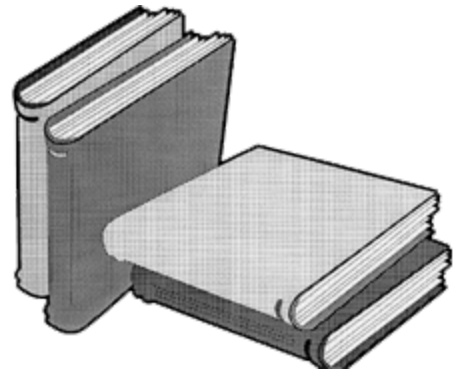


The Rock and Pit

*Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn,
and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.*

Isa 51:1

Selections from the Christian's heritage in print,
Collected by Dean Brown



Issue 959a

In 1547, As Henry Lay Dying: The Reformation in England. First of Four.

Sermons were rarely preached, and when preached were rarely doctrinally sound or useful. The *Book of Homilies* [sermons intended to be read in church] was meant to remedy that deficiency.

Moreover, one can see Cramner's [Thomas Cramner (1489-1556)] chief concerns by the order of the Homilies, especially the first four, which he almost certainly composed:

- A Fruitful exhortation to the reading of holy Scripture.
- Of the misery of all mankind.
- Of the salvation of all mankind.
- Of the true and lively faith.

The principles of evangelical theology are laid out in neat sequence here: Read the Bible and you will learn of "the misery of all mankind," that all since Adam's fall suffer under the power of sin; you will also learn that God has made one plan for "the salvation of all mankind" in the death and resurrection of his son Jesus Christ; and you will further learn that the only way to grasp this salvation is by having a "true and lively faith" in Christ as your Savior. Moreover, "good works" [the title of the fifth homily] do not lead to this faith, they follow from it: a genuine faith will "break out and shew itself by good works," but salvation is by God's grace alone (*sola gratia*), and again, this grace is appropriated by the believer through faith alone (*sola fide*).

It was necessary, thought Cramner, that this plan of salvation be universally understood, and the first requirement of that understanding was the reading of Scripture. The commissioning, writing and promulgating of these homilies occupied much of Cramner's time in 1547.

Alan Jacobs, *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography*,
Princeton Univ. Press 2013, p. 16-17.