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HUGH LATIMER – APOSTOLIC PREACHER

By David Streater

Introduction

On the morning of 16 October, 1555, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, both formerly bishops of the Church, were executed for heresy in Oxford. It was then that Hugh Latimer uttered his famous sermon,

Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out.

The execution was part of the outworking of May Tudor's policy to re-establish the Roman Church in England, and to redress the dishonour done to her mother, Katharine of Aragon, by her divorce from Henry VIII. Mary blamed these two bishops, with Thomas Cranmer, for the divorce, and for establishing Biblical Christianity within the Church in England.

Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer were all graduates of Cambridge, where Reformation teaching had taken root in the early part of the sixteenth century, through the influence of Erasmus' Greek New Testament and Luther's writings. Amongst others involved at Cambridge were Thomas Bilney, a Fellow of Trinity Hall, William Tyndale, who had left Oxford for Cambridge, and Matthew Parker, a future Archbishop. All these men played significant roles in the work of the English Reformation. Bilney's early evangelistic influence at the University must be measured more by his witness to others than in what he actually achieved. Tyndale would translate the Bible from the original languages into English. Cranmer's liturgical work would produce the two Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552, while Latimer would come to be acknowledged as possibly the greatest popular preacher in the English language.

This movement of protest in the Church in the West during the sixteenth century evolved from a controversy over the nature of authority and the method of achieving salvation. The crux of the debate centred upon the Reformers' emphasis of *sola scriptura* and *sola fides* (scripture alone and faith alone). This was an intensely theological debate carried on by scholars of both persuasions. It is evident that in such a debate few, if any, of the common people would have understood the precise issues unless they had been simplified. It is in Latimer's background and in his ability to communicate with the common people, that we shall find his true significance in the work of Reformation in England.

The Ending of the Middle Ages

The most likely date of Latimer's birth was 1485, which was a milestone in English history, as it saw the end of the Wars of the Roses, the death of the last Plantagenet king, Richard III, and the beginning of the Tudor dynasty under Henry VII. In the wider European scene, the year 1485 marked the closing of the Middle Ages, in so far as any year can mark what is a process. The high point of the Middle Ages, which had lasted a thousand years from the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, had been the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.

It was during these centuries that the Church's secular power had increased, and there was a growing demand for money to finance it. In this, the Church had lost much of its spiritual authority. There was dissatisfaction with the Church as an institution, and there were constant demands for

reform, even if there was no consensus as to what should be reformed. Chadwick pertinently comments. 'What one honest man believed to be an abuse, another honest man defended.'

Other factors were now beginning to emerge. In England, there was a growing force of nationalism, as the feudal system gave way to the personal monarchy of Henry VIII, who wielded greater power than his predecessors, for the Wars of the Roses had severely weakened the barons. Personal monarchy created a more centralized government, which needed to be funded. Little wonder that covetous eyes began to be cast on the Church's wealth, which as Myers says, '... owned at least a fifth of the land in England, and its treasures were still increasing in the early sixteenth century.' Taxes paid to Rome, in tithes and annates, continued to drain the nation's wealth, so that there were economic tensions between Church and State.

While nationalism was increasing, education was also growing among the wealthier classes. The Renaissance, which had its origin in Italy, was concerned initially with the rediscovery of classical learning of Ancient Greece and Rome. Later, as it spread to Northern Europe, it became more associated with the reform of the Church. In England, by 1498, there was a band of scholars, lecturing on Greek at Oxford. Amongst them was John Colet, who had studied in Italy. He encouraged Erasmus to apply his scholarship to the revival of a more primitive Christianity. It was Erasmus' Greek New Testament of 1516, which partly prepared the way for Luther's protest.

With nationalism and education, there were advances in science and discoveries of the New World. All these began to widen men's horizons, but it would be incorrect to view the Reformation solely in these terms. They were important contributory factors, but as Sykes points out, 'Fundamentally, the Reformation was a revolution and it was concerned ultimately with the deepest elements in religion.'

The Middle Ages had a clearly defined set of beliefs. There was a Creator God and Judge, there was heaven, purgatory and hell. Man entered both Church and Society by baptism, and followed the teaching, and used the sacraments, of the Church to avoid hell and enter heaven. This was illustrated dramatically by the Mass, which set out liturgically, the redemptive work of Christ. The fact that some had, in the sixteenth century, as Green puts it, 'a penny-in-the-slot attitude', does not mean that there were none seeking a more satisfying personal religion.

