to learn. But Anglicans, more than most, must engage with the issue of power and their institutionality.

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Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), pp. 728. ISBN 9781846144295.
doi:10.1017/S1740355320000406

Interest in ThomasCromwell (1485–1540) was piqued by the tremendous success enjoyed by Hillary Mantel's novels (*Wolf Hall* in 2009, *Bringing up the Bodies* in 2012 and *The Mirror and the Light*, 2020) and their much celebrated adaptations on stage and screen. Until 2018 there was no recent scholarly assessment of the historical character. But Diarmaid MacCulloch has now set this right and produced a definitive biography of this leading and reputedly 'unbiographable' character in Henry VIII's court. The main challenge lies in the fact that Cromwell's out-going correspondence was probably destroyed by members of his household after his arrest in an effort to protect their master. Thomas Cromwell's portrait must be reconstructed from what is left in the archive and thus mostly from his in-tray. This is not the author's first foray into the biographical genre and, as suggested by the identical subtitles, with *Thomas Cromwell: A Life* and *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (1996), MacCulloch has produced a diptych of the two most influential figures of the Henrician Reformation.

MacCulloch addresses one of the other difficulties in reconstructing the role of Thomas Cromwell in Henry's England. There was almost a permanent disjunction between his titles and the measure of his influence: throughout his career, Cromwell's actual power much surpassed his official capacity (p. 352). Hence his reputation for being a shadowy character and one whose reach is difficult to assess. The first chapters provide a wealth of information on Cromwell's youth, from his travels to Italy, his early work as a lawyer, to his entry in the service of Thomas Grey and his election as an MP in 1523. MacCulloch shows how these experiences were instrumental in shaping the character, expertise and network of the man who entered Wolsey's service in 1523 at the age of 40.

The phenomenal rise of the self-made 'ruffian' is charted in great detail, as honours were often bestowed in a complex context of favours swapped and lands exchanged (pp. 352-56, 431-35, 520). Cromwell's is an incremental rise through the echelons of government. In 1531, as a councillor, 'Master Cromwell' acted as representative of the king for the first time appearing in Convocation demanding that the clergy recognize the king as 'protector and supreme head of the English Church and clergy' (p. 146) and then emerged as government spokesman in Parliament. In 1532, when merely Master of the Jewels and Clerk of the Hanaper, he was interfering in ecclesiastical matters in ways that prefigured his

function as Vice-Gerent in Spirituals (pp. 168-69, 194, 269, 273), a newly created office through which the king delegated the exercise of his headship of the Church. By 1533, he was understood by the ambassador to Charles V as being 'in charge of government, transacting all matters in the realm' (p. 230) but only occupied the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer (a minor and ill-defined position at the time).

Over the course of the next year he steered the break with Rome and the royal supremacy through Parliament, managed the Boleyn coronation and was then successively appointed Principal Secretary, Master of the Rolls, Vice-Gerent in Spirituals and Chancellor of the University of Cambridge (pp. 269-76). MacCulloch reveals the bitter enmity that existed between Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell. The queen prevented the advancement of the cardinal's man who in turn was the acting force in her demise. Only after her death did 'Master Secretary' finally receive one of the highest offices of state by being appointed Lord Privy Seal and enter the nobility by being made Baron of Wimbledon. When his son Gregory married Elizabeth Seymour, the King's own sister-in-law, in 1537, Cromwell became Knight of the Garter and Dean of the Cathedral of Wells, making him the first lay man to formally head a church. He was finally created Earl of Essex and Lord Great Chamberlain merely weeks before his arrest on charges of treason.

Sifting through a vast documentation, MacCulloch reconstructs the minister's immense knowledge, his astounding memory, his grasp of detail, his ability at directing processes, his administrative creativity and uncovers many cases in which he operated most efficiently in an unofficial capacity. For instance, he was the architect of the reconciliation between the king and Princess Mary to whom he had always shown kindness (pp. 312-13, 342-49). Lastly, Cromwell played a key role in changing the way Tudor government operated, in particular by lastingly empowering Parliament but his power thrived on administrative indeterminacy, frantic improvisation and a nexus of personal connections rather than on a bureaucracy. Dedicating the book to the memory of Sir Geoffrey Elton, MacCulloch nevertheless offers a revised interpretation of his supervisor's thesis of a revolution in government (pp. 398, 502-503, 542-44 and n. 46 p. 275).

This books meticulously follows several other threads. One centres on the long lasting loyalty of Cromwell to Archbishop Thomas Wolsey. Reconstructing his career, MacCulloch sees the two halves of Cromwell's career as tightly bound together, for his entering royal service is interpreted 'not only as a way forward, but a chance to manage the still open future of his old master' (p. 110) and salvage Wolsey's pet projects. In a chapter entitled 'Serving Two Masters' the case is made that 'Cromwell's duties during 1530 were the real foundation of his future success' (p. 113). Much is made of Cromwell's politically courageous decision to remain loyal to the end. And many of the policies which Cromwell implemented as the king's servant continued what Wolsey had initiated. This is evidenced in Cromwell's involvement in the management of Wolsey's 'legacy projects' from his splendid tomb crafted by Italian artists (which was seized but not used by the king) to the cardinal's educational initiatives in Oxford and Ipswich (the former was salvaged and became Christ Church College while Cromwell attempted to create a grammar school to compensate for the latter's disappearance). MacCulloch shows how Cromwell's involvement in the closing down of several religious

institutions in the 1520s shaped his later preferences as to how religious orders should be managed and reformed; that is, with some degree of moderation instead of the blanket hostility that led to the complete dissolution of the monasteries (pp. 319, 459).

