

John de Wycliffe, born about 1324, styled the “Morning Star of Reformation,” was an English divine, whose piety and talents procured for him one of the highest ecclesiastical positions of honor. Having openly preached against the corruptions of the Roman Church, he was displaced, the pope issuing several bulls against him for heresy. Accordingly, he was examined by an assembly, but made so able a defense that it ended without determination. Continuing to denounce the papal corruptions, and power, he was again summoned before a synod, but was released by order of the king’s mother. It is remarkable that although he continued his vehement attacks upon vital of Romish doctrine, he escaped the fate of others similarly accused; but over forty years after his death, which occurred in 1384, his bones were exhumed, burned, and cast into the River Swift, which bore them through the Severn to the sea, his very dust thus becoming emblematic of his doctrine, now diffused the world over. His most important work was the first English version of the Bible.

John Huss, the celebrated reformer, was a native of Bohemia, born in 1370, and educated at the university of Prague, where he received the degree of master of arts, and became rector of the University and confessor to the Queen. Obtaining some of the writings of Wycliffe, he saw the errors and corruption of the Romish Church, which he freely exposed, though persecuted by several popes. By his teaching, a reformation began in the University, to check which the archbishop issued two decrees; but the new doctrine spreading still more, he was finally brought before a council, thrown into prison, and after some months’ confinement, sentenced to be burned. Though urged at the stake to recant, he firmly refused, and until stifled with smoke, continued to pray and sing with clear voice. He was burned in 1415, and his ashes, and even the soil on which they lay, were carefully removed, and thrown into the Rhine.

Jerome of Prague, who derived his surname from the town where he was born somewhere between 1360 and 1370, completed his studies at the university of the same name, after which he traveled over the greater part of Europe. At Paris he received the degree of master of arts, and at Oxford he became acquainted with the writings of Wycliffe, translating many of them into his own language. On his return to Prague, he openly professed Wycliffe’s doctrines, and assisted Huss in the work of the reformation. Upon the arrest of the latter, he also expressed his willingness to appear before the council in defense of his faith, and desired a safe-conduct of the emperor. This was not granted, but on his way home he was seized, carried to Constance, and after the martyrdom of Huss, threatened with like torments. In a moment of weakness, he abjured the faith; but on being released, bemoaned his sin, and publicly renounced his

recantation, for which he was consigned to flames, 1416.

Thomas Cranmer, the first archbishop of Canterbury, was born in 1489. Although in his profession as a divine, he was somewhat politic as a statesman, and thus was well suited to unite the religious and worldly enemies of popery. He was also a servile adherent of Henry VIII. After the death of the latter, he joined the upholders of Lady Jane Grey, who was also a Protestant, and was accordingly sent to the Tower on the accession of Mary; and being accused of heresy by the pope's party, was burned at Oxford, 1556. As a reformer, he introduced the Bible into the churches, and so used his influence as a regent of Edward VI that the Reformation greatly prospered during the young monarch's reign. Shortly before his martyrdom, he signed a recantation contrary to his convictions, in hope of life; but at the stake he was more courageous, first thrusting into the flames the hand which signed the document, exclaiming many times, "O my unworthy right hand!"

William Tyndale, an eminent English divine, was born about 1484. He received an ample education at Cambridge and Oxford, and took holy orders. Embracing the doctrines of the Reformation, he excited so much enmity among Romanists by his zeal and ability in expounding them, that he was compelled to seek refuge in Germany. Believing that the Scriptures should be read by the masses in the vernacular, he produced a complete version of the New Testament in English, which, though ordered to be suppressed, was in such demand that six editions were published. This version was also the model and basis of that of King James, and is but little more obsolete. He also translated the Pentateuch. For these and other reformatory writings, he was arrested at Antwerp at the instigation of the English government, and after eighteen months' imprisonment, was burned, first being strangled by the hangman, 1536.

