MICHAEL C. QUESTIER

Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England

Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550–1640

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Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England

This is a groundbreaking study of the political, religious, social and mental worlds of the Catholic aristocracy from 1550 to 1640. Michael Questier examines the familial and patronage networks of the English Catholic community and their relationship to the later Tudors and Stuarts. He shows how the local history of the Reformation can be used to rewrite mainstream accounts of national politics and religious conflict in this period. The book takes in the various crises of mid- and late Elizabeth politics, the accession of James Stuart, the Gunpowder plot, religious toleration and the start of the Thirty Years War and finally the rise of Laudianism, leading up to the civil war. It challenges current historical notions of Catholicism as fundamentally sectarian and demonstrates the extent to which sections of the Catholic community had come to an understanding with both the local and national State by the later 1620s and 1630s.

MICHAEL C. QUESTIER is Senior Lecturer in History at Queen Mary, University of London. He has published *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (1996).

CATHOLICISM AND COMMUNITY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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MICHAEL C. QUESTIER

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PREFACE

This book has been a long time in the making. It would never have appeared at all if it had not been for the considerable kindness of so many friends. In particular Pauline Croft read the entire typescript (more than once) and made numerous invaluable suggestions. Rivkah Zim shared her understanding of the aristocracy during this period; Simon Healy provided essential advice on early modern parliamentary procedure; and I am exceedingly grateful to Simon Adams for allowing me access to his utterly encyclopaedic knowledge of sixteenth-century politics. Most helpful also were Geoff Baker, Caroline Bowden, Thomas Cogswell, Ginevra Crosignani, Richard Cust, Andrew Foster, Gabriel Glickman, Paul Hammer, Matthew Piggott, Glyn Redworth, Geoffrey Scott and Margaret Sena. And I am indebted to Peter Lake for discussions of many of the topics and themes in this volume.

One of the advantages of doing any species of local history is that it allows one to see at first hand some of the places and things in which one claims to be interested. I would like to thank Richard Clark of Battle Abbey school for discussing the architecture and history of the abbey with me, and also Helen Atkins of Firle Place for her assistance with the records of the Gage family. Timothy McCann and Christopher Whittick, local history supremos respectively in West Sussex and East Sussex, were exceptionally helpful in guiding me to sources that I would, without doubt, never have discovered on my own. I would like also to record my thanks to *Historical Research* for allowing me to use material previously published in that excellent journal, and to Michael Watson and Linda Randall of Cambridge University Press, and also to the Marc Fitch Fund and the Isobel Thornley Fund for financial assistance towards the costs of publication.

Another debt of gratitude is owed to Geoffrey Holt and Thomas McCoog, the guardians of the Jesuit library and archive in Mayfair in London. It is a tribute to their tolerance that I was allowed to use their archival resources to complete a study of Catholicism in the early modern period, a significant proportion of which is concerned with hatred (expressed by both Catholics and Protestants) of the Society of Jesus. Ian Dickie, at the Westminster Cathedral

Archives, has had to put up with listening to stories about the Jesuit archive in a different part of town and yet still allowed me to take liberties with his archival holdings (and with his photocopier).

My last debt is to the Tudor and Stuart seminar at the Institute of Historical Research in London. In the context of a crumbling and decaying, and frequently deeply depressing, higher education system in twenty-first-century Britain it is reassuring that some things, and notably the seminar, have not changed. One former convenor of the seminar liked to think that the compensation for a lower standard of living in London academe was a higher standard of thinking. Whether or not this is true, the seminar, with its intellectual solidarity and sheer unpretentiousness, has been for many of us the centre of the early modern historical world (at least in London). Had I not been privileged to attend it, and had it not been for the many friends whom I have met there, I would, without question, never have had the incentive to carry on.

In a recent overview of the Reformation period Peter Marshall suggested that I had misunderstood the nature of the post-Reformation Catholic community in England, in particular in my belief that there was no such unitary thing as Catholicism during the period. After a certain amount of bad-tempered huffing and puffing I am bound to say that, at least in some respects, I now agree with him. The contours of this volume owe a lot to his thoughts. It is, as its title indicates, written also with an eye to John Bossy's *English Catholic Community 1570–1850* of 1975. The whole project is, in some sense, a response to that extraordinary book, even though it is not really in disagreement with any aspect of what Professor Bossy said. (I am, in fact, still thinking about the general thrust of Bossy's argument and, in a perplexed state, will probably go on doing so.) But I recognise that, probably misled by the weight of both early modern polemics and also by more modern historical establishment-centred accounts of the Church and religion during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, I have not previously acknowledged sufficiently the coherence of the early modern Catholic community (although coherence does not necessarily mean harmony), and I have done my best, therefore, both to adjust my own perspective and also to reignite the debate about the religious politics of the period which Bossy pioneered over thirty years ago.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

In the text, dates are given Old Style (unless otherwise indicated) but the year is taken to begin on 1 January. The place of publication of printed works cited is London unless otherwise stated. Original spelling in all quotations from early modern manuscripts and printed works has been retained (except for 'than', which frequently appears in them as 'then'; and, also, i is transposed to j, and u to v, where necessary in order to conform to modern usage). Contractions have been silently expanded. Capitalisation has been modernised and punctuation has been partly modernised.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anthony Maria Browne, second Viscount Montague, 'An Apologeticall Answere of the Vicount Montague unto Sundrie Important Aspersions in the Seven Reasons, and some other partes of a Letter of a Namelesse Author cov[e]red under the Letters A.B.' (Gillow Library MS, on microfilm at WSRO)
AAW	Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster
ABSJ	Archivum Britannicum Societatis Jesu
Adams, 'Protestant Cause'	S. Adams, 'The Protestant Cause: Religious Alliance with the West European Calvinist Communities as a Political Issue in England, 1585–1630' (D.Phil., Oxford, 1973)
Akrigg, *Southampton*	G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (1968)
Albion, *CI*	G. Albion, *Charles I and the Court of Rome* (1935)
Allison, JG	A. F. Allison, 'John Gerard and the Gunpowder Plot', *RH* 5 (1959–60), 43–63
Allison, QJ	A. F. Allison, 'A Question of Jurisdiction: Richard Smith, Bishop of Chalcedon and the Catholic Laity, 1625–1631', *RH* 16 (1982), 111–45
Allison, RS	A. F. Allison, 'Richard Smith, Richelieu and the French Marriage. The Political Context of Smith's Appointment as Bishop for England in 1624', *RH* 7 (1964), 148–211
Allison, RSGB	A. F. Allison, 'Richard Smith's Gallican Backers and Jesuit Opponents', I (*RH* 18 (1987), 329–401), II (*RH* 19 (1989), 234–85), III (*RH* 20 (1990), 164–206)

Anglia MS 1	Letters of the Jesuit general, Muzio Vitelleschi, to members of the English province (summaries at ABSJ, XLVII/3 (vol. I: 1605–23), XLVII/4 (vol. II: 1624–32) and XLVII/5 (vol. III: 1633–41))
Anstr.	G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests* (4 vols., Ware and Great Wakering, 1968–77)
Anstruther, *Vaux*	G. Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden* (Newport, 1953)
APC	J. R. Dasent *et al.* (eds.), *Acts of the Privy Council of England 1542–1628* (46 vols., 1890–1964)
ARCR	A. F. Allison and D. M. Rogers, *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation between 1558 and 1640* (2 vols., Aldershot, 1989–94)
ARSJ	Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu
Bellenger, *EWP*	D. A. Bellenger, *English and Welsh Priests 1558–1800* (Bath, 1984)
Berry, *Sussex*	W. Berry, *County Genealogies: Pedigrees of the Families in the County of Sussex* (1830) (copy at WSRO annotated by J. Comber)
BIHR	*Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*
Bindoff, *HC*	S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The House of Commons 1509–1558* (3 vols., 1982)
BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Bossy, 'Character'	J. Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', *Past and Present* 21 (1962), 39–59
Bossy, *ECC*	J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570–1850* (1975)
Breight, 'Caressing'	C. Breight, 'Caressing the Great: Viscount Montague's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Cowdray, 1591', *SAC* 127 (1989), 147–66
BS	*Biographical Studies*
Challoner, *Memoirs*	R. Challoner, ed. J. H. Pollen, *The Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (1924)
Cockburn, *Kent Assizes: Elizabeth*	J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments: Elizabeth I* (1979)

Cockburn, *Surrey Assizes: Elizabeth*	J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Surrey Indictments: Elizabeth I* (1980)
Cockburn, *Surrey Assizes: James I*	J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Surrey Indictments: James I* (1982)
Cockburn, *Sussex Assizes: Elizabeth*	J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize Records: Sussex Indictments: Elizabeth I* (1975)
Cockburn, *Sussex Assizes: James I*	J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Calendar of Assize. Records: Sussex Indictments: James I* (1975)
Codignola, *CHL*	L. Codignola, trans. A. Weston, *The Coldest Harbour of the Land: Simon Stock and Lord Baltimore's Colony in Newfoundland, 1621–1649* (Montreal, 1988)
CRS	Catholic Record Society
CRS 1	*Miscellanea I* (CRS 1, 1905)
CRS 2	*Miscellanea II* (CRS 2 1906)
CRS 4	*Miscellanea IV* (CRS 4, 1907)
CRS 5	J. H. Pollen (ed.), *Unpublished Documents relating to the English Martyrs* (CRS 5, 1908)
CRS 10–11	E. H. Burton and T. L. Williams (eds.), *The Douay College Diaries* (CRS 10–11, 1911)
CRS 18	M. M. C. Calthrop (ed.), *Recusant Roll No. 1, 1592–3* (CRS 18, 1916)
CRS 21	J. H. Pollen and W. MacMahon (eds.), *The Ven. Philip Howard Earl of Arundel 1557–1595* (CRS 21, 1919)
CRS 22	*Miscellanea XII* (CRS 22, 1921)
CRS 37	W. Kelly (ed.), *Liber Ruber Venerabilis Collegii Anglorum de Urbe: Annales Collegii Pars Prima: Nomina Alumnorum I. A.D. 1579–1630* (CRS 37, 1940)
CRS 39	L. Hicks (ed.), *Letters and Memorials of Father Robert Persons, S.J.*, I (CRS 39, 1942)
CRS 41	L. Hicks (ed.), *Letters of Thomas Fitzherbert 1608–1610* (CRS 41, 1948)
CRS 51	P. Renold (ed.), *The Wisbech Stirs (1595–1598)* (CRS 51, 1958)
CRS 52	A. G. Petti (ed.), *The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan (c. 1550–1640)* (CRS 52, 1959)
CRS 53	C. Talbot (ed.), *Miscellanea* (CRS 53, 1961)

CRS 54–5	A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome* (2 vols., CRS 54–5, 1962–3)
CRS 56	E. E. Reynolds (ed.), *Miscellanea* (CRS 56, 1964)
CRS 57	H. Bowler (ed.), *Recusant Roll No. 2 (1593–1594)* (CRS 57, 1965)
CRS 58	P. Renold (ed.), *Letters of William Allen and Richard Barret 1572–1598* (CRS 58, 1965)
CRS 60	A. G. Petti (ed.), *Recusant Documents from the Ellesmere Manuscripts* (CRS 60, 1968)
CRS 61	H. Bowler (ed.), *Recusant Roll No. 3 (1594–1595) and Recusant Roll No. 4 (1595–1596)* (CRS 61, 1970)
CRS 64/68	A. J. Loomie (ed.), *Spain and the Jacobean Catholics* (2 vols., CRS 64, 68, 1973, 1978)
CRS 71	H. Bowler and T. McCann (eds.), *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls 1581–1592* (CRS 71, 1986)
CRS 74–5	T. M. McCoog (ed.), *English and Welsh Jesuits 1555–1650* (2 vols., CRS 74–5, 1994–5)
CSPD	R. Lemon and M. A. E. Green (eds.), *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series* (12 vols. (for 1547–1625), 1856–72)
CSP Rome	J. M. Rigg (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally at Rome* (2 vols. (for 1558–78), 1916–26)
CSP Scotland	J. Bain *et al.* (eds.), *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots 1547–1603* (13 vols., Edinburgh, 1898–1969)
CSP Spanish	M. A. S. Hume (ed.), *Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas* (4 vols., 1892–9)
CSPF	J. Stevenson *et al.* (eds.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth* (33 vols. (for 1558–96), 1863–2000)
CSPV	H. F. Brown and A. B. Hinds (eds.), *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian Series* (11 vols. (for 1581–1625), 1894–1912)

