

# EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

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## Evangelical Review of Theology

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living.*

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gladness.”<sup>31</sup> Woven of perishable materials, they were used to celebrate occasions of joy or victory. The scene here envisioned may be the festive occasion of a banquet or the crowning after struggle for victorious achievement. For Peter’s readers the crowning which concluded the athletic contests would readily come to mind. This picture is in keeping with the context.

Two modifiers, placed attributively between the article and the noun (τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον), further describe the nature of this crown. The adjective rendered “unfading” (ἀμαράντινον) occurs only here in the New Testament. It differs slightly from the adjective rendered “will not fade away” (ἀμάραντον) in [1 Peter 1:4](#). The use of this variant form suggests that a somewhat different meaning is intended here. The form used in [1:4](#) points to a quality that will not fade away; the term, using the suffix -ινον, points rather to the material from which the thing is made. Then the crown is described as “made of amaranth,” a flower whose unfading quality was the symbol of immortality. In contrast to the flowers of this world, the crown itself is made of material which never loses its beauty and attractiveness.

The crown is further characterized as “of glory” (τῆς δόξης); the genitive is appositional, identifying its material; the crown consists of “the [heavenly] glory.” After His own suffering, Christ was “crowned with glory and honour” ([Heb. 2:9](#)); He will reward His faithful under-shepherds in having them share in His own unfading glory. Clearly Peter believes that the prospect of a glorious future must motivate faithfulness in the present. Prophetic truth is indeed practical!

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## Hugh Latimer: Apostle of England

Philip Thomas

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*Lessons on how the Church responds to periods of intense persecution need to be learned by every generation. This brief reflection on the witness of the English reformers Latimer and Ridley in a period of persecution ending with their martyrdom on 16 October 1555 is a challenge to faithfulness to all Christian leaders. The context may change but the test is always with us.*

(Editor)

“Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man.  
We shall this day, light such a candle, by God’s grace,

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<sup>31</sup> Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (1880; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1947), p.78.

in England, as I trust shall never be put out.”

The stake was firmly driven, the faggots placed. As the flames leapt around the two men, Hugh Latimer’s last sermon was perhaps his most eloquent and enduring. Those words spoken by the town ditch outside Oxford, about the candle that would never be put out, scored their way into the consciousness of the English people, alongside Nelson’s battle signal and Churchill’s rallying of a nation at war.

Latimer was born “of good yeoman stock” about the year 1485, and it was as a countryman that he always felt most at ease. As a student at Cambridge his competence and devotion earned recognition by his appointment as ceremonial cross-bearer, and as he was as unmoved by the visit of Erasmus to the University as he was by the “new learning” that he had come to represent. Indeed his zeal was such that he was known for the vigour with which he disputed any hint of the Lutheran heresy which so stirred some of his fellows. After one such dispute, the confession of one of them, Thomas Bilney, so troubled Latimer, that by the end of 1524, he too had concluded that a formal orthodoxy was not enough. What was needed was a personal trust in Christ. “So I began to smell the Word of God,” he afterwards recounted, “and forsook the school-doctors and other such fooleries.”

This change of heart became quickly obvious, as with Bilney, Latimer energetically undertook to visit the poor, and joined with the little circle at the ‘White Horse’ who read and discussed the New Testament, and the banned books from Germany. Latimer’s thinking did not change all at once. His theology was quite in accord with his superiors, yet this insistence that popular religion should be more than the formal observances of traditional piety unsettled some. As yet he may only “smell of the frying pan” as they put it, yet this raised “doubt [p. 123](#) whereunto this may grow.” Before a formal censure could be invoked however, weightier matters were to intervene.

During 1529 Cranmer had been in Cambridge preparing a case to support Henry VIII’s claim for a marriage annulment. Latimer’s support brought not only an extended preaching licence, but also the invitation to give the Lenten sermons before the king in the following year. Such sermons, Cranmer advised, should be no longer than an hour and a half! In fact most of 1530 Latimer spent at the palace, and then by the royal favour he spent five years as a parish priest. In 1535 he was consecrated Bishop of Worcester.