It is not surprising, therefore, that it was a monk's personal reaction to the promiscuous sale of indulgences which set the Reformation in progress. Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg on All Saints' Day, 1517, intending to promote a serious debate, but he provoked a disruption within the Western Church, changing the face of Western Europe and bringing the Middle Ages to an end.

Rural Beginnings

Thurcastone, where Latimer was born, in the fifteenth century, was a typical Anglo-Saxon settlement of some twenty-five families. The village lies some seven miles north of Leicester. From Latimer's later comments, it appears that the village still farmed in the old strip method, by which the Lord of the Manor allocated yardlands to tenants:

My father was a yeoman and had no lands of his own . . . he had a farm of three or four pounds by year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half a dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep and my mother milked thirty kine.

It was normal in such communities for the farmhouse to be contained within the village itself, and not isolated in the countryside. So Latimer would have mixed with the village people in the daily round of country life, within the shadow of the Church, and hard by the village green, where archery was practised, not only for sport, but also for the purpose of defence:

In my time my poor father was as diligent to teach me to shoot as to learn any other thing . . . he taught me how to draw a bow, and not to draw with the strength of the arms as other nations do, but with the strength of the body.

It appears that Latimer's father took a deep interest in him, as his sole surviving son, after his mother died. This may provide a partial answer as to why he was sent to school and university, rather than working on the farm. Perhaps Hugh Senior, concentrating his affection on the lad, perceived that, in him, there was a sensitivity and lively wit, which fitted better in the life of the Church than in the robust work of the farm. As Latimer said in a sermon much later, mentioning his father, 'He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to preach before the king now.'

While we do not know where Latimer went to school, it may have been a monastic establishment, or a newly-founded grammar school - we may be certain that his education would have consisted of the Trivium and Quadrivium. In the syllabus, he would have learnt Latin grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. He would also have been taught logic and disputation. Such an education would have fitted this bright and sensitive child for the task of speaking publicly, but his background of village life gave him understanding and sympathy for the poor, preparing him to be a popular preacher:

The tang of country clung to Latimer to the end of his life: the smell of the soil, the song of the plow, the life of the farm, have all been preserved in his sermons, and he never lost his large-hearted sympathy for the humble tenant who had to toil for a living in the teeth of high rents and the policy of land enclosure.

Cambridge Days

Latimer went up to Clare College Cambridge in 1506. Cambridge was a bastion of the old scholastic orthodoxy of Duns and Lombard. Latimer graduated B A in 1510. In 1514 he graduated M A, and received his B D in 1523. With this orthodox background, Latimer "set his face resolutely against the new learning and friends of reform".

His orthodoxy was noted and his eloquence in the pulpit and championship of the poor led to his appointment in 1522 as one of the twelve Cambridge preachers, licensed to preach anywhere in the land. In that same year the university further honoured him by appointing him as crucifer to bear the silver cross before king Henry VIII making a royal visit to Cambridge.

At this time George Stafford was lecturing in the university on the Bible from the original languages. Latimer as the defender of scholastic orthodoxy and an ardent ritualist made it his business to dissuade students from attending these lectures and to return to the study of the Schoolmen. He carried his defence further by attacking the works of Philip Melancthon, the colleague of Martin Luther at Wittenberg in his oration on the occasion of his receiving the B D in 1523. Among those listening was Thomas Bilney.

Bilney had great influence in the early part of the English reformation at Cambridge. His conversion to the Protestant cause had occurred through reading Erasmus' New Testament, and the passage concerned was from St Paul's First Epistle to Timothy, "It is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Timothy 1, 15).

Bilney had become the centre of a small group which met at the White Horse Inn, known locally, if somewhat jocularly, by the name of Little Germany because of the discussions of Lutheran doctrine and the New Testament which took place there. It was the application of the theology of Paul which was the catalyst for the reformation. After hearing Latimer's oration, Bilney went to him with the request that Latimer would hear his confession. This was probably in the spring of 1524. Latimer said much later, 'Master Bilney... was the instrument whereby God called me to knowledge.'

How may this be explained humanly? It is possible that Latimer's high moral standards, coupled with a deep sensitivity, led him to a profound sense of guilt before the righteous demands of a holy God, which in turn led him to conviction of sin. In this there are similarities with Martin Luther's own experience of grace.

