

## THOMAS CRANMER<sup>1</sup>

1489-1556<sup>2</sup>

CRANMER was born at Aslacton in Nottinghamshire in 1489 of an honourable family which possessed some

<sup>1</sup> Cranmer is a place-name and was originally spelt Cranemere, thus Hugh de Cranemere (1273), William Cranemere, Rector of Bawsey (1414). Next it is written Cranmere, and finally Cranmer.

It was the name of a low, swampy country at Long Melford, Suffolk, and there was a manor called Cranmer at Sutterton in Lincolnshire ("an ancient mansion house of antiquity called Cranmer Hall"). The arms of the family contained three cranes, which were not so much a play on the name as evidence of its origin, which signifies a mere or lake abounding in cranes. Henry VIII changed the cranes to pelicans, which were fabled to feed their young with their own blood, saying to Cranmer, "You are like to be tested if you stand to your tackling." The family, like many others, had traditions of descent from the times of William the Conqueror, and whilst Cranmer entertained a visitor of the same name at Lambeth in token of a common origin, he recognised the comparatively obscure and humble history of his family, saying, "I take it that none of us all here, being gentlemen born, but had our beginnings that way from a low and base parentage." There was, or is, a stained glass window in Sutterton church in Lincolnshire to the memory of Hugh Cranmer in the fourteenth century. In the only extant letter written before his consecration and signed by his own hand, Cranmer writes "Thomas Cranmar." When he became Archbishop his signature was "Thomas Cantuar."

<sup>2</sup> Born 1489. Entered at Jesus College, Cambridge, 1503. Fellow 1510. First marriage, 1511 (about). Elected Fellow a second time, 1512. Refused Wolsey's offer of a Canonry at Cardinal College, Oxford, 1524 (about). (Doubts have been cast upon this offer. The first Canon, who became Sub-Dean in 1527, was Thomas Canner. Foxe, author of the *Book of Martyrs*, and others make the statement, but they may have confused the two names. It is stated that Dr. Capon, Master of Jesus College, recommended him.) Pope's Penitentiary in England, 1529. Archdeacon of Taunton, 1531 (there is no entry in the register of

landed property there. His father, who was very desirous to have him learned, died when his son was twelve years old, and seems to have left him a portion of the estate, for in 1529 a State Paper speaks of "Mr. Dr. Cranmer" as one who had corn to dispose of in the parish of Aslacton in a time of famine. He was taught by a rude parish clerk, who proved a "marvellous severe and cruel schoolmaster." Afterwards he attended a neighbouring school, probably Southwell Collegiate School, until he entered, at the age of fourteen, at the then newly founded Jesus College, Cambridge. He gives a lamentable account of his college tutor, who was so ignorant that he used to skip any hard chapter. For eight years he worked at logic and philosophy in the dark riddles of Duns Scotus, and then began to read good Latin authors. Afterwards he devoted many years to the study of the Holy Scriptures. He was a slow reader, but a diligent marker of what he read. With pen in hand he would write out passages for references, noting both the author and place, and these were ready for reference afterwards. Greek was then only beginning to be studied at Cambridge, and Cranmer's chief studies were in Latin. In these years of study he must have laid the foundation of that knowledge of English for which he became famous, though there is not much trace in his official letters as Archbishop of that charm of style which marks his liturgical writings. He pursued his studies with unremitting assiduity for many years, and Erasmus speaks of him at the time of his appointment as Archbishop as "a professed theologian and a most upright man of spotless life."

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Bath and Wells, but during his short tenure of the office Cranmer might easily draw the emoluments without being licensed by the Bishop). Married a second time, Margaret, niece of Osiander, Pastor of Nuremberg, 1532. Archbishop of Canterbury, 1533. Burnt at Oxford, 1556. There is no evidence that Cranmer was ever chaplain to Anne Boleyn or her father, though he lived in the house (at Durham Place) of the latter by order of Henry VIII to study the King's marriage question. He was a Royal Chaplain before he became Archbishop. After he became Archbishop his usual designation of himself in writing to the King was "Your Grace's most bounden Chaplain and Beadsman."



*William Woodcut*

<p><i>Natus 1489 July 2 Consecratus 1533. Mar. 30</i></p>		<p><i>Martyrio Coronatus 1556. Mar. 21</i></p>
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ARCHBISHOP CRANMER.

In his twenty-third year he forfeited his fellowship by marriage. His wife was a gentleman's daughter related to the wife of the keeper of the Dolphin Inn at Cambridge. The inns of that day supplied the place of the modern club, and there was nothing incongruous in the Fellow of a college finding his wife there. His enemies in later years made this the subject of jest and malice, and called him "an innkeeper" or "an ostler"<sup>1</sup> who had been raised to great dignity and power. As Mrs. Cranmer died within twelve months, her husband was re-elected Fellow and shortly afterwards ordained. During his short married life he supported himself as common-reader at Buckingham (Magdalene) College. The years passed uneventfully for the young student, and yet he grew in knowledge and university reputation. In 1526 he became D.D., and subsequently was appointed examiner for the same degree and lecturer in divinity at his own college. It is said that as early as 1525 he