Davidson, RC	A. Davidson, 'Roman Catholicism in Oxfordshire from the Late Elizabethan Period to the Civil War *c.* 1580–1640' (Ph.D., Bristol, 1970)
Devlin, *Life*	C. Devlin, *The Life of Robert Southwell* (1956)
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
Dockery, *CD*	J. B. Dockery, *Christopher Davenport* (1960)
ER	*Essex Recusant*
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office
Foley	H. Foley, *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* (7 vols., 1875–83)
FSL	Folger Shakespeare Library
GEC	G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage* (13 vols., 1910–59)
Guilday, *ECR*	P. Guilday, *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent 1558–1795* (1914)
Hamilton, *Chronicle*	A. Hamilton (ed.), *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St Monica's in Louvain* (2 vols., 1904–6)
Harris, 'Reports'	P. R. Harris, 'The Reports of William Udall, Informer, 1605–1612', part I, *RH* 8 (1965), 192–284
Hasler, *HC*	P. Hasler (ed.), *The House of Commons 1558–1603* (3 vols., 1981)
HEH, BA	Archive of Webster of Battle (Henry E. Huntington Library, Los Angeles)
Hibbard, *CI*	C. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill, 1983)
HJ	*Historical Journal*
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HMCA	S. C. Lomas (ed.), *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Ancaster* (HMC, 1907)
HMCD	E. K. Purnell *et al.* (eds.), *Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire* (5 vols., HMC, 1924–8)
HMCS	M. S. Giuseppi *et al.* (eds.), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury* (24 vols., HMC, 1888–1976)
Hope, *Cowdray*	W. H. St John Hope, *Cowdray and Easebourne Priory in the County of Sussex* (1919)

HPT	History of Parliament Trust
HR	*Historical Research*
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
Hughes, *HSJ*	T. Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America* (4 vols., 1908), vol. I
Hughes, *RCR*	P. Hughes, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in England* (1942)
Hyland, *CP*	St George Kieran Hyland, *A Century of Persecution* (1920)
JBS	*Journal of British Studies*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
Larkin and Hughes, *SRP*, I	J. F. Larkin and P. L. Hughes (eds.), *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603–1625* (Oxford, 1973)
Larkin, *SRP*, II	J. F. Larkin (ed.), *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of King Charles I 1625–1646* (Oxford, 1983)
Law, *AC*	T. G. Law, *The Archpriest Controversy* (2 vols., Camden Society, second series, 56, 58, 1896–8)
LJ	*Journals of the House of Lords*
LM	Loseley Manuscripts
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
Loseley MSS	'The Manuscripts of William More Molyneux, Esq., of Loseley Park, Guildford, co. Surrey', *Seventh Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, part I (report and appendix) (1879), 596–681
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
Lunn, *EB*	D. Lunn, *The English Benedictines, 1540–1688* (1980)
Lunn, 'Opposition'	D. Lunn, 'Benedictine Opposition to Bishop Richard Smith (1625–1629)', *RH* 11 (1971–2), 1–20
McClure, *Letters*	N. E. McClure (ed.), *The Letters of John Chamberlain* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1939)
McCoog, *Society*	T. M. McCoog, *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England 1541–1588: 'Our Way of Proceeding?'* (Leiden, 1996)
Manning, *Religion*	R. B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester, 1969)

Milton, *CR*	A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* (Cambridge, 1995)
Milward I	P. Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Elizabethan Age* (1977)
Milward II	P. Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Jacobean Age* (1978)
Morris, *Troubles*	J. Morris (ed.), *The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers* (3 vols., 1872–7)
Mosse, *ME*	N. Mosse, *The Monumental Effigies of Sussex (1250–1650)* (Hove, 1933)
Mott, HR	A. Mott, 'A Dictionary of Hampshire Recusants: Tempo Eliz' (typescript at ABSJ)
NAGB	M. Questier (ed.), *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead* (Camden Society, 5th series, 12, 1998)
NCC	M. Questier (ed.), *Newsletters from the Caroline Court, 1631–1638: Catholicism and the Politics of the Personal Rule* (Camden Society, 5th series, 26, 2005)
NDNB	*The New Dictionary of National Biography*
n.p.	no place (of publication)
OFM	Order of Friars Minor
OSB	Order of St Benedict
Paul, HR	J. E. Paul, 'The Hampshire Recusants in the Reign of Elizabeth I with some Reference to the Problem of Church Papists' (Ph.D., Southampton, 1958)
Peckham, 'Institutions'	W. D. Peckham (ed.), 'Chichester Diocese Institutions, 1560–1658' (typescript at WSRO, Miscellaneous Papers 1096)
PRO	Public Record Office (National Archives)
Questier, LF	M. Questier, 'Loyal to a Fault: Viscount Montague Explains Himself', *HR* 77 (2004), 225–53
Questier, PM	M. Questier, 'Catholicism, Kinship and the Public Memory of Sir Thomas More', *JEH* 53 (2002), 476–509
RAF 3/4	Battle Abbey: Account of the Steward to Lady Montague 1597 (Raper & Fovargue, solicitors, Antiquarian Collection, Box 3/4)
RH	*Recusant History*
Roundell, *Cowdray*	C. Roundell, *Cowdray* (1884)

SAC	*Sussex Archaeological Collections*
SAS	Sussex Archaeological Society
Sharpe, *PR*	K. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (1992)
SHC	Surrey History Centre
SJ	Society of Jesus
Smith, *Life*	L. P. Smith (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* (2 vols., Oxford, 1907)
Southern, *ERH*	A. C. Southern, *An Elizabethan Recusant House Comprising the Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague (1538–1608)* (1954)
SR	*The Statutes of the Realm* (11 vols., 1810–28)
SRS	Sussex Record Society
SRS 19–20	E. H. W. Dunkin (ed.), *Sussex Manors, Advowsons, etc., Recorded in the Feet of Fines . . .* (SRS 19–20, 1914–15)
Stone, *CA*	L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1965)
TD	M. A. Tierney, *Dodd's Church History of England* (5 vols., 1839–43)
Traherne, *SC*	J. M. Traherne (ed.), *Stradling Correspondence* (1840)
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
VA	Vatican Archives
VCH Surrey	H. E. Malden and W. Page (eds.), *The Victoria History of the County of Surrey* (4 vols., 1902–67)
VCH Sussex	W. Page *et al*. (eds.), *The Victoria History of the County of Sussex* (9 vols., 1905–97)
VCH Wiltshire	R. B. Pugh *et al*. (eds.), *A History of Wiltshire* (17 vols., 1957–2002)
Watson, *Decacordon*	William Watson, *A Decacordon of Ten Quodlibeticall Questions* (1602)
WSRO	West Sussex Record Office

1

Introduction

This book started out as a proposal for a doctoral thesis on the post-Reformation experiences of one aristocratic family – namely the Brownes who dwelt during this period principally at Cowdray in West Sussex, Battle Abbey in East Sussex and in their Southwark residence, Montague House, which was situated in St Saviour's parish on the south bank of the Thames. (The head of the Browne family during Mary Tudor's reign, Sir Anthony, was promoted to the peerage in 1554 as Viscount Montague.) These were the sort of people whose lives and careers could be used, I thought, to explore certain central themes within the social history of the aristocracy of the period, especially with reference to political ideology and religious belief. For the Browne family was predominantly and often openly Catholic in its religious inclinations.

At the time that I was commencing research, however, this topic looked potentially rather unfashionable. It was the 'popular' rather than the blue-blooded variety of English Catholicism which was then attracting Reformation historians' attention. Popular conservatism, we are still told, is the key to explaining why the English Reformation failed in its purpose of transforming the English Church into the godly and pious institution which some Protestants wanted. Indeed, popular residual Catholic sentiment would have had even more clout after 1559 had the natural leaders of Catholicism, the high-born, particularly the peerage, not been vertebraically challenged. But they did nothing to crystallise and express that popular defiance which perhaps could, with proper direction, have completely halted the Reformation in its tracks. If, as has been estimated, approximately 20 per cent of the aristocracy remained Catholic in this period,[1] it must have been the least important 20 per cent. And their Catholicism can stand only as an index for their irrelevance. They were generally deprived of high office, but, not having the zeal of humbler Catholic folk, they were not usually called to account

[1] Lawrence Stone estimates that in 1641 about one fifth of the 121 peers could be described as Roman Catholic, Stone, *CA*, 742. See also Allison, QJ, 139.

for their religious opinions in the way that many recusant nonconformists were when they were hauled before the judges of the ecclesiastical and the secular courts.

It was therefore something of a worry to me that, since the project was concerned, initially at least, with the first Viscount Montague and his grandson and heir (who succeeded to the title as the second viscount), the thing might end up being called ‘a tale of two nobles’, or that, reflecting on their (apparent) withdrawal from the national stage, some wit might suggest that the first and second viscounts were an example of, using John Bossy’s famous phrase, ‘inertia to inertia in three generations’, without there even being an active generation in the middle! Therefore, the preliminary work which I had done on the project I simply put aside, thinking that one day it might become an article in a local history journal.

But, as the years went by, I kept coming across references to this family, stories told and opinions voiced about them, and not just them but a wide variety of people with whom they were connected in various ways (by blood, marriage, tenurially, through patronage and service and even purely through ideological affinity). Although I was stumbling across bits and pieces of information and evidence essentially at random, it began to look as if there was something amounting to a fairly significant social entity which, for shorthand purposes, I decided to call an ‘entourage’ (grouped around the leading members of the family).[2]

I began to hope that by pursuing this entourage in some depth, even by resorting from time to time to some of the methodology of microhistory,[3] it might be possible to take an identifiable unit or nexus of individuals within the English Catholic community and ask a series of questions about it. For example, what political opinions did they hold? What were their attitudes on a range of questions such as nonconformity? How did the patronage structures work which allowed for the support of the Catholic clergy? Why was Catholicism so factionalised? What structures of authority for preserving Catholicism were created among such people? In particular, how did these Catholics understand the relationship between themselves and the

[2] By ‘entourage’ I mean something broader and looser than the patronage and clientage structures which have been discussed in such detail by, for instance, historians of early modern France. See e.g. S. Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1986), chs. 1–3, for an elaborate theorisation of the forms of patronage in France during this period. As Paul Hammer notes, the ‘terms “following” and “followers” are imprecise, but suggestive, words’. The second earl of Essex’s ‘“following” consisted of (primarily) men who were either his servants, clients (those linked to him by some significant patronage tie), relatives or close friends. Very often, individuals qualified as followers under more than one of these categories’, P. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics* (Cambridge, 1999), 269. For differences between Lord Burghley and the earl of Essex about how a following or entourage should be constructed, see *ibid*., 298.

[3] See C. W. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550–1630* (Cambridge, 1994), 10–14.

regime? And what was the nature of their relationship with the Church of England? The interaction of the Catholic community with the outside world, or, rather, the rest of English society, was something which Professor Bossy's justly famous magnum opus, *The English Catholic Community 1570–1850*, for methodological reasons, did not fully address. In some very real sense Catholicism did become, as Bossy argued, 'sectarian'. But Bossy developed this concept by writing about his topic from within. He specifically said that he was not interested in the 'relation of minority to majority, considered either as State or as Church, but with the body of Catholics as a social whole and in relation to itself'.[4] But this did not mean that the relationship of minority to majority could or should not be considered. Indeed this aspect of the topic positively invited study since one of the consensuses of recent Reformation scholarship has been that there was a good deal more interaction between people of supposedly hermetically sealed religious traditions than we had previously thought. Thus, by indulging myself in telling a story about a specific bit of the early modern Catholic community in which I was interested, I hoped to be able to narrate something which was not only about that community, at least not as it has traditionally been understood.

It is not surprising, of course, that, within the small-ish world of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English gentry/aristocratic Catholicism, people tended to know other people. Methodologically, there was clearly a danger that what started out as a study of one relatively coherent family unit might become a mêlée of stray remarks about everyone who had even the slightest connection with anybody else within this comparatively narrow universe of individuals. There was also a risk that one would attribute impulses, attitudes and ideas exclusively to this group which were much more widely shared and held by other people, people about whom one knew next to nothing simply because they did not figure in the sources upon which one was relying.

