HENRY MARTYN 1781 – 1812

"Now let me burn out for God!" exclaimed Henry Martyn when he arrived in Calcutta, India April 1806. But he probably had little idea how fast the blaze would consume him. He died six years later at age 31. Eager to devote his life to the Lord's work in India, with an incredible determination and unselfish dedication, Martyn compressed a lifetime of service into those six years.

Born in 1781 in Cornwall, England, Martyn had planned to study law and mathematics, but while at Cambridge his interest in the Far East was stirred with stories of William Carey's work in India as well at stories of David Brainerd's missionary efforts to the Indians in America. When he arrived in Calcutta as a chaplain employed by the East India Company, he discovered they did not want missionaries there upsetting local beliefs and practices because it might turn out bad for business.

He lived with the Rev. David Brown and his family and had opportunity to meet "the father of modern missions," William Carey. During his stay he translated the New Testament and the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer* into Hindustani. At his own expense he established numerous schools for the native population. He became an able preacher to the natives, though often under threats of personal violence. Martyn also translated the New Testament and Psalms into Persian, which was the language spoken at the Moslem courts in India and the language of judicial proceedings under the British government in Hindostan.

Working relentlessly in his mission, Martyn's health soon weakened into tuberculosis. Doctors recommended a sea voyage for his health. So in 1811 he left India for Persia (modern Iran). There he had frequent discussions with Moslem intellectuals, upholding the divinity of Christ and the truth of the Gospel message. The only Christian in this setting, Martyn's letters and diaries reveal his spiritual struggles and always the faith in his God which was his strength.

Often in a fever, Martyn headed home to England for his health. However, traveling overland to Constantinople, Martyn succumbed to illness. He died and was buried by strangers and unbelievers at Toscat, Turkey, on October 16, 1812. His genius was coupled with humility, and his love for God was reflected in his passion for the Scriptures.