<sup>1</sup> An ignorant northern priest said of Cranmer: "What make you of him? He was but an hoseler and hath no more learning than the goslings that go yonder on the green." Some one reported this to Thomas Cromwell, who sent the priest to the Fleet prison and left him there for some time. The Archbishop, hearing of it, sent for the man, who denied having ever spoken the words. The accuser, who was present, called him a dastardly dolt and varlet, whereupon the priest fell on his knees and besought the Archbishop to forgive him, as he was drunk when he spoke the words. "Ah," said Cranmer, "this is somewhat, and yet it is no good excuse, for drunkenness evermore uttereth that which hath hid in the heart of man when he is sober." The Archbishop then asked him about his own learning, and found he could not say who was David's father or Solomon's father. The priest pleaded that his only study had been to service and mass, which he could do as well as any priest in the North. He was then dismissed with words of reproof and advice, released from prison and sent to his parish: "God amend you, forgive you and send you better minds." This story is a very characteristic one of the Archbishop, who always found it hard to bear any resentment. For this he has been called weak, and perhaps he was, but he had before him the words, "Pray for those that despitefully use you and persecute you." In some greater matters his gentleness became weakness and led him into acts of moral cowardice. It became a common saying, "Do unto my Lord of Canterbury displeasure or a shrewd turn, and then you may be sure to have him your friend whiles he liveth."

began to pray in private for the abolition of the papal power in England.

One of Cranmer's bitterest enemies,<sup>1</sup> describing his character, says: "He had in his favour a dignified presence adorned with a semblance of goodness, considerable reputation for learning and manners so courteous, kindly, and pleasant that he seemed like an old friend to those whom he encountered for the first time. He gave signs of modesty, seriousness, and application."

Cranmer sought no office and aspired to no dignity. His quiet routine of study and teaching satisfied all his ambitions, and he probably desired nothing more than to remain all his days in the tranquil round of academic life, when one of those events which we sometimes call accidents occurred, which brought him unwillingly into public life, and led him, through all the eventful years of his stirring episcopate to the stake at Oxford.

We are now to trace in outline what he did and how he served the Church from 1530 to 1556.

#### *Cranmer's Entry upon Public Life.*

In July 1529 Campeggio, to avoid a decision, suspended the marriage question over the vacation. In August Henry VIII arranged for summoning the Parliament which has become known as the Reformation Parliament, and which sat without prorogation for seven years. He then went on a hunting expedition to Waltham. Two heads of Cambridge Houses, Fox, Provost of King's, and Gardiner, Master of Trinity Hall, were with Henry VIII as members of his household. They were quartered for convenience in Cressy's house. In the same month the plague broke out at Cambridge, and Cranmer, who was tutor to Cressy's sons, took them home for refuge from danger. The three Cambridge scholars naturally spoke of the great national question, and Cranmer expressed the opinion that the Universities were the proper authorities to decide the matter. He said he was no lawyer, but a theologian, and thought

<sup>1</sup> *Bishop Cranmer's Recantacions*, Ed. Gardiner, p. 3.

the question should be taken out of the hands of lawyers and submitted to the divines.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion contained the germ from which all subsequent action grew. To contemplate any other authority than that of Rome in a matter of marriage was to raise a standard of revolt. When the conversation was repeated to the King he "commanded them to send for Dr. Cranmer, and so by and by, being sent for, he came to the King's presence at Greenwich."<sup>2</sup> The result of the interview was that Cranmer was ordered by Henry VIII to write his mind on the divorcement, and was sent to the house of the Earl of Wiltshire, Anne Boleyn's father, for the purpose. Cranmer's work was circulated in manuscript. Dr. Croke was sent to search the libraries in Italy, and to secure the adhesion of the learned men in the universities there. The King secured in 1530, under circumstances highly unworthy, a vote in his favour from the University of Cambridge.<sup>3</sup> Gardiner and Fox engineered this vote, and Cranmer took no personal part in it, because at the end of 1529 he had been sent to Italy to negotiate terms with Clement VII. The Pope received him with graciousness and compliments, and appointed him "Penitentiary," an office of much money value. He returned, however, to England in September 1530, without having accomplished anything of value.

From this time Henry VIII took matters into his own hands. Cranmer was in England until January 1532, but he seems to have taken no public part in Convocation or Parliamentary proceedings. At this time he was

<sup>1</sup> "We must recollect that the Universities were then regarded not only as establishments for education, but as supreme tribunals for the decisions of scientific questions." (Ranke's *History of the Reformation*.)

<sup>2</sup> A report, resting on no contemporary authority, states that Cranmer added "neither Pope nor any other Potentate, neither in cases civil or ecclesiastical, had anything to do with the King or any of his actions within his own realm and dominion," and that the King's words in hearing the advice were, "Mother of God, that man has the right sow by the ear." Both statements are extremely probable, and if not spoken at the time, may have been uttered later.

<sup>3</sup> See *History of Cambridge*, by J. Bass Mullinger, vol. i., p. 618.

sent abroad as ambassador of the Emperor Charles V, and remained in Germany for about a year, until he was recalled to occupy the vacant see of Canterbury. Before his return and under the primacy of Archbishop Warham various steps were taken towards separation from Rome. Warham was more than eighty years of age, and too enfeebled in health to resist the King's wish. Reginald Pole, after refusing the bribe of York or Winchester, was in disgrace.<sup>1</sup> Gardiner was now made Bishop of Winchester, and, with his eyes on Canterbury, was complacent and yielding whilst making a show of resistance.

In 1531 the King compelled the reluctant Convocation to pass a declaration and subscribe in this form: "We acknowledge his Majesty to be the singular Protector only and Supreme Head, and so far as the laws of Christ allow, even Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy."<sup>2</sup> This was only part of what the King demanded. The Court of King's Bench had convicted the whole body of the clergy, under the Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire (1393) as guilty for having

<sup>1</sup> "I requested my brother to sound the King's mind," writes Pole, "as he did . . . having found an opportunity for conversing with the King in a privy garden where he chanced to walk with him, he related the whole circumstance. On hearing him, and after remaining a long while thoughtful and silent, Henry exclaimed that he had read my writing and that I had spoken the truth, nor could its perusal make him feel any anger against me, as, although the writing was very contrary to his wish, he nevertheless recognized in it my love for him and the sincerity with which I had written it; but that, in conclusion, my opinion did not please him, and that he much wished me to change it, in which case he would then prove how dear I was to him."—Cardinal Pole to Protector Somerset, September 1549.