On the other hand, I was sure that one could do more here than write a connected series of biographical sketches. For while at certain points in the period all we can find out about these characters is the absolute minimum of scattered biographical detail, at other times the aristocratic entourage's political and religious identity converged with and influenced, in quite significant ways, the wider Catholic community. Many of the well-known factional divisions and inclinations within the early modern Catholic community can be found being played out within this particular aristocratic following, as Catholics argued with each other about what Catholicism in post-Reformation England should be like. While there was often, as we might expect, a close fit between what clergy and laity within this aristocratic entourage thought and wanted, it was by no means guaranteed that

[4] Bossy, *ECC*, 5.

they would always agree. In the early seventeenth century we can find clerics within this entourage making a bid for influence and authority in a fashion which many other Catholics, lay and clerical, looked at askance. It seemed to me that what one had here was an often fairly coherent and quite sizeable slice of the English Catholic community, and a window potentially on to the whole of it.

I also hoped to do something which might be regarded as methodologically and historiographically innovative. As I have already suggested, a good deal of the current historiography of post-Reformation Catholicism in England tends to adopt a worm's-eye view of the beast. It has been defined almost exclusively as a popular response to the official Reformation, a response which was sulky and negative, enunciated by the 'people' who lived mainly in a series of shattered parochial rural idylls. For the Tudor State had systematically attacked, sequestrated and/or destroyed the forms and accoutrements of traditional religious practice.[5] Here 'Catholicism' and 'popular' are almost interchangeable terms. In contrast to this 'popular' groundswell of opinion, the actual Catholics whose names appear in the indexes of most of the volumes which deal with ecclesiastical politics in this period look like an ill-assorted and rather paltry lot – a few peers and gentry, a few seminary priests and the odd, sometimes very odd, conspirator. As I have intimated at the start of this chapter, historians have often defined what happened to English Catholicism by looking at these individuals in the context of the massed ranks of conservative plebeians. Here was the interpretative key necessary to explain why neither achieved anything: elite Catholicism was inept and detached from reality; popular Catholicism was inert and leaderless. And, in consequence, Catholicism after 1559 rapidly became a spent force.

Our entourage-based view of Catholicism does not fit this model at all. It wants, instead, to look from the top down as well as from the bottom up, and outwards as well as inwards. It is necessary to do this if we want to understand why some contemporaries continued to see Catholicism as a dynamic and threatening ever-present religious and political force or movement. To do this we have to know what the Catholics in our entourage said to each other, which of them spoke to each other and especially which ones did not, what they wrote and published, what forms of patronage were exercised among them, what the patrons among them wanted from their clients, and how their clients responded, and how these Catholics positioned themselves in relation to the regime and the State (both local and national).[6]

[5] E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992); D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (1999).
[6] See S. Kettering, 'Patronage in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies* 17 (1992), 839–62. Kettering notes that the word 'patronage' in English has meanings which the French version of the term does not possess (even though the literature on patronage and clientage

Now, in an ideal world, one might have extended one's research to more members of the Catholic aristocracy. But the surviving papers for most Catholic aristocratic families of the period are extremely limited. About some leading Catholic clans, such as the Barons Windsor, almost nothing is known. Obviously, for them, as for most landed families in this period, trawls through the Public Record Office's archives of chancery, exchequer and other government departments might turn up some material, but it would for the most part be about their economic and legal concerns and interests, not their politics or their religion. (To base a study on such sources would certainly tell one relatively little about such people's Catholicism.) Thus it seemed sensible to fix upon one specific entourage where it might be possible to reconstruct in some detail both the web of relationships between its members and also its political and religious concerns; an entourage which was clustered about a great man or men whose patronage, protection and company were consistently sought by a variety of people whose own paths and politico-religious interests crossed and collided in a variety of ways.

For my purposes the ideal entourage turned out to be the one with which I was already familiar – namely the following of the Viscounts Montague of Cowdray. Here there appeared to be an extremely wide set of marital relationships and ideological affinities, in some sense national in scope (since they were not restricted by county boundaries), perhaps even international (if one takes into account the entourage's clerical members' friends and contacts abroad). The entourage was also usefully decentred, in that what it stood for was not any single belief, objective or programme. Precisely because it was not a univocal and unidirectional entity, it might allow one to glimpse what a quite major section of English Catholicism was like, and what factors and characteristics enabled contemporaries to identify people as Catholics in the post-Reformation period.

This approach was suggested, in fact, by a throw-away comment in an essay written by Professor Bossy, an essay which I read years ago while I was still an undergraduate. In a survey of Jacobean Catholicism he remarked, commenting on Lawrence Stone's account of noble religion, that the Catholic aristocracy played 'a comparatively passive role' in the history of the Catholic

in early modern France seems now to be greater than the equivalent work on these things in early modern England). However, as Kettering observes, one of the principal meanings of the word is a 'system of personal ties and networks'. In the English context, that might be taken to denote 'an individual relationship, multiple relationships organized into networks, and an overall system based on these ties and networks', *ibid*., 839. Such a definition is particularly relevant to the workings of post-Reformation aristocratic Catholicism because it is not dependent, for its evidence, on the kinds of activities, principally office-holding and appointments to office, which have frequently supplied the raw data for analysis of patronage and clientage systems. For the problems experienced by historians in locating evidence of patron and client networks, see *ibid*., 842.

community. In particular he noted that 'it might be argued that the Catholicism of the earls of Worcester was as much an effect as a cause of its popularity among the gentry and people of Monmouthshire'.[7] This idea was sparsely footnoted but intriguing. Obviously, what he meant by 'passive' was that the peerage was at best a buffer zone to protect the Catholic community from the predatory hand of government. Meanwhile the character of the community was formed among the gentry class by both the 'active' and the 'quiet', with the clergy primarily and necessarily serving those gentry once their own larger ambitions of exercising a restored clerical authority had been frustrated by those same gentlemen who had no wish to see clerics lording it over them. I was not entirely sure how 'passive' the Catholic aristocracy were. But the idea of interplay between patrons and clients helping to define what Catholicism was, and how it was perceived, seemed interesting, perhaps crucial, and worth further exploration and more time than Bossy could give it in a short essay for a Macmillan 'Problems in Focus' volume.

So what I had conceived originally as a study of a minor south-coast aristocratic family became, instead, an attempt to recover a series of political *démarches* within Catholicism between the Reformation and the civil war, and to chart some of the responses to major issues which were thrown up by, and were directly concerned with, or touched upon, the problem of Catholicism, issues such as non/conformity, the succession to the throne, allegiance and loyalism, intra-Catholic division over ecclesiastical issues (notably over hierarchy and discipline), sacerdotalism and the 'triumph of the laity', and also the coming of 'Laudianism', or at least the series of policy innovations which some historians have identified as radically changing the face of the Church of England during the 1630s.

It would, of course, have been possible to deal with Catholic attitudes to allegiance, the succession and so on, in a purely thematic way. But I have chosen to pursue them within the context of a particular Catholic 'entourage' because I did not want to see these things only, as it were, in the abstract. The dearth of source material generated by as well as about Catholics has often meant that such issues are, by default, discussed in a thematic manner. But, at the end of it all, it frequently remains a problem to say which Catholics held this or that view on all or any of the above questions, or whether such views were, in fact, merely being attributed to them by others. I wanted to set the whole thing in the context of a specific Catholic group of people talking to and about each other, bound and linked to each other by various

[7] J. Bossy, 'The English Catholic Community 1603–1625', in A. G. R. Smith (ed.), *The Reign of James VI and I* (1973), 91–105, at p. 102. For other instances of the opinions expressed within a patron's clientele helping to shape the opinions of the patron, see e.g. S. Adams, 'A Godly Peer? Leicester and the Puritans', *History Today* 40 (1990), 14–19; Hammer, *Polarisation*, 78–81.

ties (of kinship, ideology etc.). And I wanted to see how Catholics' ideas were discussed inside a large clientage/patronage network, and to see what such a network thought and did in particular circumstances.[8]

Clearly, not all human life was here, and not even all of the post-Reformation English Catholic community. The Brownes and their friends were not necessarily representative of all other Catholics. But by describing how such an entourage was built up, and how it intersected with other parts of the community, I believed and still think that it is possible to contribute to a description of how Catholicism evolved in later sixteenth- and early to mid-seventeenth-century England, and why at particular times it was so politically 'hot', when, on many modern historical accounts of the 'seigneurial' (or gentrified) and marginalised Catholic community, it should have been nothing of the kind.

There have been some outstanding studies of patronage networks among English Protestants of the period.[9] Clearly in the patronage stakes Catholics generally had a lot less to play for. Catholic clergymen were not eligible for university posts, for official Court chaplaincies, indeed for any Church-of-England benefice. In addition, lay Catholics who were recusants were barred from holding public office. Those who were tainted by suspicion of Catholicism were liable to lose official posts and employment in both the local and national State. It is extraordinary, however, that, for example, no systematic study has been undertaken of which Catholic clerics were attached to which lay patrons. It is often not known even which houses and households they lived in. Even where this is known it is generally assumed that their residence in those houses and households was an ideologically neutral event (i.e. that they were there simply to carry out the functions of a priest) even though it is evident from many sources that clergy frequently attached themselves to those patrons with whom they were ideologically in sympathy. In England, those Catholic clergy who had an impact on public opinion were invariably those who had powerful patrons. By incorporating those patrons back into the picture, and by identifying how they and their clients talked not just to each other but also to curial officials in Rome, to foreign diplomats and notables and especially to the papal nuncios in Paris, Brussels and other places, and to local and national representatives of the English/British State, it seemed possible to give both definite social shape, and even, in places, a narrative form (and thus, perhaps, a degree of coherence) to the lives of some of those Catholics who tend otherwise to be discussed

[8] Kettering remarks that kinship and patronage were 'essential to the diffusion of information and ideas' among the French provincial nobility, Kettering, 'Patronage in Early Modern France', 842.

[9] See e.g. K. Fincham, 'William Laud and the Exercise of Caroline Ecclesiastical Patronage', *JEH* 51 (2000), 69–93.

in the thematic abstract and are mentioned, if they are lucky, only in the footnotes of monographs.

Thus, while it would be difficult to pretend that this social entity, this Catholic aristocratic entourage, was itself the Catholic community, it is, I claim, nevertheless, possible to read off from its view of itself and the world, an account of Catholicism during the period, or rather, how Catholicism was understood and discussed by a range of contemporaries (both Catholics and Protestants). For the fact that traditional parish worship was largely ground out at the root by a series of reforming Tudor regimes did not mean that Catholicism died the death as a public and political issue. Contemporaries talked endlessly about Catholicism (or 'popery'), its political inclinations and significance, the vicissitudes of the pan-European 'Protestant cause' and the real or imagined threat from its diametrical opposite, the 'Catholic cause'. The connection between the danger from an international Catholicism and the existence and activities of actual English Catholics was a source of constant contemporary comment.[10] English Catholic polemicists and ideologues, often with powerful foreign patrons, developed coherent and sometimes perilous lines of thought on major political issues – for example (during Elizabeth's reign) the unsettled question of the succession, the problematical topic of when and how far it was legitimate to resist sovereign authority and the issue of toleration.

The drive for toleration was carried on with even more vigour after the accession of James Stuart, a king whose dynasty's claims to the English throne many English Catholics had long reckoned to have supported. After his accession, they loudly and continuously reminded him that this had been so. James's European dynastic ambitions for his own house, principally a marriage for his heir with either the Habsburgs or Bourbons, meant that the 'Catholic issue' was given renewed political vigour in the middle and at the end of his reign. And, under Charles I, while it is possible to overestimate the extent to which actual Catholicism infiltrated the Court, many contemporaries perceived a link between the regime's ecclesiastical projects and the infiltration of popish Catholicism into the bowels of the regime and State. There were violent anti-Catholic scares throughout the period, and notably after 1637.[11] The crisis leading up to the civil war was perceived by many Protestants to be the product of a popish plot, and, as Thomas Cogswell has remarked, by their reckoning this would have been 'at least the third' time since the beginning of the seventeenth century that a popish

[10] For very sensible remarks on this topic in a seventeenth-century context, see M. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000), 325.

