

“This Month Long Ago”

January 	February 	March 
April 	May 	June 
July 	August 	September 
October 	November 	December 



“Do you see yonder Wicket Gate?”

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Field Preaching

John Wesley and George Whitefield

"About three in the morning (January 2nd), as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried with exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground"

So writes John Wesley concerning a gathering of believers in a house in Fetter Lane, London, in the year 1739.

It was a very significant gathering, not only with regards to the experience, but also with regards to the spiritual equipment, which it provided for those assembled. This was the year that the great Methodists, Wesley and Whitefield were to launch out on their careers of open-air preaching, or "field preaching" as it was then called. Banned from almost every pulpit in England, they had little alternative but to turn to the open fields and to those who would receive their message.

Here is George Whitefield, and he has just been told in the town of Kingswood that he may only preach if he undertakes not to preach on the "new birth". He, therefore, turns to the open fields, to the coal miners just coming off duty. What a sight it must have been!

"I preached", he says, "on the Saviour's words to Nicodemus: 'Ye must be born again', and the people heard me gladly. Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were delighted to hear of One who came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

The first discovery of their being affected was to see the white gutters made by the tears which streamed plentifully down their black cheeks as they came fresh from the coal pit. Hundreds and hundreds of them were soon brought under deep conviction, which happily ended in sound and thorough conversions. The change was visible to all".

This was something unheard of. Here were ordained ministers of the Church of England, cultured and eloquent, and yet, but with a single message for rich and poor alike,

"Ye must be born again"

Their fame spread, and with it, revival of true heart-religion. The whole country felt the impact, and it is a fact of history that England was saved from revolution such as smote France primarily through the religious revival which swept the country in the wake of the ringing affirmations of the Wesleys and Whitefield, and others. One writer of the Methodist movement has well called their work "a herculean work", and he sees the preparation for it on that January morning long ago "It was a glorious preparation", he says of it, "for the herculean work on which Whitefield and the Wesleys were about to enter. No wonder that the year thus begun should be the most remarkable in Methodistic history".

"Marvel not that I said unto thee: Ye must be born again".



Patrick Hamilton

Scotland's First Protestant Martyr

Four hundred and eighty plus years might seem a long time to go back for an event which took place 'This Month Long Ago' But in the things of Christ, years sometimes prove but two things ... The truth of God never changes; and the opposition to that truth seldom changes either.

The scene is the town of St. Andrews, and the date is February 29th 1527. A young man of not much more than twenty-four years of age has just been taken and tied to a post where he is going to be burned alive. The young man's name is Patrick Hamilton. He is Scotland's first Protestant martyr; a young man laying down his life for what he knows to be God's unchanging truth, and suffering the unchanging opposition which adherence to that truth evokes.

Just look at the scene.

Patrick Hamilton has been accused of heresy and is now being led to the place of his death. As he passes along the road that is lined with people, he strips off several pieces of his clothing ... 'This stuff', he tells those to whom he hands the garments, 'will not help me in the fire, yet will do thee some good. I have no more to leave thee but the example of my death, which I pray thee, keep in mind'.

He is then brought to the stake where the wood and leaves are piled around his feet and legs. But, it had been a dark, dismal morning of drizzle, and, as one writer on the event so frankly puts it ... '... so he remained half scorched, half suffocated. For six hours the torture went on, the martyr being slowly roasted rather

than burned'. In this painful condition, Patrick Hamilton was still assailed by his opponents. Friar Campbell, who had been one of the main instigators in Hamilton's arrest and trial, continued to hurl his abuse at the dying man ... 'Recant ... Admit to being a heretic ... offer prayers to Our Lady'. Finally, Patrick Hamilton rebuked his accuser in the Name of Christ, and with his dying words, prayed for the spiritual condition of Scotland ... "How long, O Lord, shall darkness cover this realm?"

A solemn scene indeed, and one that some might feel would be best forgotten after four hundred and eighty years. But, let us ask ourselves what Partick Hamilton meant by that dying prayer, and perhaps we will see that the lesson which he outlined on that February morning over four hundred and eighty years ago is a lesson that should be impressed on every Christian mind in these days.

"How long, O Lord, shall darkness cover this realm?" Let us ask ourselves, what was Partick Hamilton's idea of "darkness?" For the answer to this let us just read a few words which were exchanged between him and that Friar Campbell already mentioned at the trial just prior to his execution.

Campbell – "Thou sayest it is lost labour for men to call upon the saints, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, as mediators to God for us".

Hamilton – "I say with Paul, there is no mediator between God and man but Jesus Christ, His Son.

Campbell – "Thou sayest our labours are vain when we say Masses for the dead whose souls are held in the pains of Purgatory".

Hamilton – "Brother, I never read in the Scriputres of God of such a place as Purgatory, nor do I believe that anything can cleanse the souls of men but the blood of Jesus Christ".

Now listen to Campbell's summing up of the trial ... "My Lords, you hear that he denies the Institutions of the Holy Church, and the authority of our Holy Father, the Pope. I need not accuse him further".

This was the "darkness" that Patrick Hamilton prayed would be eliminated. **Not Rome's behaviour** – bad and all as this was – but **Rome's doctrine and teaching** that said man was saved by **works** and not by **grace**.

Would Patrick Hamilton see the Church of Rome any different today? In her behaviour he might detect a bit more subtility, but in her **doctrine and teaching** still the same. Herein lies the impossibility of unity with Rome – she **still** preaches **another gospel**.



Parting of Patrick Hamilton from his friends at the stake



The Words of a Dying Man

The Death of Samuel Rutherford

This month we go to the town of St. Andrews, and to the words of a dying man. This is not a young man, neither is he suffering a death such as Patrick Hamilton suffered. But for all that, in every respect this is a martyr's death, even though the head of the dying man rests on a clean white pillow.

The date is March 30th, in the year 1661, and the man is Samuel Rutherford. Just a few short weeks before, Samuel Rutherford had occupied the Professor of Theology's Chair in the University of St. Andrews, but now he is a dying man who has been denied even the right to DIE within the walls of his old College, let alone live there.

What had brought about such a tragic change of circumstances? Samuel Rutherford lived in a day when the affairs of the Church of Christ in Scotland were irregular and uncertain. The Presbyterian form of worship had been established by an act of Parliament in 1592, and James VI of Scotland had promised to adhere to the Church as "the sincerest Kirk in the world". When he became James 1st of England, however, he leaned hard towards the Episcopal form of worship and government, and before his death, saw the Scottish Church ruled by Bishops. The jurisdiction of these bishops was far from universally acknowledged, however, and Samuel Rutherford was inducted to the flock at Anwoth, on the Solway Firth, as it says... "Without any engagement to the Bishop."

This was all that Rutherford desired. God had called him to a people and to that people he would minister the Word of God for as long as the law of the land permitted him. His zeal and industry among the folk at Anwoth are almost incredible. He was accustomed to rise at 3 a.m. every morning for devotion and study, and then give the whole afternoon and evening over to "being among his people". It was said of him: "He is ALWAYS praying, ALWAYS preaching, ALWAYS visiting the sick, ALWAYS catechising, ALWAYS writing and studying". Nor was this labour carried out under a cloudless sky; far from it; for during his time at Anwoth, Rutherford nursed his sick bride of five years for thirteen months before her untimely death, and saw his little ones taken from him. But in all his trials, Rutherford had the comfort of his call to serve Christ. "Dear brethren", he exhorted his fellow ministers, "do all for Christ; pray for Christ; preach for Christ; feed the flock committed to your charge for Christ". This was Rutherford's whole purpose.

"I came to Irvine", said an English merchant on business in Scotland, "and heard a well favoured proper old man (David Dickson), with a long beard, and that man showed me all my heart. Then I went to St. Andrews, where I heard a sweet majestic-looking man (R. Blair), and he showed me the majesty of God. After him I heard a little, fair man (Rutherford), and he showed me the loveliness of Christ".

After nine years, however, the labours of Rutherford at Anwoth were brought to a halt. Charles 1st now sat on the throne of England, and under the instigation of Archbishop Laud, the rule of bishop was now beginning to come into its own in Scotland. Soon Rutherford was summoned before the Court to answer a charge of Nonconformity. The charge was easily established and Samuel Rutherford was deprived of his ministerial office and sentenced to be "confined during the King's pleasure, within the town of

Aberdeen". Rutherford was heartbroken, and longed for his beloved Anwoth,

"Fair Anwoth by the Solway,
To me thou still art dear;
E'en from the verge of heaven
I drop for thee a tear;
Oh, if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand;
My heaven will be two heavens
In Immanuel's land".

In Aberdeen he was forbidden to enter a pulpit... "My dumb Sabbaths", he wrote, "are like a stone tied to a bird's foot". But preach he would for all that; not only by word of mouth wherever he could find ready ears, but by pen as well. His letters flowed from his hand all over Scotland. "Joshua Redivivus" was the title given to his letters when they were published three years after his death. And this was without a doubt the way he saw himself. Just as Joshua of old had given a true report of the state of the land, so he was "Joshua Redivivus", Joshua restored to life and giving a true picture of the cause of Christ in Scotland.

For eighteen months Rutherford was confined to Aberdeen, but soon a wind of change began to blow, and by 1639, he found himself appointed Professor of Theology at St. Andrews. He was among the Westminster Divines who drew up the Confession of Faith in 1646, and as he returned to St. Andrews, his reputation as a scholar and preacher reached its greatest height. But dark days were looming for all non-conformists as Charles 11 was restored to the throne of England. Soon the heather was going to be red with the blood of the covenanters, and Rutherford would gladly have reddened any hillside with his own, had not the Lord something else in store for him. He was summoned to appear before Parliament, but God was already summoning him to a far, far

better rest than he had ever known. It was voted that he "should not die in the University", but Lord Burleigh reminded all those who had made the vote... "Ye cannot vote him out of heaven".

Of this glorious fact Rutherford himself was assured... "This night", he told those who had gathered around his bed; "this night will close the door and fasten my anchor within the veil, and I shall go away in a sleep by five o'clock in the morning". And so it was. At that very hour he entered into his rest with his dying words falling from his lips...

"Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's Land".

It was Mrs A. R. Cousin who took Rutherford's dying words wove them into one of the Church's loveliest hymns:-

"The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks;
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair, sweet morn awakes;
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
AND GLORY, GLORY DWELLETH
IN IMMANUEL'S LAND".



David Brainerd

The Morning Star of the Missionary Movement

Our thoughts turn to the young man who has been well named "The Morning Star of the Missionary Movement". It was the 20th April 1718, that David Brainerd was born in the little town of Haddam in Connecticut. As a child, he said of himself, he was "somewhat sober and inclined to melancholy"; and perhaps this retiring nature fitted him well for the solitude that he was to face in later life. David Brainerd began to preach when he was 24, and for 5 years laboured among the Indians of New Jersey and Pennsylvania until 1747, when ill-health forced him to give up his work of love for Christ. He died in the house of the famous Jonathan Edwards when he was still in his 29th year, proving himself to be a true "morning star" that had blazed in the heavens only until the day was ready to break on the missionary scene.

"What can be done", asked the great Methodist John Wesley. "What can be done to revive the work of God where it has decayed?" And then he answers his own question... "Let every preacher read carefully the life of David Brainerd!" In accordance with John Wesley's counsel, William Carey set to, to read Brainerd's Journal and from that caught the vision of a world for Christ. Henry Martyn too, and Dr. A. J. Gordon were influenced in their missionary enterprises by digesting the life and labours of the young missionary to the Redskins, and in more recent years, Dr. Andrew Murray of South Africa could write of Brainerd's biography: "Read and pause, and read again, as in God's presence, until you hear the voice of the Spirit CALLING YOU to follow in the footsteps of God's servant."

David Brainerd was indeed an early light to guide many. But, from what source did he draw his strength of influence which still is alive even today to all who will take time to read his life and diary? As we've said already, he could write of himself that he was "somewhat sober and inclined to melancholy"; and as we remarked, this may have been an essential NATURAL attribute to his service of later years. "But I do not remember anything of conviction of sin", he could also write; and so, regardless of what natural attributes he possessed, he would still have to be endowed with the supernatural attribute of salvation before he could influence anyone.

But it must come as a blow to any spiritual pride of service that we may possess when we learn that it was not until Brainerd was 21 - just 8 years before his death - that the light of the Gospel began to work in his heart and mind. "At this time", he says of it, "The way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness and excellency that I wondered that I should ever have desired any other way of salvation...If I could have been saved by my own duties, or any other way that I had formerly conceived, my whole soul would now have refused it. I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation..."If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!"

But how could the world "see and comply with this way of salvation?" The greatest part of the world had never even so much as heard that there was such a way. "If any man thirst", thought Brainerd; "ANY man." But how could he reach the mass of the world with this message that had completely transformed his own life? The Missionary Societies were still unknown, and even unthought of; how could he span the ocean to seek out the primitives and tell them about the love of God in Christ Jesus the Saviour? But, did he need to do that? Did he need to cast his eyes to such far away shores? Was there not a whole mission field almost on his doorstep? And so, David Brainerd, 3 years after his

conversion, turned to his red-skinned fellows to call them to "come and drink of the water of life freely".

