

An Anabaptist's Walk in London

by Alan and Eleanor Kreider

Introduction

The first Mennonite who made England his home, the Canadian John Coffman, arrived in London during an air raid in 1940. For the next five years, he distributed food and clothing and took care of orphans as a representative of the Mennonite Central Committee, the relief and development agency of the North American Mennonite Churches. In this he was assisted by Eileen Pells Coffman, whom he met and married in London. After the war John and Eileen worked as Mennonite missionaries with the Finsbury Mission and the Free Gospel Hall; in 1967 they retired in Highgate. They were much-loved parental figures among English Mennonites, and died in 1990 and 1999 respectively.

John Coffman enjoyed taking tourists to sites in London that the tour-buses missed. The typical tourist, John knew, visited sites associated with privilege, royalty and military might. But there was another history – a Nonconformist history – that had left more obscure monuments in the area to the north of the City where John and Eileen had worked in the bleak, ration-ridden post-war years.

So John devised the itinerary that we have followed in the following pages. Several times John took us with him on his walk; to our delight it always involved stopping for tea at a well-chosen restaurant! We have built on his itinerary, inserting a few additional stops, biographical information and literary materials that we hope will evoke something of the spirit of the people whom the places will recall.

Most of the people whom the walk commemorates were not Anabaptists (who were almost entirely absent from England after 1575); and one of them, the Protestant John Bradford, probably would have been willing to see the Anabaptists burned. Yet all of the following were nonconformists, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to the dominant forms of Christianity of their time; all of them were people of courage and imagination. All of them have been examples to us of the freedom and joy that comes to those who follow Jesus. We believe that they will also be an inspiration to other Christians, including Anabaptists.

Enjoy the walk!

Wesley's Chapel

Arriving at Bank tube station by train, follow the 'Way Out' sign that points to 'Lombard Street' (rather than 'Monument'). If yours was a southbound Northern Line train, then go left upon exiting the train. After passing through turnstiles, continue straight along corridor to Exit 2, 'Princes St'. This passage will curve to the left before the exit appears.

You will emerge at the intersection of Threadneedle, Cornhill, Lombard and Princes Streets. The Royal Exchange and a statue of the Duke of Wellington are to your left. Turn to the right, going north, along Princes St. After crossing Lothbury St, the road name changes to Moorgate. After crossing South Place, the name changes to Finsbury Pavement, becoming Finsbury Square after one block. One block later, the street becomes City Road. The road forks after 50 yards or so, with Tabernacle St on the right. Keep left on City Road.



Having thus walked for ten minutes northwards along Moorgate, Finsbury Square and City Road, the Wesley buildings will emerge on the right.

Wesley House & Chapel

John Wesley (1703–1791) was the founder of the Methodist movement. Fifteenth child of Revd Samuel and Mrs Susannah Wesley (see below), John Wesley studied at Oxford where he, with other earnest and scholarly undergraduates, met with a group variously called 'The Holy Club' and 'Methodists'. After a period of activity as a missionary in the colony of Georgia, Wesley associated with pietists in London, including Moravians, among whom in 1738 he had an experience of God's grace, which impelled him to 'promote as far as I am able vital practical religion and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men'. For the rest of his life he tirelessly toured throughout England,



Ireland, Wales and Scotland – to Scotland alone he paid 22 visits. The global Methodist church was not his original intention; but he was passionately committed to realising the values of the New Testament church through voluntary 'Class Meetings.'

It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation [of Class Meetings]. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to 'bear one another's burdens,' and naturally to 'care for each other.' As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And 'speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ.'

(Wesley, Works, Vol. 8, p. 254)

Wesley Chapel:

imposing and immaculately maintained, the 'cathedral of Methodism'. Note especially Wesley's pulpit (which used to be 15ft high) and the dove of peace and serpent of wisdom motif around the balcony. The stained glass (of which Wesley would not have approved) was added much later, and the roof is a reconstruction of the original design.

Foundry Chapel:

intimate and retaining the feel of early Methodist chapels, with simple pews and a tiny baptismal font. At the front is the organ belonging to Charles Wesley, on which some of his famous hymns were composed.

Burial Ground:

behind the chapel is the burial site of John Wesley and five ministers, one of whom, Thomas Oliver (died 1779), wrote the hymn 'The God of Abraham praise'.

