**Cranmer's Ambiguous Legacy**

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Diarmaid MacCulloch reflects on the 'after-life' of Henry VIII's archbishop, burnt at the stake as a Protestant martyr under Mary.

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer died at the stake in 1556, a martyr for the English Reformation; but did he die a martyr for the Church of England or for Anglicanism? If we examine Cranmer's career after he parted company in the early 1530s with the Catholicism of his first forty years, we find a man of international perspective, who sought to move England into the path of the wider European Reformation: in particular towards the Reformations to be found in the churches of south Germany and Switzerland. After Cranmer's death, most of these churches would be labelled 'Calvinist' or 'Reformed'. He would not have recognised these descriptions, but if he had lived, it is very likely that he would have done his best to take the English church in the same direction.

What would the Church of England have looked like if instead of Queen Mary's triumph in 1553, Queen Jane's quite reasonable hereditary claim to the throne had succeeded in establishing her regime? The Lady Mary would have to have been effectively neutralised, and one fears that neutralising her for good would have involved the block, in a return to Henrician savagery. The Lady Elizabeth could have been married off to Lord Robert Dudley, a good catch for a royal bastard, and a good chance for them both of a happy love-match.

Archbishop Cranmer, living to his allotted three-score years and ten or beyond, could produce a third version of his two earlier Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552, in the light of friendly criticism from continental reformers whom he respected, like Peter Martyr, Johann Heinrich Bullinger and Calvin. He would be succeeded as archbishop by Nicholas Ridley or Robert Holgate, with energetic younger. reformers like Edmund Grindal ready to make their mark and pick up good ideas from the best reformed churches of Europe. The Scots immigrant John Knox, mellowed by an increasingly successful career in the Church of England, would be appointed Bishop of Newcastle, benevolently taking no notice of the advanced congregations in his diocese who received communion sitting; this was a practice in any case increasingly common throughout Jane's Church, despite Cranmer's grumbles. Cranmer's cherished reform of the old popish canon law would be achieved; the primer and catechism published at the very end of Edward's reign in 1553 would become the standards; the Forty-two Articles would have been unmodified by Elizabethan hesitations about relegating the significance of the sacrament of Holy Communion to that merely of a symbolic repetition.

Out in the parishes, metrical psalms in the style of Geneva would quickly have spread: these were the best secret weapon of the English Reformation, making its public worship and private devotional practice genuinely popular throughout increasing areas of the kingdom. This congregational music would also take over in the cathedrals, now devoid of choirs or polyphony, and with their organs (where they survived) used mainly for entertainment in the Dutch fashion. The conservative nobility would continue the sullen public compliance with religious change which they had shown under Edward VI, their private celebration of ceremonial worship tolerated as eccentricity, like the Lady Elizabeth's patronage of choral music in her own chapel.

The traditionalist higher clergy would gradually die off in senior church offices and the universities, with no possibility of like-minded replacement: since the universities produced no major haemorrhage of exiles in the 1560s, the Jesuits and other religious orders would find it difficult to recruit potential clergy to train for their attempt to treat Jane's England as a mission field. England would have become the most powerful political player in the Reformed camp, with Cranmer a cordial if geographically distant partner with John Calvin. It is powerfully symbolic that it was Cranmer's son-in-law Thomas Norton who translated Calvin's Institutes into English, and Cranmer's veteran printer Reyner Wolfe who published it. With a Cranmer-Calvin axis, the profile of Reformed religion across the whole Continent would have been changed, and with the help and encouragement of Bishop Knox, the Reformation in Scotland might have followed a close path to the Reformed Church of England.

That is the history that never happened. Instead, in 1558 Queen Elizabeth had to cope with the consequences of Mary's steadily more successful effort to integrate a traditionalist comeback with the Counter- Reformation's new dynamism. At home, Elizabeth wanted to conciliate conservatives; abroad, she wanted to conciliate suspicious Catholic Spain and France, and also to win friends among the Lutheran princes of Germany and Scandinavia, who were increasingly hostile to the Calvinist and other Reformed Churches to their south. At the same time, however, she was identified with the Protestant cause by her birth, she had a team of advisers who were senior administrators from Northumberland's regime, and she faced a triumphalist Protestant grouping already creating a mythology of glorious resistance to evil in the deaths of so many martyrs. Of these martyrs, Cranmer's name headed the list. Elizabeth herself shows signs of having preferred his discredited first Prayer Book of 1549 to his second of 1552, but virtually no-one at the time agreed with her: to reintroduce 1549 was not practical politics.

