

12th September

Memory Verse

My times are in thy hand:

deliver me from the hand of mine enemies,

and from them that persecute me.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:

save me for thy mercies' sake. Psalm 31:15 and 16.

younger children can learn the words in **bold** and understand that “thy” means “your”, in this case indicating God the Lord. More about today's memory verse in tomorrow's lesson.

Something to read from history: The Chanforan Conference 1532¹

Today is the anniversary of a historic conference. I expect you already know something about the great leaders of the Reformation, Martin Luther,² John Calvin³ and many others. Imagine how delighted the Reformers must have been to find out that, deep in the valleys of the Alps and in scattered pockets elsewhere, there were groups of Christians who down the centuries had always believed the very truths which the reformers had now rediscovered! These were the people who called themselves just “brethren” but were known to others by names such as Waldenses or Vaudois.

These groups in places such as Piedmont, Italy, traced their origins right back to apostolic times. They had not left the New Testament patterns of worship while the rest of Europe slid into apostasy and error. Often they benefited from the remoteness of their Alpine valleys to isolate them from the development of the Roman Church. Here they were almost undisturbed. Sometimes they might be forced to submit to hearing a mass or to having their children baptised by Roman priests. But then when the Roman clerics went away they would return again to their ancient ways. Some considered these groups had been founded by that good Bishop of Turin, Claudius (810-827). Others thought that Peter Waldo (1140-1205) was their founder. Perhaps there were some connections but the Waldenses themselves always maintained that they had continued faithfully clinging to the Bible from the very earliest times.

The Waldensians eventually made contact with the reformers Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531) and William Farel (1489-1565). They invited Farel to visit them in their mountain homes, which he did, travelling to various Waldensian villages scattered through the Alps. Together they organised a conference at Chanforan in Italy. Leaders came from churches in Italy, from many parts of France, from Germany and from Bohemia There were peasants and labourers. There were Italian noblemen. There was no building in the little hamlet big enough for the meeting so it was held outdoors, the participants sitting together on benches, rich and poor alike.



In the picture you can see the monument that stands today on the spot of this historic conference. The Bible

¹ Permission for image sought from Segreteria@e-borghi.com. 12/01/22 Information from E. H. Broadbent *The Pilgrim Church* (1931) and other sources.

² See the lesson for July 16th.

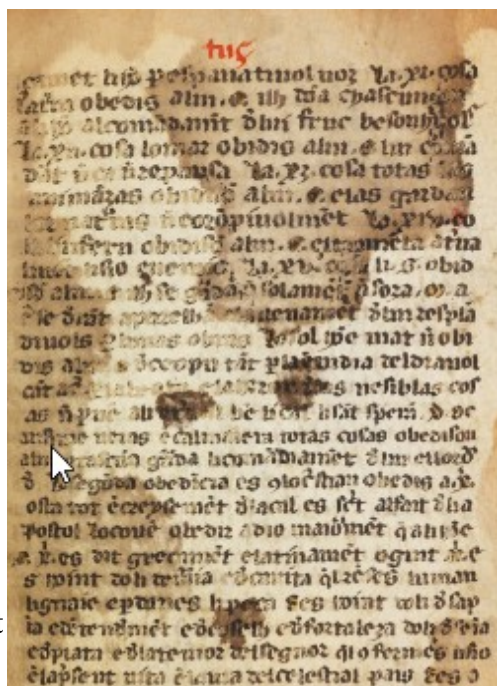
³ See the lesson for July 10th

translation that came out of that conference (see below) is depicted on the monument.

Under the shade of the chestnut trees and surrounded by the mountain wall of the Alps the meetings were opened “in the name of God” on the 12th September, 1532.⁴

The chief spokesmen for the Reformers were William Farel and Antoine Saunier and for the Waldensians Daniel of Valence and Jean of Molines. The Waldensians had often been persecuted and sometimes they had yielded outwardly. The Reformers were keen to urge them to separate completely from Rome whatever the cost.

The Waldensians showed them the manuscript Bibles that they used, carefully copied by hand. The manuscript in the picture (which is now in the Geneva Library) is not a Bible page but from a collection of Waldensian sermons. The hand written Bibles would have had a similar appearance. The sight of these venerable copies moved the Reformers to consider how much a printed French language Bible was needed. The Waldensians generously gave money towards this project. A Waldensian scholar, Pierre Robert Olivetan (c. 1506 – 1538), Calvin's cousin, made this first French translation which was published in 1535. What a blessing it is to have the Word of God in our own language!



Some art to look at⁵

In yesterday's lesson⁶ we learned about people who at various times in history have lived in caves. This part of today's lesson continues the theme – with some art to enjoy as well.

In south-western France, in the district of Dordogne, on a plateau overlooking the valley of the river Vézère, is the entrance to the cave of Lascaux, famous throughout Europe.

