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Cranmer as Reformer

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This paper focusses attention on Thomas Cranmer's career as a reformer. Before we examine his teaching on some of the major issues of the Protestant Reformation, we will attempt to provide an outline of his career, with particular reference to his growing understanding of Holy Scripture and the effect this had on his policy of reform.

I. The Bible and Reform

As with the apostles and prophets of old, the proclamations of the Protestant Reformers were founded on 'Thus saith the Lord' and 'What saith the Scriptures?' Their consciences were captive to the Word of God; and what was famously true of Martin Luther was equally true of Thomas Cranmer. Even allowing for his essentially cautious and conservative disposition, obedience to the supreme authority of Holy Scripture became the prominent feature of the Church of England's greatest reformer.

Cranmer's scholarly diligence at Cambridge brought him the highest academic honours (he received his DD in 1523), but even higher influences were at work in his soul. Cranmer was obviously in sympathy with the stirring religious events of the day. Truths which had gripped Luther's heart and conscience had been taking hold of Cranmer also. Marcus Loane writes that after Cranmer refused Wolsey's offer of a canonry at Oxford in 1524, 'His mind had now begun to yield to the teaching of the Scriptures, and as early as 1525, he had begun to pray daily for the abolition of the Papal power in England. About the year 1526, he was asked to examine candidates for Degrees in Divinity, and

began to insist that they should furnish proof of a first-hand knowledge of the Scriptures.¹

It was Cranmer's attachment to Scripture which brought him royal recognition. During a discussion of the great divorce problem at Waltham in 1529, Cranmer declared 'There is but one truth in it, which the Scripture will soon declare, make open and manifest, being by learned men well handled, and that may be as well done in England in the Universities here as at Rome or elsewhere in any foreign nation.'²

It was Cranmer's studious habits, appetite for the Scriptures and his transparent integrity, that eventually brought him into the public arena. King Henry VIII could not abide ambitious churchmen, and there was nothing of the grasping ecclesiastic in Thomas Cranmer. He shrank from the notion of high office in the church. However, the king was in a typically determined state of mind when he decided who should succeed Warham as Archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer was on the Continent when he received the royal summons in 1532. 'There was never man came more unwillingly to a bishopric than I did to that,' he said; 'in so much that when King Henry did send for me in post that I should come over, I prolonged my journey by seven weeks at least, thinking that he would be forgetful of me in the meantime.'³ It is a miracle that Cranmer did not lose his head for these delaying tactics, but his learning, godly integrity and compliant disposition made him indispensable to his king. Although Cranmer was troubled by the oath to the Papal authority required of him before consecration, he finally yielded after receiving legal advice. The consecration took place on March 30th, 1533. Whatever intentions Henry had, Cranmer was determined to be loyal, not only to king and country, but more importantly to the cause of reforming the Church of England.

The royal divorce and the passing of the Act of Supremacy in 1534 created a situation of unique religious and political complexity. As Loane rightly observes, 'The Church was to retain its old constitution almost unchanged, except that the King had taken the place of the Pope as supreme.'⁴ However frustrating the situation was from the standpoint of a spiritual and evangelical reformation, Cranmer began to seize the opportunities presented to him. His programme of reform was directed by a principle

¹ 'Thomas Cranmer' in *Masters of the Reformation* (London, 1954), 183.

² *Ibid.* 184.

³ *Ibid.* 186-7.

⁴ *Ibid.* 189.

shared by all evangelical Protestants: 'His heart was set on the restoration of a knowledge of the Scriptures among both laymen and clergy . . .'⁵ The dissolution of the monasteries also revealed Cranmer's supreme spiritual concern. Whilst he took no active part in the dissolution itself, he was hoping that resources would consequently be available to promote new institutions of godly learning. He was therefore deeply disappointed at the way the monastic estates were handed out to grasping lords and laymen.

The year 1536 was an important one for the Reformation. The first edition of Calvin's *Institutes* was published in Basle, and in *Vilvorde, Belgium, William Tyndale died a martyr's death, praying as he died, 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes.'* Here in England, while the 'sun of truth was still slowly rising',⁶ Cranmer's zeal for reform was increasingly evident. He preached for two hours at St Paul's Cross in February, denouncing the Pope's claim to release souls from a supposed purgatory. While the Ten Articles and the Bishop's Book (a commentary on the articles) of 1536 left much to be desired—they were a general compromise between the old and the new—matters were moving in the right direction. The publication of Matthew's Bible in 1537 (incorporating the labours of Tyndale and Coverdale) brought Cranmer 'as much joy as ever happened to him in all the time of his Prelacy'.⁷ A new edition, revised by Coverdale, and known as the Great Bible on account of its size, was published in Paris in 1539. By royal injunction, every church was required to provide itself with a copy within a year. Loane remarks, 'Thus was Tyndale's prayer at the hour of death honoured by God, and under God, this was by the hand of Cranmer. Cromwell and Henry each had a part to play, but he was the prime mover, and his motive was the simple desire to secure the widest reading of this book as the Word of God.'⁸ Cranmer actually wrote a preface to the editions of 1540 and 1541, by which it became known as Cranmer's Bible.

There can be no doubt that Cranmer was more a servant of God than he was of the King of England. If he lacked the heroic courage of Luther and the inflexible will of Calvin, he was no royal lackey. He was deeply shocked at the fall of Anne Boleyn, and whether or not she was guilty, Cranmer had the courage to remind the king of his own misdemeanours. When a Committee

⁵ *Ibid.* 189.

⁶ *Ibid.* 190.

⁷ *Ibid.* 191.

⁸ *Ibid.* 192.

of Lords had been appointed by the king to produce a standard of faith in 1539, their failure to do so brought the king to the House. This was too much for the gentle Archbishop! Cranmer rose up to challenge the royal erudition, arguing that the cause was not the king's but God's. It is surely remarkable that when others lost their heads, and Cranmer himself was nearly a victim of conspiracy on more than one occasion, nothing ever shook Henry's trust in Cranmer. Indeed, God had more work for our English Daniel, and Henry, with all his faults, may be seen as something of a Darius.