[11] R. Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution', *Past and Present* 52 (1971), 23–55; *idem*, 'Fear of Popery', in C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (1973), 144–67.

plot had been concocted in order to overthrow the commonwealth.[12] During the civil war, Catholics heavily engaged themselves for the crown. Virtually to a man those Catholics who took part in armed conflict were royalists. A glance at the pages of the heralds' visitations, printed by the Harleian Society, reveals numerous members of the Catholic gentry who are recorded as having been slain at one or other of the civil war's various battles. Catholics recalled and eulogised their co-religionists who suffered in the king's service.[13]

It is worth pointing out here that I have, throughout, decided deliberately to privilege evidence of kinship networks. Clearly this might be regarded as a somewhat tendentious methodological approach.[14] After all, the mere fact of kinship can be precisely that – a mere fact. On the other hand, the fact that so many of the Catholics dealt with here were indeed related by blood or marriage does in itself put a specific gloss on the nature of the Catholic 'community' in this period. Catholics tended to portray themselves as being a 'gathered' community of all right-thinking people who had a conscience in matters of true religion and the courage to express it. The post-Reformation/pre-civil-war Catholic community has since that time often been presented by historians in the same way. Instead, the suggestion here will be that contemporaries might well see the Catholic community as a series of entourages and networks, often factionally aligned internally, whose ideological concerns inflected the more basic fact of their blood, kin and client relationships.[15]

THE FATE OF THE RECORDS

Where, then, should one look for evidence of all this? As we have already noted, remarkably little material on the Catholic aristocracy actually survives, at least in the form that such records were originally kept.[16] And there is even a dearth of archival material for the family at the centre of this study – the Brownes of Cowdray.

[12] T. Cogswell, 'England and the Spanish Match', in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (1989), 107–33, at pp. 128–9. The other two 'plots' were the Gunpowder conspiracy and the Spanish match negotiations of the early 1620s. See Hibbard, *CI*.

[13] See ch. 15, pp. 499–507 below.

[14] See, however, D. Smith, *The Stuart Parliaments 1603–1689* (1999), 87; J. T. Peacey, 'Led by the Hand: Manucaptors and Patronage at Lincoln's Inn in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of Legal History* 18 (1997), 26–44.

[15] See Kettering, *Patronage, Brokers and Clients*, 33, 73, for the functional relationship between kinship, patronage and clientage.

[16] A number of Catholic noble families' papers were destroyed in the civil war, for example in the sieges of the Paulets' residence at Basing and of the Arundells' castle at Wardour.

In the late eighteenth century a series of mishaps conspired to wipe out both the family's title and much of its memory. In the late summer of 1793 the eighth viscount, George Samuel, took it into his head to go on a jolly jape of a boating trip and try to 'shoot the falls' at Laufenburg on the Rhine. He proceeded to take himself and a friend and an unfortunate dog to a watery grave despite the best efforts of the local authorities and an old family retainer to prevent him. (His heir, a distant relation, died without issue and the title became extinct.) Shortly before the drowning incident, the family's palace of Cowdray was destroyed by fire, on 24 September 1793. (See Figures 1 and 2.) Workmen who were completing alterations and repairs to the building had taken to burning charcoal in an improvised carpenter's shop in a tower above the north gallery, in 'the midst of all the shavings and chips which strewed the floor'. Several of the staff were soused on that particular night, and they were quite unable to form a chain to pass water buckets up from the river.[17]

In fact, the muniment room (in the Kitchen Tower) which housed the family's records was not destroyed in the blaze. But nothing was done to preserve the papers there. In 1834 they were noted to be 'lying in heedless heaps on the floor, or . . . scattered on the shelves' while a few of the more important documents 'more ancient, and known by their rightful owner to be more curious than the rest' were set aside in some rudimentary kind of exhibition for the multitude to come and look at. Actually, visitors carried away quite a lot of deeds and manuscripts, and others were used 'as wrappers, or for kindling fires'. The scandal was remarked on even by a pupil at the

[17] Hope, *Cowdray*, 26; Roundell, *Cowdray*, 100–2, 123, 127. A separate stone building near to the main house contained a fire hose and buckets, but the key was missing, and further delay was caused as those servants who were not fully intoxicated tried to get the door off its hinges. After the fire the house was plundered for building materials, *ibid.*, 131, 130. Catholic tradition claimed that these events were the fulfilment (albeit rather late) of a fire-and-water curse allegedly pronounced in 1538 (in the abbot's hall at Battle) by an ejected monk on Sir Anthony Browne, Henry VIII's boon companion, abbey-plunderer and new owner of the dissolved Battle Abbey, J. Gillow, *A Literary and Biographical History, or Bibliographical Dictionary of the English Catholics* (5 vols., 1885–1902), V, 82. Lady Montague, the mother of the eighth viscount, and a convinced Protestant, by contrast blamed both Providence and one Higgeson, the supervisor of the carpenters, Roundell, *Cowdray*, 129. According to a contemporary, had not the steward at Cowdray wrongly addressed his letter describing the fire – to Lucerne as opposed to Laufenburg – the eighth viscount might have returned to England and not launched himself over the fatal waterfall, *ibid.*, 126, 132. To add insult to injury, the family's splendid funeral monument was removed in 1851 from Midhurst parish church and placed in Easebourne priory church (simply to make more space at Midhurst). (See Figures 3 and 4.) In the course of the move the monument was badly damaged, Mosse, *ME*, 72. For the monument as it originally stood at Midhurst, see Hope, *Cowdray*, plate 52. The monument was structurally mutilated by the diminution of its plinth, the removal of its four massive obelisks (one at each corner), its emblazoned shields and some of the kneeling figures around it; and by altering the position of the structure, i.e. turning it into a mural monument and rearranging the position of its three central figures, B. W. Greenfield, 'The Wriothesley Tomb in Titchfield, Hants: Its Effigial Statues and Heraldry', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club* (1889), 65–82, at p. 66.

Figure 1. The ruins of the palace of Cowdray (east range), the residence of the Browne family (Viscounts Montague), near Midhurst, West Sussex. The palace was badly damaged by fire on the night of 24 September 1793.

Figure 2. A view of the west range of the ruined palace of Cowdray, including the chapel.

Figure 3. Marble and alabaster monument to Sir Anthony Browne, first Viscount Montague, in Easebourne parish church (St Mary). The monument's original arrangement was changed, and its structure damaged, when it was moved to Easebourne from Midhurst parish church in the nineteenth century.

Figure 4. Detail of the first Viscount Montague's two wives (Jane Radcliffe and Magdalen Dacre) on the funeral monument in Easebourne parish church (St Mary).

grammar school in Midhurst. In 1863 Sir Sibbald Scott noted that he had been able to root around in the 'parchments and papers' of the family in the same muniment room, still decaying and mouldering with the effects of the weather, damp and passing jackdaws. From his description, the really serious loss would appear to have been not so much estate documents but rather the 'piles of letters to and from different members of the family'.[18] By circuitous routes a few clutches of papers have survived, but comparatively little overall, and distressingly little for the mid- to late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[19]

Furthermore, any kind of family archive which might have remained at the family's Southwark residence, Montague House (see Figure 5), was lost during the civil war when the family's property was sequestrated. (Montague House was demolished in the nineteenth century.)[20]

We are left, therefore, with very scattered and uneven evidence for these people. A few contemporary printed books mention them in passing. There

[18] A. A. Dibben, *The Cowdray Archives: A Catalogue* (2 vols., Chichester, 1960), I, xxviii–xxix.
[19] *Ibid.*, xxix–xxxii, describing the papers in question.
[20] F. T. Dollman, *The Priory of St. Mary Overie, Southwark* (1881), 29.

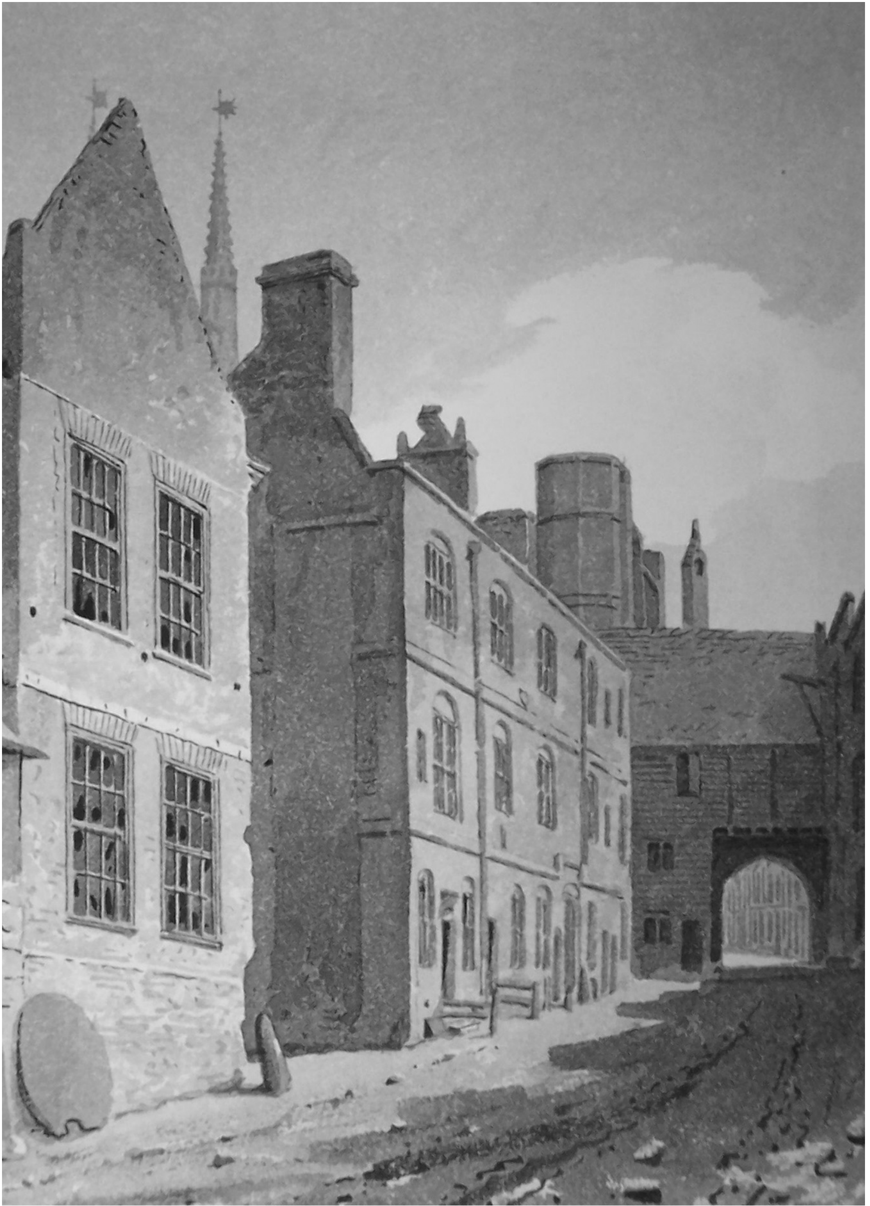

Figure 5. A view of Montague House looking towards the gateway, 1827 (by John Chessell Buckler (1793–1894)).

are references to them in the archives of local and central courts, but these are often of little real significance, at least for the topics under discussion here. Some estate material survives. But for the purposes of an account of aristocratic politics and patronage the subsistence of court rolls is frankly not a great deal of help. They tell one little of the sort of thing which can be gleaned only from personal correspondence. For the Browne family there really is very little left, of a personal nature, for the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries – a few speeches, a few letters (many, however, of the formal variety), one hagiography, one translation each by the first and second viscounts, and in the second viscount's case a couple of tracts, including a massive 701-page disquisition (on Catholic ecclesiastical controversy in the early Caroline period) which must be in the running for a prize for the most boring book ever written. There is a detailed set of rules and orders drawn up in 1595 by the young second viscount setting out in wearisome detail how his domestic servants were supposed to cater to his every need. As virtually the sole surviving account of what went on inside Cowdray, it seems to tell us little more than that he scaled the late-sixteenth-century peaks of jumped-up blue-blooded household fussiness and pretension.[21]

Yet, for my purposes, all was not quite lost. For it appeared still possible to follow up, as I hope to show, from a series of scattered and sometimes unlikely sources, the opinions and fortunes of such people, and to recover the mental worlds and kinship groups which these families inhabited.

