

February 19th

Memory verse

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

1 Corinthians 11:2 There is information about this verse in yesterday's lesson.

A “what if” from history and some dictionary work



Today is the the anniversary of the birth of one of the most popular princes England has ever known. Prince Henry Frederick Stuart (1594-1612) was born on 19th February at Stirling castle in Scotland. His father was king of Scotland at the time and later, on the death of Queen Elizabeth I, became king of England as well, moving his court to London and Prince Henry became Prince of Wales.

The king doted on his son when he was younger and provided him with everything he could think of to educate him for the crown. The composer Alfonso Ferrabosco was appointed as his music tutor so if you want to hear the kind of music the prince would have heard, and perhaps even played, find some of his compositions to hear.¹

However, as the prince grew older, he and the king began to have different views, especially on the important religious issues of the time. The prince's ideas were more in tune with those of the people. He sympathised much more with the puritans than his father did and was horrified at the suggestion that he should marry a catholic princess in order to bring peace to Europe – which was his father's great scheme. Henry's servants were forbidden to swear and required to attend chapel. At chapel, the prince explained he wanted to hear preachers who had the attitude, “Sir, you must hear me diligently: you must have a care to observe what I say.” In other words he did not want preachers to waste time with flattery or speak as though they could assume he was above correction because he was the heir to the throne.

The old writer Daniel Neal sketches his character in this way (I have highlighted some words that may be unfamiliar or used nowadays in a different sense. Use your dictionary to find out their meaning.):

Henry, prince of Wales, the king's eldest son... was one of the most accomplished persons of his age, sober, chaste, temperate, religious, full of honour and probity, and never heard to swear an oath; neither the example of the king his father, nor of the whole court, was capable of corrupting him in these respects. He had a great soul, full of noble and elevated sentiments, and was as much displeased with trifles as his father was fond of them. He had frequently said that, if ever he mounted the throne, his first care should be to try to reconcile the Puritans to the Church of England. As this could not be done without each party's making some concessions, and as such a proceeding was directly contrary to the temper of the court and clergy, he was suspected to countenance Puritanism. To say all in one word, Prince Henry was mild and affable, though of a warlike genius, the darling of the Puritans, and... no historian has taxed him with any vice.²

1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF9WK-ua_s8&t=67s for example.

2 Daniel Neal, *History of the Puritans*.

Unlike his father, who was no soldier, Prince Henry showed every sign of being both brave and skilful in arms. This also endeared him to his people. Sir Walter Raleigh³ the great navigator had been imprisoned by James who accused him of being involved in a plot to assassinate the king. Prince Henry greatly admired Sir Walter, who was a great favourite of the people who thought him a hero. The prince knew Sir Walter was innocent and wanted him released from prison.

James was not a popular king but Henry was a very popular prince; so popular that the king began to feel jealous. Matters came to a head while they were out together hunting. The king criticised Henry for being unenthusiastic about the hunt and he raised his cane as though to strike him. The prince rode away – and most of the courtiers in the hunting party went with him.

It was while his father was suggesting a match with a French catholic princess and Henry was saying that he would rather go to Germany and not return until he was safely married to a German Protestant princess that he died – probably of typhoid.

But what if the prince had not died young? What would have happened if he had lived to reign? Because Henry the Prince of Wales died before his father, his younger brother, Charles, became Prince of Wales and then king. Henry and Charles did not share the same ideas about the relationship of the monarchy to parliament. Charles considered he was king by divine right and parliament only acted with his permission. If he wished he could dismiss them and rule without them. Prince Henry had a deeper understanding of the way God's providence acts. He saw that rulers have a responsibility to God and therefore *are* answerable to those they rule. He was also determined not to marry a Roman Catholic. Charles's Catholic wife was a great source of irritation in a strongly protestant country and the services in her chapel and the priests who served her were viewed with deep suspicion. Henry's puritan sympathies on the other hand would have given him a better relationship with his parliaments than Charles. As a consequence the Civil War would probably not have happened and Oliver Cromwell may have lived all his life as a country squire and loyal MP!

A painting to look at

The painter Ford Maddox Brown (1821-1893) spent the last years of his working life painting a series of 12 murals for the walls of Manchester's Town Hall. The paintings show important events related to Christianity, commerce and the textile industry in Manchester's history. They range widely over British history in general, homing in on aspects of the history of the winning of freedoms that enabled Manchester to prosper as a centre of trade and industry. They include one painting depicting the stirring events of February 19th 1377 “The Trial of Wycliffe”. We have already encountered John Wycliffe this month in relation to the reign of Edward III and also the Earthquake Synod of 1382. The trial, which happened some years before the Synod, was one of the defining moments of his life.⁴

Wycliffe had written a book in which he argued that all the lands and goods owned by the church should be taken away. He was a famous scholar from a famous university, Oxford, which was then more important than any university is today. Ideas about the Bible and about how we should think were discussed at Oxford. As men travelled to and fro from the university these ideas spread through society. Wycliffe's ideas spread from Oxford all over the country. John of Gaunt (wearing a crown in the picture to show his royal authority) and the northerner, Lord Percy, (the figure in armour beside Wycliffe in the picture) were the most powerful men in the kingdom at that time.

³ We will read all about Raleigh in the lesson for 20th March.

⁴ See the lessons for 1st and 11th February.

They invited Wycliffe up to London to preach in the churches of the City. They wanted Wycliffe's ideas about what to do with church property to be well known among the City's powerful merchants.