Cranmer's duties in the Privy Council and his membership of the Council of Regency in the latter years of Henry's reign did not hinder his activity as a determined reformer. In 1541, he secured the abrogation of certain holy days, and the demolition of various shrines and relics. In 1542, he defeated Gardiner's plan to revise the English Bible in favour of the old learning. In 1543, he also frustrated Gardiner's plan to gain legal recognition for the numerous forms of worship then in use. Cranmer also perceived the importance of laying a sound scriptural, spiritual and pastoral foundation for the overthrow of the old order, as Loane makes clear, 'Cranmer never ceased to feel the strongest concern for the needs of his See of Canterbury, and he spared no trouble during these years in the pastoral oversight of clergy and people. He would often preach in the main towns of the See as well as Canterbury itself, and he refused to rest until he had secured men of learning and of ability to make the truth known in Kent'.⁹ Cranmer therefore perceived the absolute importance of preaching in his programme of reform. With the crowning of Edward VI, whom he regarded as England's Josiah, Cranmer's expectations of progress were heightened. His coronation sermon amounted to a declaration of war against idolatry, and his next move was to publish the *Book of Homilies*, including sermons on Salvation, Faith and Good Works composed by himself. The *Homilies* were intended to be read and re-read to congregations, at a time when a good general standard of preaching could not be guaranteed. Not all were as gifted as godly and brilliant Bishop Latimer!

Cranmer's most enduring contributions to reform were, of course, the liturgy and articles of the Church of England. While the 1549 Prayer Book was a disappointment to many, Cranmer had aimed to produce a liturgy true to the test of simplicity and the teaching of the Scriptures. The second Prayer Book of 1552 was more successful in this regard, being the more reformed and

⁹ *Ibid.* 197.

protestant of the two. Indeed, it represents the high water mark of Reformed Anglicanism. Even the 1662 Prayer Book has more affinities with the Elizabethan Book of 1559 which, in fact, reverted to the 1549 in certain important details. The 1559 reintroduced the 1549's doubtful and ambiguous wording in the delivery of the sacraments to the communicants,¹⁰ and it removed the famous 'Black rubric', a typically Cranmerian compromise between John Knox's belief that communicants should sit at the Lord's Supper and any idolatrous overtones in the kneeling of communicants.¹¹ Also, the 1559 deleted the 1552 Litany's reference to 'the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities'.¹² Cranmer would have regarded these changes as retrogressive and ominous, a point which history arguably confirms. The same may be said concerning Cranmer's Forty-two Articles of 1553. While the Thirty-nine Articles follow Cranmer in the main, yet the earlier articles—including the fine statement on grace and human responsibility¹³—contain a stronger testimony to the sufficiency and authority of canonical Scripture (excluding the Apocrypha and denouncing fanatical

¹⁰ The 1549 wording is:

'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life, etc.' The 1552 changed this to: 'Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving, etc. *The Two Liturgies, A.D. 1549, and A.D. 1552* (Parker Society: Cambridge, 1844), 92, 279.

The 1559 combined the two forms. See *Liturgies . . . set forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Parker Society: Cambridge, 1847), 195.

¹¹ '... Whereas it is ordained in the book of common prayer, in the administration of the Lord's Supper, that the Communicants kneeling should receive the holy communion: which thing being well meant, for a signification of the humble and grateful acknowledging of the benefits of Christ, given unto the worthy receiver, and to avoid the profanation and disorder, which about the holy communion might else ensue: lest yet the same kneeling might be thought or taken otherwise, we do declare that it is not meant thereby, that any adoration is done, or ought to be done, either unto the sacramental bread or wine there bodily received, or to any real and essential presence there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood . . .' *The Two Liturgies*, 283.

¹² *Ibid.* 233.

¹³ 'The grace of Christ, or the Holy Ghost by him given, doth take away the stony heart, and giveth an heart of flesh. And although those that have no will to good things, he maketh them to will; and those that would evil things, he maketh them not to will the same: yet nevertheless he enforceth not the will. And therefore no man, when he sinneth, can excuse himself, as not worthy to be blamed or condemned, by alleging that he sinneth unwillingly, or by compulsion.' (The original Article X) *Ibid.* 528.

revelations),¹⁴ not to mention a firm denial of universalism.¹⁵ For those tempted to think these detailed matters are of minor importance, the history of theology provides too much evidence that oaks of falsehood grow from acorns of error.

Contrary to Rome's repeated charges and misrepresentations, the Reformers were no less concerned for unity than for the purity of gospel truth. Along with his Continental colleagues, Cranmer judged it a duty to separate from unrepentant Rome, but he never viewed the English Reformation in schismatic isolation from the work of God abroad. To meet the challenge posed by the Counter-reformation, his sense of solidarity with his Continental brethren led him to initiate plans for a Reformed Council. In 1552, he communicated the idea to Philip Melanchthon, Henry Bullinger and John Calvin. To the latter he wrote, 'Our adversaries are now holding their councils at Trent for the establishment of their errors; and shall we neglect to call together a godly synod, for the refutation of error, and for restoring and propagating the truth?'¹⁶ Calvin shared Cranmer's enthusiasm for 'Reformed ecumenicity'¹⁷ and his response to Cranmer's proposal is famous: 'So much does this concern me, that, could I be of any service, I would not grudge to cross even ten seas, if need were, on account of it.'¹⁸

Within the next four years, Edward VI died, Roman Catholic Mary ascended the throne, and Cranmer, with others, sealed his testimony to the truth with his blood. So, as Dr. Philip E. Hughes expresses it, 'This grand project never came to fulfilment.'¹⁹ Had events been otherwise, one wonders what direction the English Reformation might have taken. We know that Calvin had his doubts about the Anglican liturgy, and he actually told Cranmer that his policies were neither sufficiently thorough nor as

¹⁴ Unlike Article VI of the XXXIX, Article V of the XLII makes no reference to the Apocrypha, and Article XIX of the XLII says, 'Wherefore they are not to be hearkened unto, who affirm that holy scripture is given only to the weak, and do boast themselves continually of the Spirit, of whom (they say) they have learned such things as they teach, although the same be most repugnant to the holy scripture.' *Ibid.* 527,531.

¹⁵ Article XLII states: 'They also are worthy of condemnation, who endeavour at this time to restore the dangerous opinion, that all men, be they ever so ungodly, shall at length be saved, when they have suffered pains for their sins a certain time appointed by God's justice.' *Ibid.* 537. This idea was popularized by Origen during the 3rd century.

¹⁶ *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer* (Parker Society: Cambridge, 1846), 432. Hereinafter as *MW*.

¹⁷ See Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers* (London, 1965), 257ff.

¹⁸ *Letters of John Calvin* (Edinburgh, 1980), 133.