RECAPTURING THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Originally, in order to describe the Brownes, I had envisaged a modified form of county study. Here, by establishing the local structures of Catholicism (particularly in the parts of Sussex and Hampshire where the Brownes and many of their relatives were domiciled), I hoped to be able to reconstruct the shape and extent of these families' influence. But immediately it was clear that there would be real difficulties, not only because of the limited nature of the relevant material in the appropriate county record offices but also because of the traditional format of the county study for this period, particularly the kind which deals with or concentrates primarily on Catholicism and Catholic reactions to the Reformation.

In the first place, county studies are generally the product of comparative analyses of series or runs of administrative records. What one has in the average county study is an account of how the shire's natural governors kept at least a semblance of order and discipline in and through the

[21] S. D. Scott, '"A Booke of Orders and Rules" of Anthony Viscount Montague in 1595', *SAC* 7 (1854), 173–212.

commission of the peace, and the deputy and lord lieutenancies. The end product tends to be a story of how consensus and peace were maintained (at least in the absence of too aggressive an interference from outside by central government, or the advent of, say, a civil war). In the case of Sussex, for example, two (very good) county studies took more or less this form – Anthony Fletcher's *Sussex 1600–1660* and Roger Manning's *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*. Fletcher's work is structured so that it does not focus primarily on the divisions among the gentry which ecclesiastical issues could cause. Manning concentrates on office-holders and administration, and produces a narrative of a gradual political acquiescence and indeed anaesthetisation of the Catholic gentry through exclusion from office (unless they conformed and in the process abandoned their Catholicism). Both argue, in effect, that Catholicism was expunged from the county virtually as the end product of administrative commonsense. Prudent provincial government could hardly be expected to countenance Catholics in office. Manning does, admittedly, describe very well the extent of the hostility between conservative and reforming Protestant religious outlooks in Elizabethan Sussex. But there is often a sameness and uniformity about the county-study method of establishing people's religious positions and this sometimes tends to obscure them. Again, this is partly the product of the limitations of source material.

For example, one well-known county-study approach to the detection of shifts in religious opinion and culture is the statistical analysis of the religious preambles in last wills and testaments. Conservative modes of bequeathing the soul (for example by requesting prayers to saints and the Virgin) have been contrasted with the supposedly 'Protestant' expression, in the preamble, of trust in Christ's merits alone. Several county studies, while conceding that the general unrepresentativeness of the will-making population is something of a problem, have examined these soul bequests in order to determine, at some level, the course of the Reformation. Thus Christopher Haigh argues that, in Lancashire, mid-sixteenth-century Catholics' wills show signs of theological ignorance which left them and their religion 'vulnerable' to the attacks of university-trained Protestants. 'Two prominent gentlemen hoped to be saved by the merits of Christ but asked for prayers for their souls, as did the rector of Ashton, who ought to have known better.' 'A Manchester merchant left his soul to God, the Virgin and the saints, but trusted to find salvation through Christ's merits.'[22]

It is very difficult, however, to extrapolate confidently from such formulae to conclusions about the exact nature of people's beliefs, and also the pace

[22] C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), 194. Cf. M. L. Zell, 'The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth Century', *BIHR* 50 (1977), 246–9. See also C. Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity* (Cambridge, 1997), 168–87.

and causes of religious division, without having a pretty good idea of who the people involved actually are and also some other evidence of what they actually thought. Just by way of one example, the first Viscount Montague, who died in 1592, and was one of the most overtly Catholic members of the peerage (though never subjected to legal sanctions for nonconformity), wrote a will which used (so-called) 'Protestant' terminology, for he affirmed his belief in the redemptive work of Christ 'by the which onlye I hope to be saved, and assuredlie truste to be one of his Elect', though at the same time he protested that he lived and died 'a true member of and in the unitie of his Catholicke Churche'.[23] Unless we assume that the ageing peer had, like the rector of Ashton, become theologically confused, we may have to adopt a more sophisticated mode of analysing how Catholicism, as a species of religious sentiment, was expressed.

The methodology of many self-consciously Catholic county studies undertaken in recent years is not necessarily any help here either. A popular Catholic historiographical approach to the recovery of the Catholic presence in a particular shire has been the 'recusancy thesis'. MA and Ph.D. dissertations on Catholic recusancy usually go in exactly the opposite direction to Manning's and Fletcher's approach. They describe the formation of clear blocs of Catholic religious opinion and allegiance. In an effort to reclaim the Catholic past, they emphasise the Catholic presence in the county at the expense of its context, and take recusant separatism as the norm for Catholics when we know that, very frequently, it was not. 'Recusant history' is overly reliant for its source material on the usually undifferentiated lists of people who were recorded by the authorities as having transgressed the penal statutes which demanded conformity to the Church of England. As often as not, we do not know much else about the people on these lists. Inevitably the Catholic community, as portrayed in such studies, itself takes on a uniformity which is extremely hard to reconcile with many contemporaries' accounts of the variegated nature of Catholicism.

There are, it should be said, honourable exceptions to this perhaps rather sweeping generalisation about recusant historians. For example, both John Aveling and Alan Davidson envisaged post-Reformation Catholicism as a nebulous and complex structure. Both understood the intricacies of the family relationships and networks, particularly at gentry level, which it inhabited.[24] But, in general, the recusancy study, which to some extent was always

[23] PRO, PROB 11/81, fo. 163v; J. J. Goring, 'Wealden Ironmasters in the Age of Elizabeth', in E. W. Ives, R. J. Knecht and J. J. Scarisbrick (eds.), *Wealth and Power in Tudor England* (1978), 204–27, at p. 219.

[24] See J. C. H. Aveling, *Post-Reformation Catholicism in East Yorkshire 1558–1790* (York, 1960); *idem*, *The Catholic Recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558–1790* (Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Literary and Historical Section, X, pt 6, Leeds, 1963); *idem*, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York 1558–1791* (1970); *idem*, *Northern Catholics* (1966); Davidson, RC.

in danger of becoming the prisoner of its own specialised sources, has not been able or even attempted to determine accurately, for example, to what political ideas the wider Catholic county community (as opposed to Catholic polemical writers and ideologues) subscribed, or to whom it looked for leadership and assistance, or how it was politicised internally, and especially why it was so factionally divided.

What we need, clearly, is a less constrained approach to the study of early modern English Catholics. Thus, although the focus of this book is, in parts, quite heavily county-based, it is not exclusively so. Catholic families did not always find that their interests and ideas were compatible. Of particular interest here, then, is the way in which the frictions between different Catholic clerical factions became embedded within family networks which, in turn, underwrote and amplified such quarrels.

Again, all of this is not without its methodological difficulties. For, although many of the people in this book were *habitués* of Tudor and Stuart high society and the Court, the reconstruction of their world involves dredging up the names of many people who were outside the political and social mainstream in their own time, and are outside, too, the modern historical narratives which cover this part of the early modern period. Only to the few readers who already boast a specialism in this subtopic of early modern ecclesiastical studies will these names be familiar. Other readers will reckon that they have not heard of them before and may think that they are unlikely to come across them again. And yet here, I think, there is often such a close fit between the shadowy existence of these individuals and the main outlines of the history of English Catholicism (which itself intersects at certain points with the mainstream political narrative of the period) that it may be worth the effort of identifying and describing them.

So how will our conclusions about the post-Reformation Catholic community differ from those reached by other county studies of Catholicism during the Reformation? Some localist accounts of Catholicism in this period have described it through a narrative of virtually terminal decline. Haigh's Lancashire and its popular religious culture constituted a bastion against puritan evangelism, but that culture's resistance to the Reformation was not sustained. A. L. Rowse argued that Cornishmen were prominent in the seminarist experiment initiated by William Allen, for in 'the first years the Cornish contingent in the [Catholic] college at Douai was notably large', but he intended to describe 'its gradual diminishing by persecution and financial exhaustion at home'.[25]

By contrast, the recovery of the Catholic networks at the heart of this study will suggest that in several significant senses English Catholicism

[25] Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*; A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall* (1940), 355–6.

was not in its death throes. In fact, if we look at the ecclesiastical culture of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sussex, the Catholic parts of the county were becoming, arguably, much more Catholic; or, rather, the Catholicism of those families who espoused and entertained recognisably Catholic opinions was becoming more sharply defined. This may have been simply because Sussex was not Cornwall or Lancashire. But should similar work, one day, be done on other Catholic patronage networks in other counties, it will be interesting to see whether these judgments are confirmed.

In addition, I hope that this will change some of our understandings of the shape and nature of the pre-civil-war Catholic community. Broadly speaking, there are currently two possible interpretative lines about Catholicism in (partly) Protestantised post-Reformation England. The first is, as we have already seen, that reasonably swiftly a mass Catholic culture was whittled down to a tiny gentrified minority which had access to the Catholic sacraments dispensed by seminary priests (replacements for the ageing Marians who had separated or part-separated from the Church of England). Some historians, such as William Trimble, have seen this Catholicism as virtually identical to the victimised religion which fell prey to the State's intolerance.[26]

The second line (not entirely distinct from the first) is that the vast majority of the population remained something close to Catholic, at least in the sense that the 'people' were not Protestantised. (Elizabethan Protestant/puritan complaint literature dwelt almost obsessively on residual 'popery' among the bulk of the population.) However, this popular Catholicism lost its Catholic edge precisely because of the gentry's selfish appropriation and monopolisation of the sacramental services of the seminary priests. As a result, popular conservative religious attitudes were at last converted into a conformist component of the Church of England. Haigh calls it 'parish anglicanism'. These 'parish anglicans' had 'not been moved by the evangelistic fervour of the Protestant Reformation – indeed, in the sense that they knew little of doctrine and rejected justification by faith and predestination, they were not Protestants at all'. Yet they were 'no longer Catholics', for they had been 'neglected by the missionary priests, and they attended the services of the Church of England'.[27]

Stated bluntly in this way, these interpretations have a tendency to mislead. In the first place, this is because their *terminus ad quem* is usually 1603.

[26] W. R. Trimble, *The Catholic Laity in Elizabethan England 1558–1603* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

[27] C. Haigh, 'The Church of England, the Catholics and the People', in C. Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (1984), 195–219, at p. 219.

For Haigh's Lancashire, Manning's Sussex, Wark's Cheshire[28] and most of the unpublished dissertations on recusancy written during the 1960s and 1970s, the end of the story is fixed by the death of Elizabeth. The Catholics' inability to convert her or unseat her meant that they had failed in their effort to overturn the established Protestant religion and culture of the Church of England. But a perspective which looks forward from 1603 as well as back from that date makes the whole picture look very different. For the accession of James Stuart was seen by many religious engagés, Catholics as well as Protestants, as ushering in a new era – an era in which much of the agenda of uniformity and conformity would be up for negotiation and amendment. Viewed from this perspective, 1603 looks more like the start of a new chapter than the dragging out of an old one.[29]

THE CATHOLIC ARISTOCRACY AS PATRONS AND LEADERS

Another and more fundamental reason why some of these older interpretations and approaches to the topic need revising and updating is that they leave us without any sense of the structures which underpinned Catholicism, or of how different kinds of patronage operated among those who identified each other as Catholics or were perceived as Catholics by those who were not in sympathy with them.