Wycliffe made the best use of this opportunity. He formed a body of supporters among the citizens of London. He found ready listeners at the royal court also. He went from church to church in London, preaching everywhere what laymen had been thinking for a long time, but had never before heard preached so bravely or with such logic.

At this time the Bishops and clergy of all England were gathered in the city for a Convocation. They could not allow such ideas as Wycliffe's to be preached while they just sat and debated other things. The Bishop of London, Bishop Courtenay was a fierce and proud man. You can see him whispering



into the ear of the enthroned archbishop in the painting. He could not endure hearing himself and the other bishops attacked in his own diocese, and in his own churches, by an unauthorised priest from Oxford. Archbishop Sudbury of Canterbury (enthroned on the right hand side of the picture) was a mild and rather lazy man. He did not want trouble but the others forced him to act. He reluctantly agreed to summon Wycliffe before him at St. Paul's.

On **February 19th** in Old St Paul's the Bishops met in the Lady Chapel behind the altar. Here they waited for Wycliffe, the accused, to appear. The London mob crowded the whole length of the aisle, up which the prisoner had to pass from the main entrance. The Londoners liked Wycliffe. Only a year later they would be breaking in on a similar trial to rescue him from the Bishops. On that occasion it was the widow of the Black Prince, the king's daughter-in-law, who had intervened to help Wycliffe. Is she the seated lady trying to restrain John of Gaunt in the picture?

But the enraged Londoners were now thinking not of Wycliffe, but of John of Gaunt and his ally Lord Percy. Just that very week the City's powers and independence were being threatened by Lord Percy himself. It was this aspect of the situation which inspired the painting, I think. It made it appropriate to Manchester because what was done in London at this time affected all other cities – although Manchester was not yet a city at the time. Parliament was sitting and the ministers had, in the name of the ailing King, introduced a bill. It was designed to take the government of London out of the hands of the Mayor and put it into the hands of the King's Marshal. And who was the King's Marshall? It was Lord Percy. The bill was promoted by Percy himself, and John of Gaunt's young brother. How angry the citizen's were to think of their ancient liberty being removed in this way!

They were all thinking about this rather than Wycliffe's plight as they thronged St Paul's. The aisle of St Paul's was the longest of any cathedral in the world. Wycliffe arrived at the door of the great Cathedral and moved slowly up it. It was crowded to capacity. Four friars (there seem to be five sitting at a bench at the lower left in the painting) from Oxford, each representing one of their four orders, came with him to defend his doctrines. But the prisoner was not supported by logic and learning alone. By his side walked the great Duke; in front strode the King's Marshal, the Northern lord. This man from the wild borderlands proposed to hand out the same rough justice in the streets of London as he did at home! With all the pride of a nobleman from the great family of the Percies, he pushed the city merchants and apprentices to right and left, to make room for John of Gaunt and Wycliffe. The Londoners were often violent, especially if their rights were challenged. Under the circumstances, it is more surprising that the noblemen returned to Westminster alive, than that the mob forgot for the time their favour to Wycliffe and his teaching.

Courtenay, Bishop of London, who appears to have been in the aisle as the procession moved up it, angrily rebuked Lord Percy for laying about the Londoners whom he considered were *his* flock, declaring that he would never have let the lords into the church if he had known that they were going to behave in this manner. The Duke answered that they would do as they pleased, whether the Bishop liked it or not.

They had now reached the Lady Chapel where the trial was to take place. The Duke and Lord took chairs for themselves, and Percy bade Wycliffe be seated: "Since you have much to reply, you will need all the softer seat," he said. If you look at the picture closely you will see that someone is placing a stool or seat behind Wycliffe at Lord Percy's command.

Courtenay, whose temper had been already stirred by the way the men had behaved, cried out that the suggestion was ill-mannered, and that Wycliffe should stand to give his answers. The two nobles swore that he should sit. Courtenay, taking the proceedings out of the hands of Archbishop Sudbury, who was glad enough to sit quietly, insisted that the prisoner should stand.

The Duke, finding he could not win the argument, broke out into abuse and threats. He would bring down the pride of all the Bishops of England he threatened, adding darkly that Courtenay need not trust in his parents the Earl and Countess of Devon, for they would have enough to do to take care of themselves. The Bishop made the obvious answer that he trusted in God and not in his noble parents.

The Duke, it was afterwards said, muttered to his attendants some threat of dragging him out by the hair of his head. The next moment the Londoners had broken in on the proceedings with wild cries of vengeance, and a general brawl broke out between the citizens and the Duke's guard. The meeting broke up in confusion, and the prisoner was carried off by his supporters, whether in triumph or in retreat it was hard to tell.

Of Wycliffe's share in all this it can only be said that he did not interfere and that he lost no popularity in London because of the events of that day. What he thought of it all we can never even guess. Whether he had wished the Duke of Lancaster to accompany him must remain a mystery. He does not mention the scene in any of his books, though he writes much about his later persecutions. In the roaring crowd of infuriated lords, bishops and citizens, he stood silent, and stands silent still.⁵

For more about John Wycliffe see also the lessons for 22nd May, June 10th and June 21st.

5 This account of the event is simplified from George Macaulay Trevelyan's *England in the Age of Wycliffe*.

Map work: South!

On 19th February explorer William Smith (c.1790-1847) discovered the South Shetland Islands. He claimed them in the name of his king, George III. Can you find them in your atlas? One of the islands, Smith Island, is named after the discoverer.

Also on 19th February in 1836 King William IV signed the letters patent which established the Province of South Australia. Find South Australia in your atlas. Can you identify the capital city of South Australia today?