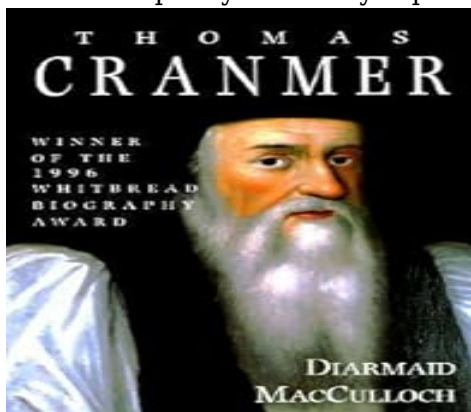


## Thomas Cranmer By Diarmaid MacCulloch

Thomas Cranmer the architect of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer was the archbishop of Canterbury who guided England through the early Reformation—and Henry VIII through the minefields of divorce. He shows how Cranmer was recruited to the coterie around Henry VIII that was trying to annul the royal marriage to Catherine and how new connections led him to embrace the evangelical faith of the European Reformation and ultimately to become archbishop of Canterbury. By then a major English statesman living the life of a medieval prince-bishop Cranmer guided the church through the king's vacillations and finalized two successive versions of the English prayer book. MacCulloch skillfully reconstructs the crises Cranmer negotiated from his compromising association with three of Henry's divorces the plot by religious conservatives to oust him and his role in the attempt to establish Lady Jane Grey as queen to the vengeance of the Catholic Mary Tudor. In jail after Mary's accession Cranmer nearly repudiated his achievements but he found the courage to turn the day of his death into a dramatic demonstration of his Protestant faith. From this vivid account Cranmer emerges a more sharply focused figure than before more conservative early in his career than admirers have allowed more evangelical than Anglicanism would later find comfortable. A hesitant hero with a tangled life story his imperishable legacy is his contribution in the prayer book to the shape and structure of English speech and through this to the molding of an international language and the theology it expressed. Among the Reformers killed during the Marian Persecutions Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer Bishop of London Nicholas Ridley and Bishop of Worcester Hugh Latimer are known as the "Oxford Martyrs. Latimer's final words to his friend Ridley were: "Play the man Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out. During two and a half years of isolation and interrogation in prison Cranmer held out at first and refused to deny his Protestant faith but he eventually broke and signed several recantations. Sensing that they had the ultimate prize in their fight against the Reformation Mary's officials packed the church and even built a special platform across from the pulpit for Cranmer to speak from. Mary's Church and the Martyrs' Memorial last year I prayed: "Keep us O Lord constant in faith and zealous in witness that like your servants Hugh Latimer Nicholas Ridley and Thomas Cranmer we may live in your fear die in your favor and rest in your peace; for the sake of Jesus Christ your son our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God now and forever. Thomas Cranmer was the Archbishop of Canterbury during Henry VIII's and King Edward VI's reign and he was responsible for most of the English Reformation of the 16th century and their schism/split with the Catholic Church. He was first and foremost uber-loyal to King Henry VIII and then his son Edward VI but he also brought his skills from his Cambridge doctoral degree in divinity to the table to craft the Prayer Book a breviary and numerous defenses for his beliefs and the canons of the Church of England. One part of his theology that didn't make sense to me was that Cranmer did not believe in transubstantiation of the Eucharist but he never let go of his belief in predestination. It's \*so\* comprehensive as to be almost un-readable at points—scholarship sometimes overwhelms narrative and the book becomes rudderless—but it's worth it to keep reading anyway especially because the author's own prose can almost match his subject's in its ability to finely summarize a point. Paperback The English Reformation played out very differently than those on the Continent and by the time it got underway the continental reform movements were already welcoming a second generation of leaders. In modern evangelical contexts much attention is given to the nonconformists of 17th & 18th-century England while those figures who initially moved the English Church away from Rome during the 16th century are largely unknown due to neglect. I believe that this "life" of Cranmer will serve 21st-century evangelicals by introducing them to a theological ally (and ancestor) albeit one who found himself at the head of an established Church and involved in matters of state at the highest level and who was obliged to navigate all the ethical and theological ambiguity associated with such a position. What was once famously said of the NT Gospels could just as easily be claimed about MacCulloch's magisterial biography of the first "evangelical" Archbishop of Canterbury - it is a