In fact, historians such as Trimble tend to imply that there were no such structures. In his version of the story, a weak and bullied Catholic laity, unable to withstand official harassment, and ideologically all at sea, had no leadership. He concludes that the position of Catholics in late Elizabethan England was quite 'anomalous'. His evidence is drawn almost exclusively from the records of the State Paper office and the privy council registers which do frequently suggest a harassed and clueless Catholic minority manipulated and terrorised by a powerful government machine. For him, this evidence 'forms a pattern which shows, as the whole reign of Elizabeth manifests, that the Catholics were leaderless and that their well-being depended completely upon the policy of the government and the frame-of-mind of individual officials'. For Trimble, the only kind of evidence which would suggest that the Catholics were climbing out of their government-dug elephant trap was signs of action. And, as far as Trimble could see, there were hardly any such signs. The penning of loyalist tracts which rejected the prospect

[28] K. R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire* (Manchester, 1971).
[29] For an admirable account of contemporaries' uncertainty about how far James I's accession caused discontinuity in official attitudes to Catholicism, see J. Watkins, '"Out of her Ashes May a Second Phoenix Rise": James I and the Legacy of Elizabethan Anti-Catholicism', in A. Marotti (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (1999), 116–36.

of Elizabeth's deposition and of forcible national re-Catholicisation was a mark of understandable and inevitable Catholic 'disillusionment'.[30]

Trimble was, of course, attempting a comprehensive overview of Catholicism during the Elizabethan period. But versions of this argument have surfaced even in studies of individual prominent Catholics. H. S. Reinmuth's account of Lord William Howard of Naworth is a good reconstruction of the social circle of an avowedly Catholic noble. In Reinmuth's view, a major aspect of Howard's success in life was to die, if not exactly peacefully in his bed (because he expired in 1640 shortly after being forced to flee the advancing Scots), at least, then, not on the scaffold. But this meant surrendering any thought of being a Catholic leader. The most that he could do was to offer some measure of protection to individual Catholics, people such as the Cornish man Nicholas Roscarrock, whom Howard was able to accommodate in a menial position in his household. As a result of the limitations imposed on nobles such as Howard, there 'never was a Catholic community in England during this period, but rather a number of . . . Catholic enclaves, plus looser associations of related Catholics, and isolated individuals'. Although Reinmuth did not, like Trimble, see the subservient position of the Catholics as dependent 'upon government policy *per se*', it was nevertheless traceable to 'the impact of recusancy laws upon each individual'. For 'isolated persons easily fell victim to the authorities'. The only relief came when prudent but wealthy Catholics such as Howard could, because they enjoyed some measure of protection from the penal statutes, offer limited security and solace to a few individuals who managed to reach the safe haven of a great family's estates.[31]

Great men who were not overtly Catholic could interfere with and deflect the impact of the laws against recusancy for the benefit of their own retainers. In 1593 the earl of Shrewsbury instructed Sir Thomas Williams to protect the earl's servant Nicholas Williamson, who was a recusant, from arrest. (The earl needed Williamson's experience in order to deal with disputes over fishing in the River Trent.)[32] But the whole point is that such peers were not seeking to circumvent the law on conformity for the benefit of Catholicism or the Catholic community, and were certainly not trying to disrupt the general working of the burgeoning legal code against recusant separatism.

The prevailing picture that we have, in existing scholarship, of post-Reformation Catholicism (drawn mainly from the records of recusant nonconformity) is indeed of isolated and segregated enclaves. Lawrence Stone

[30] Trimble, *The Catholic Laity*, 171, 253–4.
[31] H. S. Reinmuth, 'Lord William Howard (1563–1640) and his Catholic Associations', *RH* 12 (1973–4), 226–34, at pp. 231–4.
[32] PRO, SP 46/49, fo. 111a.

comments that such enclaves were a product of the combination of aristocratic and gentry patronage and of the recusancy statutes.

> The geographical pattern of seventeenth-century Catholicism, which was a rural not an urban movement, was consequently determined in large measure by the attitude of a handful of leading families in each county. What in the early years of Elizabeth had been a widely diffused scatter of passive conservatives had by the end of the reign become a series of isolated little pockets of dedicated recusants, each one centred around and dependent upon a great house.

He rehearses a series of well-known facts and figures in order to show how tiny groups of recusant Catholics were huddled around large aristocratic and gentry establishments all the way from Barwick in Yorkshire to Kesteven in Lincolnshire. (He might also have mentioned Cowdray and Battle in Sussex.)[33]

The corollary of keeping one's head down in this way was surrender of the political initiative. Albert Loomie, who did write about Catholic leadership and action (political, spiritual and literary), confined his account to the Elizabethan exiles in Spain and Flanders. And a central plank of his general thesis about these Elizabethan Catholics was that although from time to time a prominent Catholic peer, 'an earl of Westmorland, the wife of Northumberland, a Lord Dacres, Lord Paget, a Lord Morley . . . needed and ambitioned to acquire a large clientèle among the *émigrés*', nevertheless 'they failed to rally any noticeable influence among their compatriots' even outside the country, let alone in it.[34]

Reinmuth is surely right to stress the limits of the protection that a noble such as Lord William Howard could afford to his fellow Catholics. Even around Midhurst, the Brownes' Catholic neighbours could not necessarily count on the influence of the leading local Catholic peer to shield them

[33] Stone, *CA*, 733. See also S. J. Watts (with Susan J. Watts), *From Border to Middle Shire: Northumberland 1586–1625* (Leicester, 1975), 84–5; Bossy, *ECC*, 175–7. Fletcher notes that 'once gentry support was lacking in a parish the recusant tradition quickly failed', A. Fletcher, *Sussex 1600–1660* (1975), 98–9. Battle (where the dowager Viscountess Montague lived until 1608) had many Catholics in the 1590s but only six recusants in 1626. In both 1676 and 1767, Tisbury (where the well-known Catholic family of Arundell was resident) and nearby parishes had nearly half the Catholics in Wiltshire, and in 1839 more than three-quarters, *VCH Wiltshire* XIII, 243; J. A. Williamson, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire 1660–1791* (1968), 182. The fact that there was a Catholic patron in a particular parish did not, however, mean that there would necessarily be a group of recusants gathered around him. At Etchingham there were only four recusants though the Catholic Robert Tirwhit was the patron and the rector was the often-in-trouble and allegedly popish William Holland, W. C. Renshaw (ed.), 'Ecclesiastical Returns for 81 Parishes in East Sussex Made in 1603', *SRS* 4 (1905), 3–17, at p. 9. Sir George Browne, son of the first Viscount Montague, had acquired the patronage of several East Sussex parishes, e.g. St Thomas à Becket, Brightling and All Saints, Hastings, but there were no recusants there, and only two women recusants in Folkington (where he was patron as well), *ibid*., 6, 10.

[34] A. J. Loomie, *The Spanish Elizabethans* (New York, 1963), 95, and *passim*.

from the depredations of government agents and informers. While, as we shall see, certain people who were in good odour with the family did look to it from time to time for assistance, local recusants could not guarantee that such protection would be forthcoming. Particularly in the early seventeenth century the second Viscount Montague did appear rather powerless. Priests such as Benjamin Norton who wrote up accounts of the casual violence offered to Catholics in the area sometimes said that their only recourse was self-help. Of one predatory sweep carried out in 1610 Norton noted how local Catholics were subject to the crudest kind of harassment. This included seizure of moveable (usually agricultural) goods. Most submitted, but Anthony Williamson, a recusant who had property in Easebourne, near Midhurst, and held land by 'demise and grant of Anthony Viscount Montague', did not. When 'they wold have had Anthony Williamsons, and his mothers cattel', 'he sware . . . that they shold pay dear for them'. 'They drew ther woepons thrise one at the other' and, 'at the last, one of the knaves diswaded his fellow from dealing with such a murtherous minded man'.[35] But the viscount either would not or could not turn out in order to protect his tenant.[36] In fact, from the evidence unearthed by Roger Manning in star chamber cases between 1609 and 1618, it looks as if there was an undercurrent of popular hostility to the second viscount in West Sussex. At around this time there was a series of attacks on Montague's deer parks. Some of those involved in these quasi-popular and semi-public rapes of his estates were those who, Manning shows, had a history of antagonism towards the Browne family, had taken part in similar poaching in the 1590s, and certainly seem to have believed that they could act with impunity against the Catholic viscount's officers.[37]

Nevertheless, as John Bossy's work has shown, one should not simply write off the influence of the wealthy laymen in the Catholic community. Indeed, a crucial part of Bossy's thesis about the development of Catholicism in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England was the reassertion

[35] *NAGB*, 92; BL, Additional MS 39415, fo. 26r.

[36] Likewise, in the Brownes' London parish, St Saviour's, there were several recusants in the 1580s, indicted for their separatism, but there is no evidence that the first viscount did anything to assist them, Hyland, *CP*, 379–88. One exchequer case records that the second Viscount Montague did, in fact, intervene to prevent the confiscation of livestock which were stated by the sequestrators in November 1614 to belong to one Clarissa Hunt of Woolavington, PRO, E 368/555, mem. 187a. But such interventions seem to have been rare. See also Williamson, *Catholic Recusancy*, 230.

[37] R. B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers* (Oxford, 1993), 223–4; ch. 8, p. 238 below. Manning suggests that Catholic gentry and peers were peculiarly vulnerable to poaching, since 'there was a certain amount of truth in the popular perception that Catholic possessors of hunting franchises and well-stocked deer parks lacked the political influence with juries, local magistrates, and crown ministers successfully to prosecute those who raided their game reserves', *ibid*., 220.

of the power of the gentry over the often politically radical ambitions of some of the Catholic clergy. Bossy's work showed how important, politically, lay patrons were within the community, something which contemporary clericalist narratives often try to cover up.[38]

So, in what did aristocratic leadership consist? Stone's thesis about the social role of the aristocracy claims, rightly I am sure, that the aristocracy functioned as a crucial vehicle for the entrenchment of particular religious attitudes which had an oppositional flavour and which challenged aspects of the Elizabethan establishment of religion. Peers were protected from official wrath against dissent by their exalted social status. Also, because they had so much to lose, it was pointless for them to be so openly adversarial as to risk total forfeiture of office, property and influence.[39]

Stone draws a distinction between conventional attitudes to religion (as a bulwark of order) and the attitudes, which Stone holds to be sincere, of a significant minority of peers who were in some measure dissenters. 'It is very significant that of the 30 peers who between 1558 and 1641 showed signs in their wills of strong religious feelings, no fewer than 7 were recusants or schismatics, and 12 were puritans or puritan sympathizers.' That 'the Catholics were inspired predominantly by ideological considerations is proved by their readiness to take the financial and other consequences of recusancy', though recusancy here is a problematic term since nonconformity was only very rarely detected and punished amongst the aristocracy.[40]

In fact, declares Stone, the peers were uniquely placed to shape the country's religious geography. 'Given the preponderant authority of the aristocracy in the countryside in the early years of Elizabeth, the success of the Anglican settlement depended very largely on their active co-operation or passive acquiescence.' They were able to punish or protect dissenting clergy, to prevent or allow, or even encourage, risqué sermons, and to crack down on or turn a blind eye to lay nonconformity. The preponderance of Catholic peers in the North in the 1560s, not just the future rebels Westmorland, Northumberland and Dacre, but others too, such as Wharton and Lumley (and even the earls of Derby and Shrewsbury), made it difficult to enforce the settlement there. By contrast the great puritan peers were domiciled largely in the South. So, although we should give due weight to the clerical activists, it was the consciences of the peers which dictated, to some considerable degree, 'the religious configuration of seventeenth-century England'. It was the oppositional temperament of 'a handful of magnates on either side which

[38] Bossy, 'Character'; *idem*, 'Elizabethan Catholicism: The Link with France' (Ph.D., Cambridge, 1961).

[39] Stone, *CA*, 724. [40] *Ibid.*, 727.

allowed Catholicism and Puritanism to dig in and take root' in a society which otherwise was 'tepidly conformist'.[41]

While Stone's puritan aristocratic patrons held positions of vast authority, his Catholic peers, almost to a man, did not (or found themselves forced to choose between their Catholicism and their offices). Yet those who were known Catholics were not necessarily deprived of influence. If Claire Cross's description of the establishment of the third earl of Huntingdon is anything to go by, we should not underrate the impact of such a self-conscious social and political unit as the noble household, even if it was a Catholic one.[42] Cross stresses that an establishment such as Huntingdon's was a combination of a seminary, a finishing school and a university college where future great divines might start their careers. In such households, the 'leaders of the coming generation were moulded'. As Cross emphasises, only scraps of information about the household remain, but 'quite enough evidence survives to show the surprising extent of the household's influence'. Huntingdon offered shelter to puritan ministers such as Anthony Gilby who 'helped transform the household' in Ashby-de-la-Zouch 'into a Protestant seminary in miniature'. Cross charts the spread of a particular brand of Protestant piety outward from this household in the shape of some of its one-time inhabitants, e.g. Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby's famously pious wife, Margaret Dakins, who had served Huntingdon's countess.[43] In a great establishment some of the household servants would themselves be drawn from the gentry. Such service attracted the 'good lordship' of the great man and employer, just as it also reflected the power, authority and general presence of the lord. The lord's servants wore his livery, an emblem of their own authority and credit in his service.[44]

The same might be true for Catholic, or predominantly Catholic, aristocratic establishments. According to the Jesuit John Price (the encomiast of George Talbot, ninth earl of Shrewsbury), Shrewsbury's household operated like a miniature ideal commonwealth. 'There was noe place for drunckards, or otherwayes disorderly persons, in soe much that it was every where taken for a patterne of all good order and vertue.' Price had heard William Petre, second Baron Petre 'affirme that hee did willingly admitt the

[41] *Ibid.*, 729. For the fourth earl of Derby's alleged hindering of the legal process against Catholics (even while posturing as an enforcer of it), see D. Flynn, *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (Bloomington, 1995), 163–5.