The Museum of Methodism:

a wonderful collection of Wesleyan memorabilia, giving an indication of the global character of Methodism.

Wesley's House:

revealing the piety, the simplicity of life and the wide-ranging intellect of John Wesley.

NB: The buildings are open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Saturday. There is an admission fee for the Museum and for Wesley's House.

Bunhill Fields Burial Ground

From the Wesley buildings cross City Road and enter the burial grounds. October to March, these are open weekdays 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and weekends/bank holidays 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.; April to September, weekdays 7.30 a.m. to 7 p.m. and weekends/bank holidays 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. To view enclosed areas, ring 020 8472 3584, or on weekdays contact an attendant.

Entrance to Bunhill Fields

Bunhill Fields ('bonehillfields') were leased by the corporation of London from 1315 to 1867 as burial ground that was not consecrated by the Church of England; hence it was an important burial place for religious nonconformists and freethinkers. By the 19th century it had become overcrowded; the final burial, of a 15-year-old girl, was in 1854.

It currently is a public open space, with large trees and interesting vistas, and is a good place to sit down to rest and eat sandwiches.

Turn left into the first alcove.

John Bunyan (1628–88):

pastor, evangelist, writer. After fighting in the parliamentary armies in the Civil War, Bunyan joined an Independent congregation in Bedford and soon became well known as a preacher. After the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, Bunyan was imprisoned for his nonconformist religious activities. He spent 12 years in Bedford gaol, during which time he wrote *Grace Abounding*. His later life was filled with preaching and wide-ranging evangelistic activity, as well as with writing *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*.

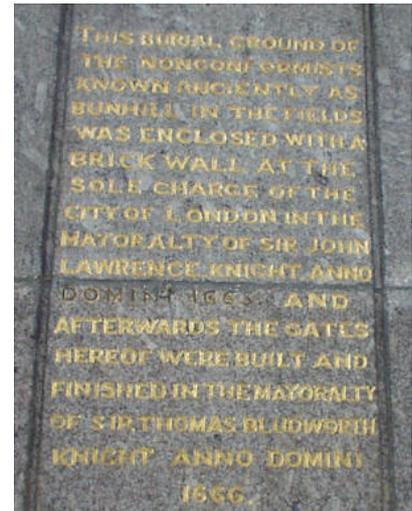
It is not every suffering that makes a martyr; that is, not only for the Word of God after a right manner; that is, not only for righteousness, but for righteousness' sake; not only for truth, but for love of truth; not only for God's Word, but according to it; to wit, in that holy, humble, meek manner, as the Word of God requireth. It is a rare thing to suffer aright, and to have my spirit in suffering bent only against God's enemy, sin; sin in doctrine, sin in worship, sin in life, and sin in conversation. I have often thought that the best of Christians are found in the worst of times. And I have thought again that one reason why we are no better, is because God purges us no more. Noah and Lot, who so holy as they in the time of their afflictions? And yet who so idle as they in the time of their prosperity?

(Mr. Bunyan's Dying Sayings: The Works of John Bunyan, Vol. 1 Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, pp. 65-66)

Turn right into the first alcove.

On the wall on the right is a map, showing the location of the graves of various famous nonconformists, including the Puritans John Owen and John Gill and the founder of the old nonconformist Dr Williams' library, Daniel Williams.

Continue into this alcove.



William Blake (1757–1827):

artist, poet, seer. Author of profound poems, full of imagery and illustrated with his own drawings and engravings, including *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. His poem 'Milton' contains the words of 'Jerusalem', commonly sung as an English national hymn. His work is pervaded by his religious convictions, which express his impatience with dogma and law and his compassionate and imaginative celebration of the God of love and nature. He was an inheritor of the radical strand of 17th-century nonconformity, but as far as we know did not regularly attend any church.

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk, or jew;
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.
(*The Divine Image*, from *Songs of Innocence*)

See also Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), author of *Gulliver's Travels*, in same alcove.