Two things became his desire, he writes in his diary:
"Sanctification in myself, and the ingathering of God's elect".
Among those savages on the American prairies, David Brainerd could see with the eye of faith a great company of the multitude for whom Christ laid down His life. It was the life of personal devotion to duty and love to Christ which sprung from this great desire that made David Brainerd such a powerful influence to those who were to later blaze in the missionary sky.

Above all things, his life of prayer has been a constant holy challenge. When William Carey offered a word of encouragement and instruction to his fellow workers, that word nearly always contained the words: "Think of Brainerd wrestling in prayer among the solitudes".

In 1747, David Brainerd rode back from "The solitudes" for the last time. He was not yet 30, but he had no regrets. "Now that I am dying," he exclaimed, "I declare that I would not for all the world have spent my life otherwise." And then, casting his eye on the Bible, he cried out with his last breath: "Oh that dear book! That lovely book! I shall soon see it opened!"

"He climbed the steep ascent to heaven,
O God, to us may grace be given,
Through trouble, toil and pain;
To follow in his train".



Robert Murray McCheyne

“Nae Ordinary Man”

One of the greatest events in the orthodox Jewish family is the birth of a baby boy. Every Jewish parent who holds fast to the faith of their fathers cherishes the hope that of them Messiah will be born. As Christians, of course, we know that the Messiah has come already - born of the virgin Mary, who was espoused to the carpenter, Joseph. Nevertheless, if we are sincere in our Christian profession, then we should cherish the hope that our children will be born, not as Messiahs, for that is impossible, but that they will be born to grow up Messiah-like. That, in the will of God, they will early come to know Christ as their Saviour, and grow more and more like Him as day follows day.

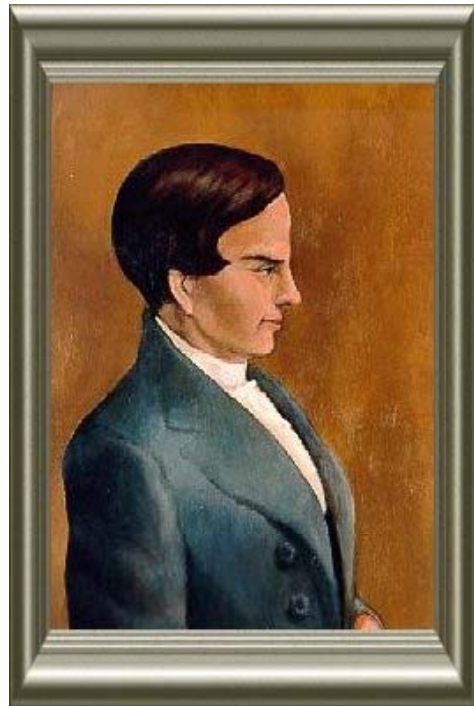
Such a desire, no doubt was cherished by the parents of a baby boy who was born on the 21st of this month, long ago. He was the youngest child of the family, and was named Robert Murray - Robert Murray McCheyne. Those who have read the life story of McCheyne need no one to tell them that he lived and worked among his fellow men as one who attained to the highest degree of Christlikeness. "You're nae ordinary man", it was said of him by a gang of workmen with whom he stopped to speak about the state of their souls; and he has been well designated "The Saintly Murray McCheyne".

In his early life, Murray McCheyne had an exceptional character. Many regarded him as a sincere born-again Christian on account of his approach to religious matters. Like Richard Sibbes before him, it could almost have been said that "heaven was in him before he was in heaven". His own estimation of those early days, however, leaves us without mistake of what his true condition was. Andrew

Bonar, his dearest friend and biographer, tells us that McCheyne himself "regarded these as days of ungodliness - days wherein he cherished a true morality, but lived in heart a Pharisee".

It was not until the death of his brother David, that McCheyne began to feel the sinfulness of sin. Many are hardened by death in the family circle, but he was melted to see himself as lost before the God with whom he had to do. He thought long and often upon the words that his brother had spoken to him about his soul's salvation.

Eleven years after the death of his brother he wrote to a friend, "This day eleven years ago, I lost my loved and loving brother, and began to seek a Brother that cannot die". The "Brother that cannot die" was found by McCheyne, and in the brief life that followed on this earth he did all in his power under the Holy Spirit to emulate the One who had captured his heart. "Make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be", was his continual prayer; and from what we know of his life, it would seem that the Lord answered this his prayer in a very real way.



He was ordained to the ministry in the year 1835, and only 7 years later was taken to be with the Saviour whom he tried so hard to please and imitate. But, in those seven years, he left an impression on the Church of Christ equal to most who had died "in a full age".

His first charge was at Larbert, and from there he moved to the place of his most famous labours and his death, at St. Peter's in Dundee. We often speak of Bunyan and Bedford, Newton and Olney, Edwards and Northampton, Baxter and Kidderminster; and

in the same way, we might speak - many may do - of McCheyne and St. Peter's. Afflicted with ill-health, he, nevertheless, drove himself to every extreme of hardship in the service of Christ. He laboured with fervent prayers and preaching among his own people; faithfully sowing the seed of the Word of God.

His labours were not confined to Dundee, however, and he travelled a great deal of the country on preaching missions, crossing the sea to Ireland on several occasions, and undertaking the enquiry into the evangelisation of the Jews when he travelled with Andrew Bonar and others to the Holy Land. It was during this trip that he was laid most low in his physical health, and yet elevated most high in his spiritual office. During his absence, the pulpit at Dundee was occupied by the great evangelist, W.C. Burns, and it was to him that God gave the sickle to reap the harvest that McCheyne had so faithfully sown and watered. On his return to Scotland, he took up his labours once more, and had the joy of seeing many, many souls brought to the saving knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ.