[42] For the importance of the large noble household in France as a focus for the dispensing of patronage, see S. Kettering, 'Patronage and Kinship in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies* 16 (1989), 408–35, at p. 418.

[43] M. C. Cross, *The Puritan Earl* (1966), 22–8; *idem*, 'Noble Patronage in the Elizabethan Church', *HJ* 2 (1960), 1–16, at p. 2.

[44] B. Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby 1385–1672* (Manchester, 1983), 85, 86–7, 88.

refuse of my lord his house into his [own] service, and that havinge admitted some of them, hee found them to bee preciouse jewells in his familye'. Talbot 'had excelent orders which to each servant were notifyed before his admittance and monthly by his steward read to his whole family and if any order were not dewly observed strict chardge was given them' for their 'reformacion'.[45]

Of course, in the post-Reformation period, the Brownes could not aspire to the dizzy political heights of influence and authority garnered and exercised by peers such as Huntingdon. Nor would the Brownes' household be anything like as big. The earl of Derby's household in 1590 employed 145 people, and the earl of Rutland's had 194 in 1612.[46] The second Viscount Montague's 1595 book of orders shows him, by contrast, employing about fifty servants.[47] For Coward, the 'household of an earl could be the focus of the personal and political ambitions of a whole county'.[48] Less powerful and wealthy peers could hardly hope to emulate the greater ones in this respect. And their servants were unlikely to aspire to or attain the authority and prestige that attendants of a truly great landed family such as the Stanleys might do. But such lesser ennobled families as the Brownes did not necessarily underestimate their own standing and achievements. We have a 1775 list of the portraits and paintings which hung in the rooms of the Brownes' palace of Cowdray before it was destroyed by fire in September 1793. The chief pieces represented a tradition of martial and diplomatic service to the Tudors. In the 'Eating Parlour' there hung a painting 'of the landing of Henry 8 at Calais whither he sailed in a ship with sails of cloth of gold and landed' on 14 July 1544 in order to go to the siege of Boulogne. The siege was commemorated by another painting in the same room. Sir Anthony Browne (see Figure 6), the father of the first Viscount Montague, had played a prominent part in this expedition. There was also a painting of the coronation procession of Edward VI, where Browne, who was both standard bearer and master of the horse, had been present. In the same room there was a painting of 'the sailing of the fleet from Portsmouth whither Henry 8 went

45 B. FitzGibbon, 'George Talbot, Ninth Earl of Shrewsbury', *BS* 2 (1953–4), 96–110, at p. 104.

46 Coward, *The Stanleys*, 92. For an analysis of aristocratic household sizes in the second half of the sixteenth century, see S. Adams (ed.), *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558–1561, 1584–1586* (Camden Society, 5th series, 6, 1995), 29–30. Adams's figures show that the size of such households tended to fluctuate, as one might expect, according to the political importance of the peer in question. For the second earl of Essex's household, see Hammer, *Polarisation*, 298. For the structure of and also the changes in the size of noble households during this period, see K. Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250–1600* (Oxford, 1988), esp. chs. 1–3 and pp. 187–93. For comparative figures from France for the same period, see S. Kettering, 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen', *HJ* 32 (1989), 817–41, at pp. 819–20.

47 Scott, '"A Booke of Orders and Rules" of Anthony Viscount Montague in 1595'.

48 Coward, *The Stanleys*, 85.

Figure 6. Portrait of Sir Anthony Browne (d. 1548). The style of the painting is French and it may represent him in his role as a diplomat in France.

to attend its equipment in person 1512'. The 1775 list records that there were several other, though by that date badly damaged, paintings of various sieges 'up in different parts of the hall'. In the 'dressing room' there was a depiction of the battle of Pavia, the famous imperial wipe-out of the French, probably an enjoyable sight and spectacle for the virulently Francophobe Sir

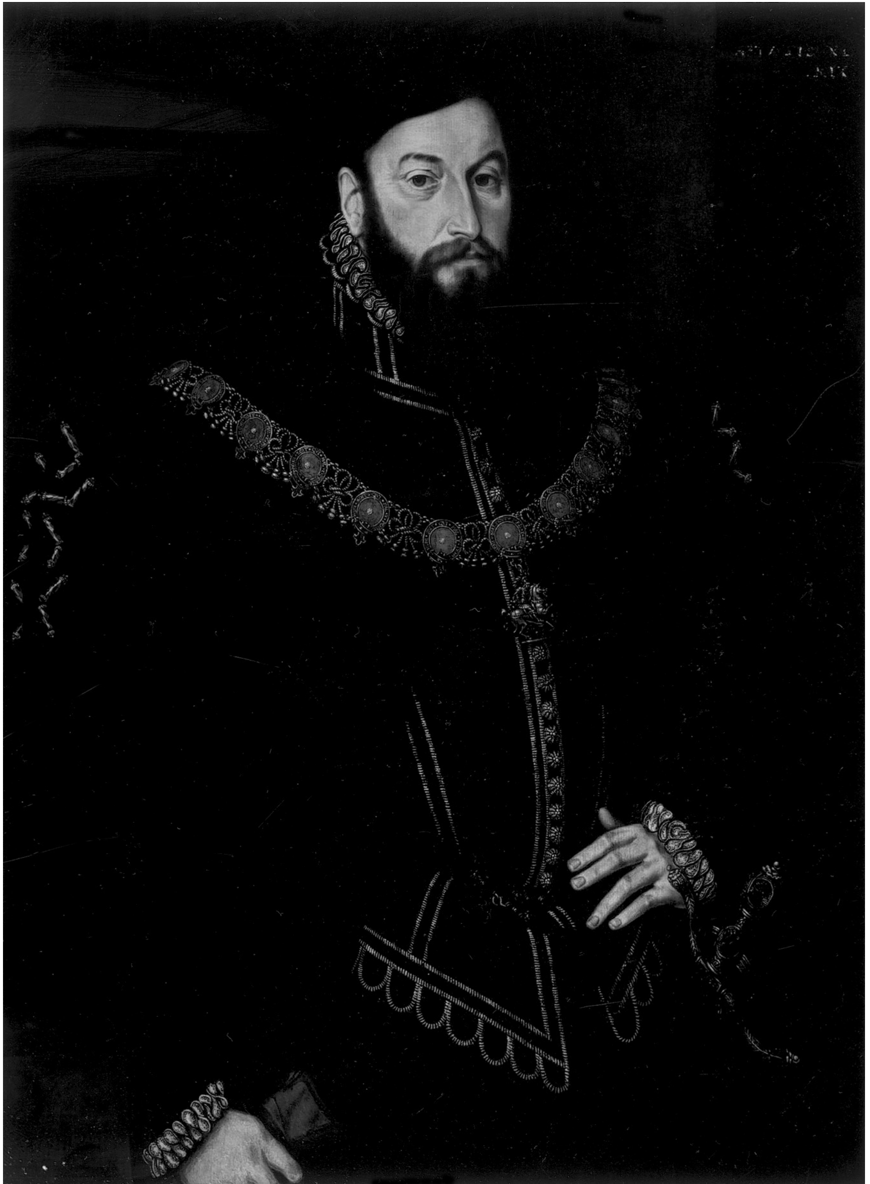

Figure 7. Portrait of Sir Anthony Browne, first Viscount Montague, by Hans Eworth, 1569.

Anthony Browne and his imperialist son, the first viscount.[49] There was also, in the 'gallery', a portrait of Sir Anthony Browne which commemorated his standing as proxy for Henry VIII during the ceremony of Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves.[50]

These pictorial reminders of the Brownes' service to the crown in the first half of the sixteenth century probably indicate that the family continued to remember its former power, and perhaps aspired to it again. In a valedictory speech to his friends and family at West Horsley in Surrey, shortly before his death, the first Viscount Montague, literally in the same breath as he declared his Catholicism for all the world to hear, added that his family had been fortunate in that 'it pleased the kinge', Henry VIII, 'to be so good and gratyous to my father and me as to rayse us up to a place of honnor'. Montague also believed that he had personally 'donne her Majestie', Elizabeth, 'good service bothe beyonde the seas, and else wheare. I stoode her in somme steede (as she knoweth) in Quene Maryes dayes, when I was of the pryvye councell and lyvetennaunt of the sheare where I dwelt.'[51]

The Brownes did not achieve high office again after the first viscount lost his seat on the privy council at Elizabeth's accession (at least not until the fourth viscount briefly served as lord lieutenant of his county during the reign of James II). But this did not prevent them from harbouring political opinions and aspirations. That they lacked 'official' positions of authority, nationally and, eventually, even in their own county, certainly did not mean that they could not exercise authority and influence within the Catholic community.

[49] BL, Additional MS 5726 E. 5, fos. 20r, 22r. W. H. St John Hope argues that Sir Anthony Browne was responsible for this series of paintings commemorating his career, even though he died on 28 April 1548, not much more than a year after Edward's accession, Hope, *Cowdray*, 91.

[50] The grumpy Horace Walpole, chronicling his August 1749 tour of Sussex which he found a 'great damper of curiosity', recorded nevertheless that it was worth seeing Cowdray; and Walpole was 'much pleased with . . . [the] whole length picture of Sir Anthony Browne in the very dress in which he wedded Anne of Cleves by proxy. He is in blue and white, only his right leg is entirely white, which was robed for the act of putting into bed to her. But when the king came to marry her he only put his leg into bed to kick her out', Hope, *Cowdray*, 26; BL, Additional MS 5276 E. 5, fo. 22r. This portrait was destroyed in the 1793 fire, Hope, *Cowdray*, 22.

[51] Questier, LF, 250–1.

2

The local setting

In what kind of environment did the self-consciously Catholic entourage of the Browne family originate and develop? What was the local context for the expression of the conservative and Catholic opinions and influence of the interrelated families grouped around the Brownes of Cowdray and Battle in Sussex? One of the consistent themes of the more recent tranche of local studies which deal with the English Reformation in the provinces is that the split between a supposedly more backward/conservative/Catholic North and a more progressive/Protestant South has been overdone. Put bluntly, what it means, according to Christopher Haigh, is that many English counties were more like Lancashire than everyone has thought. He suspects that 'the contrast is between Lancashire and what the conventional wisdom tells us happened elsewhere, rather than between Lancashire and what actually took place in the rest of England'.[1] And, indeed, we know from the famous 1564 survey of justices of the peace that there were significant numbers of mislikers, i.e. Catholics or conservatives, among many of the shires' natural governors.[2] There were also widespread deprivations and resignations of conservative/Catholic clergy after the 1559 settlement.[3] Even if the mislikers and malcontents were not going to turn the clock back to before 1559, things were unlikely to be reformed as fast as the reformers would have wished.

It may be worth reconstructing the local Reformation context of the aristocratic conservatism and Catholicism which form the focal point of this study. Many of the people whom we will be looking at either lived or had property in or around the county of Sussex and its borders. So it may serve a purpose to review briefly the character and working of the Reformation

[1] C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), vii.
[2] M. Bateson (ed.), 'A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564 . . .' (*Camden Miscellany* IX, Camden Society, new series, 53, 1893).
[3] Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 215; T. J. McCann, 'The Clergy and the Elizabethan Settlement in the Diocese of Chichester', in M. J. Kitch (ed.), *Studies in Sussex Church History* (Chichester, 1980), 99–123.

in this region in order to gauge something of the nature of our Catholics' reaction to it.

One curious aspect of the Catholic reaction to the English Reformation is the apparent combination of lethargy and radicalism. One often wonders how far the patterns of rural life were really disrupted by the occasional interventions of Protestant officialdom in the day-to-day administration of the Church, particularly if revisionist historians are right that, after the initial shock of the Elizabethan settlement, there was no particularly consistent Protestant evangelisation and schooling of the populace. And yet, from time to time, even in an apparently rather sleepy county community such as Sussex, there could erupt violent political and religious passions. Conspiracies against the regime might be, indeed were, discovered and punished; and contemporaries could discern a link there, as elsewhere, between, on the one hand, separatist and semi-separatist Catholicism and, on the other, political opposition to the Elizabethan regime.

