance in the work to encourage future missionaries.” And at least hundreds have been in fact influenced through his life and diary to become missionaries, and win thousands to Christ.

Still, he actually did lead many to Christ personally. One of these was Shaikh Salih who became the first ordained Indian Anglican minister and a pioneer evangelist and medical missionary in Agra.

A few days after first reaching India, Martyn wrote, “The sight of men, women, and children, all idolaters, makes me shudder, as in the dominions of the Prince of Darkness. I fancy the frown of God to be visible.” But, at such awful cost, Henry pointed many to Christ, in such a short time giving God and them much to smile about. May we do likewise.

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