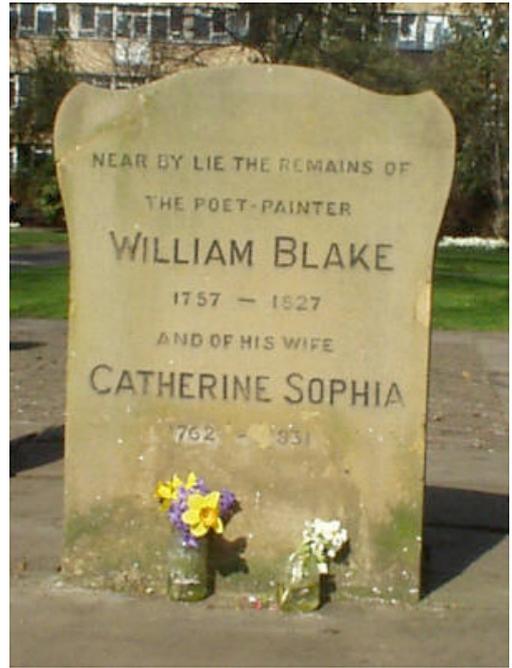
Continue along the central walkway to the very white gravestone on the left.

Susanna Wesley (1669–1742):

the wife of Samuel Wesley, rector of Epworth, Lincs, and mother of 19 children, including John Wesley and Charles Wesley. Her husband was often absent in London for meetings of Convocation (an assembly of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Canterbury in the Church of England), leaving the parish for extended periods of time in charge of a curate. During her husband's absence, Mrs Wesley paid especial attention to the education of her children. This led to Sunday evening meetings in the rectory, to which large numbers came, to the discomfiture of her absent husband. Her response to him is dated 6 February 1712.

I heartily thank you for dealing so plainly and faithfully with me in a matter of no common concern. The main of your objections against our Sunday evening meetings are, first, that it will look particular; secondly, my sex; and lastly, your being at present in a public station and character ...

To your second, I reply, that as I am a woman, so I am also mistress of a large family. And though the superior charge of the souls contained in it lies upon you, as head of the family, and as their minister; yet in your absence I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to me, under a trust, by the great Lord of all the families of heaven and



earth. And if I am unfaithful to him, or to you, in neglecting to improve their talents, how shall I answer unto him when he shall command me to render an account of my stewardship?

As these and other such like thoughts made me at first take a more than ordinary care of the souls of my children and servants; so, knowing that our most holy religion requires a strict observance of the Lord's day, and not thinking that we fully answered the end of the institution by only going to church, but that likewise we are obliged to fill up the intermediate spaces of that sacred time by other acts of piety and devotion; I thought it my duty to spend some part of the day in reading to and instructing my family, especially in your absence, when, having no afternoon's service, we have so much leisure for such exercises ...



Bunhill Fields

This was the beginning of my present practice: other people coming and joining with us was purely accidental. Our lad told his parents – they first desired to be admitted; then others who heard of it begged leave also; so our company increased to about thirty, and seldom exceeded forty last winter; and why it increased since, I leave you to judge after you have read what follows.

Soon after you went to London, Emily found in your study the account of the Danish missionaries, which having never seen, I ordered her to read it to me. I was never, I think, more affected with anything than with the relation of their travels; and was exceeding pleased with the noble design they were engaged in. Their labours refreshed my soul beyond measure; and I could not forbear spending good part of that evening in praising and adoring the divine goodness for inspiring those good men with such an ardent zeal for his glory, that they were willing to hazard their lives, and all that is esteemed dear to men in this world, to advance the honour of their Master, Jesus. For several days I could think of speaking of little else. At last it came to my mind, though I am not a man nor a minister of the gospel, and so cannot be employed in such a worthy employment as they were; yet, if my heart were sincerely devoted to God, and if I were inspired with a true zeal for his glory, and did really desire the salvation of souls, I might do somewhat more than I do. I thought I might live in a more exemplary manner in some things; I might pray more for the people, and speak with more warmth to those with whom I have an opportunity of conversing. However, I resolved to being with my own children; and, accordingly, I proposed and observed the following method. I take such a proportion of time as I can best spare every night to discourse with each child by itself, on something that relates to its principal concerns.

With those few neighbours who then came to me I discoursed more freely and affectionately than before. I chose the best and most awakening sermons we had, and I spent more time with them in such exercises. Since this our company has increased every night, for I dare deny none that ask admittance. Last Sunday, I believe we had above two hundred, and yet many went away for want of room ...