<sup>2</sup> Warham presided over Canterbury Convocation, and when the moment of the fateful vote came, said, "Whoever is silent seems to consent." One voice replied, "Then we are all silent," and so the clause passed the Upper House and was agreed to by the Lower. In York Convocation, Tunstall of Durham, a great and learned Bishop, and Kite of Carlisle, were alone in the Upper House, as Lee was not yet installed at York. Tunstall protested in a letter to Henry, which called forth a reply from the King. The phrase, said Tunstall, was capable of being distorted by the weak or the malignant.

accepted Wolsey as papal legate. Henry was in this matter the chief offender himself, but he acquitted the clergy upon their paying a sum equivalent to about £2,000,000 of our present money. Nor was he appeased by this act of humiliation. His reply to a request of Convocation to protect it in the discharge of its spiritual offices was a demand that it should surrender its power of making canons without the royal licence. In May 1532 Convocation signed the document which is known in history as the "Submission of the Clergy."<sup>1</sup> The same month Henry sent for the Speaker and twelve Members

<sup>1</sup> *The Submission of the Clergy, A.D. 1532.*

"We, your most humble subjects, daily orators and bedesmen of your clergy of England, having our special trust and confidence in your most excellent wisdom, your princely goodness and fervent zeal to the promotion of God's honour and Christian religion, and also in your learning, far exceeding, in our judgment, the learning of all other kings and princes that we have read of, and doubting nothing but that the same shall still continue and daily increase in your majesty—

"First, do offer and promise, in verbo sacerdotii, here unto your highness, submitting ourselves most humbly to the same, that we will never henceforth enact, put in ure, promulge, or execute, any new canons or constitutions provincial, or any other new ordinance, provincial or synodal, in our Convocation or synod in time coming, which Convocation is, always has been, and must be, assembled only by your highness' commandment of writ, unless your highness by your royal assent shall license us to assemble our Convocation, and to make, promulge, and execute such constitutions and ordinances as shall be made in the same; and thereto give your royal assent and authority.

"Secondly, that whereas divers of the constitutions, ordinances, and canons, provincial or synodal, which have been heretofore enacted, be thought to be not only much prejudicial to your prerogative royal, but also overmuch onerous to your highness' subjects, your clergy aforesaid is contented, if it may stand so with your highness' pleasure, that it be committed to the examination and judgment of your grace, and of thirty-two persons, whereof sixteen to be of the upper and nether house of the temporalty, and other sixteen of the clergy, all to be chosen and appointed of your noble grace. So that, finally, whichsoever of the said constitutions, ordinances, or canons, provincial or synodal, shall be thought and determined by your grace and by the most part of the said thirty-two persons not to stand with God's laws and the laws of your realm, the same to be abrogated and taken away by your grace and the clergy; and such of them as shall be



of the House of Commons, and complained that the clergy were only half his subjects, thus: "Well-beloved subjects, we thought that the clergy of our realm had been our subjects wholly, but now we have well perceived that they be but half our subjects, yea, and scarce our subjects. For all the prelates at their consecration make an oath to the Pope clean contrary to the oath they make to us, so that they seem his subjects and not ours."

In 1532, the same year, the payment of annates, or firstfruits—*i. e.* one year's profit of spiritual livings—to the Pope was conditionally restrained. By the act of Parliament power was given to the King to delay the confirmation of the act, and this power he used with good effect over the Pope *in terrorem*.<sup>1</sup> The King confirmed the act on July 9, 1532, and the firstfruits were annually paid to the Crown until they were restored to the Church under Queen Anne's Bounty in 1703. A still more drastic and important measure of independence was passed in February 1533, forbidding all appeals of whatever kind from the English Courts to Rome.<sup>2</sup> The principle of the act was that the English Church had always claimed to determine in the King's Courts temporal or spiritual all causes by spiritual jurisdiction, notwithstanding that appeals had been made delaying

seen by your grace, and by the most part of the said thirty-two persons, to stand with God's laws and the laws of your realm, to stand in full strength and power, your grace's most royal assent and authority once impetrate and fully given to the same."—*Documents illustrative of English Church History*, by Gee and Hardy.

<sup>1</sup> The act states that "our said sovereign the King and all his natural subjects as well spiritual as temporal be as obedient devout catholic and humble children of God and Holy Church as any people be within any realm christened yet the said exactions of annates or firstfruits be so intolerable and importable to this realm that it is considered and declared . . . that the King's highness before Almighty God is bound as by the duty of a good Christian prince . . . to do all that in him is to obviate repress and redress the said abuses and exactions of annates and firstfruits (23 Henry VIII, c. 20).

<sup>2</sup> Appeals to Rome in all cases whatsoever prohibited (24 Henry VIII, c. 12). See Gibson's *Codex*, vol. i., p. 96.

justice and causing great inconvenience and expense. All appeals henceforth were to be tried within the realm in the Courts of the Bishops and Archbishops, and anything touching the King was to be laid before the House of Convocation for final determination. I desire you to note that all these things happened during the episcopate of Archbishop Warham,<sup>1</sup> and when Cranmer the greater part of the time was abroad on embassies in Italy and Germany. The last act restraining appeals was passed after his death and before Cranmer became Archbishop. It is necessary to remember these things in view of the constant assertion by Roman Catholic writers that everything against Rome was done under Cranmer and at his instigation, and that Warham was the last Archbishop who was faithful to Rome. We now come to the beginning of Cranmer's tenure of Canterbury.