One of Murray McCheyne's saying was: "Live so as to be missed"; and when he departed this life on 25th March 1843, Andrew Bonar tells us that "every Christian countenance was darkened with sadness". Like David Brainerd, Robert Murray McCheyne had not reached his 30th year. "On the day of his burial", Bonar tells us, "business was quite suspended in the parish. The streets and every window, from the house to the grave, were crowded with those who felt that a prince in Israel had fallen. His tomb may be seen on the pathway at the north-west corner of St. Peter's burying ground. He has gone to 'the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, till the day break and the shadows flee away'". (The length of the present sketch is quite inadequate to give a full picture of the life of this man. May I recommend "The Memoir of Robert Murray McCheyne" by Andrew Bonar)



Selina, Countess of Huntingdon

It was on the 17th of this month long ago, in the year 1791, to be exact, a woman of no mean birth - Selina, Countess of Huntingdon - departed this life to find eternal rest in the presence of Jesus Christ her Saviour. Although she was born a Lady and lived a Countess of one of the most influential houses in England, the Countess of Huntingdon died in poverty. A few months before her death she left her only will and testament. "I do hereby declare", she wrote, "That all my present peace and my hope of future glory depend wholly, fully and finally upon the merits of Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. I commit my soul into His arms unreservedly as a subject of His sole mercy to all eternity."

To the Countess of Huntingdon, this was life's treasure and eternity's hope. And so thankful to God had she been to receive this treasure and this hope, that she counted all else but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ her Lord; a knowledge that had eluded her for a good part of her life.

It really all begins when the young Lady Selina is a child of 9 years old. Up to that time she was always looked upon as completely free from care, as most children of that age are. But, in her 9th year something took place that was to leave its impression on her and completely change her whole outlook for many years to come. She is out walking with her sisters when suddenly they come upon a funeral procession. The coffin is small, and Selina asks one of the villagers by the side of the road who it is that has died. "It is a child", she was told; and there immediately rushes into her mind an entirely new conception of life that she has never before considered — that children die. Was it a boy or a girl, she

enquired further. It was a girl, she was told. "What age was she?" "She was nine!" Her sisters look at Selina with eyes full of meaning. She too is a girl of nine; and into the young Lady Selina's heart and mind there floods the stark reality of the truth that she is a citizen of eternity. In her room that evening she thought and thought of what she had seen and heard, and her young mind searched for some foundation on which she could base her hope of happiness in that world which is to come as well as in this present one in which she lived. She had no one to turn to; even the Church of her day was formal and hypocritical, and in that ninth year of her life the Lady Selina had fallen heir to a fact that was going to haunt her for many years yet. Often she would go to that lonely grave of the unknown 9-year old girl, and there she would pray for an answer to her quest, but none was forthcoming.

The years that follow see the Lady Selina, now a young woman scrupulously doing everything in her power to merit favour with her God above; but she is plagued with the knowledge of her own sinful heart. "My best righteousness", she later wrote, "now appeared to be but filthy rags, which, so far from justifying me before God, increased my condemnation. I saw that ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God". See the picture that she gives of herself as she lies across her bed, bejewelled and elegant in the evening dress that she had worn at the ball from which she had just fled to pour out her heart before God and confess her utter poverty in His sight. "... My heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", she cries out before Him; but, she is still without Christ, and, therefore, without hope in this world, or hope for the one to come.

But hope was soon to dawn! She is now married; she is now the Countess of Huntingdon, and she has two sisters-in-law who have decided to set out for an evening's entertainment by going to listen to a certain "field preacher" called George Whitfield. With his

friends, this man is turning England upside down, and within an hour, the Lady Margaret - one of Selina's sisters-in-law, yields to the claims of Christ in her life. She tells her experience to the Countess — "Everything has changed", she says, "since I trusted Christ for salvation!" SINCE I TRUSTED CHRIST FOR SALVATION! The Countess thought, and as she turned to the Word of God, she read these lines... "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ". On what foundation could she rest her hope of happiness for the eternal world? That had been her life-long quest and question. At last, here was the answer... "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ". The day began to dawn, one of her biographers tells us. All her distresses and fears were immediately removed, and she was filled with joy and peace in believing. She determined thence forward to present herself to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which, she was now convinced, was her reasonable service.

Never was a vow fulfilled more literally, more completely and more cheerfully, it has been said, than the vow that the young Countess registered on that memorable day. Every penny that she had in her private income she devoted to the spread of the revival under the Wesleys and George Whitfield. These men had been forbidden to preach in the majority of the churches, remember, and so the Countess of Huntingdon built attractive chapels throughout the country for the ejected preachers. Into her home she invited the revival preachers to preach to her guests, and these included Princes and statesmen, poets and actors, authors and peers. You can hardly find one distinguished name in the annals of the times, it has been said, but you will find that name also among the Countess of Huntingdon's guests. On three evenings a week she crowded her home with the elite of the land; but, on almost every morning and afternoon of the week she visited the poorest and meanest cottages of England. For as long as her money lasted she

built her churches all over the country, and when her money was all gone, she sold her jewels to build more.

Thus she died in poverty as far as this world's treasure is concerned, but there was laid up for her "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". From that memorable day when she was a child of 9 she had sought that city "whose builder and maker is God:" but she knew not the foundation on which that city was built until the Lord in His appointed time enlightened the sacred page of His Word to her... "Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ".

"I do hereby declare that all my present peace and my hope of future glory depend wholly, fully and finally upon the merits of Jesus Christ my Lord..."

One of the Countess of Huntingdon's favourite chapters of the Bible, even before her conversion, was the first chapter of First Corinthians. After her conversion, she often rejoiced in verse 26 of that chapter... "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called," it says.

"Oh how I thank God for that little letter 'm', she used to say; supposing I had read "not **ANY** noble are called!"



William Chalmers Burns

And the

Kilsyth Revival

“Just when I was speaking of the occasion and the nature of this wonderful address, I felt my own soul moved in a manner so remarkable that I was sent ... to plead with the unconverted before me instantly to close with God’s offers of mercy, and continued to do so until the power of the Lord’s Spirit became so mighty upon their souls as to carry all before it, like the rushing mighty wind of Pentecost”

So writes William Chalmers Burns concerning an incident which occurred this Month Long Ago” and which made a profound effect upon the work of Christ in Scotland in those days. The incident referred to is the great outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit in revival blessing; the place was the village of Kilsyth; the date was Thursday, 23rd July 1839, and the human instrument that God used in this great religious awakening was the young man mentioned above, William Burns. Like many of the men whom God has used in the past to the glory of Christ, W. C. Burns has been neglected, or forgotten by a great many of the Lord’s people today; and yet, what a shining testimony he bore in the name of Christ.

He was mightily used in revival in Scotland after the incident mentioned above, and to him was given the sickle to reap the harvest so faithfully sown by the saintly Murray McCheyne at St. Peter’s in Dundee. But, how strange are the ways of the Lord at times to us, for after blazing across this homeland with revival in his wake, the Lord took him, while still in his twenties, to serve on the mission fields of China. He laboured there for the rest of his days, and a high and grand tribute is paid to him by that much more well known man of China, Hudson Taylor. “Never had I had

such a spiritual father as Mr. Burns”, he tells us. “Those happy months were an unspeakable joy and comfort to me. His love for the Word was delightful, and his holy reverential life and constant communings with God made fellowship with him satisfying to the deep cravings of my heart”.

