QUESTIER, Michael C. — *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550–1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 559.

This is a substantial work, building a considerable edifice upon very specific foundations. It starts within the local, county history genre with the Browne family of Cowdray in Sussex as a way into the networks of family, patronage, and politics of the various Catholic communities, primarily between the Elizabethan settlement and the 1630s. This is not to suggest, however, that this is a local study masquerading as a national study. The focus is a means to question the boundaries of the historiography including the restraints of family, geographical limits of the county, or the religious ones of Roman Catholicism. The papers of, and relating to, the successive Viscounts of Montague and those connected to them provide a focus for a much more holistic approach to the history of English Catholicism after the Reformation. As will become evident, some of the riches of this study emerge from new perspectives gained from new angles on neighbouring debates and from a rich contextualization of struggles and agreements within the Catholic community.

   The opening chapters set out the context in great detail, providing the scene for the first set of studies around the first Viscount Montague, which sets out his entourage, the issues of succession, and the efforts to negotiate power around the troubles of the late 1560s, the Anjou match, and through the 1580s. The detailed opening of the connections is particularly pertinent in that it allows an engagement with the assumptions of "moderate" and Radical Catholicism, with a constantly shifting sense of meaning according to time and place and much more porous boundaries than the nomenclature suggests. This leads into an interlude with the attention on the dominant household of Lady Magdalen at Battle Abbey and its formative influence on the second Viscount Montague as he found his feet in the new contexts of the appellant controversy, hopes of the succession of James Stuart, and the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, moving on to the struggles over the episcopacy and the potential of the new ecclesiastical politics of Charles I. Upon the death of the second Viscount Montague in 1629, the account becomes a little more broad brush, centred on the opportunities offered by the new religious discourse of the Caroline court and, ironically, the chances created by the crisis of the early 1640s to show loyalty to the crown, bringing to bloom the definition — emergent from Laudian rhetoric — of Catholicism against the anti-hierarchy and anti-order of puritanism.

   The first aspect that must be noted is the wealth of material taken from family papers, state papers, and the Westminster Archdiocese, as well as from Rome and France. This is matched by a remarkable willingness to keep control over the finely traced biographies of the servants, chaplains, friends, and acquaintances and their relations with the central figures of the study. Beyond this, a capacity to use these as a context within which to elucidate and critique the prose of the arguments within the community, occasionally a potential source of obfuscation, and to read these against neighbouring contemporary debates to reveal similar forms

of argument prevents any danger of this being seen as a Roman Catholic form of Debrett. To maintain an omnipresent sense of focus through the Brownes and their relatives is a remarkable achievement.

To outline the fruits of this study is quite a task. It has a constantly critical relationship with John Bossy's *English Catholic Community*, praising its achievements but warning against simplifications consequent upon its becoming a canonical text more referred to than read closely. The main shift of emphasis is from a model of a Catholic community looking inward and strained by internal disputes to one with an eye to the improvement of conditions, always dependent upon the changing religious and political contexts, locally, nationally, and internationally. This is delivered most persuasively in the time of the first Viscount; it is necessarily less clear with the second Viscount, as the swiftly changing environment made more subtle political demands and, possibly, because his position and personality made greater calls on his negotiating skills than upon those of his predecessor. Throughout, however, the intention to keep the focus both on struggles within the community and on relations with external forces undoubtedly enriches our understanding of the experiences of the Catholic community and the sensitivities of their Protestant observers, both those hostile and the more irenic groups. This can be seen particularly in the ways in which Catholic tropes of debate shifted in the context of the 1620s and early 1630s, from a need to prove that Catholicism was not inherently disloyal to a need to show how Episcopal hierarchy within Catholicism made it a natural ally of the Church of England with Laudian priorities. This work is required reading for historians of Catholicism, but it should be stressed that it achieves one of its implicit goals in that it is also required reading for historians of the general religion and politics of the period. For instance, after reading this, one is much less likely to dismiss the anti-popery fears of parts of the political nation, so central to the crisis of the 1630s and 1640s, as a paranoia of Protestant zealots or a foolish misreading of Laudianism and view them more as a suspicious projection of genuine possibilities.

It may seem petty to make a few criticisms of such a masterly work, but it is necessary, although it should be noted that one of them at least is probably not the fault of the author. The prefatory section, especially on the Marian period, could have been cut down as it creates a sense of delay, providing context that is less central to the meat of the study. Similarly, there is a rich collection of illustrations and, apart from the reproduction of *The Three Brothers Browne*, they are rarely employed in the text itself. Finally, it would add to the usefulness of such a broad but detailed work if some space were given to a bibliography. It may take space but it is certainly to be preferred to trawling backwards through the footnotes to find a first reference. These, it should be emphasized, are but minor complaints regarding a major text that will prove to have a lasting impact upon related spheres of early modern English historiography.

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