Latimer remarked later in a sermon, "I remember how scrupulous I was..." and the teaching of St Paul that God Himself had provided this righteousness in Christ crucified and risen to be received by faith came without doubt as a great relief to a burdened conscience. But Latimer quickly grasped that such a full and free salvation by faith must be demonstrated by a life of practical holiness.

Before the King

Latimer and Bilney became constant companions, searching the Scriptures, discussing doctrine and visiting the sick and prisoners. Latimer's conversion to Christ and to the protestant cause was not immediately recognised and it was nearly two years before complaints began to be received by the Bishop of Ely. This led the Bishop to consider Latimer's preaching for himself.

At the end of 1525 Latimer was preaching at Great St Mary's when the Bishop of Ely's party entered the Church. Latimer stopped his sermon and began a new one on the duty of bishops! However, Ely was not fooled by this and shortly after Latimer was inhibited from preaching in the diocese. Barnes, the Prior of the Austin Friars, which as a monastic house was not under episcopal jurisdiction opened his pulpit to Latimer so that his preaching ministry might continue.

All would have been well, save that Barnes launched a fiery attack upon Cardinal Wolsey and the bishops from St Edward's pulpit. Latimer, Barnes and Bilney were all summoned to appear before Wolsey. Barnes had to recant, Bilney was warned, but Latimer so impressed Wolsey by his defence that he was licensed by Wolsey to preach anywhere in the kingdom. So instead of being silenced, Latimer returned to Cambridge, making the most of the opportunity.

Becon, a contemporary, has left a record of the powerful preaching of Latimer at this time, when he "rebuk(ed) all sins, namely idolatry, false and idle swearing, covetousness and whoredom." Few slept under Latimer's ministry, but such preaching is always liable to stir up unexpected reactions. Such was the case in Advent 1529.

The occasion was Latimer's "Sermon on the Cards". In it Latimer sought to teach the undergraduates Christian truths, but it provoked a tremendous storm which only subsided when the Royal Almoner let the Vice-chancellor of the University know that the king believed that the trouble had arisen through Latimer favouring the king's cause.

This cause was the vexed question of the legitimacy of Henry's marriage to Katharine of Aragon. Because the 'divorce question' plays such an important part in the events of the English reformation, and it is so often mischievously misrepresented as the cause of the reformation, rather than its occasion, it is necessary to return to events which had occurred many years before.

The Marriage of Blood

In 1485, Richard III had been defeated by the first of the new Tudor dynasty Henry VII, at the battle of Bosworth. This was the final round of the long-running Wars of the Roses between the Houses of Lancaster and York. Henry VII's claim to the throne was not a strong one and was founded upon his marriage to Elizabeth of York. This insecurity plagued the whole House of Tudors, and is one of the main planks of their policy from 1485 to 1603 which only ceased with the death of Elizabeth I.

Henry VII was not a cruel king by nature but he was both ambitious and avaricious which is a dangerous combination. He trained Arthur, his eldest son for the crown and Henry, his second son was trained for the priesthood with a view to him being placed in high ecclesiastical office. But Henry needed a strong foreign ally, particularly to restrain French ambitions. Spain was the obvious choice and such alliances were more often than not cemented by the union of the houses through marriage.

Ferdinand of Spain's daughter, Katharine of Aragon, was a suitable choice and the marriage was arranged. However, while Henry VII was not cruel, Ferdinand was and there still remained a claimant to the English throne with a better title than the House of Tudor. That was Warwick, the last of the Plantagenets. The demand for the execution of Warwick to remove the threat to the throne was amplified by the further demand that the Spanish Ambassador should be present to witness the execution.

With the execution of Warwick confirmed, the marriage of Arthur and Katharine took place on 14th November 1501, popularly known as the marriage of blood. By the spring of 1502 Arthur was dead and Katharine, the bride of a few months, was widowed. When it became clear that the marriage would produce no heir, Henry, the second son was declared to be the heir to the throne and a Papal Bull was issued clearing the way for the marriage of Henry to Katharine amidst growing indignation by the people that this was against God's Law. (Leviticus 20, 21 and Mark 6, 18).

On the eve of Henry's fourteenth birthday, he declared that he would not marry Katharine and not until after his father's death did he change his mind. In this way events were set afoot which would lead to the deaths of Latimer and Cranmer as well as Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher of Rochester and hasten the coming of the English Reformation. Cardinal Wolsey had already fallen from favour when Latimer was called to preach before the king at Windsor in Lent 1530.