¹⁹ *Theology of the English Reformers*, 262.

zealously pursued as they might be.²⁰ Had Cranmer and Calvin met face to face, the Genevan reformer would have encouraged and reinforced the Archbishop's decidedly scriptural instincts for a purer, simpler worship and a greater stress on preaching. Calvin would also have reminded the Archbishop that the New Testament assumes an identity between bishops and presbyters, and that the people, rather than princes, elected overseers in the church, points which Cranmer had in fact recognised as early as 1540.²¹ Indeed, the logic of these emphases leads inexorably to Puritanism, and what might Cranmer's close friendship with the protopuritan John Hooper²² have produced had both men survived? Furthermore, did he not establish a puritan precedent by using the word 'minister' more frequently than 'priest' in the 1552 Order for Morning Prayer, and introducing it into the Communion Service?²³ In fact, the Puritan Prayer Book of 1578 applied these measures more consistently.²⁴ There is clear evidence that, for all his caution, Cranmer was moving in this direction. His understanding was never static and, had he lived, the English Reformation would have gone beyond the 'half-way house' Elizabethan-style settlement. From evidence cited above, if the 1552 Prayer Book does not lead directly to the Westminster Directory of Public Worship, its author would arguably have been more at home with the abortive 1689 Prayer Book proposals than

²⁰ See Letters 47 and 34 in *Letters of John Calvin*, 173ff and 140ff.

²¹ See Questions 10 and 11 in *Questions and Answers concerning the Sacraments and the Apointment and Power of Bishops and Priests*, MW, 117.

²² Cranmer wrote to Bullinger, 'And master Hooper is in such great esteem among us, . . . and he is at this time living in my house upon the most intimate terms, during the sitting of parliament.' MW, 431.

²³ See *The Two Liturgies*, 217ff and 265ff. The 1549 Order for Matins directs that 'The Priest being in the quire, shall begin with a loud voice the Lord's Prayer, etc.', whereas the 1552 Order for Morning Prayer states, 'At the beginning of morning prayer . . . the Minister shall read with a loud voice, etc.'. Ibid. pp. 29, 217. Richard Hooker agreed that 'in truth the word Presbyter doth seem more fit, and in propriety of speech more agreeable than Priest with the drift of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ.' *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V: lxxviii: 3 in *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker*, ed. J. Keble (Oxford, 1836), ii. 601.

²⁴ See F. Proctor and W. H. Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1901), 133f.

the anti-puritan 1662 Prayer Book.²⁵ He would doubtless have shared the view that when John Calvin's achievement was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Geneva on Reformation Sunday, 1986, it was altogether inappropriate to use the 1662 Prayer Book.

Speculations apart, none can doubt Cranmer's increasing dedication to Bible-based reform as the years went by. Loane rightly concludes that 'Cranmer had neither the ruggedness of a Luther nor the loftiness of a Calvin to fit him for his task. He was much more akin to men such as Martin Bucer or Philip Melancthon, mild and gentle in spirit, ripe and expert in letters, less a man of affairs than a scholar at home with his Greek and Latin divines, less a Prince or Prelate than a host whose purse and palace were so unfailingly open to men of true faith and learning. He had been won over to the Reformation Theology through the reading of the Scriptures to which he had given himself from his student days at Cambridge, and it was his patient study of Scriptures rather than some profound struggle of spirit which had brought him slowly to the crossroads where he had to turn his back on Roman dogma.'²⁶ One may only add that if his sensitive nature yielded to adverse pressure too easily, convictions wrought in his heart by the grace of God ensured that his sad recantation would not be the end of the story. Cranmer's courageous martyrdom proved beyond all doubt that, all along, his conscience had been captive to the Word of God. We must therefore thank God that his truth triumphed in the life and death of Thomas Cranmer.

²⁵ Ibid. 206ff. The 1689 proposals were not entirely fruitless, since the Prayer Book of the Free Church of England (founded 1844) is largely based on them. See F. Vaughan, *A History of the Free Church of England* (London, 1960), 171ff.

J. C. Ryle writes, 'To show the spirit of the ruling party in the Church, they actually added to the number of apocryphal lessons in the Prayer-book calendar at this time. They made it a matter of congratulation among themselves that they had thrust out the Puritans, and got in Bel and the Dragon! *Light from Old Times* (London, 1902), 317. It should also be noted that the sixth communion rubric in the 1662 Prayer Book opens the door to the idea of the reservation of the sacrament. 'If any of the bread and wine . . . remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the church . . .' Even the 1559 follows the simple 1552 rubric at this point: ' . . . And if any of the bread or wine remain, the Curate shall have it to his own use.' *Liturgies . . . set forth in Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, 198; *The Two Liturgies*, 283.

²⁶ *Masters of the Reformation*, 217. However it is interpreted, it may be said that Cranmer's language of baptismal regeneration in the Book of Common Prayer is an unfortunate example of residual Romanism in his thought.

II. The Bible and the People

While Cranmer proved himself 'so mighty a theologian'²⁷ during the Prayer Book debate in the House of Lords in 1548, it remains true that he 'was not a man in whose life an absorbing devotion to pure theology played so large a part as was the case with men like Luther, Zwingli and Calvin.'²⁸ In short, Cranmer was perhaps more preoccupied with practical than with mere doctrinal considerations. This is not to suggest that the Continental Reformers were not concerned with practical application, or that Cranmer was less concerned than they with fidelity to Scripture, but they were—Calvin especially—more rigorous and comprehensive doctrinal reformers than Cranmer. The difference might be partly temperamental and even political. Calvin did not have to contend with a monarch like Henry VIII!

Cranmer's practical pastoral concern is very evident in his *Preface to the Bible* (1540). Quite simply, he is concerned to promote and encourage not only widespread Bible reading in English, but *edifying* Bible reading. He aims at two kinds of reader: 'For truly some there are that be too slow, and need the spur: some other seem too quick, and need more of the bridle: some lose their game by short shooting, some by overshooting: . . . In the former sort be all they that refuse to read, or to hear read the scripture in the vulgar tongues; much worse they that also let or discourage the other from the reading or hearing thereof. In the latter sort be they, which by their inordinate reading, indiscreet speaking, contentious disputing, or otherwise by their licentious living, slander and hinder the Word of God most of all other, whereof they would seem to be greatest furtherers.'²⁹ Cranmer is clearly challenging both medieval conservatism on one hand, and a merely intellectual interest in biblical theology on the other. How thoroughly relevant Cranmer is to the twentieth century!

