

Hugh Latimer [and Nicolas Ridley]

A WELL EDUCATED, BRILLIANT, RELIGIOUS, BUT LOST: Latimer was martyred same year as John Rogers, 1555. Greatest preacher in England. Burned back to back with Ridley. Famously remembered, burned at stake at Oxford. Born in 1495. Studied at Cambridge U. Secular, humanist education. Ordained Catholic priest. Naturally gifted speaker. High profiled on campus. Well educated, brilliant.

A CONVERTED BELIEVER: 1524 Vehemently opposed to Reformation. Wrote his dissertation against the reformation, against Phillip Melancthon's position on salvation through faith and grace alone. Thomas Bilney was present when Hugh gave his dissertation. Bilney spoke to Latimer after the oral presentation. Gave his testimony, & God opened Latimer's heart suddenly. Latimer was dramatically saved. Had no answer to what Bilney said. Of self, Latimer says, "I was as obstinate a Papist as anyone in England. . . . By his confession I learned more than before in many years."]. Latimer joined the bible study at The White Horse Inn which included Ridely, Coverdale, Cranmer, Tyndale, Robert Barns, & Bilney. 7 or 8 martyrs out of this small group.

A POWERFUL PREACHER: Starting in 1524, 7 years post Luther's nailing of the 95 thesis to door of Wittenberg Castle, same year Tyndale starts to translate. Begins to preach immediately. Zealous preacher with a fire in His bone. Sound in doctrine. Many saved. This created opposition against him by Catholic church. Denied access to church pulpits. Sent to London to be examined re his doctrine. Guilty of heresy. Henry VIII was seeking a divorce from 1st wife, and Latimer approved of it. The king spared his life because of this.

A ROYAL CHAPLAIN: Summoned to London. Examined by a group of bishops over 6 wks. But he King Henry VIII put a stop to this persecution, and appointed him a bishop of Worchester.

CHURCH REFORMER: As a Bishop, had power to appoint other preachers in various pulpits. Called Catholic priests in England back to the Bible. Charged them to preach from the Bible.

A BOLD WITNESS: 1539 - King Henry VIII goes from one extreme to another. Issues The Six Articles, against the Reformation ordering all worship to be with the Catholic mass.

AN IMPRISONED CRIMINAL:

- Arrested, house arrest for next 8 years. Moved to tower of London. King Henry dies. Edward the 6TH comes to the throne, a determined Protestant. Installs Latimer again as a royal chaplain. Instructed to preach faith alone gospel throughout England. For next 6 years, he is used powerfully to spread the gospel.

A FAMOUS SERMON:

- Preached most famous sermon in The Reformation on Jan 1, 1548, Sermon of the Plow, a blistering sermon against Catholic priests who had neglected their calling to preach the

Word, and the gospel of bad news and then good news. Taught that we are to use the plow of Word to convict of sin, and then give gospel.

- Lazier the preacher the less the preaching. The more a preacher just wants to lord it over the flock, the less he fulfills his duty to let God direct the people through His Word. Lording, loiterers crept in with unpreaching preachers. They filled the pulpit in England with small homilies with little devotional thought. Would not preach the depths of the truths from the Scriptures. Lording over the flock – elevated to high positions in society. Plow stands still. Not out in the field. Not plowing up the seed in the hearts of the people with the Law. People starve. Preachers hunt, play cards, throw dice, so the plowing is set aside.
- Then brings this blistering sermon to a conclusion. The hardest worker in England who is out in the field who never takes a break who is the busiest preacher in all of England, is the devil himself. Will never find him idle. This described the state of the Church. This is what is wrong today.

AN ARRESTED CRIMINAL: 1553 Prince Edward dies. Replaced by Mary Tudor, “bloody Mary”. Changes religious landscape from protestant to catholic. Dramatic turn around. Latimer has a target on his head. When told to flee, I will stay, I will preach the Word of God, and, if He wants to take me to London, I will preach in London to the officials and guards that are there. Did so willingly. God will enable me to preach to Queen Mary. Rogers has already been put to death. As passed by Smithfield where Rogers was burned, he stated, “Smithfield has long groaned for me.” He is locked up with tower of London in same cell as Cranmer, Ridley and John Bradford. Together searched Word in vain to find even 1 one verse supporting mass. [Latimer is aging.]