Samuel Wesley at first responded favourably, but then, upon objection of the curate and a few others, he became alarmed and wrote to Susannah to discontinue the meetings. On 25 February she responded:

I shall not inquire how it was possible that you should be prevailed on by the senseless clamours of two or three of the worst of your parish, to condemn what you so lately approved. But I shall tell you my thoughts in as few words as possible. I do not hear of more than three or four persons who are against our meeting, of whom Inman [the curate] is the chief. He ... may call it a conventicle; but we hear no outcry here, nor has any one said a word against it to me. And what does their calling it a conventicle signify? Does it alter the nature of the thing? ... If its being called a conventicle, by those who know in their conscience they misrepresent it, did really make it one, what you say would be somewhat to the purpose; but it is plain in fact that this one thing has brought more people to church, than ever anything did, in so short a time. We used not to have above twenty to twenty-five at evening service, whereas we have now between two and three hundred; which are more than ever came before to hear Inman in the morning ...

If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your positive command, in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment, for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. (Adam Clarke, (ed.), *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, 2nd ed., New York, 1848, pp. 387-393)

Walk down a short path on the right.

Isaac Watts (1674–1748):

the son of a respected Southampton schoolmaster, who was twice imprisoned for his nonconformist convictions. Local benefactors, who observed Isaac Watts' gifts, offered him education at one of the universities with a view to ordination in the Church of England; Watts refused this, and chose instead to study at a nonconformist academy in Stoke Newington, London. He soon began writing hymns, which he continued to do after his ordination as a Congregational minister. His many hymns include 'O God, our help in ages past', 'When I survey the wond'rous cross', and 'Jesus shall reign where e're the sun'.



My Shepherd will supply my need;
Jehovah is His name:
In pastures fresh he makes me feed,
Beside the living stream.
He brings my wand'ring spirit back,
When I forsake His ways;
And leads me, for His mercy's sake,
In paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death
Thy presence is my stay;
One word of Thy supporting breath
Drives all my fears away.
Thy hand, in sight of all my foes,
Doth still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows,
Thine oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God
Attend me all my days;
O may Thy house be my abode,
And all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, nor a guest,
But like a child at home.
(*'Resignation'*, *CMD*, 1719)

Turn right into the second alcove, where there is a large tomb standing on its own.

Dame Mary Page (died 1728, aged 55):
note her epitaph:

In 67 months she was tapped 66 times,
Had taken away 240 gallons of water
Without ever repining at her care
Or ever fearing the operation.

Return to the main walkway and turn right. Leave Bunhill Fields, turning right (north) into Bunhill Row. Walk past Moorfields Primary School on the right.

Bunhill Meeting House

Turn left (west) into Banner Street, walk 100 yards on the left side of the street. At a signpost pointing left, turn under an archway in a block of flats to Bunhill Meeting House. George Foxe is buried near the far wall of an enclosed (locked) garden at the rear of the small meetinghouse, but the grave is clearly viewable from outside the gates. Nearby is a small park, well equipped with playground equipment and benches.

George Fox (1624–91): the founder of the Quakers. The son of a weaver and apprenticed to a shoemaker, Fox at 19 gave up a settled existence and began an itinerant search for religious illumination. Three years later, after receiving assurance of the Inner Light of the living Christ, he began to preach and to attract followers. He was frequently imprisoned, both by the nonconformists under the Protectorate and by the Anglicans after the Restoration. His missionary journeys took him all over England, as well as to Ireland, Holland and the New World. His followers, called 'Friends of Truth', became established into a network of meetings on both sides of the Atlantic. The following extract gives the flavour of his Christocentric radicalism and his Spirit-inspired impromptu preaching.

Then I asked, 'Am I at liberty and free from all that hath ever been done against me in this matter?' 'Yes,' said the judge, 'you are free from all that hath been done against you.' But then, starting up in a rage, he said, 'I can put the oath to any man here, and I will tender you the oath again.' I told him he had examples enough yesterday of swearing and false-swearing, both in the justices and the jury; for I saw before mine eyes that both justices and jury had forsworn themselves.