Cranmer argues very cleverly against Latin conservatism. If tradition and antiquity are the test of a Bible version's acceptability, the 'more ancient custom' should surely be followed. He then turns the tables on the traditionalists: 'For it is not much above one hundred years ago, since scripture hath not been accustomed to be read in the vulgar tongues within this realm; and many hundred years before that it was translated and read in the Saxons' tongue, which at that time was our mother tongue:

²⁷ *Ibid.* 203.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 205.

²⁹ *MW*, 118.

whereof there remaineth yet divers copies found lately in old abbeys, of such antique manners of writing and speaking, that few men now been able to read and understand them.³⁰ But Cranmer was not pleading for old Saxon instead of old Latin, but for a Bible in contemporary English. He was aware that language was a living and changing thing, and, to strengthen his case, the 'more ancient custom' also provided a precedent for the Great Bible: 'And when this language, i.e. Saxon, waxed old and out of common usage, it was again translated in the newer language.'³¹ Whilst making no concessions to the lowest possible linguistic denominator, Cranmer would doubtless think it strange to cling to sixteenth century English in the late twentieth century! He clearly distinguished between unchanging truth and changing linguistic forms. That said, the Bible is no ordinary human document, so faithful translations of the Scriptures will always preserve the unchanging truth of 'the books of the prophets and apostles, and all holy writ inspired by the Holy Ghost.'³²

Cranmer takes the doctrine of inspiration for granted. He feels no need to prove it or defend it. Like Luther he believed in the perspicuity of Scripture, and like Tyndale he believed the Bible should be available for all. Cranmer then beats the traditionalists at their own game by quoting extensively from the Greek father Chrysostom (347-407 AD) in favour of popularizing the Bible: 'For the Holy Ghost hath so ordered and attempered the Scriptures, that in them as well publicans, fishers, and shepherds may find their edification, as great doctors their erudition: for those books were not made for vain-glory, like as were the writings of the Gentile philosophers and rhetoricians, to the intent the makers should be had in admiration for their high styles and obscure manner of writing, whereof nothing can be understand without a master or an expositor. But the apostles and prophets wrote their books so that their special intent and purpose might be understood and perceived by every reader, which was nothing but the edification or amendment of the life of them that readeth or heareth it.'³³

In Cranmer's view, the Great Bible placed the Word of God in reach of everyone, so ignorance of the Gospel was inexcusable. Using Chrysostom's words again, he expresses impatience with those who complained, 'I cannot understand it.' What marvel?

³⁰ Ibid. 119.

³¹ Ibid. 119.

³² Ibid. 120.

³³ Ibid. 120.

How shouldest thou understand, if thou wilt not read nor look upon it? Take the books into thine hands, read the whole story, and that thou understandest keep it well in memory; that thou understandest not, read it again and again: if thou can neither so come by it, counsel with some other that is better learned. Go to thy curate and preacher; show thyself to be desirous to know and learn: and I doubt not but God, seeing thy diligence and readiness (if no man else teach thee), will himself vouchsafe with his Holy Spirit to illuminate thee, and to open unto thee that which was locked from thee.³⁴

Cranmer, true to his practical pastoral concern, is not slow to advertise the benefits of biblical instruction alongside one's obligation to believe what God has spoken. Every kind of person, whatever their place in society, whatever their personal circumstances, will profit from studying the Scriptures. But if Cranmer is concerned that the Bible be *used*, he is equally anxious that it should not be *abused*. If some might neglect the Bible, others might use it for mere intellectual curiosity and speculative amusement. In short, the curse of medieval scholasticism must not spread to the common people through a commonly available Bible. Quoting another Greek father, Gregory Nazianzen (325–389 AD), Cranmer argues, 'It is not fit for every man to dispute the high questions of divinity . . . neither . . . must we discuss every doubt . . . in every market place, every alehouse and tavern.'³⁵ He is not seeking to curb sober theological enquiry; there is a time and place for everything. But in the wrong months, 'high speculation' can so easily divorce Christianity from serious, practical godliness. Truth must never be trivialized by theological jousting and irreverent table-talk. Cranmer sums up his hopes for the success of the Great Bible thus: 'Wherefore I would advise you all, that cometh to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the Word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic that remaineth on the earth, that ye bring with you the fear of God, and that ye do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain-glory of frivolous disputation, but to the honour of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and other.'³⁶

III. The Bible and the Gospel

For Cranmer, the 'books of holy scripture' are 'the instruments of

³⁴ *Ibid.* 121.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 122.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 122.

our salvation.³⁷ Therefore, the recovery of the Gospel in church and nation required a widespread public proclamation of the Bible's message. To further this end, the *Book of Homilies* was published in 1547, which included five sermons specially composed by Cranmer himself. The first sermon reinforces Cranmer's *Preface to the Bible*, being entitled *A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture*. It simply seeks to promote diligent and regular Bible reading. The facts and doctrines of the Christian Faith must be known, for 'Ignorance of God's word is the cause of all error.'³⁸ But Cranmer's sermon *Of the Salvation of Mankind* also reinforces a concern voiced in his *Preface*. Salvation is more than cerebral clarification or correct head-knowledge. To exchange Reformed orthodoxy for Roman heterodoxy is necessary but not sufficient. 'For the right and true christian faith is, not only to believe that holy scripture and all the aforesaid articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ: whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments.'³⁹

Cranmer's sermon on salvation is the 'Homily of Justification' referred to in Article XI, *Of the Justification of Man*. It is therefore the official Reformed Anglican statement on the subject. As with Luther, Cranmer was anxious to set the true gospel over against its Roman perversion. Rome had taught, partly under Augustine's influence, that justification was by an infusion of grace at baptism, thereby confusing justification with sanctification. In other words, we are justified before God by *inherent* righteousness. While Christ merited salvation for sinners, none are saved without the merit of good works. Therefore we are justified by faith *and* works, since faith is mere assent and insufficient without love and obedience. Assurance of salvation is never attainable in this life, and the faithful are entirely dependent on the priesthood and the sacramental system for their progress in justification. What then was Cranmer's alternative to Rome's way of salvation?

Cranmer emphatically denies that we are justified before God by an *inherent* righteousness. Our best efforts are imperfect, so

³⁷ Ibid. 120.

