

William More of Loseley and early Elizabethan anti-Catholicism

DENNIS FLYNN

Sir William More of Loseley gained access to the Elizabethan court through his adroit use of Tudor political structures and especially through his administration of Elizabethan policy directed against Catholicism in Surrey. Associated with Sir Thomas Cawarden in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I, More's personal fortune was greatly augmented by his acquisition of expropriated church land and by his eventual inheritance of Cawarden's property in Blackfriars. More then built Loseley House, which became the nexus and symbol of the family's influence and activities on the national political scene. The wedding of his daughter Elizabeth at Blackfriars was the ceremonial beginning of the family's entry into the ambit of the court. It was followed within two years by the first of several visits by the queen on progress to the newly completed Loseley, an event that inaugurated the period of More's most active support of anti-Catholic policy. He took key roles in Surrey supporting the government's suppression of the 1569–70 Rising in the North and was subsequently instrumental in dealing with the remnants of Catholic political and social eminence in the county. Examples are More's activities in the cases of Thomas Copley of Gatton and Henry Wriothesley, 2nd Earl of Southampton.

The divided Loseley manuscripts (mostly held at the Surrey History Centre, but a considerable fraction at the Folger Shakespeare Library) offer significant insights into the rise at the Elizabethan court of the family of William More of Loseley, and particularly into the specifics of early Elizabethan policy directed against Catholicism in Surrey. Evidence among the Loseley papers regarding More's official and unofficial religio-political activities is a useful supplement to the history of the county. Moreover, these papers confirm and complicate our understanding of many features of the structure of Tudor politics. As has truly been noted, archival materials illustrating the personal and political affairs of a prominent local family are especially useful 'in analysing a political system in which the boundaries of public and private activity were so blurred. Landholding was the basis of social power and the qualification for local office, the household was a fundamental political and even administrative unit, and personal recommendation was the sole route to promotion'.¹ In the case of Loseley and the More family, records and correspondence dealing with hospitality, litigation, kinship, neighbourhood, and wider affinities all contribute to a deeper recognition of how the nation operated from the grass roots all the way up to the court.

More built Loseley of stone drawn from what had been the earliest Cistercian house in England, Waverley Abbey. Although Loseley was not completed until autumn 1569, More received Queen Elizabeth in the course of her late-summer progress in that year, the first of several visits by the queen. This occasion expressed the arrival of More's household as a recognized participant on the national political scene, participation that would extend for another generation beyond the remaining years of the queen's reign. As Elizabeth sat in the shade at the threshold of the great hall overlooking Loseley's park of oaks, one of More's children in the gallery within sang to a lute for her and her ardent favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, knelt at the queen's foot.² More's prudent development of assets had included, as a principal concern, the education and advancement of his children (and, later, of his grandchildren). He educated two generations of offspring, female as well as male, as

¹ Gunn 1995, 71. Gunn's analysis focuses on the time of Henry VIII although, as he frequently observes, much the same kind of evidence continues to characterize Tudor and early Jacobean politics.

² This significant tableau was recalled by Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, on 10 November 1571 in the course of his interrogation by the Privy Council (*CSP Scotland*, 4: 37). The singer was probably Elizabeth More, the eldest child, who as Elizabeth Wolley later became lady in waiting to the queen. On the career of More's daughter, see McCutcheon 1999.

carefully as he had constructed Loseley House itself, blending diverse elements in the eclectic design of a patriarch.

He was the son of Christopher More, a clerk for many years in the Exchequer under Henry VII and Henry VIII, who had raised himself through diligence, with formal legal education in his thirties, to local prominence in Surrey, sitting in the parliaments of 1539 and 1547. Christopher More held various county offices during these years, among them two terms as Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex; he gained a knighthood after serving among those gentlemen appointed to attend on Anne of Cleves, arriving in England to marry Henry VIII in 1540. Two years afterwards, Sir Christopher More reached his highest office as King's Remembrancer of the Exchequer, the master of the office of the Exchequer, charged with keeping and preserving its records, with the power of deciding cases of equity arising out of the financial affairs of the Crown.³ Sir Christopher's knowledge of the Crown's revenues, based on archival records, along with his legal education, made him particularly experienced in the acquisition of land. This expertise he applied to the peculiar opportunities prevailing in 16th century England, gaining the foundations of an estate that, greatly enlarged by his son and his grandson, remains under the family's continuing ownership to this day.

More had purchased an old house at Loseley prior to the birth of William, a fifth son, in 1520. Substantial further purchases of neighbouring land made Sir Christopher one of the leading gentlemen of Surrey – in fact, 'the right hand man of Henry VIII's government in the county'.⁴ As Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex, partly owing to the patronage of the Lord Chancellor Thomas Cromwell, he apparently co-operated in expropriations of church land. After the dissolution of the monasteries, Sir Christopher himself had received grants of monastic lands in Westbury and Compton.⁵ Despite his professional associations with several who opposed the policies of the Crown in these matters – for example, the countess of Salisbury, the marquess of Exeter, and Robert Sherborne, Bishop of Chichester – More himself was never in trouble. 'In 1534 he sent Cromwell a hawk "as some amends for my old fault" but the progress of his career offers no evidence that he was disaffected'.⁶ A further clue to More's beliefs may be found in two wills he made. The first (in 1547) made provision for a trental of masses in his name; but the second, at his death in 1549, omitted this request while retaining the traditional preamble: 'he bequeathed his soul to Almighty God, His blessed mother St Mary, and all the company of Heaven.'⁷ In some waning sense he was evidently still a Catholic.