Elizabeth's solution to her dilemmas was remarkable: quite deliberately, she established what proved to he a snapshot, frozen in time, of the Church as it had been in September 1552, ignoring the progress made in further changing the Church of England after that date. This meant that the 1559 Prayer Book was the 1552 rite, devoid of the last-minute 'black rubric' denying that kneeling at communion represented adoration of the eucharistic elements of bread and wine (an addition probably demanded by Cranmer himself to preserve the custom of kneeling after John Knox's criticism). No government sympathy was offered to attempts in 1559 and 1571 to revive the arch- bishop's 1553 scheme of wholesale replacement for canon law. The 1553 catechism and primer were set aside, the primer in favour of a modified version of that issued in 1551 – itself a reworking of Henry VIII's 1545 primer.

One of the most striking features of Elizabeth's 1559 Settlement was that it began the Church of England's long march away from Cranmer's eucharistic theology, if only in small details. Cranmer wanted to ensure that people did not think that there was any physical or corporal presence of Christ in the elements of bread and wine, and he carefully recast his 1552 communion service to make this clear. Christ was only present to those communicants who had faith in him, and faith could not be earned by any human being; it was a predestined gift of God to those to whom he chose to give it. The clarity of Cranmer's sacramental intentions was undermined by restoring to the communion service the 1549 formulae of administering bread and wine to communicants which he had replaced in 1552, now simply shackled to the later formulae: was the communicant receiving the body and blood of Christ, or taking the elements in remembrance that Christ had died for human salvation? This, the omission of the 'black rubric', and a baffling instruction that the permissible ornaments and vestments of the Church were those in use in the year before the 1549 Prayer Book was authorised, were the only modifications of significance to the 1552 book in 1559.

Similarly, the most material alterations made by the 1565 Convocation to the Forty-two Articles of 1553 concerned eucharistic doctrine. Lutherans believed in a real presence in the eucharist. Although advocates of such views were virtually non-existent among English higher clergy, there were foreign diplomatic considerations. Most significantly, the Article statement 'of the wicked which do not eat the body of Christ', was omitted in 1563 to spare foreign Lutheran sensibilities, and it was only restored in 1571 when Lutherans no longer mattered. The 1553 argument that Christ's body could not be on earth because he was locally present in heaven was also left out for ever. It was true that the replacement wording still emphasised spiritual presence: 'the body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner; and the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper is faith'. However, Edmund Guest, the architect of this phrase and one of the bishops on Elizabeth's bench farthest from the Reformed ethos, gave it a spin which would not have appealed greatly to Cranmer: it 'did not exclude the presence of Christ's body from the sacrament, but only the grossness and sensibleness in the receiving thereof.

One should not exaggerate the extent of the drift at this early stage. Edwardian establishment evangelicals who survived the Marian holocaust, either through exile or some form of discreet invisibility at home, resumed their careers. To men like Bishop Edmund Grindal, who had been a major help to John Foxe in compiling his collections on the Marian persecutions, Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley were shining examples whose work needed to be upheld and extended. Even more radical evangelicals who had clashed with Cranmer under Edward Vl could forget their differences in view of what had happened under Mary: John Knox was generous in his comments on the three Oxford prisoners' 'lenity, sincere doctrine, pure life, godly conversation, and discreet counsel' and he called the martyred Cranmer 'the mild man of God'.

Yet the plain fact was that the Supreme Governor would not allow the Edwardian Reformation to proceed on its path, at least if it meant bringing structural change to her Church. Famously, she ruined Archbishop Grindal's ministry because of his refusal to suppress the 'prophesyings' – gatherings of clergy for the improvement of their preaching, and much more useful and less dramatic occasions than their name implied. The generation of Parker and Sandys found themselves defending this fossilised version of the Edwardian Church in the face of criticism from those who had been their companions in misfortune under Mary – increasingly also from a new generation who had no such personal links to restrain their expression of anger at the bewildering immobilism of the Church establishment.