#### *Cranmer as Archbishop under Henry VIII.*

It is idle to speak of Cranmer as an obscure or unworthy person at the time he became Archbishop. He was a distinguished Cambridge Doctor, a Royal Chaplain, Archdeacon of Taunton, and Pope's Penitentiary in England. For the last four years he had been employed in high office at home and abroad, and had displayed great powers of statesmanship. The Bishop of Winchester (Gardiner) was bitterly disappointed at being passed over, and his hostility to Cranmer dates from this time. Cranmer's long delay in returning to England for consecration and his reluctance to accept office are well known, but the King left him no choice between obedience and perpetual exile. Henry VIII laid his plans carefully and kept his own counsel. He nominated the Archbishop himself, and secured the consent of the Prior and Canons of Christ Church, Canterbury, but, with a view to what was coming, he would have nothing omitted which gave papal sanction to

<sup>1</sup> Warham issued a proclamation in 1531 against all the acts passed in the Parliament to the prejudice of the Church. (Burnet's *Collection of Records*, books i., ii., iii.)

Cranmer. He asked Clement VII for the usual papal confirmation, and obtained it. Eight Bulls were sent confirming and assenting to everything done. Cranmer surrendered his to the King, because he would not own the Pope as the giver of his ecclesiastical dignity.

Thus Cranmer ascended the throne of Canterbury, nominated by his King, consented to by Christ Church, Canterbury, consecrated by English bishops, and confirmed by the Pope and created *Legatus Natus* for England. The consecration took place at S. Stephen's, Westminster, on March 30, 1553.<sup>1</sup> Clement VII was under no delusion in what he did, and only bowed to what was inevitable. Cranmer, in taking the papal oath, "declared that he intended not by the oath that he was to take, to bind himself to do anything contrary to the laws of God, the King's prerogative or to the Commonwealth and Statutes of the Kingdom." He pre-faced this papal oath by a protestation, before a notary and witnesses, that he held it to be more a form than a reality. The oath was accepted on these terms, and the circumstances must have been reported to the Pope.

In the previous year, 1532, Henry VIII wrote to the Pope that he separated his marriage cause from the authority of the See Apostolic.<sup>2</sup> Having clothed the Primate of England with the combined authority of the

<sup>1</sup> The consecrating bishops were the Bishop of Lincoln, Bishop of Exeter and Bishop of S. Asaph. See *Episcopal Succession in England*, by Bishop Stubbs, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> See Henry VIII's last letter to Clement VII: "We do separate from our cause the authority of the See Apostolic which we do perceive to be destitute of that learning whereby it should be directed and because Your Holiness doth ever profess your ignorance and is wont to speak of other men's mouths, we do confer the sayings of those with the sayings of them that be of the contrary opinion: for to confer the reasons it were too long. But now the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford in our realms, Paris, Orleans, Biturisen, Andegavon in France and Bonony in Italy by one consent; and also divers other of the most famous and learned men being freed from all affection and only moved in respect of verity, partly in Italy and partly in France, do affirm the marriage of the brother with the brother's wife to be contrary to the law of God and nature; and also do pronounce that no dispensation can be lawful or available to any Christian man in that behalf."—Burnet's *Collection of Records*.

English Church and the Papal See, Henry VIII brought the controversy of years to an end.<sup>1</sup>

On May 23, 1533, Cranmer, under a commission in which the Bishops of Winchester (Gardiner), London (Stokesley), Bath (Clerk) and Lincoln (Longland) were associated with him, declared the marriage with Catherine to be null and void. Five days later he pronounced the King's marriage with Anne Boleyn valid.<sup>2</sup> On June 1 (Whit-Sunday) Cranmer crowned "our dearest wife the Lady Anne our Queen" with great magnificence at Westminster. Courtiers echoed the stories of her beauty, but the chaste womanhood of England, thinking of the wronged wife at Dunstable, was filled with suppressed indignation. Queen Anne's triumph was short-lived. Largely by her influence, Fisher and More were sent to the block in 1535. Queen Catherine died in January 1536, and upon receipt of the news both Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn showed unseemly joy. On May 17 Cranmer declared the marriage with Anne invalid and her daughter Elizabeth illegitimate. The records of the trial have been destroyed, but she who for ten or twelve years had held the King under the spell of her fascination was judged unfaithful, and ended her unparalleled career on Tower Hill on May 19, 1536.<sup>3</sup> I shall say no more about Henry VIII's matrimonial affairs. Jane Seymour bore him his only

<sup>1</sup> Mason's *Cranmer*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> This marriage had taken place in private on January 25 (as is supposed). Burnet, arguing from the date of Elizabeth's birth, September 7, 1533, says it must have taken place in December, 1532. This is special pleading. It is certain that Cranmer did not perform the marriage ceremony, and he declares that he did not know of the marriage until a fortnight after it had taken place. Dr. Mason (*Life of Thomas Cranmer*, 1898) suggests as early as November 14, 1532, but supports this with no adequate evidence.

<sup>3</sup> Cranmer was shocked at the accusations and pleaded with the King, but to no avail. The Queen wrote from prison a very able and pathetic letter protesting her innocence, but from what we know of her literary gifts she must have had assistance in writing it. (Burnet's *Collection of Records*.) Dr. Matthew Parker, her chaplain, was with her about the time it was sent, and it is supposed to be from his pen.

son, and died in child-bed. Anne of Cleves, finding she was not a *persona grata*, acquiesced in the annulment of her marriage, and ended the serio-comic episode by accepting a pension and a comfortable home in England. In 1541 the Councillors importuned Cranmer to inform the King of Catherine Howard's infidelity. He shed tears and was distraught with grief. Men whose own morals are bad are often scrupulous about those of their wives. The tragedy again ended on Tower Hill. Catherine Parr was married to the King by the Bishop of Winchester (Gardiner), and, being a wise and discerning woman, deservedly retained his confidence until his death.