³⁸ *Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be read in Churches* (London, 1832; facsimile, Lewes, East Sussex, 1986), 4. Hereinafter as *Homilies*. While this homily is not included in Cranmer's *Miscellaneous Writings*, it is thought to be by him, see C. H. H. Wright and C. Neil (eds.), *A Protestant Dictionary* (London, 1904), 266.

³⁹ *MW*, 133; *Homilies*, 20.

every man must seek 'another righteousness, or justification . . . , that is to say, the remission, pardon, and forgiveness of his sins and trespasses . . . And this justification or righteousness, which we receive by God's mercy and Christ's merits, embraced by faith, is . . . our perfect and full justification.'⁴⁰ In short, justification is not an infusion of grace but the forgiveness of sins. It must not be confused with sanctification, the process of inward renewal (although this necessarily accompanies justification).

Cranmer insists that 'this justification be free unto us', rather than something earned. Yet a price had to be paid to satisfy the injured justice of God. And since we had no resources with which to pay, God himself 'provided a ransom for us; that was the most precious body and blood of his most dear and best beloved son Jesu Christ, who, besides his ransom, fulfilled the law for us perfectly. And so the justice of God and his mercy did embrace together, and fulfilled the mystery of our redemption.'⁴¹ Therefore, our acceptance before God depends not on or deserving, 'Christ himself only being the cause meritorious thereof.'⁴² If the work of Christ is the sole meritorious cause of justification, there are two other causes: God's 'great mercy and grace' and, 'upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesu Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us.'⁴³ Therefore, the sinner contributes nothing to his salvation, but 'only a true and lively faith.'⁴⁴ In short, we are justified by grace alone through Christ alone, received by faith alone.

The Reformers' stress on 'faith alone' brought forth every anathema Rome could devise. If justification is by faith alone, then the most unholy rascal on earth can assume he is saved! However, Rome really misrepresented the Reformers at this point. Cranmer was careful to explain that justifying faith 'doth not exclude repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but it excludeth them from the office of justifying: so that although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not together.'⁴⁵ Cranmer further insists that good works necessarily accompany faith also. Approving of the best medieval writers, he even agrees that we are not 'justified *without* our good works.'⁴⁶

⁴⁰ MW, 128; *Homilies*, 13.

⁴¹ MW, 129; *Homilies*, 14.

⁴² MW, 132; *Homilies*, 18.

⁴³ MW, 129; *Homilies*, 14.

⁴⁴ MW, 129; *Homilies*, 14.

⁴⁵ MW, 129; *Homilies*, 15. The wording of the *Homilies* differs slightly from Cranmer's original.

⁴⁶ MW, 131; *Homilies*, 16.

In one sense therefore, no one is justified by faith alone, for faith is never isolated from other graces.⁴⁷ But Cranmer's point is that nothing wrought in us or performed by us is ever capable of meriting justification since it is neither perfect nor in excess of our duty. How then is *sola fide* to be understood? Strictly in the context of merit. 'But this proposition, that we be justified by faith only, freely, and without works, is spoken for to take away clearly all merit of our works.'⁴⁸ *Sola fide* is then opposed not to good works *per se*, but to their supposed merit. It really means 'faith in Christ only . . . that we be justified by him only,'⁴⁹ for 'Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in him.'⁵⁰

Cranmer is careful to insist that faith is no more the ground of our justification than our good works are. Had he done otherwise, he would have repeated Rome's error of justification by an infusion of grace, since faith is the fruit of regeneration: 'So that the true understanding of this doctrine, we be justified freely by faith without works, or that we be justified by faith in Christ only, is not, that this our own act to believe in Christ, or this our faith in Christ, which is within us, doth justify us, and merit our justification unto us (for that were to count ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that is within ourselves): . . .'⁵¹ Faith therefore has no more strength or merit than any other grace, despite its unique role: 'As great and as godly a virtue as the lively faith is, yet it putteth us from itself, and remitteth or appointeth us unto Christ, for to have only by him remission of our sins, or justification. So that our faith in Christ (as it were) saith unto us thus: It is not I that take away your sins, but it is Christ only.'⁵² In short, it is more accurate to say that we are justified, not by faith, but by Christ the ground or object of faith.

The last thing Cranmer could be accused of is an antinomian 'easy-believing' view of justification. The *Homily of Faith* makes plain that justifying faith is an obedient, working faith. 'For the very sure and lively christian faith is, not only to believe all things

⁴⁷ This point is made clearly by Calvin: 'Thus it still remains true, that faith without works justifies, although this needs prudence and a sound interpretation; for this proposition, that faith without works justifies is true and yet false, according to the different senses which it bears. The proposition, that faith without works justifies by itself, is false, because faith without works is void . . . faith cannot justify when it is without works, because it is dead, and a mere fiction.' *Comment*, Ezekiel 18:14-17.

⁴⁸ *MW*, 131; *Homilies*, 16.

⁴⁹ *MW*, 132; *Homilies*, 18.

⁵⁰ *MW*, 130; *Homilies*, 15.

⁵¹ *MW*, 131-2; *Homilies*, 17.

⁵² *MW*, 132; *Homilies*, 18.

of God which are contained in holy scripture; but also . . . to obey and serve him in keeping his commandments, and never to turn back again to sin. Such is the true faith that the scripture doth so much commend.⁵³ Cranmer speaks of two kinds of faith: 'a dead and an unfruitful faith, and a lively faith, that worketh by charity: the first to be unprofitable, the second necessary for the obtaining of our salvation; the which faith hath charity always joined unto it, and is fruitful, bringing forth all good works.'⁵⁴ That is, we are only justified by a good works-producing faith. In the *Homily of Good Works*, Cranmer positively discourages antinomianism. He quotes Chrysostom who says 'faith of itself is full of good works,'⁵⁵ concluding 'So that this is to be taken for a most true lesson taught by Christ's own mouth, that the works of the moral commandments of God be the very true works of faith, which lead to the blessed life to come.'⁵⁶

It is plain therefore that Cranmer is only concerned to defend a gospel which produces holiness. Unsansctified believers are a contradiction in terms. But Cranmer does more than vindicate the Reformed view of the gospel before his Roman critics. Taking the offensive, he actually outguns them. He argues that, contrary to its sanctimonious image, true Romanism does not really produce saints at all! As for the monastic ideal of obedience, chastity and poverty, Cranmer shows that Roman super-spirituality is really no true spirituality either. And why? Because Roman legalism destroys Christian holiness by surplanting God's Law with man-made traditions, superstitions and rituals: 'Thus was the people, through ignorance, so blinded with the goodly shew and appearance of those things, that they thought the observing of them to be a more holiness, a more perfect service and honouring of God, and more pleasing to God, than the keeping of God's commandments.'⁵⁷

It cannot be denied that Cranmer's theology of justification, faith and good works is an authentic exposition of the teaching of Paul. However, there is evidence that Cranmer—like Luther—found the seemingly conflicting teaching of James 2:24 rather problematic. While his solution is not as drastic as Luther's epistle-of-straw treatment, Cranmer's explanation in his *Notes on Justification* is somewhat incoherent: 'St James meant of justification in another sense, when he said, 'A man is justified by works, and

⁵³ *MW*, 136; *Homilies*, 24.