Nicholas Ridley, a learned English bishop and martyr, educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge, was born about 1500. His great abilities and piety recommended him to the notice of Archbishop Crammer, through whom he was made chaplain to the king. In the reign of Edward VI, he was nominated to the see of Rochester; and finally to the bishopric of London. By his influence with the young king, the priories and revenues devoted to the maintenance of corrupt friars and monks were used for charitable purposes. On the decease of Edward, he embraced the cause of Lady Jane Grey, and in a sermon warned the people of the evil that would befall Protestantism if Mary should come to the throne. For this, and for his zeal in aiding the Reformation, he was seized by Queen Mary, sent to Oxford to dispute with some of the popish bishops, and on his

refusing to recant, was burned with Latimer, 1555.

John Bradford, was born in the first part of the reign of Henry VIII. He early evinced a taste for learning, and began the study of law; but finding theology more congenial, removed to Cambridge University, where his ability and piety won for him, in less than a year, the degree of master of arts. Soon after, he was made chaplain to Edward VI, and became one of the most popular preachers of Protestantism in the kingdom. But after the accession of that rigid Catholic, Mary, he was arrested on the charge of heresy, and confined in the Tower a year and a half, during which time he aided with his pen the cause for which he suffered. When finally brought to trial, he defended his principles to the last, withstanding all attempts to effect his conversion to Romanism. He was condemned, and committed to the flames in 1555. He died, rejoicing thus to be able to suffer for the truth.

John Rogers, the first of many that were martyred during Queen Mary's reign, was born about 1500. He was educated at Cambridge, receiving holy orders, and was afterward chaplain to the English rectory at Antwerp, where he became acquainted with Tyndale and Coverdale, and by their aid published a complete English version of the Bible. Removing Wittenberg, he became pastor of a Dutch congregation; but when Edward VI came to the throne, he was invited home, and made prebendary and divinity reader of St. Paul's. On the Sunday after Queen Mary's accession, in a sermon at St. Paul's, he exhorted the people to adhere to the doctrines taught in King Edward's days, and to resist all Catholic form and dogmas. For this he was summoned before the council, but vindicated himself so well that he was dismissed. This not pleasing Mary, he was again summoned, and ordered to remain a prisoner in his own house; but he was soon after seized, and sent to Newgate. He was then tried and condemned, and refusing to recant was burned, 1555.

Hugh Latimer, born about 1490, one of the chief promoters of the reformation in England, was educated at Cambridge, receiving the degree of Master of Arts. At the beginning of the Reformation, he was a zealous papist; but after conversing with the martyr Bilney, he renounced the Catholic faith, and labored earnestly in preaching the gospel. Henry VIII, being pleased with his discourses, made him bishop of Worcester; but being opposed to some of the king's measures, Latimer finally resigned. After the death of his patron, Cromwell, the latter's enemies sought him out, and he was sent to the Tower. He was released by Edward VI, but refused to be restored to his diocese, and remained with Cranmer, assisting in the Reformation. When Mary came to the throne,

he was again sent to the Tower, thence with Cranmer Ridley to dispute with popish bishops at Oxford. Here he argued unusual clearness and simplicity, but was condemned and burned at the same stake with Ridley, 1555.

John Hooper, Was born about 1495, and was educated at Oxford. After taking his degree of Bachelor of Arts, he joined the Cistercian monks, but his attention being directed to the writings of Zwingli, after a diligent study of the Scriptures, he became a zealous advocate of the Reformation. Knowing the danger to which his opinions exposed him, he went to France. On his return to England he found the plots were again being laid against his life, and escaped to Ireland, thence to France, and finally to Germany, where he remained some years. Again returning to England he applied himself to instruct the masses, laboring so successfully that the king, Edward VI, requested him to remain in London to further the Reformation, and created him bishop of Worcester. On the accession of Mary, however, he was immediately arrested, sent to the Fleet prison, and, after eighteen months' confinement, was tried for heresy, and condemned to the flames in 1555. He endured the agonies of the stake with great fortitude, though they were unusually protracted on account of the use of green wood.

Martin Luther, the greatest of reformers, was born in Saxony, in 1483. When a poor boy, a benevolent lady took him in charge to educate. At first he studied law, but a narrow escape from death so affected him with the uncertainty of life that he retired to a monastery. Here he came in possession of a Bible, and was struck with the difference between the teachings of the gospel and the practices of the Romish Church. Being sent on an errand to Rome, the impression was deepened, and when the pope issued his famous bull granting the sale of indulgences, Luther, who was then professor of divinity in the University of Wittenberg, was prepared to oppose it, which he did so ably that multitudes, including many nobles, upheld him. He was ordered to appear to Rome, but refused. The pope issued a condemnation, which Luther burned. At the Diet of Worms he refused to retract, and soon spread his views throughout the kingdom by his writings. He also translated the Bible into German. A decree being passed the mass should be universally observed, a protest was issued by the reformed party, from which they received the name Protestants. The confession of Augsburg, the standard of their faith, was then drawn up. He still kept on writing and laboring until he died, worn out by excessive toil, in 1546.

Ulric Zwingli, Whose name in the annals of Protestant reformation ranks second only to that of Luther, was born in 1484. As he early evinced a taste for study, he was sent first

to Bale and Berne, and finally to the university of Vienna, to receive an education. On return he was pastor of a large parish near his birthplace, and afterward preacher to the cathedral church of Zurich. Here he made a special study of the scriptures, committing to memory the whole New and a part of the Old Testament. His theological researches led him to see the corruptions of the Romish Church, and he commenced declaiming against them, especially against papal indulgences, until he effected the same separation for Switzerland from the Catholic dominion, that Luther did for Saxony. These religious dissensions brought on a civil war in Switzerland, and Zwingli, who accompanied his army as chaplain, was slain on the field of battle, 1531.

Philip Melancthon, the famous reformer and friend of Luther, was born in the grand duchy of Baden in 1497, At the age of seventeen he graduated as master of arts from the university of Heidelberg, and soon after obtained the Greek professorship at Wittenberg. Here he formed a friendship with Luther, whose opinions he accepted, and defended in his lectures and writings. His prudence aided the promulgation of Protestant doctrines greatly, as it guarded them from the abuses of intemperate zeal. His greatest work was the drawing up of the Augsburg Confession, although he was a fluent writer, and was the author of the first system of Protestant theology, which passed through more than fifty editions, and was used as a text-book in the universities. His learning and moderation became famous throughout all Europe, and the kings of England and France invited him to their kingdoms, but he preferred to remain in Wittenberg, where he died in 1560.

John Knox, the celebrated Scotch reformer, was born in 1505, and was educated at St. Andrew's University. He received a priest's orders, but renounced popery after reading the writings of St. Augustine and Jerome. He was accused of heresy, and his public confession of faith condemned, but he began to preach it openly from the pulpit, and reformed documents spread rapidly. St. Andrew's being taken by the French Fleet, he was carried to Rouen, and condemned to the galleys, where he remained nineteen months. After his liberation, he went to England, and was made chaplain to Edward VI, having refused a bishopric. On Mary's accession he went to Frankfort and preached to English exiles. Thence he went to Geneva, where he was esteemed by Calvin, to whose doctrines he was much attached. He returned to Scotland, where he died in 1572, after rendering the Reformation triumphant in his native land.

John Calvin, an eminent reformer, and founder of the religious sect known as the Calvinists was born in 1509. He was early destined for the church, being presented with

a benefice when only twelve years old. He was educated in Paris for the ministry; but becoming dissatisfied with the tenets of the Romish Church, he turned his attention to the law. He soon received the seeds of the reformed doctrine, and so strongly defended them that he was obliged to leave France. He retired to Bale, Switzerland, where he composed his famous Institutes of Christianity, which was translated into several languages. He then settles at Geneva as minister and professor of divinity, but was compelled to leave for refusing to obey some papal forms. Going to Strasburg, he raised up a French church, where he officiated. By the divines of this town he was sent as deputy to the Diet of Worms. He returned to Geneva after repeated solicitation, and was actively engaged as speaker and writer in the interests of the Reformation, until his death in 1564.