We turn now to the progress of reform, remembering what has already been done and how the Pope has been warned of what is yet to come. In 1534 Parliament passed (25 Henry VIII, c. 19) the Restraint of Appeals. In the same year (25 Henry VIII, c. 21) Papal Dispensations and the payment of Peter's-pence were forbidden and the first Act of Succession was made law. All these passed in the spring of the year, and in November the Supremacy (Supreme Head) Act was passed, which contains no reference to the Convocation clause "so far as the law of Christ allows." This annulled all papal authority. Meantime in England, in March 1534, the Convocations of Canterbury and York declared that the Roman Pontiff has no greater jurisdiction bestowed on him by God in the Holy Scriptures in the realm of England than any other foreign bishop. The universities followed with a like declaration.

Under the Supreme Head Act Cromwell, before December 1534, received his commission as Vicar-General, and what has been rightly called the "reign of terror" began. Of Cromwell's deeds we have already spoken, and these are his, not Cranmer's. The Pope's Bull of Deposition was drawn up in 1535, but was withheld until 1538 in the vain hope of recovering lost power. The immediate cause of its issue was the spoliation of Thomas à Beckett's shrine at Canterbury.

Whilst the breach with Rome was completed, many courtiers and Churchmen conspired to ruin Cranmer as one of the leading agents. His foes were everywhere.

They were found at Court amongst the bishops and the country gentry, and still more at his own Cathedral Church and in his household. The Chapter of Canterbury had been reconstructed upon its becoming, after the dissolution of the monasteries, a cathedral of the new foundation. Cranmer's influence was ignored in the selection of the new prebendaries, with the result that only one, the future Bishop Ridley, was a reformer. This led to what is known as the "Prebendaries' Plot," which proposed to the King the issue of a commission, with Gardiner at its head, to examine into all abuses and enormities of religion in Kent. The Privy Council recommended this, and Henry VIII promised to consider it. A little later he met Cranmer, and said, "Ha! my chaplain, I have news for you: I know now who is the greatest heretic in Kent." He then told the Archbishop he would issue a commission on which Cranmer and such as he would choose should sit. When Cranmer demurred the King would take no refusal, and so, instead of a commission to convict the Archbishop, they obtained one presided over by Cranmer himself to inquire into their own plot. Another attempt to ruin the Archbishop was made by the Privy Council, which asked for his committal to the Tower in order to inquire into his administration. Strong in his consciousness of innocency, Cranmer was content to go in order that his conduct might be impartially inquired into. The King laughed at his *naïveté*, and told him of his fond simplicity in thus allowing himself to be put into the hands of his enemies. The next day Cranmer was summoned to the Council, and, under the pretence of indignation, they kept him waiting at the door of the Council Chamber. The King scolded them well, saying, "I would you would well understand that I account my Lord of Canterbury as faithful a man as ever was prelate in this realm, and one to whom I am in many ways beholden by the faith I owe unto God, and therefore whoso loveth me will regard him hereafter." The cowed conspirators began to make excuses, and so long as the King lived no one dared again to conspire against Cranmer. Henry VIII, always a good judge of character, had by this

time perfected himself in the knowledge of men and their motives. Others had betrayed him in their schemes of self-advancement. Cranmer had served him with unflinching fidelity, never joining the general scramble for wealth, and exhibiting in all things a spirit of truthfulness and simplicity which invited the King's protection, whilst it often excited his amusement at its guilelessness.

It may be contended that guilelessness is out of place in high office, but we are now in search of facts; and if Cranmer had been like Anselm, à Beckett or Langton he would have lost his head under Henry, and the English Reformation might have taken another course perhaps less true to Catholic traditions, for in the succeeding reign Cranmer clung to the past in spite of Genevan influence. As it was, so long as Henry lived, when the breach with Rome was complete, he would have no alliance with the spirit of the Continental Reformation in Geneva or Germany.

During the remaining years of the reign the Great Bible was issued in 1539, the Six Articles of Religion were passed in 1539 and amended in 1544, and the English Litany, from the pen of Cranmer, was published the same year. An act for the Dissolution of Chantries carried the work of Church spoliation a step farther. The end came on January 28, 1547, after the King had disposed of the Crown by will in December 1546. His truest friend was sent for, but Henry had lost the power of speech, and could do no more than clasp the hand of Cranmer, whose voice urged him to give some token that he trusted in Christ's mercy and salvation.

#### *Cranmer as Archbishop under Edward VI.*

Edward VI has been described as a marvellous boy, master of Latin, English and French. The journal of his reign written with his own hand is evidence of his precocious intellect,<sup>1</sup> but we are not to attribute anything

<sup>1</sup> See the *Character of Edward VI* written by Cardanus, and his journal in Burnet's *Collection of Records*.

in Church policy to him. Cranmer, by Henry VIII's will, was appointed head of the Council of Regency, though the power passed out of his hands into those of the Protector. His first act was to take out a commission from the King to exercise his episcopal office,<sup>1</sup> and so did Gardiner, Bonner, Tunstall and the rest. The Crown was then supreme, and the Church's rights were trampled in the dust. There had been no reformation in doctrine during Henry's reign, but the English Litany had been used for a little more than two years, and the Committee of Convocation had been at work upon a new Service Book for some four years, and finished its work shortly after Edward came to the throne. The Archbishop and twelve others, including men of both the old and new learning, were responsible for its production, though Cranmer's part was the most important. It had, therefore, Church authority before it was passed by the Act of Uniformity (1549), 2 and 3 Edward VI, c. 1, though the question of its receiving General Synodical authority is debatable.<sup>2</sup> This book was in use from June 9, 1549, until November 1, 1552. The Ordinal belongs to 1550, and was completed in the spring and came into force April 1. As in that year only one bishop, Poyntet of Rochester, who the next year succeeded Gardiner at Winchester, was consecrated (June 29), he would be the first to receive his consecration under the new Ordinal.<sup>3</sup> Meantime the reforming spirit had grown strong. Before the end of 1551, Day, Gardiner, Bonner, Heath and Tunstall had all been deprived

<sup>1</sup> "Quandoquidem omnis jurisdictionis Autoritas, atque etiam jurisdictionis omnimodo, tam illa quae Ecclesiastica dicitur quam Saecularis, a Regia Protestate velut a Supremo Capite," etc. From the Commission, see Burnet's *Collection of Records*.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Stubbs, a great authority, states, "It is important to observe that the first Prayer-book of Edward VI was accepted by the Convocation," and "also that, Convocation voted the lawfulness of communion in two kinds and of the marriage of priests."—*Report of the Ecclesiastical Courts Commission*, i., 142, 143.

<sup>3</sup> The Ordinal was authorised by anticipation on January 31, 1550, but no bishop was consecrated in England from September 1548 to June 1550.



of their bishoprics. There was a difficulty in finding men of sufficient learning to fill the vacant sees. Only three consecrations took place in 1551 (Hooper, Coverdale, Scory), one in 1552 (Taylor of Lincoln), one in 1553 (Harley of Hereford), and then nine in 1554; but in September 1553 Cranmer was sent to the Tower, and the last consecration he took was on May 26, 1553. On the whole, then, only six bishops were consecrated in Edward VI's reign under the new Ordinal. The second Prayer Book was passed on April 6 and came into use on November 1, 1552, Edward VI dying the following July. In those days, when injunctions and Acts of Parliament took some months to reach the whole country, it is doubtful whether it was used at all in very many parishes, especially as the printing of it was stopped for further corrections and it was not out of the printer's hands on October 27. Officially it was not withdrawn until October 1553.<sup>1</sup> The Eucharistic Vestments which had been ordered in the first book were forbidden in the second; but on this subject we shall speak in the lecture upon Matthew Parker. Whatever part others took in the preparation of the Book of Common Prayer, Cranmer's controlling share is undoubted. His was the mind which dominated everything, his the pen from which its choicest language came. Its principles and its objects are set out in the Preface, in the Article concerning the service of the Church, and in "Of Ceremonies, why some be abolished and some retained." Every man or woman can turn to-day to the Book, which contains its own apology and justification. The general principle was to make worship a matter of the understanding as well as of the spirit, to explain in exhortations the meaning of each service, and to give to the people their own definite share in public worship. As the services may in many parts be sung or said, it is equally useful for the stately cathedral or the humblest parish church. It

<sup>1</sup> Again the part taken by Convocation is undecided. Cardwell says Convocation was not allowed to pass judgment upon it. Bancroft implies that Convocation approved. Stubbs thinks that the Committee which revised the book may have been a Subcommittee of Convocation.

would be difficult to exaggerate its influence upon the religious thought and mind of English Church people for the last 360 years. It has created a type of worship and produced an attitude of devotional feeling, which can be called "Anglican," in opposition to every other form of public worship.<sup>1</sup> Our own generation is demanding that it shall be revised, and this not without good reasons. The Anglican Church to-day is no longer confined to one country; it has to minister under widely divergent conditions of life and to people in every stage of mental and spiritual development. Modern Church needs have supplemented its services and modern usage has played havoc with some of its rubrical directions, and yet, so sacred has it become to most Church people, and so binding in its power of unity amongst different schools of thought, that the problem of change brings up quite unexpected questions. Whatever changes may come—and many of us hope for some in the interests of discipline, since no one can profess to be wholly obedient

<sup>1</sup> See "An Apology for the Prayer-Book" in *University Sermons*, by Prof. J. J. Blunt, S. John's College, Cambridge, p. 321: ". . . regard it for a moment as a handbook of Public Devotion. What a calamity would it be if by any rude derangement of it in the one character we should pave the way for losing it in the other! How could we replace it! Where could we find thoughts that breathe and words that burn like its own! How reasonable it is, and yet how impassioned! How catholic, and yet how true to the wants of every man's own heart! How charmingly are its several parts disposed and combined! How do they relieve one another and sustain one another! So that share in it as often as we will, we never weary of it! And let accident or necessity suspend our participation in it for a season, with what eagerness do we revert to it when the time comes! How hearty are its accents of self-abasement! How touching its cries for mercy! How earnest its petitions! How high and animating its notes of thanksgiving and praise! How elastic it is! How affecting in its simplicity when it cheers our humble village church! How sublime in its majesty when it puts forth the fulness of its strength in our cathedrals! How suited to all ranks and conditions of men! How grateful to the scholar! How acceptable to the peasant! What multitudes of hearts has it lifted up to God! What multitudes of souls has it led to Paradise! *Esto perpetuum!*"

Prof. Blunt's writings have fallen into disuse, to the great detriment of devout, reverent and truly catholic churchmanship.

to its directions—its spirit, its tone and its doctrines are the only safeguard of union in our Church in every one of its varied branches.

Passing over some matters of historical interest in the reign of Edward VI, we come to the last days of the boy-King. The ecclesiastical legislation of the reign included as its more important items the act giving the Chantries to the King,<sup>1</sup> the two Acts of Uniformity, acts legalising the marriage of priests and making their children legitimate, and an act against images and old service-books.

When Edward VI was dying the councillors gathered round his bed and persuaded him to grant the Crown by will, as his father had done. The argument was unfair to the dying boy, who thus was induced to disinherit his two sisters. The scheme was started to gratify the ambition of Northumberland, and the gifted girl for whom he sought the throne (Lady Jane Grey) and her unfortunate husband had little responsibility for what was done. All the councillors consented, and then came to the Archbishop to urge him to join them. He hesitated and sought to escape action, seeking a private interview with the King, which was denied him by the councillors, so after much argument he yielded and became a party to the plot. Edward, whether of his own free will or under the influence of the plotters, was obstinate, and claimed the same right to dispose of the Crown by will as his father had exercised. "This seemed very strange unto me," writes Cranmer, "but, being the sentence of the judges and other learned counsel in the laws of the realm (as both he and counsel informed me), methought it became not me, being unlearned in the law, to stand against my prince therein." Cranmer's action on the occasion affords another example of his character. He lacked the moral purpose and strength required in his high office. Had he remained at Cambridge, or occupied only some comparatively obscure position, his learning alone would have contributed great things to the Reformation, and his match-

<sup>1</sup> See in Lecture II for the educational effect of it.

less liturgical knowledge and power would have caused the sun of his reputation to shine brightly through the ages. But Henry VIII, not without a view to his pliable nature, chose him and insisted upon his consecration to the throne of Canterbury.

In this office he accomplished great things, but in the days of decision he proved himself again and again morally weak, and history will forgive acts of tyranny in a man of high office more readily than acts of weakness. And thus, indeed, justly, for acts of tyranny are often transient in their consequences, and can be resisted or corrected, but acts of moral weakness lead to unexpected results; and so men gather around such characters which are otherwise noble and good and rend them. When the day of reckoning came, this was Cranmer's experience. Whilst others were beheaded, he was degraded and burnt, and his treason was overlooked in order to humiliate him as a heretic.

Let no one suppose that I shall justify what was done. When we come to the last days of Cranmer, I will speak of them in a way which shows my abhorrence, but now I am only describing the motives of human actions, especially when they are stirred by religious feelings. Did I say religious? I mean the vile and bad passions in which men have so often indulged themselves in the name of religion.

#### *Cranmer as Archbishop under Queen Mary.*

When Queen Mary so easily defeated the plot into which her brother had been foolishly led, and ascended the throne of her father amid the plaudits of the nation, Cranmer's fate was sealed. Many reasons combined to favour Mary. The English sense of fair play revolted against the attempt to deprive her of her inheritance, and the country was still largely Roman Catholic in feeling. The two Protectors had been tyrants, and we readily flee from evils which we know and from which we have suffered. Mary announced that she meant "not to compel or constrain other men's consciences otherwise

than God shall put in their hearts." But these were fair words spoken in the days of gratitude for her throne, and were soon forgotten.

The others who had conspired against her were sent to the block, no one objecting, but Cranmer was reserved for a more humiliating death. He was a heretic, and this was, in Mary's eyes, a worse crime than treason. As a heretic, he was to be degraded, insulted and burnt. Mary might have remembered how the Archbishop had pleaded with her father when he wronged her in the days of her girlhood, but the faithful daughter of Rome saw nothing but her duty to extirpate heresy and to avenge herself upon the arch-heretic of all. Cranmer's theory of Church government required him to seek a new commission from the throne to exercise his office as archbishop, but he sought it not. Four bishops, five deans and scores of doctors and preachers, together with the foreign divines, saw what was coming and fled from the impending storm, but Cranmer, like Ridley and Latimer, stood to his post. "It would ill become me," said Cranmer, "to fly." He braced himself to defend all the changes which had been made under his influence in the reign of Edward VI. Ridley wrote to him, saying, "If thou, O man of God, do purpose to abide in this realm, prepare and arm thyself to die."

Cranmer's reverence for the throne caused him to humble himself before the Queen. He wrote to her to say that he would never be the author of sedition to move subjects from the obedience of their heads and rulers. Some suggested a pension for him upon his retiring into private life. A report was circulated that the Latin Mass had been set up in Canterbury Cathedral under his orders. For once the Archbishop broke out into flaming indignation, and issued a declaration which contained the words: "It was not I that did set up the Mass at Canterbury, but it was a false, flattering, lying and dissimulating monk which caused Mass to be set up there, without mine advice or counsel." Cranmer's last public function was on August 6 at the funeral of Edward VI, and he was sent to the Tower in September 1553. Bishop Bonner triumphantly wrote: "This day

is looked Mr. Canterbury must be placed where is meet for him. He is become very humble and ready to submit himself to all things, but that will not serve."