passion narrative with a rather lengthy introduction. The book's penultimate chapter consists of a sensitive account of Cranmer's trials - both psychological and ecclesiastical - leading up to his condemnation following that of his fellow Oxford martyrs as a heretic. Cranmer was arrested in September 1553 and burned at the stake on 21 March 1556 by order of Queen Mary who had taken the throne following her younger brother's untimely death and was intent on undoing the "evangelical" damage done during Edward's reign. Cranmer's struggle for survival and his prevarication during his imprisonment between a "traditionalist" Roman position and his particular Reformed stance mirrored that of the Church of England since Henry VIII's 1534 Act of Supremacy i. Throughout a lengthy series of both public disputations and private interrogations Cranmer was obliged to explain his views on the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist as well as justify his failure to recognize the universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome. His loyalty to Mary as his Queen was also questioned and Cranmer repeatedly insisted throughout the proceedings that he would submit to the rule of Mary and her Spanish husband Phillip if ever he was afforded the chance to serve them as a free man. As successive English monarchs tottered between agendas of reform and allegiance to Rome the incarcerated Cranmer for his part struggled against the temptation to reconsider the validity of those views he had come to embrace over decades of theological reflection (and publication) and political maneuvering. Eventually the long months of isolation the distress at having to witness the burning of his friends Latimer and Ridley and the strain of being constantly interrogated entreated and threatened wore Cranmer down to the point where he issued a series of six statements the final one written just a few days before his death offering recantations of his heretical views and promising submission to the Pope and the rites of the Roman mass. However in a dramatic departure from his prepared remarks Cranmer shouted to the large assembly that he recanted all his recantations called the Pope the Antichrist and affirmed his published (and "heretical") views on the Eucharist. Ironically Cranmer was condemned by Mary I for his decades-long defense of the right of the monarch to be the Supreme Head of the Church in England a right that the Queen repudiated. However a mere three years later the Elizabethan Settlement would consolidate enough of Cranmer's theological and political gains to allow the Church of England to maintain its unique theological identity within a polarized Western Christendom. Cranmer abandoned transubstantiation in favour of a more Lutheran understanding of Christ's presence in the Eucharist before ultimately arriving at a view somewhat akin to that of Zwingli all the while not reducing the bread and wine to mere symbols (cf. The author is confident that had Lady Jane Grey remained queen Cranmer would have been able to fully reform the English Church indeed to make it the preeminent Reformed Church in close theological affinity to that of Calvin (pp. On the question of predestination it is interesting to note that though Cranmer firmly believed in this doctrine he was loth to preach about it openly for fear that it would not serve to comfort the faithful (pp. You get the impression from this book that Cranmer is a political animal testing and navigating a dangerous world of court conspiracies until circumstances outside of his control entrap him. Cranmer is not so much a radical reformer (aka Luther) but a man who sought to appease everyone even as he was still working out the implications of his core theological convictions. I find it odd that MacCulloch ends the book explaining to the reader that Cranmer's most lasting contribution is the standardization of English Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer helped standardize. Cranmer was throughout his life a work in progress and as such his life should be an inspiration to Christians and theologians today that humbly approach the text of Scripture in dialogue with peers ancient and contemporary in an attempt to understand and define their views on a myriad of complex theological issues: This is the first major biography of him for more than three decades and the first for a century to exploit rich new manuscript sources in Britain and elsewhere. Diarmaid MacCulloch one of the foremost scholars of the English Reformation traces Cranmer from his east-Midland roots through his twenty-year career as a conventionally conservative Cambridge don. Don't let the size of this volume fool you it is remarkably readable. I am glad to see such an underappreciated churchman treated without bias: Paperback Be forewarned: MacCulloch's biography of England's first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury is a big book and is sometimes heavy sledding, But I've given it five stars because it is