⁵⁴ *MW*, 137; *Homilies*, 24.

⁵⁵ *MW*, 137; *Homilies*, 25.

⁵⁶ *MW*, 144; *Homilies*, 34.

⁵⁷ *MW*, 148; *Homilies*, 39–40.

not by faith only.' For he spake of such a justification which is a declaration, continuation, and increase of that justification which St Paul spake of before.⁵⁸ Now, if James is using 'justification' differently from Paul, how can he be thinking of a 'continuation and increase' of Paul's idea? In the judgement of the present writer,⁵⁹ it was a late 17th century successor of Archbishop Cranmer who effectively solved this knotty issue. Utilising the insight accepted by all the Reformers, that faith was pregnant with good works, John Tillotson (1630–1694) sees James as pleading for a conception of faith Paul generally takes for granted: 'And this doth not contradict St. Paul, who saith Gal. 2:16. that a man is not justified by the works of the law: but by the faith of Jesus Christ. For how does this, that we are justified not by the legal dispensation, but by the faith of the gospel, which includes obedience and good works, contradict what St. James says, that we are not justified by a bare assent to the truth of the gospel, but by obedience to the commands of it?'⁶⁰ The solution is as simple as that!

Although John Wesley and George Whitefield later accused Tillotson of having undermined *sola fide*, Cranmer's successor focussed attention on the real issue in a thoroughly Cranmerian manner: 'But there is a wide difference between the doctrine of the Papists about justification, and this doctrine. They say that obedience and good works are not only a condition of our justification, but a meritorious cause of it; which I abhor as much as any one. It is the doctrine of merit that the Protestants chiefly oppose in the matter of justification.'⁶¹

There is no reason to imagine that Cranmer's assessment of Rome's pseudo-Christianity should be revised. That said, he would undoubtedly approve of many of the statements in *Salvation and the Church* (ARCIC II), while taking issue over the retention of merit—with its notorious ambiguity—and the related penitential and devotional practices of Roman piety.⁶² If Cranmer had no time for Rome's theology of justification, it must also be said that he would question some of the later refinements of Reformed high orthodoxy. While he taught that Christ 'fulfilled

⁵⁸ MW, 208.

⁵⁹ See Alan C. Clifford, 'The Gospel and Justification' in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 57.3 (1985), 247–267.

⁶⁰ 'Of Justifying Faith', *The Works of the Most Revd. Dr. John Tillotson*, ed. R. Barker (London, 1712), ii. 483.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 484.

⁶² *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (London, 1987), 21–23.

the law for us' as part of the meritorious ground of our justification, he never said that Christ's 'active obedience' was imputed to us as something additional to forgiveness. Like Luther and Calvin, but unlike Beza and John Owen, Cranmer insisted that forgiveness and justification were the same thing, and that this is a continuous provision rather than a one-off event.⁶³ Thus they avoided the potential complacency and antinomian implications of the later scheme.

IV. The Bible and Authority

For all his pastoral concern to promote the Bible and its message of salvation, Cranmer was well aware that the case for the sole authority of inspired Scripture had to be established beyond all doubt. If Rome's traditional appeal to the Fathers and to General

⁶³ See Clifford, *op. cit.*, 256ff. While the Reformers avoided Rome's error of confusing justification with sanctification, it was no part of their polemic against Rome to depict justification as a single, 'lightning-flash' event. While it begins in fact with conversion, though promised sacramentally in baptism, it is also a *continuum* or life-long, day-by-day experience for the Christian. Later Reformed theologians have generally failed to see this in the Reformers whose teaching on this point is clear and surprisingly unanimous. Luther wrote 'For God has not yet justified us, that is, He has not made us perfectly righteous or declared our righteousness perfect, but He has made a beginning in order that He might make us perfect . . . Now, is he perfectly righteous? No, for he is at the same time both a sinner and a righteous man; a sinner in fact, but a righteous man by the sure imputation and promise of God that he will continue to deliver him from sin until He has completely cured him.' *Lectures on Romans in Luther's Works* (St Louis, 1972), xxv. 245, 260.

While emphasising that justification is through God's mercy alone, Calvin describes it as a continuous, daily provision when he says, 'Nor can this be confined to the commencement of justification as those interpreters fondly suppose, for the definition *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven*, was effected in David after a lengthy period of training in the service of God . . . When Paul teaches us that God justifies men by not imputing their sins, he quotes a passage which is daily repeated in the Church. That peace of conscience, which is disturbed on the score of works, is not a one-day phenomenon, but ought to continue through our whole life. It follows from this that until our death we are justified only as we look to Christ alone in whom God has adopted us, and now regards us as accepted.' *Comment*, Romans 3:21. See also *Comment*, Luke 1:77 and *Institutes* III:14:11. In Calvin's theology, adoption (through union with Christ by faith) is the one-off, unrepeatable event in Christian experience.

Cranmer also suggests a continuum view of justification with regard to those guilty of post-baptismal sin, 'when they turn again to God unfeignedly, they are likewise washed by (Christ's) sacrifice from their sins . . . This is that justification or righteousness, which St Paul speaketh of . . .' *Homilies*, 13. See also pp. 17-18. The continuum view is also evident in the *Homily on Repentance*, *Ibid.* 372.