These were the years of the Reformation Parliament, when under the skilful advocacy of the newly appointed Archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, the realm was gradually brought under the reformed faith. At this time too, there was a ready opening for Latimer’s preaching gifts. At court, from parish pulpits, and finally in Convocation, he spoke forcefully for the reforming measures, and levelled his attack against formalism, hypocrisy and superstition of any shade. His sermons show a unique combination of impassioned eloquence and effective raillery; direct, simple, sometimes almost garrulous. “What, ye brain-sick fools, ye hoddy pecks, ye doddy poules, ye healdes, are ye seduced also?” ran his fairly free reading of [John 6:67](#)! He had a stock of good stories, and illustrated his points with relish, not hesitating to draw from his own or his hearer’s experiences. The full theological implications of the reform were not yet clear to him, and at times his uncertainties and the need for expediency tortured his conscience. Yet he was wholly for “gospel living” on the basis of a personal trust in Christ and insistent that the Church live by his truth.

Henry’s craft brought changing fortunes again. Latimer felt compelled to resign his see, and he spent nearly eight years under house arrest, the last twelve months in the tower. But his greatest work lay yet before him.

During the short reign of Edward VI (1545–51) the flood gates of reform were opened. Latimer’s theology was by now fully developed, and with his resolve hardened

by the years of inactivity, he threw himself into the work at hand. He refused to take up his Bishopric again but as Cranmer's aide and confidante he held the pulse of a nation. Those were busy days. His servant recorded that Latimer was at his desk by 2a.m. each morning, three hours before the rest of the household. Each year between 1548 and 1550 he was the Lenten preacher at court, boldly instructing the king in his Christian duties, and pillorying the graft of the courtiers. The clergy who "loved ease" felt the lash of his tongue, and so too did the materialism of the nobles. He was not [p. 124](#) just a "society preacher" either. He enjoyed being a man of the people, and the people gladly heard him, as for two hours at a time he regularly expounded from an open pulpit behind St. Pauls. Whoever his audience Latimer repeatedly returns to the theme of the Gospel, to faith in Christ alone, and the need for justice and the recompense of evil. He takes up the concern of the poor for education and opportunity, and of the farmer for fair dealings with his land. Any suggestion that the church should not speak out on social and political matters would receive little support from Latimer. His concern was for a pure religion, a personal religion and a national religion.

His outspokenness made him many enemies, yet there is no record of any accusation that he himself failed to live by the high standards of his words. Neither was this increased zeal a matter of time serving under more favourable conditions. He had always spoken when his mind was made up, and even in Edward's time it was a costly thing to stand for the reform; it was already apparent that Mary would soon succeed her ailing half-brother. Such warning simply added urgency to Latimer's task.

If his convictions had formed slowly, by the 1550's they were his own, and it was this firing of Scriptural truth within the crucible of experience which marked Latimer's life. It was not just eloquence or even courage which gave such remarkable power of communication. Preaching was no exercise on behalf of the status quo, but as a letter writer put it, the speech of a dying man to dying men. As he had put it in one of his early Cambridge sermons, Christ was his trump; now the card was played, and the winner would take all. Today we can understand something of the courage which makes a man willing to suffer for an unpopular cause. It is not so easy to appreciate the particular courage of Latimer and the others who were prepared to step aside from the traditions and practices in which men for centuries had sought for eternal security, and stand before God upon the advocacy of Christ alone. Such is always the risk and the urgency of the Gospel.

With Mary's accession came long imprisonment. The stake "has long groaned for me" he observed. If in the past Latimer had been impetuous, if at times he had been slow to act upon his most deeply held beliefs, now that the issues were clear, his faith held like rock. Others in the Tower may have been more nimble in their defence, but they all looked to "Old Father Latimer" for the security of his prayers and spiritual perceptiveness. On the 16th October 1555, with the disputing finished and the long walk over, the fires were kindled. Hugh Latimer, "The apostle of England" as Ridley called him, set the seal to his message with his life. [p. 125](#)

A few months before that day he had written, "Die once we must; how and where we know not ... And let us consider all the dear friends of God, how they have gone after the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ; Whose footsteps let us follow, even to the gallows if God's will so be, not doubting but as He rose again the third day, even so shall we do at the time appointed of God, that is when the trump shall blow, and the angel shall shout, and the Son of Man shall appear."