Nothing was said about his treason, and plans were not yet ready for his trial for heresy. The laws of England must be altered before anything could be done, and in October all the Acts of Parliament were repealed. The following year Cardinal Pole, who was not consecrated archbishop until March 22, 1556, absolved the realm from schism.<sup>1</sup> Now all was ready for the final pre-arranged act in the tragedy of Cranmer. The story from September 1553 to the day of burning, March 21, 1556, including imprisonments, trials, intimidations, recantations, insults, humiliations and triumphs, would take many hours to tell. Each one can read it for himself in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* or in Strype's *Cranmer*. According to the new laws, the Archbishop must be tried for heresy by spiritual authority, and to increase his own triumph the Pope secured the case for himself. Convocation in 1554 deputed eight members of the Lower House to examine Cranmer, together with Ridley and Latimer, but these proceedings had no legal power. They made humble suit to Paul IV to try Cranmer, and, acting upon this, the Pope issued a summons to the imprisoned Archbishop to appear within eighty days at Rome, delegating the trial to the head of the Roman Inquisition. The functionary delegated his powers to Dr. Brooks, the new Bishop of Gloucester, who summoned Cranmer to appear before him at Oxford on September 12, 1555. The official summons was: "Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, appear here and make answer to that shall be laid to thy charge, that is to say, for blasphemy, incontineny and heresy, and make answer here to the Bishop of Gloucester, representing the Pope's person." The Archbishop protested against the authority of his judge: "He had once taken a solemn oath never to consent to admitting of the Pope's authority into this realm of England again, and

<sup>1</sup> What was done by Pole in the name of Rome and the bearing of this upon English Ordinations forms a subject by itself. (See *A Treatise on the Bull Apostolicae Curae*, S.P.C.K., 1896.)

he had done it advisedly and meant, by God's grace, to keep it." The charge of blasphemy related to his view of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, of incontinency to his being a married man, and of heresy to his repudiation of Rome in administration and doctrine. Nothing was wanting in the trial to add to the full measure of insult. Every lie and slander of his enemies was brought forth and pressed against him—his first marriage and the oft-repeated story of his having been an ostler and an unlearned man, with many other like charges. But his chief offence was his repudiation of Rome and his doctrinal opposition to that Church. The proceedings were a travesty of justice administered with subtlety and cruelty. Knowing the character of his victim, the Bishop of Gloucester allowed him to be plied in private with exhortations and promises. Hence the renunciations and the recantations, the miserable intrigues against the honour of a man of highest character and yet of a yielding mind. Cranmer was no hero like the fierce and defiant Ridley or Latimer, and the proceedings were purposely prolonged to increase his humiliation. At one stage they induced him to declare that as the Queen's Majesty, by the consent of Parliament, had received and restored the Pope's authority, he would submit himself and take the Pope for the chief head of the Church of England so far as the laws of the realm would permit. This was to attack Cranmer on his weakest side, because loyalty to the Crown was a passion with him. In a few days he was induced to substitute for it a more unqualified submission, and to submit himself to the Catholic Church of Christ and to the Pope. Later he appealed from the Pope's authority to a general council. In this way six submissions were followed by six recantations, until at last all timidity and hesitation fled. Before the end he had been solemnly and with much insult stripped of each robe and symbol of office, and clad in a poor yeoman beadle's gown bare and worn. Thus attired, he was as a layman handed over to the secular authorities, to be dealt with by them.

On the day before his death he composed his seventh recantation, in which he declared: "I believe every

article of the Catholic faith, every clause, word and sentence taught by our Saviour Jesus Christ, His Apostles and Prophets in the New and Old Testaments, and all articles explicate and set forth in the General Councils."

The final scene at Oxford is too well known to need description; and as the flames leapt up he stretched out his right hand, saying with a loud voice, "This hand hath offended," and held it in the fire until the end came. The Pope escaped responsibility for the burning of Cranmer by causing him to be handed over to the secular power.<sup>1</sup> He and Queen Mary must share the blame between them for this and all other burnings for heresy in her reign.<sup>2</sup> These have branded themselves indelibly upon the hearts and memories of Englishmen. It was the hour of Rome's temporary triumph, but the five years of Queen Mary have left an heritage of suspicion of Rome in the minds of most Englishmen which has ever since grown in the minds of the uneducated into a positive horror, if not hatred. The dread of Rome helped to bring Charles I to the scaffold and drove James II from his throne; and when, in the seventeenth century, the great English theologians were building up an Anglo-Catholic theology which was true to the Bible and antiquity, the very authorities to which Cranmer appealed, they were met by opposition, as teachers are

<sup>1</sup> "The Smithfield fires, which have cast so lurid a light upon the second half of that short period (Mary's reign), were the almost inevitable consequences in that age, and under circumstances which it is well-nigh impossible for us at this distance of time to understand and to make allowance for, of the rebellious turbulence of the men who would accept no tolerance, to whom mild measures were but incentives to greater audacity and outrage. Even so, it appears abundantly clear that this rigour was the work of a lay majority in the Council. . . . As for Pole himself, the only prosecutions for heresy which took place in the diocese of Canterbury were enacted when he lay upon his death-bed."—*Life of Reginald Pole*, by Martin Heile, 1910.

This Roman Catholic writer wishes to lay all the blame upon English laymen, and is anxious to exonerate Queen Mary, and still more Cardinal Pole. Not so can Rome escape the responsibility of the "Smithfield Fires."

<sup>2</sup> On "The Limits of Tolerance," see Appendix E, p. 219.



now in the twentieth century, prompted by fear of even looking Romewards, though nothing be taught which is distinctly Roman Catholic.

I close with Dr. Mason's summary of Cranmer's work:<sup>1</sup> "For two things Cranmer lived. He lived to restore as nearly as might be the Church of the Fathers, and he lived and he died for the rights and the welfare of England. The independence of the English Crown, the freedom of the English Church from an intolerable foreign yoke, an English Bible, the English services—for these he laboured with untiring and unostentatious diligence, and with few mistakes considering the difficulties of his task. He made no claim to infallibility, but he laid open the way to the correction of whatever might be amiss in his own teaching or in the Church which he ruled when, in the magnificent demurrer which he made at his degradation, he appealed, not for himself only, but for all those who should afterwards be on his side, to the next General Council. Under that broad shield which he threw over us we may confidently abide, and lay our cause before those who will candidly weigh the facts of History."

<sup>1</sup> *Thomas Cranmer*, by Dr. A. J. Mason, 1898.