



Blood, sweat and tears: Thomas Cranmer's role in the English Reformation

1) Why I love the English Reformation

2) Introduction to Cranmer

3) Overview of English Reformation

a. John Wycliffe

b. Tyndale

c. The "Kings Great Matter"

4) Cranmer's place in the English Reformation

a. Cranmer's agenda for reform under Edward VI

b. Martyrdom under Mary I

c. Cranmer's tumultuous imprisonment

When Mary became Queen in 1553, Cranmer was urged to flee from England, but he responded that he was:

*"not afraid to own all the changes that were by his means made in religion in the last reign."*¹

Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, issued a warning to Cranmer when Mary came to the throne:

*If you, O man of God, do intend to abide in this realm, prepare and arm yourself to die: for...there is no appearance or likelihood of any other thing, except you will deny your Master Christ.*²

He professed that he did *"not otherwise believe than the Catholic Church and the Church of Rome holds and teaches. I am sorry that I ever held or thought otherwise."*³

¹ J Strype, ed., *Memorials of Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1854), 3:37.

² Parker Society, *The Works of Nicholas Ridley* (Cambridge: University Press, 1843), 62.

³ John Fox, *Fox's Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christian and the Protestant Martyrs* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954), 246.

“As for the pope, I refuse him, as Christ’s enemy, and antichrist, with all his false doctrine. And as for the sacrament [the Eucharist]... my book teaches so true a doctrine of the sacrament, that it shall stand at the last day before the judgement of God, where the papistical doctrine contrary to it shall be ashamed to show her face.”⁴

“for as much as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished; for when I come to the fire, it shall first be burned.”⁵

5) What can we learn from the life and death of Thomas Cranmer?

a. Cranmer is a very human figure

b. Jesus is faithful to his people

c. Engaging with the tension between the unchanging authority of Scripture and changing forms of communication.

i) Cranmer believed thoroughly in the unchanging authority of Scripture; Cranmer held to *sola Scriptura*, the first, or formal principle of the Reformation from which all other Protestant doctrines flow.

ii) Cranmer was communication-savvy and made significant (and at times deeply unpopular!) changes to church services to try and make the Bible clear within them.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.