John Bunyan, the most popular religious writer in the English language, was born in 1628. He was a tinker by trade, and therefore received but a meager education. His mind was little drawn to religious matters until his enlistment as a soldier, during which one of his comrades, who had taken his post, was killed. This he looked upon as a direct interposition of Providence, and after his return home, became deeply concerned about his spiritual welfare. He soon joined the Baptist Church, and from an exhorter, became a successful preacher among them. At this time all the dissenters from the Church of England were punished, and Bunyan was thrown into jail, where he remained twelve years. Here he wrote the world-renowned Pilgrim's Progress, which has since been translated into every tongue of Christendom. He was also the author of other religious writings, such as Holy War. At the close of the persecution he was released. He soon resumed his former labors, and was popularly known as Bishop Bunyan. His death, in 1688, resulted from exposure.

George Whitfield, an English clergyman, born in 1714, was educated at Oxford, where he received the degree of B.A, and where he became acquainted with Charles Wesley, and was an enthusiastic member of the club which gave rise to Methodism. He was soon ordained, and commenced his remarkable missionary career. Upon the urgent invitation of John Wesley, who was in Georgia, he embarked for America, but soon returned to solicit funds for a proposed orphan asylum. He made five subsequent visits of America, preaching in all the large cities, also in those of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and made a journey to Holland. He met with great opposition from the clergy, and being shut out of the churches, was first to introduce open-air services. Having differed from the Wesley's in some belief, they finally separated, which gave rise to the two classes, Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodists. He still continued his laborious

efforts, sometimes speaking three and four times a day for weeks, until his death, in 1770, at Newburyport, Mass., while preparing for a seventh missionary tour in America.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was born in 1703, and was educated at Oxford, becoming an eminent tutor in Lincoln College. With his brother and a few others, he formed a society for mutual edification in theological exercises, and they rigidly occupied themselves in religious duties, in fasting and prayer, and visiting prisons and relieving the suffering. At the solicitation of General Oglethorpe, Wesley accompanied him to Georgia with a view of converting Indians. He finally returned to England to engage in missionary labors, but his design was not to withdraw from the established Church of England, but to create a revival among the neglected classes by preaching salvation through simple faith in Christ. However, the churches being shut against him, he held open-air services, obtaining so many converts that the organization became necessary, and spacious churches were built. Until his death in 1791, he was indefatigable in his self-imposed work, which he carried through England, Scotland, and Ireland, traveling nearly 300,000 miles, and preached over 40,000 sermons, besides being a voluminous writer.

John Fletcher, was born in Switzerland in 1729. He was of noble birth, and was educated at the University of Geneva. Not conforming conscientiously to all Calvinistic doctrines, he forsook the clerical profession, and entered military service. Peace being proclaimed, he went to England as a tutor. He joined the Methodist society, and received orders from the Church of England. Though presented with a good living, he declined saying “that it afford too much money for too little work>” The poor and suffering were his charge, and in a region of mines and mountains, midst opposition and persecution, he labored with charity and devotion. He visited France, Switzerland, and Italy, and on his return was president of a theological school, but his advocacy of Wesleyanism sundered the connection. He afterward devoted his life to parishional duties, making long missionary journeys with Wesley and Whitefield and to the preparation in writing of their peculiar doctrines. His death occurred in 1785.

William Miller, the greatest reformer of modern times, born in Massachusetts in 1782, was of poor but honorable parentage. Having a thirst for knowledge, he acquired considerable education by his own exertions. He served in the war of 1812, and was promoted to the rank of captain. Until 1816 he favored infidelity; but a careful study of the Bible for the purpose of refuting Christianity convinced him of his error, and opened to the world the then unexplored fields of prophecy. After much solicitation, he began

his life work, the promulgation of the prophetic interpretations, especially in regard to the second advent, thus inseparably connecting himself with the great religious movement of 1844. The message soon became so wide-spread that invitations from all the principal cities of the United States, as many as possible of which he answered; and a revival such as had never been known sprang up in every denomination, extending even to Europe. Though disappointed in the time of the second advent, by a misapplication of prophecy, the majority of his views proved themselves to be correct, and introduced a new era in the never-ending work of reformation. He devoted himself to the work which he had begun, both lecturing and writing until his peaceful death in 1849.