Thus it may be worth trying to explain how the uneven pace and character of the Elizabethan Reformation could provoke Catholics sometimes to exhibit both a loyal or at least a quiescent face, and, at other times, one that was much less so.

Most accounts of the Elizabethan Reformation in Sussex agree that it did not exactly go through the county like a dose of salts. The 1564 survey of the county's JPs and the 1569 visitation (after Bishop William Barlow's death) of the diocese of Chichester are snapshots of the lack of success on the part of the reformers in the county (if by 'success' one understands the rooting out of opposition to the thrust of the Elizabethan settlement's religious reforms).

In 1564, Barlow's report on the justices claimed that the shire was reasonably calm. Parishes had unenthusiastically started to use the new order of service, but he feared 'secrett practises which perhappes myghte breake oute into open violence'.[4] There were too many prominent gentlemen who were known to harbour deep misgivings about the government's ecclesiastical programme.

By 1569, it seems, things had got worse. When Archbishop Matthew Parker's commissaries carried out their visitation of the diocese in that year, they painted a very bleak picture. Attempts to remove the rood from local churches had provoked people to paint 'there in that place a cross with chalk', i.e. where the rood had been, and even 'upon the pulpit and communion table in despite of the preacher'. It was not uncommon to find that chalices were still in use, and it was believed that the Mass would one day be restored.

The stipulated quarterly sermons were often not preached, in part because there were not enough preachers, not even in the cathedral (where only four

[4] McCann, 'Clergy', 99, citing Bateson, 'A Collection of Original Letters', 8–11.

out of thirty-one prebendaries were resident). Some who technically could preach would, if they were ever given the chance, preach for the other side. Parker's commissaries referred here to some of the Marian clergy whom we shall meet again later, men such as the notorious David Spencer of Clapham. These Marians who had kept their livings were 'hinderers of the true religion, and do not minister'. They were maintained by gentry families such as the Poles, Palmers, Gunters and Gages. This was the kind of association of magistracy/gentry and ministry that Protestant higher authority did not want. 'In the parish of Racton', for example, 'they have no churchwardens, clerk or collector for the poor, because of Mr Arthur Gunter, who rules the whole parish'. There was also illicit literature, printed overseas, circulating in the parishes. In particular, 'certain parishes keep Dr [Nicholas] Sander's book called *The Rock of the Church*, wherein he doth not account the bishops now to be any bishops'. Exiles were being financially supported by 'exhibition' which 'goeth out of the shire and diocese unto them beyond the seas', for example to the inflammatory Romish writer Thomas Stapleton, 'who being excommunicated by the archbishop did avoid the realm'. There were altars, images and other 'popish ornaments' 'ready to be sett up for Mass again within 24 hours' warning', as in 'the town of Battell' (where the first Viscount Montague had one of his two principal estates in the shire – Battle Abbey) as well as 'in the parish of Lindfield where they be yet very blind and superstitious'.[5] And there were unlicensed schoolmasters. One of these schoolmasters, Edward Terry, resided at Battle and was, allegedly, the cause of a lot of the Catholic disaffection there. The report noted that 'in the town of Battell, when a preacher doth come and speak anything against the pope's doctrine they will not abide but get them out of church. They say that they are of no jurisdiction', because the dean of Battle exercised peculiar jurisdiction there, 'but free from any bishop's authority'. 'The schoolmaster is the cause of their going out, who afterwards in corners among the people doth gainsay the preachers. It is the most popish town in all Sussex.'[6]

But was the county actually on the verge of revolt? If so, why was nothing done? The problem was that things said in a report to government could not so easily be said in a corner of Sussex where the old order was not locally understood as an overt and illicit challenge to higher authority. Anthony Garnett, one of the Brownes' chaplains, was informed by Robert Porter from Battle in June 1570 that 'my lord byshopp of Chechester', the recently appointed and very godly Richard Curteys, was 'with us on Frydaye laste and prechyd with us hem selfe and offryd to sett with us in that order as he

[5] McCann, 'Clergy', 100–1, citing PRO, SP 12/60/71.
[6] McCann, 'Clergy', 100–1, citing PRO, SP 12/60/71. For Battle's status as a peculiar, see *VCH Sussex* IX, 111.

dyd in hys dyosys abowte us'. Porter said that they had by 'fayre meens usyd our speche to hem and declaryd how our lybartye of our towne had byn ever in tyme paste usyd by hys predessessors that were byshoppes before hem', 'to the wyche sayeng he usyd us verye corteslye and sayd yf we had such a lybartye he wolde not seke to breke yt'. In fact he 'gave us daye' to bring '[our] recordes before hem . . . for the testemonye of our lybartye' before 'Michaelmas Daye next'.

Curteys was, of course, like the 1569 visitors, well aware that Battle was not a leading centre of godly reformation. For 'there had byn manye yll wordes as we understande reportyd to hem of our towne before he came to us'. But Porter was pleased to record that before Curteys 'departyd the towne agayne, he lykyd so well of us that I suppose yll reportes made to hem agayne here after wyll scante bere anye credett with hem'. Two of Curteys's imps, 'Vynall and Benett, were erneste before hem to breke our custom of our churche for our fower asystens to bere no suche actoryte as they claymyd'. Yet, alleged Porter, Curteys had 'answeryd them the order was good and that yf he had to do here to vyssyt he woulde alow yt and no other because of our custom being so long contenwyd'. There were other matters which had to be sorted out before the high commission and 'we delyvered hem a copye of the artyckllles at Battell', and 'my lord [Montague] and we are mutche beholdyng to Mr Doctor Bartlye'.[7]

Clearly Curteys, who subsequently fought and lost a really bitter battle with those Sussex gentry whom he accused of popish nonconformity,[8] was unlikely to be in sympathy with the kind of people protecting Battle's ecclesiastical liberties, especially after the 1569 report had discovered or confirmed their popish tendencies. But there was evidently nothing that he could do at that point when faced with a consensus that the established order in that part of the county was merely traditional.[9]

Sussex was not the only south-coast county to contain bastions of conservatism. Bishop Robert Horne complained to Sir William Cecil about the Winchester diocese in early 1570 that something should be done about the papistical faction who 'stamp and stare' at the northern rebels 'and crieth out at their lewde entreprice', and at its failure. 'Most assuredly they looked and were in good hope in all this countrey (I mean the papists), what so ever they sayde, that the matter wolde have gone otherwise.' Horne believed the queen should do something 'to alter this religion and that with her owne handes'.[10]

[7] BL, Additional MS 33508, fo. 23r–v. Robert Porter appears as a witness to a deed of November 1569 settling part of Montague's estate on his children, WSRO, SAS/BA 41. For Porter's property at Battle, see HEH, BA 56/1618, 1617, 1623, 1624.
[8] See Manning, *Religion*, ch. 5. See also ch. 5, pp. 151–3 below.
[9] BL, Additional MS 33508, fo. 23r–v.
[10] BL, Lansdowne MS 12, no. 31, fo. 74r–v.

What did all these accounts of widespread and popular resistance to the Elizabethan Reformation add up to? Was this just the inevitable naysaying of the dyed-in-the-wool conservatives who frequently but ineffectually howled at every sign of change? Or was this a serious challenge to a regime which was finding that, although it had made the royal supremacy its flagship ecclesio-ideological policy, it could not impose godly Protestantism on the parishes?

In fact the amount of active popular resistance (outside the northern counties in 1569–70) seems to have been limited in its scope. Certainly there were Marian clerics in Sussex, such as David Spencer, who stayed in their parishes and were known to be no supporters of the 1559 settlement.[11] But other Marians simply upped sticks and went. For instance, Thomas Stapleton, who was noted as an exile in the 1569 visitation, moved to Louvain and eventually to a chair at the seminary at Douai. Edward Godsalve, prebendary of Ferring, also went abroad and took up a teaching appointment at Antwerp. Others, whom one might have expected to put up more vigorous resistance, such as some of those who eventually gathered around the Brownes, did not – for example the first Viscount Montague's chaplains Alban Langdale and Anthony Clerke. After 1559 they lived almost entirely private and retired lives.[12]

Taking the diocese of Chichester as a whole, therefore, the picture painted by the 1569 visitation simply does not seem to have translated immediately into any organised form of political resistance. Deprivations, exile and deaths seem to have effected a thorough clearing out of the county's Marian ecclesiastical establishment. Timothy McCann shows that 'the large number of clergy who were deprived of their livings or who resigned them, left ample room for the reforming clergy when they began to issue forth from the universities, and the passive resisters who stayed in their livings did not have the strength or the influence to form a "Catholic party" to oppose them'. At the same time 'many Catholic gentry were already withdrawing from parish life, and concentrating their religious activities within their own households'.[13]

Were the Sussex Catholics similar, then, to Diarmaid MacCulloch's Suffolk Catholics, who were afflicted by 'a passivity which was to prove the deathblow to the seminary priests' efforts to spread the faith outside the narrow confines of the established recusant estates'?[14]

11 For Spencer's blatant and adversarial Catholicism, and his contact with and financial support of religious exiles, see McCann, 'Clergy', 112.

12 *Ibid.*, 105–6. Langdale, however, became briefly involved in 1580 in the controversy over recusancy and conformity. See ch. 5, pp. 162–4 below.

13 McCann, 'Clergy', 114–15.

14 D. MacCulloch, 'Catholic and Puritan in Elizabethan Suffolk: A County Community Polarises', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 72 (1981), 232–88, at p. 261.

Perhaps, but Catholics in the upper reaches of provincial society could sometimes appear distinctly dangerous. The Ridolfi conspiracy was largely Sussex-based. In the wake of the Edmund Campion affair, leading Sussex Catholics (the heads of the Gage and the Shelley families) were arrested, as were several men in the entourage of the second earl of Southampton whose principal seat was at Titchfield, just over the border in Hampshire. (See Figure 8.) The earl had many links with West Sussex Catholic families as well as with the Hampshire ones.[15] In September 1583 the exile Charles Paget returned briefly into the county from France in connection with the Throckmorton plot. The discovery of the conspiracy led to the downfall of the eighth earl of Northumberland (who lived at Petworth).[16] William Shelley, Northumberland's retainer, was the principal Sussex gentleman to suffer personal ruin because of the plot.[17]

Not surprisingly, when the war against the Spaniards began, the southern coastal counties were watched closely for signs of disaffection, and were policed thoroughly as one invasion scare succeeded another. There was constant anxiety about what was happening in the Channel and about how well coastal defences were being maintained. The execution of the priests William Marsden and Robert Anderton on the Isle of Wight in April 1586 was a high-profile event. The regime modified its usual propaganda pitch of claiming that it prosecuted such people only for treason and not for religion. They were condemned not only because they would not explicitly repudiate a papally sponsored invasion but also because they would not promise not to meddle with the religion established by law. The regime's proceedings against them were vindicated by a royal proclamation.[18]

In early June 1586 the earl of Sussex informed Lord Burghley that an insurrection in Hampshire, 'a certeine mutenye and assembly to be shortlie practized within this shire', was in train, and was to take place with a 'fyring of the beacons'. Ten days later the earl claimed that this was part of some kind of concerted action across several shires 'as yt was in King Edwards tyme'. He had taken swift action to repress this alleged rebellion. Significantly he believed that various recusants, whom he did not name but who had been egged on 'by the perswasion of forrayne rebelles and fugitives', were privy

[15] Robert Persons, 'Of the Life and Martyrdom of Father Edmond Campian', *Letters and Notices* 11 (1876–7), 219–42, 308–39, and 12 (1878), 1–68, at vol. 12, p. 52.

[16] L. Hicks, *An Elizabethan Problem* (1964), *passim*, though the actual purpose of Paget's visit is much disputed; cf. D. Flynn, *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (Bloomington, 1995), ch. 7.

[17] For the Throckmorton conspiracy, see C. Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham* (3 vols., 1925), II, 381–6; J. Bossy, *Under the Molehill* (2001). For suspects from the Sussex–Hampshire border region, including George Brittaine and Nicholas Wolfe, see PRO, SP 12/167/59.

[18] *APC 1586–7*, 58–9; Anstr. I, 8–9, 218; P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (3 vols., 1964–9), II, no. 680.

Figure 8. The gatehouse of Titchfield Abbey, near Fareham in Hampshire.