In the face of this unexpected turn of events, the Oxford martyrs became as much the property of those who deplored the Elizabethan Church's half-reformed polity, as of Cranmer's remaining colleagues. A tussle, indeed, took place for the honour of being the heirs of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley between groups within the Church which from the late 1560s can be distinguished as Puritan and conformist. Both sides claimed the myth-making of Foxe's Book of Martyrs for their own, and chose what they wanted from the myth. For conformists, Cranmer's legacy was his Prayer Book, so that he was the symbol of their defence of the liturgy against Puritans, just as he had been in the disputes among the Marian exiles about how far they could depart from the 1552 Book. For Puritans, this was a distortion of the Cranmer legacy, tragically cut off before it could be completed. Notoriously, for John Field and Thomas Wilcox, the authors of the Admonition to the Parliament in 1572, the Prayer Book was 'an unperfect book, culled and picked out of that popish dunghill, the mass-hook full of all abominations'. Even John Foxe, in his 1571 introduction to the published text of Cranmer's canon law revision, felt compelled to point out the one serious flaw in this document prepared by his hero, that it ordered the exclusive use of the Prayer Book. The way to avoid the seeming contradiction of attacking Cranmer's Prayer Book while regarding him as an example to all good Protestants was the quite reasonable supposition that his work had been interrupted: the tradition that in time he would have 'drawn up a book of prayer a hundred times more perfect than this that we now have'.

The separatists who resisted a state- sanctioned Church encompassing both godly and ungodly alike who emerged on the fringe of the Puritan movement were much more equivocal towards Cranmer than mainstream Puritans, but they were by no means totally hostile; they too could use the Oxford martyrs as sticks with which to beat the Elizabethan hierarchy. Robert Browne, a Cambridge Puritan who had taken the rare step beyond the official Church into separatism, sneered about Elizabeth's bishops that 'neither Cranmer nor Latimer, nor Hooper, nor Ridley were so meet for the prison houses, as these are for their bishoprics'. He regarded the Marian persecution as God's way of. trying to save Edwardian establishment evangelicals from repeating the follies of the old Church; however, the Elizabethan hierarchy had not learned from Cranmer's and Ridley's mistakes, and 'these have got again that false popish government'. John Greenwood, a separatist who bitterly detested the Prayer Book which Cranmer had created, coupled his rather condescending view of the Oxford trio's 'ignorance' in borrowing a liturgy from Antichrist with the affirmation that 'I reverence those good men as much as I may by the word of God ... In that they knew, they shewed themselves faithful unto the death; therefore they [were] gatherers with Christ and not with antichrists ... God did pardon Cranmer for making that vile book, and his being metropolitan', he affirmed confidently. Only among the real radicals, those who were conscious heirs of the anabaptist martyrs whom Cranmer had helped to burn in Edward VI's reign, was there a consistent tradition that scorned the Oxford martyrs even amid the Marian troubles.

Another less positive view of Cranmer emerged from the 1.580s in a different quarter, among members of the established Church who wished to lay greater stress on its sacramental life. Most early significant figures (like many Puritan leaders), were Cambridge dons, notably Lancelot Andrewes, the Master of Pembroke: later the movement would widen, until under the patronage of the two first Stuart monarchs it gained an edgy self-confidence and a leading role in the Church. It is difficult to find a satisfactory general label for the grouping, except for the vague and variable description 'High Church'. At first without much public group identity, by the second decade of the seventeenth century these sacramentalists were being given. the nickname 'Arminians', by comparison with the movement in the Netherlands pioneered by the maverick Calvinist theologian Jacobus Arminius. The common factor was a revolt against the orthodoxy established by the great figures of the Reformation, of whom Calvin was the most obvious reference-point. However the English 'Arminians' predated Arminius' emergence as a disruptive force, and they had other priorities: a predisposition to emphasise continuity rather than discontinuity in the English Church through the Reformation struggles, and a willingness to appreciate afresh the devotional traditions of the medieval West. Above all, the sacramentalists wished to restore the notion of real presence in the eucharist to what they regarded as its rightful key place in Christian doctrine.