A PROSECUTED HERETIC: 1554 Transferred from London to Oxford. There doctors of divinity will be used to cross examine these men. Put into different cells. Trial began on April 14, 1554. Forced them to take mass. Church is packed. Cranmer, Ridley & Latimer. Latimer is called to affirm Catholic articles. He responds with a repudiation of Catholic Doctrine. Denies mass is in Scripture. Prosecutor Weston said he will cause him to retract his words. Latimer responds, that you will never do. Hammered with examination over four days. Insisted on sticking to Biblical texts. Responds, “I am of their faith when they say well what the Scripture says.” Threatened with fire of stake and told he will have no cause to be stubborn once a fire burns in his beard. A pardon is offered to Latimer by Queen if he will return and embrace the mass. He responds, “You will have no hope in me to turn. I pray that the Queen will repent and turn.”

A CONDEMNED OFFENDER: 1555

- These 3 reformers are brought back to St. Mary’s church and condemned as heretics. John Fox’s excellent work on the martyrs details the account through careful personal research into eye witnesses - “When master Latimer bowed his knee down to the ground holding his hat in his hand having a handkerchief on his head and upon it a nightcap or two and a grey

cap such as a townsman wore with two broad flaps to button under the chin wearing an old freeze [gown] girding his body with a leather girdle, he had his New Testament in hand and he has his spectacles dangling around his neck.

- He was warned by the bishop of England to repent and turn to the Church which he has forsaken. He was told for God's love to consider your estate, remember you are a learned man, you have taken degrees in the school, born the office of a bishop. Remember you are an old man. Spare your body. Accelerate not your death, and remember your soul's breath.
- Latimer – said the bread is still bread and the wine is still wine for the change is not the nature but in the dignity [what it represents]. Christ made one perfect sacrifice for the whole world. Neither can any man offer Him again. Neither is there any propitiation for our sins except in the cross.
- Was offered to give the night again to think it through, and Latimer responds, don't bother to give me another night for you would only be giving me respite in vain therefore I pray that you not trouble me tomorrow. But they forced him to take one night. He and Ridley are brought back the next day. Ridley 1st, and the final verdict of condemnation was read, guilty of heresy, and would face execution. The carpet on which Ridley was standing was removed from him signifying that his ordination as a Catholic Priest was being removed from him.
- Bishop of London addressed Latimer and urged him to denounce his heresies of the sacrament. Latimer interrupted the Bishop, and denied that the Church of Rome is the true catholic church. He affirmed that once and for all at one time Jesus Christ made one perfect sacrifice and it is a sacrifice that will never be offered again. The blood is not continuing to be shed. The body is not continuing to be given. Christ made one sacrifice for the sins of the world, and that a perfect sacrifice. Neither needs there to be any other. Neither can there be any other sacrifice. Bishop turned him over the Bishop of Oxford with the words "he is now your prisoner."
- Sentenced to die by being burned at the stake. Latimer added his praise to God that He has kept me alive so that I could testify of my Savior & of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Prosecutor denounced Latimer saying, "If you go to heaven in the faith, I will never come there."

A VALIANT MARTYR: Oct 1555

- Ridley approached the stake 1ST followed by Latimer. Ridley saw Latimer approaching behind him and asked Latimer if he were there. Latimer responded, "I am. I am following you as fast as I can." When Latimer reached the stake, Ridley ran to meet him. Embraced him. Kissed him.

- The two went down to their knees. They prayed fervently that God would be glorified in their death. That God would give them the greater grace to die in a way that would give honor to their Lord.
- Catholic Church brought a priest to preach to them. He preached [1 Cor 13:3 - if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing] to scorn them that their dying is all in vain. They were tied at the stake. They lifted their hands and eyes toward heaven and called upon the Lord. Latimer had his attendant pull off his socks and his outer garments. Chain of irons was placed around their waists and fastened binding them back to back to the stake. Bag of gun powder was hung around both of their necks. The fire was ignited.
- As fire burned up their feet, Latimer called out to Ridley with some of the most famous words that have ever been spoken, "Be of good comfort master Ridley. Play the man. We shall this day lite such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust will never be put out." Latimer then cried out, "O Father of heaven, receive my spirit." Latimer rubbed his face with his hands though frail and weak with age, bathing his body with the fire, and the flames claimed his life. He collapsed at the base of the stake as he was blown up.
- We are to follow their example no matter what form the opposition to Christ in us will take. We are Christians which means literally "a little christ", a term 1st used in Acts 11 to describe disciples as a form of mockery – He suffered and died, and you are a loser like He is. Early believers took that label onto themselves.