

Biography of Diarmaid MacCulloch

Host of *A History of Christianity*



Diarmaid Ninian John MacCulloch has been Professor of the History of the Church at the University of Oxford since 1997 and Fellow of St. Cross College, Oxford, since 1995. The history of Christianity is a subject MacCulloch has been immersed in all his life, as the last in three generations of Anglican clergy. “I was a country parson’s son. When I was a small boy, my parents used to drive me around historic churches searching out whatever looked interesting...but soon, they realized they had created a monster,” he says. “The history of the church became my life’s work. For me, no other subject can rival its scale and drama.” MacCulloch is one of the most widely-traveled Christian historians in the world.

From 1978 until 1990, MacCulloch was a tutor at Wesley College, Bristol, and taught Church History in the department of Theology at the University of Bristol. He interrupted his teaching to study for the Oxford Diploma in Theology (awarded 1987) at Ripon College Cuddesdon. In 1987 he was ordained deacon in the Church of England and from 1987 to 1988 he served as Non-Stipendiary Minister at Clifton All Saints with St. John in the Diocese of Bristol. However, in response to a motion put before the General Synod in 1987 by the Rev. Tony Higton regarding the sexuality of clergy, he declined ordination to the priesthood and ceased to minister at Clifton. He joined the Gay Christian Movement in 1976, serving twice on its committee and briefly as honorary secretary.

MacCulloch attended Hillcroft Preparatory School and Stowmarket Grammar school in Suffolk, and subsequently read History at Churchill College, Cambridge (BA 1972, MA 1976), where he was organ scholar. He took a Diploma in Archive Administration at Liverpool University in 1973, and then returned to Cambridge to complete a PhD in Tudor History under the supervision of Sir G. R. Elton (awarded 1977), combining this with a position as Junior Research Fellow at Churchill College. MacCulloch was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (1978), a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (1982), and a Fellow of the British Academy (2001). He is a Doctor of Divinity of the University of Oxford (2001) and in 2003 was awarded an honorary DLitt by the University of East Anglia. He co-edits the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. This year, he was recognized in the UK with the Longman/*History Today* Trustees’ Award, given annually by the Trustees to a person or institution that has done outstanding work to promote history.

MacCulloch’s book *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided 1490–1700* (2003) won the 2004 National Book Critics Circle Award, the Wolfson Prize, and the British Academy Prize, adding to his earlier success in carrying off the 1996 Whitbread Biography Prize, Duff Cooper Prize, and James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*. *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, was published in September 2009 with a related television series on BBC 4, which is being released on DVD in March 2010.

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