

THOMAS CRANMER

Archbishop of Canterbury & Martyr, 1489-1556

Feast Day: 21 March

Collect: Merciful God, through the work of Thomas Cranmer you renewed the worship of your Church by restoring the language of the people, and through his death you revealed your power in human weakness: Grant that by your grace we may always worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



Facts:

- Driving force of the English Reformation
- Entered Cambridge at age 14, became Doctor of Divinity in 1526
- Caught Henry VIII's attention by constructing theological defenses of "the King's Affair," Henry's desired divorce from Catherine of Aragon, which Henry then directed Cranmer to present at universities around Europe
- Became involved with Lutheran reformers while in Europe, influenced deeply by their thinking and began to move from being a Catholic humanist to becoming a reformer himself
- Named Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533—among his first acts was to declare the King's marriage null and void and validate his marriage to Anne Boleyn
- Compiled the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549, writing many of the prayers himself, pushed it even further toward Protestantism in the 1552 edition
- Arrested by Mary I after death of Edward VI
- Signed recantations during 2 years in prison, probably under torture, but then recanted recantations
- Burned at the stake on March 21, 1556

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Obtained permission for and created the first vernacular worship in England—The Great Litany
- Pioneer of the Via Media in the Reformation—apply Reformation energy without losing everything of value in the Roman Catholic tradition
- Prayerbook as the primary theological statement of our faith: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, “as we pray, so we believe”
- Wanted to make not only the Bible accessible in English to common people, as earlier reformers had, but also daily prayer—legacy of today’s Daily Office (Morning & Evening Prayer)
- Although accused of merely being a political operator, was willing to give his life for his beliefs: “Foreasmuch as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, there my hand shall first be punished; for if I may come to the fire, it shall first be burned.”

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- What is the value of daily liturgical prayer in our lives? Why did Cranmer work so hard to make the Daily Office available to us?
- What is the value and what is the cost of working with a corrupt ruler to accomplish theological goals?
- How do we decide what to keep from Tradition and what needs reforming or discarding?
- What does it mean to assume responsibility for the spiritual welfare of others? Can and should we do that? How do we do it with integrity and intention?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:

HENRY VIII

Monarch & Reformer, 1491-1547

Feast Day: none

Collect: Almighty God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and power infinite, have mercy upon the whole congregation, and so rule the heart of thy chosen servant Henry the Eighth, our king and governor: that he (knowing whose minister he is) may above all things seek thy honor and glory, and that we his subjects (duly considering whose authority he hath) may faithfully serve, honor, and humbly obey him, in thee, and for thee, according to thy blessed word and ordinance: Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee, and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.



Facts:

- Honestly a terrible person, but still the instigator of the English Reformation by breaking away from Rome over the Pope refusing to grant an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon
- Driven by the need to have a healthy male heir to the throne and continue the Tudor line
- At first opposed to the Reformation—named “Defender of the Faith” by the Pope for his treatise denouncing Luther’s ideas
- Influenced by Anne Boleyn, Cranmer, and other Reformers in his inner circle
- Primarily interested in divesting the church of its power and wealth and taking them for himself
- Named himself Supreme Head of the Church of England
- Married six times, became increasingly erratic and insecure as his health declined
- Spent most of the money he gained from destroying English monasteries on costly European wars, the common people never benefited from it

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Virtually destroyed the rich English monastic tradition by sacking the English monasteries beginning in 1538—the dismantling of the shrine of Thomas Becket in 1540 led to Henry's excommunication by the Pope. While much was lost, this also ended the exploitation of poor people by monks making money off of displaying "relics" for devotion
- Henry occupies an interesting place how we as Americans arrived at our current relationship of church and state—he made church and state explicitly unified, with the state dominant. This very elevation of state authority over spiritual authority later created the conditions for the separation of church and state posited by the American Founders
- Was persuaded by the theological minds he elevated (especially Cranmer) to allow vernacular Bibles, vernacular worship, and other Reformation principles to take hold in England

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- How does God use bad people to do good things? What do we make of this?
- How do we grapple with the mixed heritage we have as Anglicans? There are a fair number of dishonorable motives in our birth as a tradition along with the noble motives—what do we do with that?
- Henry was a sad, angry, miserable, ill and awful person who killed hundreds, and imprisoned thousands of people. How do we pray for him? How do we pray for people like him today?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:

ELIZABETH I

Monarch & Religious Diplomat, 1533-1603

Feast Day: (unofficial) 7 September

Collect: Almighty and everlasting GOD, we are taught by thy holy word that the hearts of monarchs are in thy rule and governance, and that thou dost dispose and turn them as it seemeth best to thy godly wisdom: We humbly beseech thee, so to dispose and govern the heart of Elizabeth the first, thy servant, our Queen and governor, that in all her thoughts, words, and works, she may ever seek thy honor and glory, and study to preserve thy people, committed to her charge, in wealth, peace, and Godliness: Grant this, O merciful Father, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Facts:

- Daughter of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII
- Declared illegitimate after Anne's execution
- Imprisoned in the Tower of London for almost a year on suspicion of supporting Protestant rebellion by her half-sister Mary, who ascended the throne after her half-brother Edward,
- Ascended the throne in 1558 at the age of 25, to rule a nation torn apart by religious violence
- Created the Elizabethan Settlement, a set of legal principles formed by the 1558 Act of Supremacy and the 1559 Act of Uniformity, behind which were a set of civic and spiritual principles that contributed to the Via Media
- Elizabethan Settlement had three main parts: the monarch is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, *The Book of Common Prayer* forms its worship, and the line of apostolic succession back to Peter is to be maintained
- Remembered for 44 years of stable rule—had her father's charisma, her mother's political savvy, and her own grit

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Elizabeth really cemented the nature of Anglicanism as we know it today. Under her brother's rule, the Church had moved unrecognizably far to the Protestant side, and her sister tried to drag it all the way back to full Roman Catholicism. She found the Middle Way.
- Famously said, "I do not seek windows into men's souls." Believed in the individual's right to personal spiritual convictions, not subject to legislation by the church or the state—a revolutionary stance for someone in her position
- Presided over repeal of heresy laws, virtually ending systematic religious persecution as a function of the state in England (although this would resurface from time to time)
- Found a way to end religious war in England—the significance of this cannot be overstated compared to what continued to happen in continental Europe

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- What is the role of the individual in determining his/her own spiritual beliefs? We take this for granted, but what good reasons are there for the corrective of the community?
- By what metrics do you determine your spiritual beliefs, aside from the outer authorities you rely on? Feelings? Emotions? Direct communication from God? How do you know what you know? Why do you trust it? When do you distrust it?
- What does it mean to be asked to peacefully coexist with people who believe things that are anathema to you? How do you do it? Should you have to? What does it mean for our church? What does it mean for our society?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics: