

PREFATORY COMMENTS

An emphasis upon the effect of leading personalities within the proscribed minority of English recusant Catholics and of those among them who sacrificed life and social placement in order to worship in the manner and freedom they desired, have marked much of the historical writing and scholarship concerned with post-Reformation Catholicism. Later writing, apart from revisionist attempts, general analyses, and new ecumenical insights, have been tempted to the less dense woods inhabited by vagaries of episcopal control and management with the awareness of tighter engagement with Rome and the universal Church.

Alongside such a background, it is imperative not to ignore the importance of the lives and struggles of less flamboyant figures, thus, in particular, revitalizing the work of Aveling, Anstruther and Bossy. In pursuit of such an aim, Richard Turner, in a fundamental way, has directed attention to a class of men with professional instincts and yearnings and their struggle to seek national and local awareness leading to recognition and financial stability. His study of the life of John More and its achievement illustrates how a 'subdued Catholicism' was no hindrance to his ultimate aims. Turner has produced a piece of work that, interspersed with 'known' and 'unknown' elements, enhances the authenticity of the value of such local research. The task has necessitated diligent effort in a wide geographical range of archives and sources and one which has involved much cross-referencing as well as detailed local awareness. This work is not 'parish pump' history for its outcome illustrates how the Catholic community coped with its social displacement and contended against it on an individual front.

Turner's story of the rise, growth and social significance of John More is one of fascinating attraction, even though the question mark posited in the title of the article is not capable of being fully answered in any simplistic way. The article falls securely in two parts, the first of which accentuates the knowledge of John More's faith as a papist in early Stuart times and his professional development under the eyes of George Villiers, first duke of Buckingham who from 1616 was an adviser to James I. A career in medicine enabled More to have easy access to influential circles, Protestant and Catholic, even though he was well known as a recusant Catholic himself.

The second part of the article examines how More managed to acquire substantial land holdings which enabled him to establish a family dynasty through his brother William and his descendants. John More himself was unmarried. Richard Turner steps warily through a highly complicated family history that led to much conflict and antagonism in money and land matters, consequences that had emerged from John More's thrift, percipience and ambitious provision. Turner takes the reader through this process with care and precision. The notes he provides are rich and varied and there are several important appendices that enlighten contentious and detailed points. More left a Catholic heritage behind him and the possibility of his heirs connecting through marriage with local Catholic families and interests.

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