For saccamentalists or Arminians, Cranmer's 1552 Prayer Book as lightly revised in 1559 was not promising territory; nor did they enjoy contemplating the work of the Edwardian Church over which the Archbishop had presided. For most of them, there was no question of open criticism, Arminians made much of heir loyalty to the established Church, and they were fond of citing the homilies to prove controversial points which were often far from the intentions of the homilies' original compilers. Rather, their disapproval manifested itself in a discreet lack of comment about the virtues of the Edwardian Church, and also an increasing interest in the 1549 Prayer Book, for the very reason that Cranmer had revised it, because of the possibilities that it offered of reinstating a more extrovert Catholic practice and devotion than was possible with the 1559 rite. Lancelot Andrewes, once he had become a bishop, set an example in his private chapel by rear- ranging the order. of material in the 1559 communion service and multiplying the accompanying ceremonial to suit his theological predilections, an interesting action for a bishop who always emphasised uniformity and obedience to the Church in his public statements. When in 1.637 the sacramentalists had the chance to create an entire new liturgy for the kingdom of Scotland (alas, a liturgy which was not appreciated by the recipients), it was to 1549 and not to 1559 that they looked for a model.

Matters were made worse when the Arminians' growing ascendancy in the early Stuart Church and their frequently aggressive promotion of their remoulding of its life and practice met with opposition from the older Church establishment. One of the best examples of how Cranmer could now be used to embarrass the Arminians comes from the bitter dispute between William Laud and Bishop John Williams of Lincoln over the correct positioning of the communion table, and the symbolism or lack of it which the positioning might imply. In his 1637 justification of the general practice of the Elizabethan Church, Holy Table: name and thing, Williams naturally drew .heavily on the 1559 Book of Common Prayer, and on the Homilies. He also appealed directly to Cranmer's arguments as presented in the Defence and the Answer, since Cranmer's was 'the most learned in this theme of our late divines'. The 'theme' was eucharistic sacrifice, and Cranmer's usefulness to Williams was to restrict the idea of sacrifice, oblation or offering in the communion to the 'sacrifice of laud and thanksgiving', so that the holy table could not be regarded as a place of sacrifice, an altar.

Cranmer indeed became powerfully symbolic for all Laud's enemies. William Dowsing has entered history- books (to a limited extent) as the man who turned iconoclasm into, if not a fine art, then at least a careful bureaucratic duty. He was an East Anglian Puritan who, in the Civil War, gained a commission from Parliament to wreck churches; he was also an admirer of Thomas Cranmer and the Oxford martyrs. He possessed both Cranmer's Defence and his Answer: his surviving copy of the Answer, bought in 1637 at the height of the confrontation with Laud and now far from home in St Andrews, is filled with his customary lavish marginal annotations. Having read Cranmer's book, Dowsing drew particular attention to what he called 'Cranmer's prayer', an acrid rebuke to the Catholic Bishop Stephen Gardiner. The passage culminated with the ringing call: 'I pray God, that we have not rather been figures of bishops, hearing the name and title of pastors and bishops before men, than that we have in deed diligently fed the little flock of Christ with the sweet and wholesome pasture of his true and lively word'. Dowsing summed this passage up as Cranmer's 'desire he may answer his call of bishop'. Here was an archbishop after his own heart. a sad contrast to the contemporary occupant of the office in 1637.

After the 1641 national crisis, attitudes to the Marian prelate-martyrs became more divided. William Prynne, for instance, can be found re- evaluating the deaths of Cranmer and Ridley, whom (like Dowsing) he had previously seen as symbolic allies in his campaigns against Laudian prelacy. Most hostile of all was John Milton, in his bitter attacks on the whole notion of episcopacy during the Interregnum. Cranmer and Ridley became 'halting and time-serving prelates' who were only brought to a better understanding of truth by the persecution which they endured, although it must be said that Milton's opinion of the tyranny of Genevan church government was no higher! Conversely, moderate defenders of the pre-war established Church redoubled their praise of bishops who could be seen as redeeming episcopacy from Laud's follies. However, perhaps the most impressive Interregnum verdict on the martyred archbishop's memory was spoken more quietly, throughout the parishes of England. That verdict was neither one of Laudian embarrassment nm of anti-episcopal antagonism. It was the unobtrusive continuing use of the Book of Common Prayer at a time when it was illegal and officially replaced by the Westminster Assembly's Directory of Public Worship. The Prayer Book itself had attracted little open hostility during the course of the Civil War, while bishops were abolished and church furnishings and ornaments were destroyed by the likes of Dowsing. In the years after the war, through all the turbulence of Commonwealth and Protectorate, its use continued in very many churches, adapted to local needs in the way sought by Elizabethan Puritans. After a century of use, it had become part of an English popular culture.