The judge asked me if I would take the oath. I bid him do me justice for my false imprisonment all this while; for what had I been imprisoned so long for? And I told him I ought to be set at liberty. 'You are at liberty,' said he, 'but I will put the oath to you again.' Then I turned me about and said, 'All people, take notice, this is a snare, for I ought to be set free from the jailer and from this Court.' But the judge cried, 'Give him the book'; and the sheriff and the justices cried, 'Give him the book.' Then the power of darkness rose up in them like a mountain; and a clerk lifted up a book to me. I stood still and said, 'If it be a Bible, give it me into my hand.' 'Yes, yes,' said the judge and justices, 'give it him into his hand.' So I took it and looked in it, and said, 'I see it is a Bible; I am glad of it.'

Now he had caused the jury to be called, and they stood by; for after they had brought in their former verdict, he would not dismiss them, though they desired it; but told them he could not dismiss them yet, for he should have business for them, and therefore they must attend and be ready when they were called. When he said so, I felt his intent that if I was freed he would come on again. So I looked him in the face, and the witness of God started up in him, and made him blush when he looked at me again, for he saw that I saw him.

Nevertheless, hardening himself, he caused the oath to be read to me, the jury standing by; and when it was read, he asked me whether I would take the oath or not. Then said I, 'Ye have given me a book here to kiss and to swear on, and this book which he have given me to kiss, says, 'Kiss the Son'; and the Son says in this book, 'Swear not at all'; and so says also the apostle James. Now, I say as the book says, and yet ye imprison me; how chance ye do not imprison the book for saying so? How comes it that the book is at liberty amongst you, which bids me not swear and yet ye imprison me for doing as the book bids me? Why don't ye imprison the book?' Now as I was speaking this to them and held up the Bible open in my hand, to shew them the place in the book where Christ forbids swearing, they plucked the book out of my hand again; and the judge said, 'Nay, but we will imprison George Fox.' Yet this got abroad over all the country as a by-word that they gave me a book to swear on that commanded me not to swear at all; and that the Bible was at liberty, and I in prison for doing as the Bible said.

Walk back through archway into Banner Street. Turn left, and then turn left again into Whitecross Street, site of the Whitecross Street Market. At Chequer Street look left, noting the Peabody Trust buildings, erected for 'artisans', on both sides.

From 1947 to 1955 John and Eileen Coffman, who worked as Mennonites with the Finsbury Mission, lived with their two sons on the fifth floor of building T and the second floor of building N.



Postwar residence of John & Eileen Coffman

Continue south on Whitecross Street past a supermarket, where you can buy food for lunch.

You are now approaching The Barbican, a 'comprehensively modern environment' of three residential towers, many walkways and flats, theatres and a concert hall constructed on the site of buildings bombed in World War II.

Cross Chiswell Street at the zebra crossing (the King's Head pub is on the left); go forward into Silk Street. Enter the Barbican Centre at the Silk Street Reception (open 24 hours a day); go past the porter's desk, go up the steps (or take the lift); go left along the corridor. Follow the yellow line on the pavement and signs for Museum of London – Gate 7 (each 'gate' is an access to the lower pavement and street). As you view the church of St Giles, Cripplegate, which you can visit, on your right, the yellow line will fork to the left. Keep to the right-hand passage, going more-or-less straight. Follow directions for Gate 7. As you approach Gate 7 you will also see remains of the City wall, including a medieval bastion tower. You will come to a crossroads of sorts, with a café on the left. Go right along Bastion Highwalk.

Monument to John Wesley's Conversion

Museum of London: a remarkable collection of artefacts, models, pictures and displays concerning London's history; there is an especially fine scale model of London during the fire of 1666. In the courtyard in front of the museum, there is 'The Aldersgate Flame' – a monument to John Wesley's conversion experience in nearby Aldersgate Street on 24 May 1738.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday May 21, 22, 23 (1738) I had continual sorrow and heaviness in my heart.

Wednesday May 24 – I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words, 'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1.4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God' (Mark 12.34). In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, 'Out of the deep have I called unto Three, O Lord:

Lord, hear my voice. Oh, let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.'

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart.

(The Journal of John Wesley, ed. H.P. Hughes, Chicago: Moody Press, n.d. pp. 62-63)

From the museum and the monument, go straight until you come to the café. Then keep to the left, curving around to Gate 7, going across the footbridge and down the stairway to the street. Go right and right again into Aldersgate Street.

