



# News Release

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006  
11.00hrs. For immediate release.

## Archbishop's Enduring Legacy

When Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, was burnt at the stake on 21 March 1556 it must have seemed as if his life's work had been wasted. Yet Cranmer's influence on the Church of England, on the English language and on our political life and national identity endures 450 years after his martyrdom.

Cranmer's liturgy, which survives more or less intact in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, remains the liturgical standard of the Church of England. His 42 Articles were reworked into the 39 Articles which remain the official statement of the foundational beliefs of the Church.

When the services of the Church were largely conducted in Latin, which ordinary people could not understand, Cranmer was instrumental in securing an English Bible (which had previously been banned) and he himself compiled, and largely wrote, an English liturgy whose richness influenced the development of the English Language.

Cranmer was also instrumental in breaking, after centuries of occasional conflict, the political power of the Papacy over the English political life, thus paving the way for genuine constitutional democracy.

Cranmer was not without his faults yet, having been thrust into the political as well as spiritual office of Archbishop under the despotic Henry VIII he tried wherever possible to direct Henry gently and deal fairly with opponents.

Under intense pressure and having witnessed several of his fellow Bishops sent to their deaths Cranmer regrettably signed a statement recanting his reformed beliefs. However, recognising his error he used his final speech to reaffirm his clear commitment to the biblical teaching which shaped his work and the Church of England for centuries to come.

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*or visit : [www.churchsociety.org/issues/history/CranmerIntroduction.htm](http://www.churchsociety.org/issues/history/CranmerIntroduction.htm)*

*Church Society exists to uphold biblical teaching and to promote and defend the character of the Church of England as a reformed and national Church.*

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