Given this testimony to the Prayer Book's place in the fabric of English Protestantism, the nature of Charles II's Restoration Settlement of 1660-62 with its startling triumph of militant Anglicanism becomes more comprehensible; Cranmer played his part in that victory. Whether he would have been happy with the aftermath of the triumph is less certain. Perhaps he would have understood the need to modify his liturgy after a century of use; after all, he had only been given four years in which to experiment with its practice in Edward VIs reign. However, the author of the Defence and the Answer might have looked askance at the delicate subversion of his sacramental outlook by the 1662 revisers.

Likewise, he is unlikely to have been happy that Anglicanism's new,, more narrowly-drawn, identity in 1662 which excluded many Protestants who would have found a home in. the pre-Laudian Church; almost single-handed, the triumphalist Anglicanism of the Restoration created that phenomenon which is so distinctive in English religion – large-scale Protestant nonconformity. At the moment in the eighteenth century when that 'Old Dissent' seemed to be fading, a new outburst of energy within the established Church burst its banks and formed a family of 'Methodist churches. Particularly in the Wesleyan Connexion which lay at the heart of the Methodist phenomenon, this rebellion remained true to the spirit of Cranmer's Prayer Book, and was sustained by the spirituality of the English Reformation. When archivist at English Methodism's oldest surviving theological college, Wesley College, Bristol, I had in my custody two quarto copies of the Book of Common Prayer used in the college's original chapel from its opening in Manchester: they were worn frail with regular use in leading the community's communal worship.

Later, attitudes to Cranmer among historians and biographers remained divided. On the one hand there was a tradition of praise, led by John Strype and Gilbert Burnet; on the other, a tradition of blame, which stemmed naturally from Catholic sources, hut which found some unexpected adherents during the nineteenth century. Most bizarre was the virulent stance taken by William Cobbett, whose view of the Reformation as an act of deliberate plunder inflicted on the helpless poor needed a villain, provided by Thomas Cranmer. Besides this, however, came a revival of coldness towards Cranmerian religion among the heirs of Laud and the Arminian tradition: the Tractarians and churchmen of the Oxford Movement, whose ideas were absorbed into the wider Anglican movement known as Anglo-Catholicism. They were embarrassed that the Church of England had been permanently shaped by the reign of Edward VI; the responsibility for that shaping was in the hands of the one man who remained at the centre of religious policy throughout Edward's reign, Thomas Cranmer.

There was at least one escape-route for Tractarians and Anglo-Catholics from the worst consequences of the reign of Edward VI. As the Arrninians and Laudians had done two centuries before, they could see Cranmer's first Prayer Rook (quite mistakenly) as a welcome refuge from the theological implications of his second. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, reorderings of the eucharistic rite in the mould of 1549 became common in Anglo-Catholic parishes and convents, particularly in dioceses which had been created by the world-wide spread of Anglicanism in the wake of the successive British empires. Yet the 1549 Prayer Book's compiler remained Ioved more for his prose than for his theology. There are not any statues to him in the beautiful churches built in the Anglo-Catholic tradition.

Today Anglicanism makes much of its position as a 'middle way' (via media) between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Standing as he did in the developing Reformed tradition of Europe in the 1550s, Cranmer's conception of a 'middle way' in religion was different. The middle ground which he sought was the same as Bucer's: an agreement between Wittenberg and Zurich which would provide a united vision of Christian doctrine against the counterfeit being refurbished at the Council of Trent. For him, Catholicism was to be found in the scatterered churches of the Reformation, and. it was his aim to show forth their unity to prove their Catholicity.

Perhaps the most widespread use of Cranmer's original texts in pure form remains Anglican evensong, where twentieth-century forms have failed to win admirers away from the majestic rhythms of his prose. One of the glories of the Anglican tradition is the choral performance of this even- song in the setting of great churches such as cathedrals: again a situation replete with irony. Cranmer had little affection for cathedrals, and no discernible love of complex choral music. He would have deplored the long-term survival of the Anglican cathedral tradition which Elizabeth I's obstinate traditionalism made possible. At a. deeper level, he would have been appalled at the spirituality which may be represented in the love of evensong. This is the exploration of religion by those who have decided to remain on the fringe of the Church, genuinely concerned to pursue their dialogue with God, yet not prepared to demonstrate the degree of commitment demanded by the eucharist. The encounter with the Anglican offices, however infrequent, can provide a place where they can show that they still wish to look beyond the surface of events and say that there is more to human life and creation than the obvious, the every- day. That home has been bequeathed them by Archbishop Cranmer.

