



Portrait of Thomas Cranmer by Fliccius.  
The inscription 'Anno aetate 57. Julij 20'  
indicates that it was painted in July 1545.

# THOMAS CRANMER



Archbishop and principal Compiler  
of THE BOOK OF  
COMMON PRAYER,  
1548.



THOMAS CRANMER was a highly controversial churchman, who was born at Aslockton in Nottinghamshire in 1489. Cranmer's father was squire of the village and could boast of Norman origin. As a child aged 7 he attended his first school where the master was 'marvellous severe and cruel'. This was quite a description in an age of severity and cruelty. Young Cranmer was able to forget the miseries of schooling when at home, for he rode and was a good longbowman.

He was sent to Jesus College, Cambridge, when he was 14, and it was here that he became expert in the learning of the day; sophistry, logic, philosophy moral and natural – arguing the dark riddles and quiddities of Duns and other subtle questionists until he was 22 years old.

He stayed at Cambridge as a student of Divinity for 25 years, and only came to sudden prominence by his suggestion to the King's Secretary, Stephen Gardiner, on August 2nd 1529. He proposed that the vexing problem of the King's divorce to Catherine should be considered not by the slow-moving Papal authorities, but by English theologians at the Universities. The ploy was successful, and King Henry VIII ensured his advancement in the church as a reward in part, and part because Cranmer truly believed that the King was above criticism – and that all actions and morality should be bent towards serving Henry's interests. This led Cranmer many times into doubtful decisions and actions. His consistency in these moves at least can not be faulted. He was a brilliant exponent of argument who often brought round people of opposing views.

King Henry's opposition to the directives from Rome culminated in the English church being separated from the control of the Bishop of Rome, as the Pope was called. Cranmer played an important and active part in these moves of separation.

It became clear as time went by that alternative services must be written to substitute for the old Roman practices, and Cranmer – who by then had been Archbishop of Canterbury for some time – felt that he should draft appropriate offices. For a time there had been five different *Uses* in force in different parts of the country, but the *Sarum Use* was most popular and Cranmer felt that this should be the basis for the new Prayer Book. Much of the work of drafting the new book was done by Cranmer when he lived in his Palace at Bekebourne, close by St. Peter's Church where he often worshipped. We can easily visualise him down the hill at the Palace, seated at a desk by the fire, poring over early manuscripts and his own papers by the light of a candle.

His first draft was formed from the breviary which the Spaniard Cardinal Quignon had produced. The second draft in 1545 was composed differently; the traditional eight *Hours* services being substituted by morning and evening prayers. In it the Lord's Prayer together with some other parts were to be in English but the main text remained in Latin.

A third and final draft was made in 1548, the words being considered and debated at length by Parliament in the Act of Uniformity. A concession also converted the whole text into English. Surprisingly, with so much amendment, discussion and a certain amount of committee writing, the resultant Book of Common Prayer was a model of imaginative and beautiful prose, and it has been in use for four hundred years with little alteration; a monument of a dark and tumultuous period in the English monarchy that scarcely deserved such a grand reminder.

Cranmer outlived King Henry and the following administrations, but came himself to be burned at the stake as he had committed so many he considered heretic. He died in March 1556 by St. Mary's Church, Oxford.