Wolsey's legacy is also on display in the powers accrued by Cromwell as Vice-Gerent of the Church. The powers exercised by Wolsey as papal legate *a latere* (deputy of the pope in England) are the same that Cromwell, a layman, would later exercise as vicar general for the king (pp. 192-95, 269-76). Legislation increasing taxation on the church passed by Parliament in 1534 is another case in point (p. 266). The relevance of the cardinal's network is underlined at every stage of Cromwell's career and deeply shaped his own connections, often trumping religious affiliations until the late 1530s. At the risk of labouring the point, attempts to curb enclosures or interest in weirs and waterworks are also described as continuing Wolsey's earlier policies (pp. 183-85). Perhaps more controversially, the destruction of Queen Anne is seen in the same light, not merely as personal revenge but as 'a monument for the cardinal far beyond the skill of Italian craftsmen' (p. 342).

Finally, much attention is devoted to the religious proclivities of a man who had been considered mostly indifferent to religious matters. MacCulloch argues that Cromwell favoured evangelical reform from an early point in his life but explains that this preference did not prevent him from falling back on traditional religion at a time of crisis in his life (see the careful analysis of his 1529 will and a new interpretation of a passing remark by George Cavendish, pp. 87-89). Throughout his career, his evangelical outlook did not stop him from having religiously conservative friends and allies, often dating back to his years in Wolsey's service. And in this recounting, Cromwell is almost entirely absolved of responsibility in the murderous treatment of religious dissenters, especially Thomas More and John Fisher. Blame for bloodshed is squarely laid at the feet of the king, whose violence and fickle character could however be carefully manipulated at times. Cromwell certainly knew how to harness royal fury to take down his enemies, be it the queen. Although MacCulloch strives to paint a positive portrait of his subject, readers might not be entirely convinced of Cromwell's essential decency and this portrayal has irked some reviewers.[1]

Cromwell's involvement in the dissolution of the monasteries makes this biography the most detailed recent treatment of how the policy of dissolution was gradually shaped by circumstances and varyingly implemented on the ground. Cromwell's principal contribution to the evangelical cause is his success in introducing an English Bible in all parish churches. Behind the sycophantic title page designed to appeal to the royal head of the Church, the vernacular text was largely based on the translation by William Tyndale, a version squarely rejected by the king for its Lutheran overtones. MacCulloch's tried and tested method of reconstructing networks produces another distinctive historiographical breakthrough.[2] It seems

[1]Richard Rex, '"The Monster's Servant"; Review of *Thomas Cromwell: A Revolutionary Life* by Diarmaid MacCulloch', *First Things*, November 2018; and Seymour Baker House, 'Review of *Thomas Cromwell: A Revolutionary Life* by Diarmaid MacCulloch', *Moreana*, 56.2 (2019), pp. 250-56.

[2]For another fruitful examination of networks, see MacCulloch's analysis of the 1543 'Prebendaries Plot' in *Thomas Cranmer, A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 297-324.

that it was Cromwell who was behind the attempted rapprochement with Bullinger in 1536 when a clutch of young men were dispatched to study in Zürich. This could indicate that his faith was evolving towards a Reformed view of the Eucharist long before Archbishop Cranmer followed suit in 1547 (pp. 366-71). In the end it was Cromwell's foreign policy ambitions, his attempt to protect the ascendancy of the Seymour faction and his own influence at court through the promotion of the Cleves marriage that caused his downfall. But religion was his main vulnerability: his secret patronage of English sacramentarians and foreign policy initiatives might have fuelled the king's anger at being hoodwinked. Death was only a temporary setback for Cromwell's programme of religious reform: his lasting legacy was that 'Queen Elizabeth's Church resemble[d] Zürich's Church much more than Geneva's' (p. 371). The book concludes with a broader claim that 'Cromwell's Nicodemite version of Reformed Protestantism' is the only variety that endured in sixteenth-century Europe.

This is an impressive book both in its length and in the breadth and depth of the research it required. Although not an easy read, it will definitely be compulsory for the coming generations of early Tudor historians. It is regrettable that publishers now require endnotes formatting and, in this case, the running presentation is not user friendly. Finally, *Thomas Cromwell* can be looked to as a model of how nimble analysis of historical evidence yields essential findings. MacCulloch excels at close readings of sources and exploits particularly deftly the draft versions of many documents, charting the course of how and why events unfolded in the way they did while also paying close attention to the paths not taken. It is historical scholarship at its best.

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Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Further Correspondence of William Laud* (Church of England Record Society, 23; Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), pp. lii + 304. ISBN 978-1-78327-267-9.
doi:10.1017/S1740355320000479

This volume contains a collection of 223 of William Laud's letters, drawn from a wide range of archives, and which did not appear in the nineteenth-century edition of his works. As the editor notes, these extra letters represent an additional 29 per cent of the known corpus of Laud's correspondence. For that reason alone, this collection is of great value to scholars of this period, significantly enriching our picture of this remarkable prelate. It shines an interesting new light on the working relationship between Laud and the king. The letters make clear that Laud regularly drew the king into the minutiae of ecclesiastical affairs and was therefore able to deploy royal approbation both to advance the causes close to his heart, and to deflect criticism of actions he had taken. His acknowledged closeness to the king could also be