the definitive work on one of the English Reformation's greatest heroes, England became a Protestant nation during the reign of Henry VIII and remained so during the brief reign of his son Edward, When Edward died Henry's Roman Catholic eldest daughter Mary became queen, During the five years of her reign (1553-1558) Mary restored England to Roman Catholicism, In the process she had more than 280 Protestant leaders condemned for heresy and burned at the stake earning her the sobriquet "Bloody Mary. " Mary's re-establishment of Catholicism was reversed by her successor and half-sister Elizabeth I and England remains a Protestant nation today, " The three were tried for heresy at the University Church of St, Mary the Virgin on High Street in Oxford and burnt at the stake just outside the city walls to the north: " Thomas Cranmer was burnt five months later on March 21 1556. Three days before his death Cranmer was told that he was to make a final recantation in public at the University Church of St: But on the day of his execution Cranmer unexpectedly renounced the recantation saying "I have sinned in that I signed with my hand what I did not believe with my heart: When the flames are lit this hand shall be the first to burn, " He then added "And as for the pope I refuse him as Christ's enemy and Antichrist with all his false doctrine: "Cranmer was pulled from the platform and taken to the same spot where Ridley and Latimer had been burnt five months before. True to his word as the flames were lit Cranmer thrust his right hand first into the fire. I see heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. " There is a small cobbled brick cross in the middle of Broad Street that marks the spot where the Oxford Martyrs were burnt: The Martyrs' Memorial was erected just north of that spot in 1841: " Paperback Diarmaid McCulloch did such a thorough job with this biography of Thomas Cranmer that I can't give it any less than 5 stars. His crowning achievement was the English Book of Common Prayer which made the liturgy accessible in the English language to laypeople, I learned many things about Cranmer as a person and the minefields he traversed in England during his time as Archbishop, His fights and arguments with his primary antagonist Stephen Gardner came through in this book as the main struggle during his career: Gardiner was constantly a thorn in Cranmer's side fighting his reforms point by point: Archbishop Cranmer absolutely defied the Catholic Church in all of his evangelical reforms which ultimately (and ironically) ended in his downfall. This biography was so very well written and researched I could tell that the author really put a lot of effort into writing this book. It was rather difficult and dense reading at times which made it kind of a slog for me to get through but I'm glad I persevered and got through all of it: Cranmer's story is fascinating and I recommend this biography if you want to learn more about the man behind the English Reformation and the Book of Common Prayer. The go-to for anyone who wants a thoughtful and well-researched account of pretty much any aspect of Cranmer's life. Paperback



A comprehensive account of Cranmer's life and essential for anyone hoping to understand the man his time or his church: I'm glad I (finally) finished it and I have not doubt I'll return to several particular sections, Surely Puritans Baptists and Wesleyans are easier to include in the evangelical family tree than paedobaptist Bishops who struggled to reform an established Church from the top down. the struggle both to define its theological identity and negotiate its political allegiances (or lack thereof) to crown and Pope: In the words of the author "In him the whole of the English Reformation was put on trial" (p: Although the principle of Cuius regio eius religio could perhaps not

be applied to Henry by the time his daughter Mary had been crowned it was most definitely the case, Under Mary England lurched back into a state of "papal obedience" akin to that which had existed prior to 1534. By this point it was clear that he would not be shown clemency by the Queen: Cranmer prepared a final discourse to be delivered during the service at the Oxford University Church to be followed immediately by his execution: The text of the speech was submitted to the authorities in advance and consisted of a penitential plea for God to have mercy on his many "errors", Thus Cranmer went to the stake not a repentant son of the Roman Church but rather as the martyr of his Reformed views and champion of the evangelical cause. Of especial interest are MacCulloch's discussions of the evolution of Cranmer's views on the Eucharist and predestination, Cranmer's fully-developed views resemble the "symbolic parallelism" of H: Bullinger (1504-75) who together with Calvin (1509-64) published the Zurich Agreement of 1549, The fruit is well worth the work required to pluck it from its many pages: The reason for this is Diarmaid's focus on the small details of the most important person in Anglican history, Still it is certainly not a book one breeze through or a life one should take lightly, Out of everything Cranmer did this is the one that lasted the longest or had the greatest impact? Paperback Whew! Paperback Definitive work at least for now. As an Anglican I found MacCulloch's book both helpful as well as a bit unsettling at times, Helpful because it left no stone unturned and unsettling because the waters out of which the CoE was birthed were certainly murky. Thomas Cranmer This is probably the definitive Cranmer biography. MacCulloch treats his subject with great fairness. His extensive research shows in every chapter. Latimer and Ridley were burnt on October 16 1555. Mary. His dying words were "Lord Jesus receive my spirit. While visiting St. Amen. For some reason these things conflicted for me. Paperback Brilliant a work of genius. Paperback Definitive conscientious and well-written. Much more than I could absorb but worth the read.e. 618). pp. 614-15; also 173-84). 618-20). 210-12)!All in all I heartily recommend this book. Paperback This book is a drudge to get through. The author's style is stiff and dry. MacCulloch's portrait of Cranmer is so up close and candid. Paperback.