Back to the Country

The invitation to Latimer to preach at Windsor before the king in Lent was the first of a number of opportunities and Latimer's preaching ability was used to bring home reformed principles. Exposure to the king meant that Latimer was invited to sit on a commission called by the king to discuss the "new" doctrines. The outcome was that Latimer was forced into signing with the rest of the Commission a condemnation of Tyndale's works which by 1531 included, amongst others, the 1526 New Testament and The Parable of the Wicked Mammon.

Yet in Tyndale's writings and Latimer's preaching there is a similarity, for example:-

...as touching to please God, there is no work better than another...whether thou be an apostle or a shoemaker...thou art a kitchen page and washest thy master's dishes, another is an Apostle and preacheth the Word of God. ...Now if thou compare deed to deed there is difference betwixt washing of dishes and preaching of the Word of God. But as touching to please God none at all.¹

In brief, Tyndale is demonstrating that as far as the life of a Christian is concerned, there is nothing to debar the humblest layman from reaching spiritual maturity. Many received Tyndale's teaching and loved it. The prelates hated it because it struck at foundations of the hierarchy and Sir Thomas More sneered at the simplicity of the gospel because it attacked the favoured position of the scholar. But Latimer's sermons echoed it and it is a measure of the difficult and dangerous position that he found himself in that he had to sign the condemnation.

Little wonder that he excused himself from London and the court and was instituted to the living of West Kingston, near to Bristol in January 1531. The four years that he was there, were momentous

ones for the Church and nation. Cardinal Wolsey had fallen and although a greedy and devious man, he was not cruel. Those who succeeded him were.

John Wesley once remarked that the world was his parish. It might equally be stated that for these four years the parish of West Kington was Latimer's world. He threw himself immediately into the work, and writing to Sir Edward Baynton, he commented, "Sir, I have had more business in my little cure...what with sick folk and matrimonies...than I would have thought a man should have in a great cure".

We may be sure that Latimer was in his element among the country folk, preaching to them and teaching them from God's Word. No doubt, some of the material used later in 'The Sermon on the Plough' first saw the light of day here. Latimer was a popular preacher, and not a profoundly theological one. He used humour such as the story of the woman who could not sleep and who was going to church for the reason that she, "never failed of a good nap there." Such a story would raise some mirth, particularly, if someone was dozing.

His vocabulary was simple, and full of witty and alliterative phrases such as 'merit-mongers' and 'pot-gospellers'. It was country humour in a land where even the cities were closely connected to the countryside, and it was recognised and understood by the people. With a wealth of anecdote, Latimer preached simply to the simple people without whose support no national reformation can succeed.

But he was not to be left in peace to pursue his gospel ministry. The new Bishop of London summoned him for trial which opened early in 1532. Bilney, his friend and brother in the Lord had been martyred for the faith. Latimer realised that if he were found guilty he would share the same fate. For six weeks he was examined but no charge of heresy could be laid upon him. Fifteen articles were drawn up but he refused to subscribe. They dealt with pilgrimages and pardons.

In a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Warham, Latimer did not deny they were lawful but stated that they were inexpedient. He writes, "What can be more unseemly than to employ our preaching in that which God would neither command nor counsel...". A compromise was eventually reached and he subscribed the articles concerning Lent and the crucifix. Further trouble broke out when he replied rashly to a letter. Latimer appealed to the king who upheld his appeal, but he was compelled to confess error, "in doctrine and discretion".

Latimer had returned to West Kington when in 1533 Warham died and was succeeded by Thomas Cranmer, who recalled Latimer to preach before the king again. Cranmer's salutary advice to him was to "stand no longer than an hour, or a hour and a half at the most." In the following September Latimer was consecrated Bishop of Worcester.

From 1497 to 1535, absentee Italian bishops had left Worcester a neglected diocese, so that there was much to be done. The ignorance and the apathy of the people concerned Latimer greatly. He attempted to improve the situation in two ways. Firstly, the ignorance of the clergy needed to be dealt with, and he began a visitation. There are in existence sixteen itemised injunctions, dealing with the possession of Bibles and Testaments, and enforcing preaching instead of bead-telling or processions. His sermons complain of preachers who are like 'bells without clappers', and of people who are more in 'love with Robin Hood than the Word of God'. Secondly, he came to believe that the enforcement of discipline within the Church was necessary. In a later sermon before Edward VI he stated 'Bring into the church open discipline of excommunication, that open sinners may be stricken withal.'

Beside his preaching and administrative duties, Latimer was involved with the dissolution of the lesser monasteries. Although he strongly disapproved of monastic disorders, he more strongly disapproved of the greed of the nobility. Even Henry came under his strictures. Latimer said, 'Abbeys were ordained for the comfort of the poor; wherefore I said it was not decent that the king's horses should be kept in them.'

His convocation sermon of 1536 was a forceful attack upon the apathy of the clergy. Laying aside doctrine, he attacked the clergy for their lack of effort: 'If ye will not be the children of the world, be not stricken with the love of worldly things... Feed ye tenderly with all diligence the flock of Christ. Preach truly the Word of God. Love the light, walk in the light, and so be ye children of light while ye are in the world'. Here was bold prophetic preaching which applied the Word of God to the consciences of the hearers whoever they might be. Although the sermon was originally delivered in Latin, it was translated and circulated widely in English. The clergy did not like it but the common people received it gladly.

Latimer became involved with the campaign against superstition. There were many shrines in the country at which the people regularly worshipped. The best known was that of Thomas à Beckett at Canterbury, immortalised by Geoffrey Chaucer in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* (14th century) as the 'blissful martyr'. Chaucer satirises the various characters, especially the religious. In Latimer's own diocese was the famous image at Hailes Abbey, near Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, which was reputed to contain a phial containing some of the original blood of Christ! The blood was found to consist of melted honey.

But Latimer's days were now numbered as a diocesan bishop, for Henry was about to reverse his religious policy which looked to the German Lutheran princes as allies. In that policy, he had endeavoured to show that he was truly a Protestant. Now he reversed that policy and endeavoured to prove he was a true Catholic. The Six Articles of 1539 were Roman in doctrine, and Latimer could only agree to the first concerning transubstantiation. The devious Thomas Cromwell indicated that the king wished Latimer to resign. This Latimer did. It was a blow to the reformers and left Cranmer in a very isolated and difficult position. Latimer was placed under house arrest and for some months from 1539 to 1540 his life was in grave danger.

In the spring of 1540, the worst of the danger had passed and he was given provisional liberty provided that he travelled no nearer to London, Oxford, Cambridge or Worcester than six miles. So the preacher was publicly silenced for nearly six years, although we may be sure that Latimer continued to preach and teach privately. He returned to the Midlands but after an accident in which he was seriously injured by a falling tree, Latimer returned to London and was arrested and sent to the Tower for the last year of Henry VIII's reign. Unknown to Latimer there was soon to be a further door of opportunity opened to him for proclaiming God's Word. In January 1547, Henry VIII died, attended by Cranmer, and Edward VI, although still a minor came to the throne. The tide of English Protestantism was about to reach its high water mark.

With the accession of Edward VI at the beginning of 1547, the danger to Latimer's life receded and he was released from the Tower of London under a general pardon. He returned to preaching and as Darby says in his book, *Hugh Latimer* (1953):-

Latimer's fame is most secure as a preacher. It was in that way that he served best in the days of Henry VIII: it was almost the only way that he served during the short reign of his son. The six years gave him his fullness of opportunity to follow his natural bent.

It was during these years that the First Prayer Book of 1549 and the Second, more Protestant, Prayer Book of 1552 were drawn up with the Forty Two Articles and the First Book of Homilies. With such a programme of reform, it was clear that Latimer would be the natural choice to return to

the See of Worcester. He was invited to do so but he declined the appointment on the ground of age and infirmity. This was accepted, and as preaching was his high calling, he preached extensively before the young king. Most of our knowledge of his sermons dates from this period of his ministry. He became a champion, not only of the spoken word, but of the Word preached directly to the present congregation. It was a word relevant to the condition of the nation as a whole.

His earlier convocation sermon which had attacked the lethargy and worldliness of the clergy had won Latimer the respect of the nation. His refusal of high office and the wealth which went with it gained their hearts. It would be true to say that no other English preacher has ever been held in such high esteem, including the Wesleys and George Whitefield, as well as Charles Spurgeon. It would also be true to say that no other preacher has ever accomplished as much good in the life of the nation. The records of the State Paper Office and British Museum bear out this testimony. But Latimer was now ageing and after Lent 1550, he resigned as the King's preacher and he returned to his home country, his beloved Midland Counties, continuing to preach from Lincolnshire to Warwickshire.