Perhaps it was due to the fact that William Burns had seen the riches of Christ poured out in such remarkable ways that he sat so loosely on the things of this world. Just listen to this account, given by his brother, of the homecoming of Burns’ last possessions after he had given up his life for the cause of Christ in China. “How vividly do I remember the moment, a little more than a year ago, when the trunk which had come home from China containing nearly all the property that he left behind him in the world was



opened, amid a group of young and wondering faces – a few sheets of Chinese printed matter, a Chinese and an English Bible, and old writing and the “blue flag” of the “gospel boat”. ‘Surely’, whispered one little one amid the awestruck silence, ‘surely he must have been very poor!’ There was One we felt, standing amongst us, though unseen, who, for his sake, had been poorer still”.

“There was one we felt standing amongst us, though unseen, who, for his sake had become poorer still”.

Though he were dead, William Burns was yet speaking; and even those last few possessions seemed to be accompanied by the presence of Christ Himself. Was this not the secret of the revival that started on that day long ago in the village of Kilsyth? The

presence of Christ was mightily felt there as well, through the preaching of the Lord's chosen vessel for that time. Let us turn to William Burn's own account of the happenings of that memorable day.

“When I entered the pulpit, I saw before me an immense multitude from the town and neighbourhood filling the seats, stairs, passages and porches ... including many of the most abandoned of our population. I began, I think, by singing the Psalm 102, and was affected deeply when in reading it I came to these lines:

‘Her time for favour which was set,
Behold, is now come to an end’.

That word *now* touched my heart as with divine power, and encourages the sweet hope that set him was really now at hand. I read without comment, but with solemn feeling, the account of the conversion of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost; and this account, I am told, affected some of the people considerably. When we had prayed a second time, specially imploring that the Lord would open on us the windows of heaven, I preached from the words, (Psalm 110 verse 3) ‘Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power’. This subject I had studied and preached on at Dundee without any remarkable effect; and though I was so much enlarged on this occasion in discoursing from it, I have not been able to treat it in the same manner, or with the same effects, on any subsequent time.

I was led ... to allude to some of the most remarkable outpourings of the Spirit that have ever been granted to the Church, beginning from the day of Pentecost; and in surveying this galaxy of divine wonders, I had come to notice the glorious revelation of Jehovah's right hand which was given at the Kirk of Shotts in 1630, while John Livingstone was preaching from Ezekiel chapter 36 verses 26 and 27; when it pleased the Sovereign God of Grace to make bare

His holy arm in the midst of us, and to perform a work in many souls resembling that of which I had been speaking ... ‘

In referring to this wonderful work of the Spirit, I mentioned the fact that Mr. Livingstone was on the point of closing his discourse when a few drops of rain began to fall, and that when the people began to put on their coverings, he asked them if they had any shelter from the drops of divine wrath, and was thus led to enlarge for another hour in exhorting them to flee to Christ, with so much of the power of God that about 500 persons were converted.

Just when I was speaking of the occasion and the nature of this wonderful address, I felt my own soul moved in a manner so remarkable that I as led (like Mr. Livingstone) to plead with the unconverted before me instantly to closed with God’s offers of mercy, and continued to do so until the power of the Lord’s Spirit became so mighty upon their souls as to carry all before it, like the rushing mighty wind of Pentecost.

During the whole of the time that I was speaking, the people listened with most riveted and solemn attention, and with many silent tears and inward groanings of the spirit; but at last their feelings became too strong for all ordinary restraints, and broke forth simultaneously in weeping and wailing, tears and groans, intermingled with shouts of joy and praise from some of the people of God”.

In this manner the awakening at Kilsyth began on the 23rd of this month long ago. Surely it must be the prayer of every believing heart – ‘Lord, revive us again’; and surely the word so effectively used through the ministry of William Burns should be our confidence still – ‘Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power’.



Black St. Bartholomew's Day

If you care to look up your diary for 24th August, you will find that it is listed as "St. Bartholomew's Day". In the diary of the Church of Christ, however, we find 24th August 1662, listed as "Black Bartholomew's Day". On that day, almost 2,000 sermons were preached by almost 2,000 ministers of the Church of England, and the nature of those sermons and the men who preached them is well summarised in the words of one of them...

"I preach as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men".

The 24th August 1662, is the date of what Church History has called "The Great Ejection". It was on that day that almost 2,000 ministers of the Church of England were ejected from their churches, and pulpits, and homes, because, "for conscience sake", as they put it, they could not bring themselves to submit to "An Act of Uniformity" drawn up by Charles 2nd and his bishops. Like everything else in the history of the Church, however, 24th August 1662 was merely the climax of a state of affairs that reached back almost 100 years, to the years just following the Reformation in the Church of England, when Henry VIII was on the throne of England.

Under Henry, the Church in England had been "reformed", but it wasn't long until many were beginning to question whether or not the reform had gone far enough. These people became known as "Puritans". It was the Puritans' desire to move the Reformation right to the point where everything that had been added to the

Church during the middle ages by the Popes of Rome would be cast out, and not only the doctrine of the Church, but the practice and the discipline of the Church be "purified"; so they were called the Puritans.

The main body of opinion in the Church at this time was that "things indifferent, which are neither contrary to Scripture, nor forbidden by it, may be imposed by the Church or some lawful power". The "things indifferent" referred to were things such as candles, crosses, vestments, and altars. The Puritans held that nothing that was not entirely consistent with the teaching of the Bible should be maintained; "for, if they be kept in the Church as things indifferent", said John Hooper, who has been called "the father of Puritanism", "they will at length be maintained as things necessary".

These were the two parties that first drew their swords right back in the reign of Henry VIII.

During the reign of Mary Queen of Scots - "Bloody Mary" - the martyr fires of Smithfield began to burn. Many of the leading Reformers were put to death, but many more managed to escape to the continent of Europe where they came more and more under the influence of the Swiss Reformers, Calvin and Bullinger.

When Elizabeth ascended the throne of England at the death of her sister, Mary, Protestantism was re-established in the realm, and the Puritans who had fled to Europe began to make their way back to England. But, what were Elizabeth's intentions? Let me quote Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones here. "There is no question", he says, "but that this whole trouble and dispute which lasted for the 100 years ending in 1662 is mainly to be attributed to that headstrong woman, Queen Elizabeth I. She caused an Act of Uniformity to be passed in the year of her accession to the throne, 1558, and in that, assent to the Prayer Book and its teaching was made obligatory.

