



# Thomas Cranmer: A Life

*Diarmaid MacCulloch*

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## **Thomas Cranmer: A Life** Diarmaid MacCulloch

Thomas Cranmer was the architect of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. He was the Archbishop who guided England through the early Reformation, and Henry VIII through the minefields of divorce. This is the first major biography 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 to early Tudor Cambridge, into the household of the family of Anne Boleyn, and through the political labyrinth of the Henrician court. By then a major English statesman, living the life of a medieval prince-bishop, Cranmer navigated the church through the king's vacillations and finalized two successive English Prayer Books. MacCulloch skillfully reconstruction the crises which Cranmer negotiated, from his compromising association with three of Henry's divorces, the plot by religious conservatives to oust him, his role in the attempt to establish Lady Jane Grey as Queen, to the vengeance of the Catholic Mary Tudor. In gaol after Mary's accession, Cranmer nearly succumbed to recant his life's achievements, but was able to turn the very day of his death at the stake into a dramatic demonstration of his Protestant faith. From this vivid and fascinating 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.

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