Cranmer could hardly complain about adaptability to different times, since the consistent evangelical drive apparent in his career from 1532 was coupled with a remarkable penchant for temporary adaptations to circumstances, and adaptations of alien means to evangelical ends. No-one has made a very satisfactory defence of his conduct in taking the archbishopric (which involved simultaneously swearing an oath of loyalty to the pope and rejecting papal authority). Neither is his part in the annulment of Henry VIII's Aragon and Boleyn marriages inspiring. Yet to sneer at these three events and others as proving his craven wish to advance or present himself is a had misjudgement. The thread running through them all is his fierce determination to promote the evangelical reform of the Church. He cut legal corners. Equally, he captured the Devil's best tunes for the Lord's service. He cannibalised the writings of a Roman cardinal, Quiñones, for his liturgical reforms, and the prose of another contemporary cardinal, the theologian Cajetan, for his homilies, without the slightest respect for the theology which underlay their work. He redirected some of the riches of the Church's liturgical heritage for his Prayer Book, and only gradually discovered that this was a risky thing to do. In all this, one could compare another great metropolitan of the Church Universal who in the 1540s failed where Cranmer succeeded, and whom Cranmer clearly regarded as following the same policy: Hermann von Wied, Archbishop of Cologne. With archbishops like these, Calvin need never have turned Calvinism into a Presbyterian system, and. Andrew Melville need not have waged his long war against bishops in the Church of Scotland.

The widest aftermath of Cranmer's life and work is to be found in the realms of language and cultural identity. It was the happiest of accidents that this ecclesiastical functionary, propelled into high office by the accidents of politics, had a natural feel for English prose. His genius was limited to prose, and we can be grateful that, ever-practical, Cranmer knew that he could not write poetry. Cranmer's prose, however, has done much to guide the direction of the English language. He was a connoisseur of English who was not ashamed to borrow what he liked from other people's efforts, so what we think of as Cranmer's Prayer Book English is in fact a patchwork of his adaptations of other writers like Miles Coverdale, George Joye and Richard Taverner. If he were writing liturgy today, he would face crippling lawsuits for breach of copyright. However, his motive was not sinister; it was an expression of his natural modesty and practicality, and his alterations of existing texts were almost invariably improvements. And it came at a crucial time, for Cranmer was doing his work at a time when English, like all Western European languages, faced a double challenge: the effect of the universities' enthusiasm for humanist Latin, and the standardisation and centralisation caused by printing. Every Western European language has certain key texts of literature from this era and for English-speakers one of that handful of texts is the Book of Common Prayer. Millions who have never heard of Cranmer or of the muddled heroism of his death have echoes of his words in their minds.

The Prayer Book inevitably had a key role in deciding what was good English: it was one of the most frequently-printed and often most heard texts in the language. Whatever its content, it would have become decisive. For this reason, Cranmer deserves the gratitude not merely of the Church of England, but of all English speakers throughout the world. Through his connoisseurship, he created a prose which was self-consciously formal and highly-crafted, intended for repeated use until. it was polished as smooth as a pebble on the beach. Yet he spared the users of the Prayer Book the worst pomposities of humanism and the sprawling sentence constructions which are only too common in the English prose writers of the sixteenth century. He stands prominently amid a select band of Tudor writers from Tyndale to Shakespeare who set English on its future course.

In an ecumenical age, which honours honest doubt and hesitancy as a lesser evil than clear-eyed ideological certainty, Cranmer may win admirers and sympathisers and take his due place in Anglican history. He would not have known what Anglicanism meant, and would probably not have approved if the meaning had been explained to him, but without his contribution, the unending dialogue of Protestantism and Catholicism which forms Anglican identity would not have been possible. Beyond the concerns of Christianity, for all those who criticise his politics, or find his theology alien, Cranmer's language remains as the most enduring monument to Henry Vlll's and Edward VI's most faithful servant. Twentieth-century scholarship has reminded us just how fundamental is the structure of language to the way in which we construct our lives and our culture. Cranmer's language lies at the heart of our own English-speaking culture, which has now become so central to the destiny of the world.