Councils as supplementary sources of divine revelation had any validity, then the entire Reformation cause was doomed. He applied his sanctified mind to this issue with characteristic acumen. The result was a collation of Latin material found in one of his common-place books dating from around 1547, 'translated and set forth by E.P.' in London in 1582 as *A Confutation of Unwritten Verities, both by the Holy Scriptures and Most Ancient Authors*.⁶⁴

In the first chapter, numerous scriptural citations are made to establish the proposition 'That the word of God written, contained within the canon of the Bible, is a true, sound, perfect, and whole doctrine, containing in itself fully all things needful for our salvation.'⁶⁵ In chapter 2, the longest of eleven chapters, Cranmer actually turns the Fathers against Rome in a most persuasive and masterly manner! According to Irenaeus (martyred c.202 AD), 'To lean to the scriptures of God (which is certain and undoubted truth) is to build a man's house upon a sure and strong rock. But to leave that, and lean to any other doctrines (whatsoever they be), is to build a ruinous house upon the shattering gravel, whereof the overthrow is easy.'⁶⁶ According to Origen (185-254 AD), 'We must needs call the holy scriptures to witness: for our judgements and expositions without these witnesses are worthy no credit.'⁶⁷ And 'If the holy scripture do not determine any thing, we ought not to admit any other writing for the stablishing of our doctrine: . . .'⁶⁸ This raises the question of the Apocrypha. Here, Cranmer cites Cyprian (martyred 258 AD) concerning the 'canonical books of the Bible . . . out of the which our fathers would the doctrine of our faith to be certain . . . All other writings they called Apocrypha, which they would in no wise to be read in the church.'⁶⁹ Thus Athanasius (296-373 AD), 'The holy scriptures, being inspired from God, are sufficient to all instruction of the truth.'⁷⁰

Among lengthy citations from Chrysostom (347-407 AD), we read, 'Therefore neither ought they to be believed at all, except they speak those things which be agreeable to the scriptures.'⁷¹ And 'The holy scripture expoundeth itself, and suffereth not the

⁶⁴ *MW*, 1-67.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 22.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 23.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 23.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 27.

hearer to err.⁷² Ambrose (c.340–397 AD) is even more emphatic: ‘We justly do condemn all new things which Christ hath not taught; for Christ is the way to the faithful. If therefore we ourselves preach anything that Christ hath not taught, judge that abominable.’⁷³

Among Cranmer’s numerous quotations from Augustine (354–430 AD), the greatest of the Latin Fathers, we are exhorted to ‘Read the holy scripture, wherein ye shall find fully what is to be followed, and what to be avoided.’⁷⁴ He also declared, ‘I owe my consent to the canonical scriptures only, without any refusal.’⁷⁵ Had the medieval church followed its greatest theologian at this point, things would have been happier: ‘Gather not my brother, against so many, so clear, and so undoubted witnesses of the scriptures, sentences misunderstood, out of the writings of bishops, either of ours, or of Hilary, or Cyprian, bishop and martyr of the church: for we must put a diversity betwixt this kind of writing and the canonical scriptures.’⁷⁶ Jerome (c.346–420 AD), the translator of the Vulgate, obviously shared Augustine’s high view of Scripture: ‘I have learned to give this reverence and honour to those only writers which be now called canonical, that I dare be bold to believe that none of them did err any thing at all in writing.’⁷⁷

These patristic utterances are plainly at odds with *The Final Report* (ARCIC I). When we are told that ‘the New Testament writings . . . are the *primary* norm for Christian faith and life,’⁷⁸ the Fathers insist that they are the *only* norm. On being told of another view of tradition besides the one which is ‘primarily concerned never to go beyond the bounds of scripture,’⁷⁹ the Fathers would say such a view is a deviation from Christ and therefore not Christian! When we are told that this dubious theory of progressive revelation is ‘primarily concerned with the growth of the seed of God’s word from age to age,’⁸⁰ the Fathers tell us that the scriptures, once given, are complete for every generation. As quoted by Cranmer, Fulgentius (d.533) held to the finality of

⁷² *Ibid.* 27.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 28.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 29.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 29.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 32.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 32.

⁷⁸ *Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission: The Final Report* (London, 1982), 69.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 70.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 71.

Scripture: 'There provision is made for the salvation of all men whom the Lord doth vouchsafe to save. There is that that is agreeable to all ages; there is also that which is meet for all states.'⁸¹ In short, the Bible requires no supplement of any kind from any source.

ARCIC finds no support from Anselm (1034–1109), one of Archbishop Cranmer's illustrious predecessors, for 'God's law forbiddeth to follow the steps of the catholic, or universal faith, any more than the judgement of the canonical truth commandeth to believe. And all other apocryphal lies, the good policies of the best learned fathers have established in their decrees utterly to reject, and to banish them clean, as horrible thunderings of words.'⁸² Probably no scholastic theologian of the middle ages was more responsible for 'horrible thunderings of words' than Thomas Aquinas (1227–1274), yet according to Cranmer, even he could affirm in his more sober moments, 'The holy scripture is the rule of our faith, whereunto it is neither lawful to add, nor to take anything away.'⁸³ Had Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas and others been consistent with these sentiments instead of mixing up theology with philosophy, the labours of Cranmer and Calvin would have been unnecessary. In short, the Reformers had no quarrel with the Fathers at their biblical best. The latter clearly endorse the inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy, sole authority and all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture.

In Chapter 3, Cranmer seeks to establish that 'General Councils, without the Word of God, are not sufficient to make articles of our faith.'⁸⁴ According to Cranmer's citations, ARCIC's view of General Councils and papal authority has little sympathy from the Fathers. Gregory Nazianzen (325–389 AD) thought that 'all assemblies of bishops are to be eschewed. For I never saw good end of any synod, that did not rather bring in evils, than put them away.'⁸⁵ Augustine considered it quite wrong to appeal to councils, especially when different councils issue conflicting judgments. 'Let matter with matter, cause with cause, or reason with reason,' he declares, 'try the matter by the authority of scriptures.'⁸⁶ Even as late as the early 15th century, Jean Gerson (d.1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris, insisted, 'We

⁸¹ *MW*, 34.

