



Thomas Cromwell: The Rise and Fall of Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister

Robert Hutchinson

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'gripping... Hutchinson tells his story with infectious relish and vividly evokes the politics and personalities of this extraordinary decade.' (Anne Somerset LITERARY REVIEW)

'Hutchinson tells the horrible story admirably and compellingly, acknowledging Cromwell's rare abilities, while making no excuses for his character...' (Allan Massie THE OBSERVER)

'a rollicking good read' (Harry Reid THE HERALD)

'vigorous, pacey and focused... an effective portrait of "Henry VIII's most notorious minister"' (BBC HISTORY)

Thomas Cromwell: The Rise and Fall of Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister Details

Date : Published May 23rd 2008 by George Weidenfeld & Nicholson (first published April 2007)

ISBN : 9780297846420

Author : Robert Hutchinson

Format : Hardcover 270 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Biography, English History, Tudor Period, Biography Memoir



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From Reader Review Thomas Cromwell: The Rise and Fall of Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister for online ebook

Avis Black says

I tried to read it, but the author's hatred for his subject gets in the way so much that I gave up on it. Hutchinson should have just told the facts and let the readers make up their own minds. The writing comes across like one of those state-approved texts issued under the communist regimes of Stalin or Mao that told the reader, every inch of the way, what you were supposed to think about a person to prevent thoughtcrime. Man, is this ever annoying. The author seems convinced his readers are so stupid that they cannot be trusted to do their own thinking.

Pete daPixie says

I had recently read Hutchinson's 'The Last Days of Henry VIII' and liked it, so was quite happy to give this a try. 'Thomas Cromwell-The Rise and Fall of Henry VIII's most Notorious Minister', published 2007, is a very enjoyable read and a well researched biography on the career of Cromwell.

T.C. escaped the wreckage of Thomas Wolsey in 1529, to climb up the greasy Tudor ministerial pole. Having risen to Lord Privy Seal, and finally Earl of Essex, his fall came, charged with treason in 1540. Therefore the book covers a sizeable chunk of Henry's reign, from the 'Great Matter' pertaining Catherine of Aragon, the tenure of Anne Boleyn, the foundation of the English Reformation, the Dissolution of Monastic houses, the Boleyn trial, the Pilgrimage of Grace, the tenure of Jane Seymour, the introduction of the English bible and the very short tenure of Anne of Cleves. All the above came about in the 1530's and Cromwell was involved in all these events, as a humble Member of Parliament, then into the King's Council to Chancellor to Chief Secretary. His was the rags to riches rise to power not known before or since. It also highlights the adage of absolute power and corruption.

Hutchinson is an expert on the Reformation and Tudor history. His book is packed with primary source material. There are close on fifty pages of notes alone. Perhaps not bed-time reading material, but a great study of this period.

Rhiannon D'Averc says

You know, this book is very, very informative. If you want any facts - any facts at all - about Cromwell's life, you can find them here. In that sense, this book is very good.

However, I have two gripes regarding the layout, and the tone. There were far too many notes at the back, meaning you had to constantly flick backwards and forwards - to the extent that I ended up using two bookmarks, one for the main book and one for the notes. It would have benefitted from some of this detail being part of the main text instead, or having the notes at the bottom of each page.

The tone, as I have mentioned, was also a huge problem for me. If you're writing a biography about someone, do it about someone you like or admire - not someone you clearly despise. Some of his judgements were harsh and utterly unwarranted in a factual book.

Peter Dunn says

Really this is a book that does what it says on the tin. It is a good basic historical biography of Thomas Cromwell. It's not overly ambitious and it doesn't try to speculate beyond the limitations of the known facts. It also not reasonably assigns him credit where its due for things such as acts of loyalty, promotion of religious reformation, defence of the monarch of the day, modernising government, while equally also reporting; his own personal corruption, grudge bearing, scheming, personal aggrandisement etc, etc.

Several reviews criticise this book for what they see as its mixed messages and for not taking one clear position or another, I think rather that the book should be praised for presenting us with both the saint and the sinner, a mixture that is not uncommon in many humans.

Other reviews critique the text for being somehow lacking in substance or detail. Well I am sure there are probably many 600 plus page tomes on Thomas Cromwell out there that probably eke out the available documents with more scholarly pondering. However I just wanted something half that size that was: reliable, informative and readable to give me a decent sense of the real Cromwell, and to act as a counter balance to the entertaining fiction of Wolf Hall, and this did the job.