Edward VI died in 1553, and in spite of the Earl of Northumberland's plot to seize the throne for Lady Jane Grey, which resulted in his execution and that of Lady Jane Grey and her husband, Mary Tudor came to the throne with the acclamation of the people as the rightful Tudor heir. The high water mark of Protestantism had been reached and was now about to give way under Mary's Catholic revisionist policies. Although Protestantism had been owned by many of the influential and by large numbers of the ordinary people, it would take the death of many martyrs before the nation would wholeheartedly embrace its doctrines under Elizabeth I. Latimer was to be numbered among those who sealed their witness to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

It would be facile to believe that Mary simply misjudged the mood of the English people. Her policy towards Protestants was guided by two factors. Those two factors were that a great wrong had been done to her mother and that a great wrong had been done to Holy Mother Church. Both these wrongs needed to be redressed. Those responsible were to be punished and England's relationship to Rome re-established. In simple terms that meant the death of those heretics by fire. There was to be no mercy and in this Mary showed herself to be the daughter of her mother with a haughty Spanish temperament and a zeal for the Roman Church but she lacked the sure political touch of her father and the carefully considered pragmatism of her half-sister Elizabeth. To silence old Latimer was one thing, to burn him quite another for the English people.

Latimer was in the countryside when he was given forewarning of his imminent arrest with the possibility of escape to the Continent. He made no attempt to escape and welcomed the rather surprised officer who arrived to arrest him with the words, 'I go willingly to London.' This was the hour of trial which was to come upon him. He had lived with this possibility for thirty years. Several times he had extricated himself from difficult situations, and had seen the damage that recantations had done to the cause of Reformation. He had also witnessed the deep pangs of remorse demonstrated by some of his colleagues. If he were to give way, or attempt to escape as the most popular preacher in England, an enormous amount of damage would be done to the cause of Christ. He was now an old man who had 'fought the good fight' and it only remained for him to finish his course by sealing the testimony in his death. As he travelled through Smithfield, he wryly remarked that the place had 'long groaned for him.' But it was to Oxford that his final journey would take him.

Latimer was incarcerated in the Tower, where Cranmer and Ridley were already imprisoned. Although separately housed and strictly guarded, they were able to communicate through their servants. In this way, they encouraged one another and prepared themselves for the examination. Latimer decided that, by reason of his age, it would be futile to enter into a theological dispute and

that his best approach would be, 'not to contend much with them in words, after a reasonable account of my faith is given.'

By Lent 1554, the Tower was so overcrowded with prisoners that Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer were all housed together, to their great mutual satisfaction. By the middle of April, they were in Oxford for the disputation, which centred largely on the Mass. Latimer's mind was now set, having been convinced by Cranmer. Latimer's written answer made it clear that he would not submit. He was formally condemned by the Bishop of Lincoln, and handed over to the Mayor of Oxford to await degradation and execution by fire on the morning of October 16th, 1555.

The Reformation occurred in the sixteenth century as Green says, '... because a certain set of circumstances created a situation which made its outbreak both possible and probable.' What must be borne in mind in any discussion is the differentiation between the occasion and the cause. This is particularly true of the English Reformation. The characters of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli on the Continent, made a profound impact. Yet, it is often claimed that no comparable English Reformer exists and that, in England, it was the circulation of the Scriptures which effected the change. This ignores the significance of Hugh Latimer, as well as the movement which took place between 1520 and 1556.

The protest, as it developed the finer points of doctrine, sharpened by controversy, needed another medium with which to instruct the people, other than the Mass, or miracle play. It was the pulpit, not the altar, and preaching rather than liturgy, which persuaded the people. This was the medium in which Latimer excelled.

It was through preaching that he first won fame at Cambridge. It was as a preacher that he did all his best work. On his last day, he turned the flames that flared about him ... into an unquenchable metaphor. That word about the lighting of the candle that by God's grace should never be put out, reveals the man. His message was simple, homely and directly to the point. None could miss it. He applied the truth of God's Word, in doctrine and precept, to bring men and women to the 'obedience of faith'. He did this for thirty years throughout the heart of England, from London to Lincoln, and from Lincoln to Bristol. Latimer founded no sect, endowed no school, made no translation of the Scriptures and left no great liturgy for posterity, yet when all the preaching was done, the most significant fact was that his final sermon was from the flames and his most eloquent pulpit, his funeral pyre. Latimer died in the flames but Mary Tudor had alienated the affection of a large number of her English subjects.

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Endnotes:

- 1) Daniel D William Tyndale, Yale U P 1994 New Haven and London p167/8.