⁸² *Ibid.* 35.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 35.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 36.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 36.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 36.

ought rather believe the saying of any teacher, armed with the canonical scripture, than the pope's determination.⁸⁷

If the sufficiency of Scripture was threatened by Roman dogma, it could equally be undermined by the pronouncements of fanatics. Judging by Cranmer's evidence in Chapters 4-6, charismatic-style and spiritualist revelations are far from new. According to Cyprian, 'The enemy (after the words of the apostle) changeth himself into an angel of light, and setteth forth his servants, as ministers of righteousness, affirming . . . false faith under the pretence of faith, antichrist under the name of Christ: so that while they counterfeit the like things, they make void the truth with subtlety. This dearly-beloved brethren, cometh to pass by this means, that we resort not to the original of the truth, nor seek the head Christ, nor keep the doctrine of our heavenly Master.'⁸⁸ In the words of Lactantius (early 4th century), 'Corrupt and damned spirits stray over all the world . . . They therefore fill all the world with snares, frauds, and errors; . . . But chiefly they deserve men in their oracles and answers, whose jugglings ungodly men cannot discern from the truth . . . And so oft as any goodness is coming at hand to any people or city, according to God's appointment, they promise they will do it, either by miracles, dreams or revelations, . . .'⁸⁹

Spiritualism is an ancient deception, and Cranmer again cites Chrysostom: 'That thou mayest know that the doctrines of the scriptures and prophets are of more force, than if they that be raised from death should tell any thing . . . But what the scriptures speak, the Lord himself speaketh: therefore, though a dead man arise, yea, although an angel come down from heaven, yet chiefly we ought to believe the scriptures.'⁹⁰ Cranmer then states Augustine's view, 'that the spirit of Samuel, which the woman sorcerer raised to Saul, was not the soul of Samuel but the devil which appeared in Samuel's likeness, for to deceive Saul: this doth he prove by evident scriptures, and strong reasons.'⁹¹

For those who waver over the truth, being easily deceived by sensationalism and miraculous claims, Cranmer reminds us that such happenings are prophesied in the Scriptures. Quoting Augustine again, he says we should not imagine that all claims are necessarily non-events; there are 'lying wonders' of a very convincing kind. Even non-Christian sects can put on a good

⁸⁷ Ibid. 36.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 40.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 41.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 43.

⁹¹ Ibid. 45.

display! But when these things occur in the name of some new religious idea, we should always appeal to 'the canonical books of the holy scriptures' and the truths of the gospel revealed in them. 'These are the doctrines, these are the stays of our cause.'⁹² From Chrysostom we learn, 'Christ promised not that he would reward at the latter day them that work signs and wonders, but them that keep his commandments.'⁹³ From Cyril of Alexandria (d.444 AD) we hear, 'To work miracles, maketh not a man one whit more holy . . .'⁹⁴

As far as Cranmer is concerned, the process of divine revelation ended with the final book of the New Testament. Scripture is therefore complete and sufficient. After showing that custom has no authority in establishing religious truth in Chapter 7, he states in Chapter 8 that there are no 'unwritten verities' and, as he handsomely demonstrates, 'All contention which the old fathers had with heretics was for the scriptures.'⁹⁵ With all this patristic support, Cranmer concludes, 'if there were any word of God beside the scripture, we could never be certain of God's word; and if we be uncertain of God's word, the devil might bring in among us a new word, a new doctrine, a new faith, a new church, a new god, yea, himself to be god, as he hath already done in the popish kingdom . . . If the church and the christian faith did not stay itself upon the word of God certain, as upon a sure and strong foundation, no man could know whether he had a right faith, and whether he were in the true church of Christ, or in the synagogue of Satan.'⁹⁶

Cranmer was well aware that the Roman theologians misappropriated Scripture to justify their 'unwritten verities'. In Chapters 9-10, he undertakes a refutation of their false exegesis text by text, passage by passage. The question of infant baptism provides an interesting and perhaps delicate test case. If the scriptures are sufficient, why is infant baptism not taught? If it is to be practised, then the authority of tradition cannot be discounted. In his reply, Cranmer (like Calvin) resorts to the covenant argument to meet both Roman and Anabaptist objections: 'But in deed the baptism of infants is proved by the plain scriptures. First, by the figure of the old law, which was circumcision. Infants in the old law were circumcised; *ergo*, in the new law they ought to be

⁹² Ibid. 48.

⁹³ Ibid. 49.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 50.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 52.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 52.

baptized.⁹⁷ After citing Genesis 17:7, Matthew 19:14, 18:10 and 1 Corinthians 7:14, Cranmer argues 'By these, and many other plain words of scripture, it is evident that the baptism of infants is grounded upon the holy scriptures.'⁹⁸

In the final chapter, Cranmer deals with the claims that the 'long continuance' and 'lucky prosperity' of the Papacy prove its doctrine to be true, and that the sufferings of 'their adversaries' prove their doctrine to be false. But Cranmer knew his Bible too well to be intimidated by such nonsense: 'If the trial of true religion should rest upon antiquity of time, or upon worldly prosperity, then should the gentiles and pagans have a great advantage of us Christians, and their religion should be better than ours, by the testimonies of our own scriptures. For idolatry and worshipping of false gods, and their images, was used long before the Law of God, written and given to Moses, in which errors and idolatry the heathen continue unto this day, in great prosperity and wealth, under most victorious emperors and princes.'⁹⁹ As to the question of suffering, Cranmer cites 2 Timothy 3:12 as proof that suffering for Christ is a badge of the true church of God. To drive the point home, he shows the close similarity between Rome and Islam. For 'Turk and pope, although they be mortal enemies one to the other, yet as Herod, Pilate, the bishops, scribes, and Pharisees, although they were utter foes each to other, conspired against innocent Christ, causeless condemning him to death on the cross; in like manner, I say, the pope and the Turk do fully agree in this one point, to persecute and murder Christ in his faithful members.'¹⁰⁰

Where Cranmer is concerned, Rome's anti-scriptural dogmas, idolatries and superstitions, falsehoods and cruelty invalidate her every claim to be the true church. For him, the undeniable pointed in one direction only. Having proved his case for the Reformation from Scripture *and* the Fathers, her concludes his treatise with this impassioned plea: 'I exhort all you which fear God and be desirous to save your own souls, to flee from this whore of Babylon, and from all her detestable idolatries and heresies, not building upon the sure rock of God's infallible word written, but upon the quavemire of unwritten verities; . . . And stand thou fast, and stay thy faith, whereupon thou shalt build all thy works, upon the strong rock of God's word, written and contained within the old testament and the new; which is able

⁹⁷ Ibid. 60.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 60.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 62.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 62.

sufficiently to instruct thee in all things needful to thy salvation, and to the attainment of the kingdom of heaven. To the which I beseech the Almighty Father of heaven, of his infinite mercy and goodness, and by the merits of his only Son, our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, through his Holy Spirit is us, bring us all. Amen.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 67.