Pause at the Church of St Botolph, Aldersgate; in its garden, there are finely executed ceramic tiles by the Victorian artist G. F. Watts, devoted to 'unsung heroes', commemorating their acts of bravery and self-sacrifice. On the front fence is a tablet memorialising the conversion of John and Charles Wesley.



Church of St Botolph, Aldersgate

Smithfield

Just before the church, turn right into the street called Little Britain. Straight ahead is the bulk of St Bartholomew's Hospital. At the T-junction, cross at the pedestrian light (looking left you will see St Paul's Cathedral), and go right along a wall in Little Britain, continuing left in Little Britain along a pedestrian walkway. The ornate Smithfield Market looms ahead. Enter West Smithfield Square: walk a few metres along the right side, and then go through a medieval gateway (exposed in 1915 by a bomb dropped from a Zeppelin) to the churchyard.

St Bartholomew the Great (founded 1123):

This is one of the few churches that survived the great fire of 1666, and is a medieval treasure. It was much reduced in size at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, but its chancel survives with a perfectly executed Norman apse. In the 18th century the Lady Chapel was a print shop in which American leader Ben Franklin worked as an apprentice.

Open Monday to Friday 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday 10.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.; Sunday 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.; closed Mondays in August.

West Smithfield Square:

carnivores look right to the Smithfield Meat Market, beloved of connoisseurs of Victorian architecture. On the left in the wall by the hospital is a slightly recessed marble monument to the Protestant Reformers: John Rogers, John Bradford, John Philpot 'and other servants of God [who] suffered death by fire in the faith of Christ in the years 1555, 1556 and 1557. The noble army of martyrs praise thee!' This memorial to the more than 200 Protestants who were executed in the 1550s under the reign of Catholic Queen Mary was erected in 1870 by the Protestant Alliance, London.

John Bradford (1510–55):

from Lancashire, he was educated at the Inner Temple and Cambridge, where he taught before being ordained and serving as chaplain to Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, with whom he worked closely as a committed Protestant and a gifted preacher. Under Queen Mary he was imprisoned for 18 in the Tower of London, before being burned at Smithfield on 1 July 1555. Shortly after his imprisonment he wrote the following letter to his mother, brothers, sisters and friends in Manchester.

Good mother and brethren, it is a most special benefit of God to suffer for his name's sake and gospel, as now I do. I heartily thank God for it, and am sure that with him I shall be partaker of his glory; as Paul saith, 'If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.' Therefore, be not faint hearted, but rather rejoice, at the least for my sake, which now am in the right and high way to heaven ...

As for my preaching, I am most certain it is and was God's truth, and I trust to give my life for it, by God's grace. Indeed I thank him more for this prison than of any parlour, yea, than of any pleasure that ever I had; for in it I find God my most sweet good God always. The flesh is punished, first to admonish us now heartily to live as we profess; secondly to certify the wicked of their just damnation, if they repent not ...

Wherefore fear God; stick to his word though all the world swerve from it. Die you must once; and when, or how, you cannot tell. Die therefore with Christ; suffer for serving him truly and after his word: for sure may we be, that of all deaths it is most to be desired to die for God's sake. This is the most safe kind of dying; we cannot doubt but that we shall go to heaven, if we die for his name's sake. And that you shall die for his name's sake, God's word will warrant you, if you stick to that which God by me hath taught you. You shall see that I speak as I think; for, by God's grace, I will drink before you of this cup, if I be put to it ...

Happy may he be which of conscience suffereth loss of life or goods in disallowing [the mass]. Come not at it. If God be God, follow him; if the mass be God, let them that will, see it, hear, or be present at it, and to the devil with it. What is there as God ordaineth? His Supper was ordained to be received of us in the memorial of his death, for the confirmation of our faith, that his body was broken for us, and his blood shed for pardon of our sins; but in the mass there is no receiving, but the priest keepeth all to himself alone. Christ saith, 'Take, eat.' 'No,' saith the priest, 'Gape, peep.' There is a sacrificing, yea, killing of Christ again as much as they may. There is idolatry in worshipping the outward sign of bread and wine. There is all in Latin; you cannot tell what he saith. To conclude, there is nothing as God ordained. Wherefore, my good mother, come not at it ...

Rejoice in my suffering, for it is for your sakes to confirm the truth I have taught.

(6 October 1553, in John Foxe, Acts and Monuments, Vol. 7, pp. 107-198)

Cross the road into centre of the square. Walk past the entrance to an underground car park and through the gate (noting the drinking fountain by the entrance, erected by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association) into a garden.



Church of St. Bartholomew the Great

Smithfield Square:

this area, on the edge of the City of London, was called 'smethelfelde' or 'smooth-field', and was used for jousts, tournaments, for the famous Bartholomew's Fair and for executions. This is a good place to recall the execution of Anabaptists, for which there is no monument:

The religious changes in mid-16th-century England led to Catholics burning Protestants and Protestants executing Catholics. Note that the Protestants in power executed the Anabaptists by the same method – burning – that the Catholics had used in killing Protestants; note also that the burning of the two Anabaptists by Protestants occurred just 20 years after the burning of Protestant John Bradford by Catholics. The Anabaptists were forerunners of all who, as a result of Jesus' teaching and way, repudiate persecution.

Smithfield Square

On Easter Sunday 1575 a group of 26 Anabaptists, all apparently refugees from The Netherlands, were arrested while meeting near Aldgate. Over the next months they were imprisoned in severe conditions, both in solitary confinement 'in a deep dungeon' and among common criminals, whom Church of England Bishop Sandys of London was concerned 'should not be seduced' by the Anabaptists. Some of the prisoners (all men) recanted; 15 women, two men and a boy were deported; one died in prison; and two men – Jan Pieterss and Hendrik Terwoort – were burned at the stake, on 22 July 1575.

During their imprisonment, the Anabaptists met many prominent people, trying to intimidate them, to convert them, to exorcise them. They also were visited by 'S. B.', an English man who confessed them 'to be among the children of God, and such as follow the life of Christ most near, and I may so esteem of them that I think them worthy of reverence, yea thinking myself if I may be but a hewer of wood and drawer of water among them'. The imprisoned Anabaptists left several letters, of which one is excerpted here:

We poor and despised strangers, who are in persecution for the testimony of Jesus Christ, wish all men, of whatever race or office, from God, that the Lord would grant them a long peace, so that we may live in peace among one another, in all godliness, to the praise and glory of the Lord, and the salvation of the soul ...

We are not addressed, and interrogated concerning our faith, with a meek spirit, as the holy Scriptures teach; but reproach is heaped upon reproach, and lie upon lie, to increase and augment our afflictions and sorrows ... Our country and kindred, and our property, we had to leave ... and fled as lambs before wolves, only for the true evangelical truth of Jesus Christ, and not for any sedition or heresy ... We fain would that our whole faith and life were written on our forehead, so that everyone might know and see what we believe, and what we seek and desire here upon earth. There should nothing



Marble Monument to Protestant Reformers



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be found but a true faith in full accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and an unblamable life ... Oh that our persecutors knew that this is the desire of our hearts, they certainly could ... have compassion upon us, as the prophet says: Bring the poor that are afflicted to thy house.' Isa 58.7. Moses says: 'If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land ... the stranger shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.' Lev 19.33-34. Mark well that God commands to love the stranger as ones own self ... Oh that they would deal so with us, according to natural equity, and the evangelical truth (of which our persecutors so greatly boast), how soon should the persecutors cease, and the lying and slandering moths be stopped. For Christ and his own persecuted no one, but in his true Gospel taught the contrary, as he says: 'Love your enemies, and bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.' Matt 5.44 ...

This is the doctrine left by Christ and his apostles ...even as Paul says: 'Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.' 1 Cor 4.11-13. Paul further says: 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' 2 Tim 3.12. From all this it is demonstrable, that those who have the true evangelical doctrine and faith will persecute no one, but will themselves be persecuted.

(T.J. Van Braght, Martyrs' Mirror, ed. J. Sohm, Scottdale, PA, 1951, pp. 1012-1013)

Exit the Square along Giltspur Street; turn left into Newgate Street, which leads (on the right) to St Paul's Cathedral and (straight ahead) to the St Paul's tube station.