Pauline Chamberlain says

A good on depth biography about Thomas Cromwell

Stefan says

Robert Hutchinson's biography of Thomas Cromwell was balanced, accurate and highly readable. Hutchinson does a superb job at placing Cromwell within the context of his time. I learned a lot about Thomas Cromwell as a person (his upbringing, long political career and swift downfall) and his considerable impact on English society and government. Hutchinson emphasized that Cromwell played a large role in the dissolution of the monasteries and the violent centralization of power, which gave Henry VIII unprecedented wealth and power. Robert Hutchinson does not demonize Cromwell, but nor does he ignore that Cromwell was a ruthless manipulator who lacked any form of moral decency.

Karen says

He was truly Henry VIII's most notorious and in my opinion, his most loyal servant. He was beset by enemies who were jealous that he became so powerful and wealthy, inspite of his low birth. The book discussed many facets of Cromwell's life and I felt the information was a balance of good and bad. I really enjoyed it.

R K says

DNF page 70

By this point I'm seriously considering watching a documentary before taking on books because I have no idea what I've read in 70 pages.

Carrie says

This book clearly Outlined the historical facts of Cromwell's life. In fact I think I might have learned the same amount of information just by reading the timeline at the back of the book. Like a previous reviewer I felt the author to be very biased and judgmental which gave the book a very distasteful tone for me. I also was looking for more of a glimpse into his personal life and motivations but maybe he records of that do not exist.

Jennifer says

Reading in September with Lyn and Aly

Dawn says

Very dry and difficult to get through. I agree with some of the others that the author doesn't seem to have much affection or even respect for his subject (and why would you write a book about a person you dislike so?). But very thorough. And I didn't know exactly what Cromwell did for Henry VIII before reading this; so many of my other books (both fiction and non-fiction) imply he was Henry's evil genius and/or doer of dirty deeds and certainly don't cover the nitty-gritty.

I did notice as well that he subscribes to some of the traditional views of the other people--Anne of Cleves was a plain-to-ugly person with bad BO and possibly low intelligence; Katheryn Howard was a bubbling bimbo, etc. Sort of bothered me.

Jonathan Farley says

An interesting book.

Colleen says

This is one of the best Tudor time period biographies I have read and the one to read if you want to know more about Thomas Cromwell. The book is not dry at all, an easy read which is a bonus as far as non-fiction biographies go. The book goes into great detail about Cromwell's early life before Henry VIII and describes his determined rise to power and his downfall at the hands of the hateful Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. I learned a lot about Cromwell and even sympathized with him as I read about his motives and his never mentioned kind acts of charity to the poor. From his childhood to his botched execution Hutchinson guides the reader through the life and death of one of Henry VIII's most talked about and disliked minister's.

Aviva says

I'm surprised by the reviews of this book on this site. While I find the scholarship in this book to be admirable, I am perplexed by the author's open condemnation of his subject. His "editorial comments" and asides about Cromwell's supposed poor character, low birth, avarice, etc. are wholly unnecessary -- if Cromwell was indeed that bad, the facts should speak for themselves. Additionally, Cromwell, like all of us, was a product of his time and I'm not convinced he was truly any worse than the other ministers who served Henry VIII. Hutchinson has so far not proven he was, which is, perhaps, why he resorts to insisting so repeatedly.

Look at Norfolk, and how utterly contemptible his actions were. He and the Boleyns were entirely behind the proposal that the king marry Ann. Why? In order to gain more power and wealth for themselves. Norfolk, a devout Catholic, supported going against Rome purely for personal gain. So who in this picture is of good character? Who isn't motivated by greed, self-interest, a quest for power?

Cromwell, in addition, did everything he could to satisfy his master's demands and he was quite successful at it -- so successful, in fact, that against all odds, he rose to the very top of the king's inner circle.

I am far more interested in portraits that are three-dimensional and nuanced. This book tries very hard to tar Cromwell and it diminishes my enjoyment of it. I will finish this book but not likely read another by this author, as he is nowhere as disinterested as I would expect of a historian.

A J. says

A decently put together biography but I found my attention occasionally wandering, mainly as it's not my most beloved historical period.