Januar	Circumcisio	Martine				Vesper	
		Primus Lectio	Secunda Lectio	Tertia Lectio	Primus Lectio	Secunda Lectio	
1	Epiphania	1	2	3	4	5	
2	Epiphania	2	3	4	5	6	
3	Epiphania	3	4	5	6	7	
4	Epiphania	4	5	6	7	8	
5	Epiphania	5	6	7	8	9	
6	Epiphania	6	7	8	9	10	
7	Epiphania	7	8	9	10	11	
8	Epiphania	8	9	10	11	12	
9	Epiphania	9	10	11	12	13	
10	Epiphania	10	11	12	13	14	
11	Epiphania	11	12	13	14	15	
12	Epiphania	12	13	14	15	16	
13	Epiphania	13	14	15	16	17	
14	Epiphania	14	15	16	17	18	
15	Epiphania	15	16	17	18	19	
16	Epiphania	16	17	18	19	20	
17	Epiphania	17	18	19	20	21	
18	Epiphania	18	19	20	21	22	
19	Epiphania	19	20	21	22	23	
20	Epiphania	20	21	22	23	24	
21	Epiphania	21	22	23	24	25	
22	Epiphania	22	23	24	25	26	
23	Epiphania	23	24	25	26	27	
24	Epiphania	24	25	26	27	28	
25	Epiphania	25	26	27	28	29	
26	Epiphania	26	27	28	29	30	
27	Epiphania	27	28	29	30	31	
28	Epiphania	28	29	30	31	1	
29	Epiphania	29	30	31	1	2	
30	Epiphania	30	31	1	2	3	
31	Epiphania	31	1	2	3	4	

  

Februarius	Circumcisio	Martine				Vesper	
		Primus Lectio	Secunda Lectio	Tertia Lectio	Primus Lectio	Secunda Lectio	
1	Epiphania	1	2	3	4	5	
2	Epiphania	2	3	4	5	6	
3	Epiphania	3	4	5	6	7	
4	Epiphania	4	5	6	7	8	
5	Epiphania	5	6	7	8	9	
6	Epiphania	6	7	8	9	10	
7	Epiphania	7	8	9	10	11	
8	Epiphania	8	9	10	11	12	
9	Epiphania	9	10	11	12	13	
10	Epiphania	10	11	12	13	14	
11	Epiphania	11	12	13	14	15	
12	Epiphania	12	13	14	15	16	
13	Epiphania	13	14	15	16	17	
14	Epiphania	14	15	16	17	18	
15	Epiphania	15	16	17	18	19	
16	Epiphania	16	17	18	19	20	
17	Epiphania	17	18	19	20	21	
18	Epiphania	18	19	20	21	22	
19	Epiphania	19	20	21	22	23	
20	Epiphania	20	21	22	23	24	
21	Epiphania	21	22	23	24	25	
22	Epiphania	22	23	24	25	26	
23	Epiphania	23	24	25	26	27	
24	Epiphania	24	25	26	27	28	
25	Epiphania	25	26	27	28	29	
26	Epiphania	26	27	28	29	30	
27	Epiphania	27	28	29	30	1	
28	Epiphania	28	29	30	1	2	
29	Epiphania	29	30	1	2	3	
30	Epiphania	30	1	2	3	4	
31	Epiphania	31	1	2	3	4	

In this manuscript draft Cranmer has listed the services for all the days of January and February. You will note that there are three Lessons for Matins and two for Even-song. Although a clerk would have drawn up this page it is Cranmer's hand that has amended the list of Saints' Days - the red letter days of the early printed prayer books.



Cranmer's fall from power affected even St. Peter's Church, for it happened that a new incumbent was needed in 1553. Since the living was in the gift of the Archbishop the State had to step in. This entry in the first Parish Records was a copy made by Nicholas Batteley. Translated it reads: Marmaduke Smith, presented by King Philip and Queen Mary (the See being vacant through the depriving of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury) A.D. 1553. From the written Presentation.

*Dnus Johannes de Eyton Lincoln. Dioc. presbyter habet litteras institutionis ad Vicariam Ecclia de Lincolneburn in Cant. Dioc. Jan. 18. A.D. 1553. Ex Regis. Resignavit idem A.D. 1562. Post cujus Resignatione Wilhelmus Wigg ad eandem Vicariam admittitur sc. Jan. 2. 1562. qui et pmutarit in Vicario de Patricks. Et p hanc pmutatione decessit Beneficiatum Simon Hitch, Vicaria de Patricksborn dimissa, collatus: ad Vicariam de Beaksborn 4. Jul. Octobr. 1572*

▶ *Marmaducus Smith institutus erat ad pmutationem R. et R. Philippi et Mariae (sede tunc vacante per deprivationem Thomae Cranmer Archiepiscopi Cant.) A.D. 1553. Ex Autographi. Presentationis*