But - and this is an important point - at first this was not rigidly enforced, so the Puritans felt that they could honestly and conscientiously still stay in the Church of England. They felt that they had to but bide their time, and that the inevitable logic of their teaching would eventually become evident to all. So, there was no thought in their minds of leaving the Church; they remained within, determined to develop their teaching and to influence others. It cannot be emphasised too frequently that the main body of the Puritans persisted in that attitude right down to 1662".

This was the position then, that the Puritans returned to; Elizabeth's Church, in theory, said that all had to conform to the Prayer Book; in practice, however, this was not the case, and so the Puritans remained within its ranks in the hope that reformation would soon be complete through their efforts.

During Elizabeth's reign, however, some of the Puritans began to see that this state of affairs held out little hope, and there sprang up a strong Presbyterian group under a man called Thomas Cartwright, and a third group - the Separatists - under Robert Browne. The watchword of this latter party was "reformation without tarrying for any", and they were sorely persecuted by Elizabeth.

In the reign of James 1 (VI of Scotland), things at first appeared to be favourable towards those of Puritan sympathies, but by 1620 the famous voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers in the "Mayflower" was a direct outcome of the opposition still held out towards the Reformers. James' right hand man was Archbishop Laud, and between them, they tried to impose the rule of Bishops, not only in England, but in Scotland as well. This led to the drawing up and signing of "The Solemn League and Covenant", and the emergence of "The Covenanters" - the Scottish Puritans.

Civil war followed and the "monarchy" was abolished in the kingdom. Under Cromwell, who ruled the nation during its "Commonwealth" period, religious liberty was granted to all Protestants, but, at the death of Cromwell, no equal successor was forthcoming, and the "Royalists" in Parliament recalled Charles 11 to occupy the throne of England. He returned in May 1660, with the promise that he would grant "a liberty to tender consciences... in matters of religion".

The Puritans asked the king to recognise their position; the king replied when his "chosen" Parliament met in May 1661, and publicly burned a copy of the "The Solemn League and Covenant". Puritans were expelled from lecturing posts in the universities, etc., and the Episcopal form of church government was fully restored. A year later the Act of Uniformity became law. "The principal terms required by the Act were a Declaration of "unfeigned assent and consent" to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer, re-ordination for those not episcopally ordained, and a renunciation of the Solemn League and Covenant". (Iain Murray). It laid down "that all ministers in the Church of England must conform to the demands of this Act by St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24th, 1662".

The death knell had sounded for the Puritans; they had lived for a long time side by side with what they discerned to be the marks of an unreformed Church in the hope that they could reform it, but now the cry was "conform"; this they could never do! And so, on Black Bartholomew's Day 2,000 of them left all that they had "for conscience sake".

There was to follow the "Conventicle Act", forbidding them to meet together for worship; and then "The Five Mile Act", forbidding them to live within 5 miles of their old congregations. They were imprisoned and abused; Bunyan spent 12 years in jail for his non-conformity. "Those great preachers whose names we

remember", says C.H. Spurgeon, "were men who counted nothing their own; they were driven out from their benefices, because they could not conform to the Established Church, and they gave up all that they had willingly to the Lord. They were hunted from place to place, they wandered here and there to preach the Gospel to a few ... Those were foul times; but they promised they would walk the road, fair or foul, and they did walk it, knee deep in mud; and they would have walked it had it been knee deep in blood too." They were forbidden to preach, and yet they preached more than they might have done had they not been ejected, for when they were silenced, they wrote, and their words are speaking yet.

Philip Henry father of the famous writer of the Bible Commentary Matthew Henry wrote in his diary on the 25th March 1666, the day the "Five Mile Act" commenced:

"A sad day among poor ministers up and down this nation; who, by this act of restraint, are forced to remove from among their friends, acquaintance, and relations, and to sojourn among strangers, as it were, in Mesech and in the tents of Kedar. But there is a God who tells their wanderings, and will put their tears, and the tears of their wives and children into his bottle. Are they not in his book? The Lord be a little sanctuary to them, and a place of refuge from the storm, and from the tempest, and pity those Places from which they are ejected, and come and dwell where they may not."

Philip Henry also records that he moved his family five miles from the edge of his former parish. Such was the desire to ensnare him he was forced to have the distance measured. His new home was just 60 yards over the compulsory five miles!



“The Inkeeper’s Son”

George Whitefield

This month we come to consider, in a very incomplete way, the life of one of the greatest, if not the greatest Evangelist that the Church has ever known. I refer, of course, to George Whitefield, who died on the 30th of this month (September) long ago, in the year 1770.

Some Christians find little benefit in looking into the lives of those whom God has chosen in past days to do His exploits; but, as Bishop Ryle so truly said on one occasion, "I pity the man who takes no interest in such enquiries. The instruments that God employs to do His work in the world deserve a close inspection. The man who did not care to look at the ram's horn that blew down Jericho, the hammer and nail that slew Sisera, the lamps and trumpets of Gideon, the sling and stone of David, might fairly be set down as a cold and heartless person". And the person who would be content with the few tib-bits that this page can afford when there is a vast feast to be had in looking further into the lives of God's great servants, I would imagine to be a person with a very small appetite for the things of his faith.

George Whitefield was born in Gloucester in the year 1714. As a young boy he began to serve beer to the customers of the Bell Inn which was run by his mother. At an early age, Whitefield expressed a desire to enter the Christian ministry, even although, up to this point, he knew nothing of the saving power of the blood of Christ.

He entered Oxford, and a deep sense of the awareness of sin began to settle on him. "I have lain whole nights awake groaning under

the weight of sorrow that I felt for sin," he can tell us; "I have spent whole days and weeks lying upon the ground begging for deliverance from the evil thoughts that crowded upon me". This more or less summarises Whitefield's state during the best part of his preparation for the ministry. He read all that he could lay his hands on, and when it came to Lent he would fast on black bread and sugarless tea, and stand in the cold inadequately dressed until his hands and feet were blue and numb with the frost. Often he would wander through Christ Church meadows after dark in the hope that he would be tempted of Satan and, therefore, be like our



Lord Himself who had been in the wilderness with wild beasts and tempted of the devil. But, the devil needed to tempt George Whitefield but a little; he was still outside of the redeeming grace of Christ, and, therefore, quite within easy grasp of the devil's hand. In the whole of Oxford University there seemed to be none in the same state as the man who was destined to be the world's greatest soulwinner.

And then, Whitefield came into contact with the Wesley brothers, and, on exchange of views and aspirations, they discovered that they were all passing through similar spiritual upheavals. The "Holy Club" came into existence, but still the method of supposed justification before God was whatever good works and zeal the members could display, and as yet, salvation was an unknown word in the heart of George Whitefield.

As has happened with so many others, God in His providence saw fit to lay George Whitefield aside with a terrible illness, during which Whitefield completely abandoned any notions of redemption outside of the free grace of God in Christ; and when he

left University to take on the work of Christ's gospel, he left a different man than when he had entered, and received ordination as one who knew whom he had believed. From that day, he threw himself into the work of Christ. "Whether I myself shall ever have the honour of styling myself 'a prisoner of Jesus Christ'", he wrote, "I know not; but indeed, my dear friend, I call heaven and earth to witness that when the Bishop laid his hand upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me".

A "living martyr" George Whitefield became. Together with the Wesleys - now also converted through the grace of God - he soon burst the bounds of the Established Church of his day, and took to the fields and fairgrounds to declare unto all the gospel of redeeming love to sinners far and wide. He preached the length and breadth of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and travelled America - a long treacherous journey in those days - 13 times. He preached unreservedly the gospel of Free and Sovereign Grace, but with a zeal and determination for the souls of sinners that lit up every word that he spoke. On one occasion he was painting a picture of the blinded sinner by comparing him with a blind man whose guide dog had run off from him, and who was now approaching a cliff's edge. As he pictured the man leaning forward to seize the runaway dog, Lord Chesterfield, who in the congregation jumped from his seat and shouted: "Good God! He is gone!"

George Whitefield virtually died as he had lived - preaching. As he retired for bed on the night of his death, he turned on the staircase to those seated below, and, with candle in hand, he delivered one of his finest words before retiring for the night to sleep into eternity's arms in Christ. He was buried in a vault underneath the pulpit of the Church in which he had last preached, there to lie until the last trump.



Martin Luther

And the Reformation

Almost every Christian is aware of the fact that there once occurred in the history of the Christian Church an event which has since become known as the Protestant Reformation. It was that event which delivered men and women in many places from the clutches and domination of the apostate Church of Rome, which had sunk to the depths of idolatry and superstition.

Like most great movements in the history of the Church, or the world in general, it would be difficult to set an exact date and say when the Reformation actually began. But, if we were to have an annual memorial to the event, it would most likely fall on the 31st of this month of October. It was on that date in the year 1517 - 450 years ago this year (Note - article reproduced from Wicket Gate of 1967) that the young monk, Martin Luther, boldly stepped up to the door of the Castle Church in the town of Wittenberg in Germany and nailed to that door "Ninety-five Theses of Religion". These denounced the sale of "The Pope's Indulgence", a paper which gave direct forgiveness from the Pope for those who had sinned, or ever would sin. Through the purchase of these Indulgences, the faithful were told that they could free the souls of the loved ones



now in the pains of "Purgatory", and assure forgiveness for them and themselves.

As we've said, it would be difficult to stamp an exact date on the Protestant Reformation. We look away back to the Waldenses and there we see the smoulderings of the Reformation fire; we think of our own John Wycliff - the "Morning Star of the Reformation"; and of John Huss, who so willingly went to the stake rather than submit to the dictates of Rome's corrupt doctrine and practices. For over 300 years the Reformation was in the smelting pot. But, as young Martin Luther's hammer swung into the nail that fastened his protest to that Castle Church in that little town in Germany, the blow was to echo throughout Europe and break the chains of popery that held so many in bondage.

How true it was what John Huss had cried out to his persecutors as the flames had begun to burn into his flesh; "Today, you are cooking an old goose", he had told them, "but tomorrow, a swan will rise from the ashes". And here, standing so nobly on the steps of the Castle Church was the one of whom Huss had so accurately spoken.

But, what kind of a man was Martin Luther? In these days when so many would discredit the whole work of the Reformation and brand it as "a mistake", they would also label the Reformers as "misguided fanatics". But what a travesty of the true situation this is. If Martin Luther was wrong, then his mistake grew out of nothing less than a desire to know God and the forgiveness of his sins before the Almighty.

Luther was born into a strict German Roman Catholic family, where the main ingredients of his religious instruction were the dread of God's judgment and the power of the Pope of Rome. Luther was a brilliant student, and by the time he was 22, had

graduated as Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy from the most famous University - Erfurt - of his day. In spite of all, however, young Martin Luther was still concerned about his soul; he could only see God as the indignant judge ready to hurl down thunderbolts upon his head, and one night, when Luther was caught out in a thunderstorm, he felt sure that the time of recompense had come. He prayed to St. Anne - his patron saint - and promised that if he ever got out of this situation alive, he would surely devote himself to a monastic life. He was spared, of course, and to the disgust of his parents entered the Order of St. Augustine.

As Luther had been the diligent student, so he became the zealous monk. With fastings and beatings of his own body, and privations of many kinds, Luther hoped to win pardon for his sins and peace with God. But, as he looked at those around him and his own inner condition, his frustration grew until, God in His sovereign mercy, turned him to His own precious truth.

As Luther read the Bible, the light of God's free salvation through the gift of faith began to dawn on him. "Therefore, being justified by faith", he read, "we have peace with God throughout our Lord Jesus Christ". His heart rejoiced at the knowledge God had given him, and he began to "teach others also" as young Timothy had been exhorted to do. The movement grew, until that night of which we have spoken when Martin Luther's hammer struck a death blow at the heart of the Church of Rome.

From that night, his blood was sought; but God was with him. And as he stood arraigned before the might of the power of medieval Rome, his famous vow sealed all that he had done and would do for the cause of God's Truth ... "Here I stand; I can do no other".



William Cowper

“An Outstanding Poet”

How often, when we stand up to sing the "Songs of Zion", do we fail to appreciate out of what hardship and turmoil of mind many of our most famous hymns were born. "This Month Long Ago", on the 15th day of the month in 1731, there was born in the old Rectory in Berkhamstead, the man who was destined to be one of the most outstanding of the Church's poets. His name was William Cowper, and almost from his earliest days (his mother died when he was still a child of 6 years), he knew little of true peace of mind. From boyhood he was subject to fits of severe depression, and though he fought bravely against them, they often recurred - sometimes in acute forms which even led him to attempt to take his life on several occasions.