For many hundreds of years it had remained hidden from human eyes, but on September 12th, 1940, a boy from the neighbouring village of Montignac, walking among the trees on the plateau, saw his dog disappear down a hole. Some years earlier a fierce storm had uprooted a fir-tree and it was while the dog was sniffing around the exposed roots that he suddenly vanished. The boy ran over to the tree and found what appeared to be a deep hole, but no sight of the dog and no sound of his barking.

He lowered himself gingerly into the opening until his feet came to rest on a slippery, sloping floor leading down into the darkness. Their dog answered to his calls but the matches he had gave out before he could move along the gallery, so he clambered back out into the daylight having retrieved the dog. Thinking he might have stumbled on the route to a buried treasure rumoured to be in the area he got three friends together to explore.

⁴ E. H. Broadbent *The Pilgrim Church* p.203.

⁵ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 3 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

⁶ Still to come 14/01/22.

By the light of matches they felt their way down the passage until they came to a low gallery. Nearly a hundred years before, caves had been discovered at Les Eyzies in the same district.⁷ They had contained examples of ancient wall painting and sculptures dating from early times after the great flood of Noah's day. The boys wondered if, by chance, they had stumbled on another such monument. It was an exciting secret to share and they made a pact to meet the next day with ropes and a lamp to explore the cave properly.

The gallery led them suddenly into a great oval room and they shouted in amazement as their lamp illuminated, for the first time in hundreds of years, walls covered with paintings of bulls, horses and deer. Two openings at the end of this Great Hall of the Bulls led into branching galleries, their walls also covered with paintings in red, brown, yellow and black. At first the boys kept their secret, charging a fee to other local lads to visit the cave. They became convinced, however, that their discovery was of great importance so they eventually fetched their schoolmaster.

Within weeks experts had arrived at Lascaux from all over France and had proclaimed to the world the discovery of a new painted cave, the finest and best preserved example of such early art as yet revealed in modern times.



The exceptional beauty of the art discovered in this and similar caves shows that human beings have been artistic from the very beginning. Art historians have marvelled over the creative talent of whoever painted these caves. They were masters of depicting movement and proportion. They even made use of the shape of the wall itself on which they were painting to give an impression of a relief. All this was done with just the light of lamps made of hollowed out stone, examples of which were found in the cave. Human creativity certainly has not evolved over long ages. After visiting Lascaux the famous French painter Picasso (1881-1973) said: 'We have discovered nothing.'

⁷ For information about these find see <https://creation.com/cro-magnonnot-a-club-wielding-brute>

Do some “cave” painting

If you would like to make your own “cave painting” you can mix up some ingredients that are rather like the paints used at sites such as Lascaux. Try collecting soil, for instance, especially if you can get some different shades. The soil can be sieved or pounded in a kitchen mortar to get it to a useful consistency. This can be mixed with a white vegetable fat such as Trex to mimic the animal fats used by cave painters. You will need to experiment with the balance of pigment (soil) to carrier (fat) to get a good effect. The cave painters also used other things such as blood which you probably don't have available but you could substitute a little red poster paint into the mix!

To apply the paint you could use a worn-out toothbrush or even fingers if you don't mind a bit of a mess.

To get a real feel for what cave painting might have been like you could tape some large sheets of paper to the *underneath* of a table. Then you can lie down under the table to make your work of art. In a cave it is dark so you would be working with artificial light such as lamps. If you want to mimic that too you can darken the room and take a torch or bike light under the table with you.



A secret code?⁸

Cave artists often included hands in their work. Sometimes the hands have been printed onto the surface by covering the artists hand with paint and then printing it onto the wall. I expect you may have done something like this – on paper not a wall I hope! The other method seems to have been to use the hand as a stencil as you see in the picture above. With the stencilled hands archaeologists and researchers in the caves began to notice something puzzling. The hands often had part of a finger missing! Were these hands that had been injured? But in that case, if injuries were so common, why did they not appear in the printed hands? Some researchers suggest that the stencilled hands of this type were done with one finger bent forwards. When stencilled this would look as though the finger was shortened. This was a kind of signal or code. They were “indicators of danger, orientation signs, group identity symbols or markers of hidden goods in the cave.”⁹

If you have never done hand prints or stencils now would be a good time to try it out. Perhaps you could even experiment with a code. Drawing round your hand with chalk with one finger bent would give at least five different signs which could be used to leave outdoors as signals!

More about cave art in the lesson for 18th December.

⁸ For more information see <https://crev.info/2023/04/cave-paintings/>

⁹ George, Alison. Paleolithic hand stencils with missing fingers could indicate ritual mutilation or frostbite – but new research suggests they might be trying to tell us something. *New Scientist* 257:38-42; <https://www.newscientist.com/author/alison-george/>, 15 March 2023.