

## Saint of the Week: Henry Martyn (1781-1912)

*Observed 19 October*



In his 31 short years, Henry Martyn made extraordinary contributions to the spread of the Gospel. At the turn of the 18th to 19th centuries, it was possible to excel in very disparate disciplines, and to be called from almost anything into the ministry. So it was that this man who was crowned the most gifted student of mathematics in his time at Cambridge could decide on a career at law and instead be called to ordination and missionary work in India. He went to Calcutta as a chaplain to the East India Company, but his sympathy was not with the military and economic conquest that was the practice of the time. He ministered to wounded and dying soldiers in times of combat, but spent more of his energy ministering to local populations (colonists and colonized), establishing schools and local language churches. In the last six years of his life, while ministering in India, he made two translations of the New Testament (into Hindi and Persian), while revising an existing Arabic translation. He also translated the English Book of Common Prayer into Hindi and the Psalms into Persian, among other devotional translations for the use of missionaries and converts. It was while traveling to Persia, intending to refine his existing translations and undertake others that he took sick and died. His translations were instrumental in the spread of Christianity in India and Persia, so that he is honored as one of the fathers of the modern church in both places. Martyn was as devoted as he was gifted. His diary is an inspiration to any who read it seeking for a window into life on the frontiers of evangelism in his time. For those who wish to hear this holy man in his own voice, there is a paperback edition of his 'Life and Letters' available.

*Lessons* Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 56:8-12; Romans 1:8-15; John 4:22-266

*Collect* O God of the nations, who gave to your faithful servant Henry Martyn a brilliant mind, a loving heart, and a gift for languages, that he might translate the Scriptures and other holy writings for the peoples of India and Persia: Inspire in us a love like his, eager to commit both life and talents to you who gave them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.