His career as a lawyer had to be terminated on account of one of these attacks, but in many ways, this was to prove to be a blessing in disguise. His depression sent him to God's Word; for, although the son of a minister, his life had been lived without any reference to God whatsoever. As Cowper read God's Word he was led to pore over the words of Romans Chapter 3 verse 25; "... Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood". Cowper's mind was enlightened and he saw at once that there was salvation in none but Christ.

The steps of God's "mysterious way" that Cowper was later to write about began to show themselves, and after his conversion, the shy invalid, as he now was, was sent to live in the home of the family of Unwin. Mr Unwin had just died, and the widow and mother decided to rear her children in the market town of Olney, where the great John Newton was then minister. Needless to say, when the Unwin family moved into the red house in the Market

Square, William Cowper was with them. The years which Cowper was to spend under the ministry of, and in friendship with John Newton were to prove to be the most settled years of his life, but even during these days the darkness of depression often cast its shadow over his soul, and he often wrote out of a heavy heart. Some would tell us that it was Newton's severe Calvinistic outlook and theology that led to Cowper's depressive states, but this is a completely distorted picture, and although he was still often cast down, nevertheless, what peace of mind he knew, he knew at Olney, under Newton.

The house in which the Unwin family lived was separated from Newton's vicarage only by a garden, and many hours were spent in the closest communion on the things of Christ between the two friends. Their united gifts produced the famous "Olney Hymns", most of which were written especially for the Tuesday evening prayer meeting of the parish.

When word spread around the village that Cowper or Newton had penned a new hymn, there was always sure to be an air of anticipation at the meeting until the words were read and sung.

Many of Cowper's own greatest hymns belong to this collection. "Oh, for a closer walk with God"; "There is a fountain filled with blood"; "Jesus, where'er Thy people meet"; "Hark my soul, it is the Lord", and so on.

Cowper's own testimony of his salvation, in many ways, bespeaks the panting after the assurance that always seemed to elude him...

"I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since: with many an arrow deeply infixed
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One who had Himself

Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore
And in His hands and feet the cruel scars.
With gentle force, soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live".

One of Cowper's worst attacks occurred in the year 1773. At this time he was convinced that he was doomed to hell and "damned below Judas". He fled for refuge to Newton's comforting counsel, and for a whole year refused to leave the vicarage. Again, in answer to those critics of Newton and his religion, let it be said that it was the pastor of Olney's gentle care and cheerful faith that nursed his sick friend back to health again, and left on record some of the greatest experimental utterances that the Church's hymn books know.

Perhaps William Cowper did live in the depths of despair very often; but, do some of his words not touch the depths of all our hearts at times if we are truly the Lord's children. Which of Christ's redeemed cannot look into their soul and sigh —

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still;
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill".

And even at our "best of times", is there not the deep-rooted cry

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint".

Words born out of deep conflict of soul, and yet, words that can be our own in so many ways.



The Forerunners Of the Reformation

As this is the last of the present series, I thought that as it was approaching Christmas I would offer you a Christmas bonus by recalling with you TWO events that occurred in the life of the Church "This Month Long Ago".

The reason I have taken the two events together is on account of them having both occurred on Christmas Day — the 25th December. On Christmas Day, 1384, John Wycliff, the great Bible translator and forerunner of the Protestant Reformation, died in his vicarage in Lutterworth, in England. And on Christmas Day 1621, the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock having crossed the Atlantic in their little ship, the "Mayflower", in search of religious liberty.

Let us look at the Protestant Reformation in two ways. If we view the whole scene in the light of the old Olympic Games of ancient Greece, which were officially commenced when a runner, bearing a lighted torch entered the arena and lit the fire that was to burn throughout all the events, then, we have a picture of Martin Luther and John Calvin. They blazed into the religious world of their day with the light of the Gospel truth that was to burn like a beacon throughout the world. But, as the torch of the old Olympic runners was lit by some lone runner away back in the hills of Greece, so, there had to fall on some man's shoulders the task of lighting the Reformation torch and travelling the first hazardous miles of the Reformation road. The man who lit the torch and passed it on to others was John Wycliff.

Again, picture the full, glorious sky of Reformation daylight, when the Sun of God's Truth was shining brightly from the Luthers and the Calvins. But, again, look away to the dark night when popish superstition shrouded the religious world in darkness, and you will realise that the world doesn't move from midnight to midday without the morning first coming. For this reason, John Wycliff has been named - and well named - "The Morning Star of the Reformation".

Wycliff lived at a time when England was completely dominated by the Roman religion of his day: but, as few people knew nothing of the Bible or the religion of the Bible, there was little dissention and Rome ruled supreme. Wycliff was no different from many others, and, on reaching the age for deciding on a career, chose the Church and began his studies. He studied at Oxford University, and was simply one of the care-free bunch of students with little burden as far as true heart-religion goes. However, there occurred in England an event that was to scar the land. The "Black Death" plague began to stalk the land, killing off thousands as it went, and Wycliff began to think on eternal issues. He was driven to his Latin Bible and soon the whole Romish system was revealed to him as altogether corrupt in the light of God's Word.

At first, Wycliff set out to right the abuses that Rome was laying on his beloved country. Soon, however, he was driven to set his eyes on ever greater reforms, and God gave him the insight to see the two greatest weapons that Rome and the Devil feared, and fear most - the Bible in the language of the people, and devoted preachers to spread the good news of the gospel.

Rome hated these moves, and although Christmas Day 1384, was the day of Wycliff's death, his body was not permitted to remain at rest. On decree from the Council of Constance, Wycliff's body was disinterred, burned, and the remains thrown into a river.

It has been said that "a great deal of the religious trouble of England can be laid at the door of that headstrong woman, Elizabeth 1." Most "non-conformists" would agree with this, as it was Elizabeth's intention that the Church of the Reformation was to abide under her jurisdiction. However, just as the Lord had used persecution to spread His work and Word in the past, so He was to do in the days following the Reformation. "The Church of England was never really reformed" is a common saying; but, whether we agree with this or not, we must agree that the facts tell us that it was apparently not reformed ENOUGH for some of the brethren in its ranks. Within the Church of England, following the Reformation, there were the Puritans, whose intention it was to reform the Church and make her pure - hence Puritan. Many, however, were of a different opinion, and these separated themselves, becoming known as Separatists. In those days no man set up a religious society without knowing the full brunt of the authorities, and the Separatists suffered so much under Elizabeth that many of the decided to sail for other fields. This resulted in the voyage of the "Mayflower", which was to be used of God for the establishment of a solid religion in the homes and churches of New England. On Christmas Day 1621 - almost a year after setting sail - the Pilgrim Fathers arrived at their destination.