However, Sir Christopher More was the last Catholic of his line, since eleven years prior to his death his only surviving son and heir had at the age of eighteen already been 'by gods goodnes cauled to the trewe knowledge of his Gospell'. William More's conversion to Protestantism, as he himself recalled it, had spared him the wages of sin after a youth spent idly dissipating at one of the Inns of Chancery, 'greatlye geven to Cardes and Dise'; 'provoked to whoredome in the Citye by mye lewd companys' (though he 'ded never assent to the same'); and until his age of eighteen 'drownd in papistry', as presumably were his father and deceased older brothers. Sir William prefaced his narration of these events with the observation that 'Yt hath pleased god of hys Infyn[ite] goodnes to blesse me from my youth untill the 67th yere of my age over and above his blessings bestowed upon manye other persons.' Following this preface are listed the 'blessings' already mentioned plus more than 30 further specific 'blessings' evidently confirming Sir William's retrospective assurance in a concluding prayer of thanksgiving: that God 'didst before the creatyon of the world chose me to be one of thye electe.'⁸ William's rejection of papistry coincided more or less with the Crown's

³ Bryson 1975, 16–18 and 65.

⁴ *VCH*, 1, 371.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ 'More, Christopher' in Bindoff 1982, 2, 616–17. See also Kempe 1836, xi–xii. More's exemplary services to the Crown have been characterized by H E Malden (*VCH*, 1, 320).

⁷ PRO: PCC 9 Coode C142/89/134.

⁸ Autobiographical statement of Sir William More 'Wrytten in the 67th yere of my age' (1587); SHC: LM/1617. Nothing is known of Christopher More's reaction to his son's conversion.

confiscations of monasteries, including Waverley Abbey in 1536 and both Newark Priory and the Guildford house of the Dominican Friars in 1538, all three within a few miles of Loseley.

The newly converted William had served with his father for Surrey constituencies in the parliament of 1539. Over the next several years their common interest in the confiscation of church property had aligned both of them more and more fully with one of Cromwell's most active agents in furtherance of this goal: Sir Thomas Cawarden, a London merchant who gained status as a gentleman of the Privy Chamber of Henry VIII, a successor to Sir Christopher as Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex, and an appointee to several other local and royal offices during four Tudor reigns. As Master of the Revels and Keeper of the King's Tents, in the year of Sir Christopher's death, Cawarden moved his London headquarters into the chapel of St Anne at Blackfriars, his storage of tents evicting the faithful from their place of worship; moreover, Cawarden looted the furnishings in his own parish church at Bletchingley in Surrey and brought them for official use to Blackfriars. In the following year Edward VI rewarded Cawarden's long service to the Crown by granting him most of Blackfriars precinct, including the monastic house and outbuildings of St Dominic's Priory, which Cawarden promptly demolished. After the death of Sir Christopher More, Cawarden continued to befriend William More, who evidently worked for Cawarden, administering his Blackfriars rentals. Their relationship exemplifies the importance of personal relationships in the Elizabethan political structure: 'how individuals interacted: whom they talked to, whom they trusted', etc. Both More and Cawarden continued to acquire church property appropriated by the government.⁹

When Queen Mary succeeded to the Crown, Cawarden was required by the Privy Council to restore some place of worship for those Londoners who formerly had congregated at St Anne's chapel. Drawing perhaps on his mystery as a Master of Revels, he outfitted a small chapel in a tiny bedroom above a flight of stairs in his house and hired an Irish priest to say masses there. Sir William More sardonically (yet with his customary straight face) recalled Cawarden's hiring of the Irish priest, 'Sir Thomo', in an untitled and undated memoir concerning Cawarden and his role in the history of Blackfriars.¹⁰ Cawarden's sense of humour about the Catholic religion should not conceal from modern readers the important and onerous nature of his services to the Crown. The Keepership of Tents in particular was in large part an office with military implications, entailing considerable logistical complexity; Cawarden seems also to have been concerned to some extent in the equipment of troops with armour and munitions, drawn from stores some of which were his own property. In any case, Cawarden's insincerities failed to win the Marian Privy Council's favour. Thereafter, as a consequence of reversal in his position at court, he became involved in succession schemes.

In the aftermath of Wyatt's rebellion, a plot to overthrow Mary's government, he was questioned by Privy Councillors in the Star Chamber and held briefly under house arrest. Further trouble came after Cawarden emerged from these hazards. Returned to parliament in 1555, he was among Protestant members who staged a walkout in protest against legislative acts that had restored Catholicism. Subsequently he was again implicated in plotting against the Crown on behalf of Princess Elizabeth and was eventually imprisoned in the Fleet. Despite the Marian parliamentary statute specifically protecting grantees of confiscated church lands, lawsuits beleaguered Cawarden until the death of Mary brought him friendly relief in the accession of Queen Elizabeth. However, he died during the summer of 1559, making his wife and William More joint executors of his will.¹¹

⁹ Gunn 1995, 72. See also Kempe 1836, 15–16; and 'Cawarden, Thomas' and 'More, William II' in Bindoff, 1982, **1**, 599–600 and **2**, 624–5 respectively. William More married his first wife, Mabel Digneley of the Isle of Wight, in 1545; she had died childless by 1549. On More's work for Cawarden see his accounts for the years 1549–60 (FSL: L.b.550) and many other notes and leases among the Loseley papers held at the FSL.

¹⁰ SHC: LM/425/17: a note apparently written after 1597, since More mentions the collapse of the roof of Cawarden's chapel, dated in that year by John Stow (1923, 305).

¹¹ Kempe 1836, 16–17 and 178; and 'Cawarden, Thomas' in Bindoff 1982, **1**, 600–2.

William More meanwhile had extended such personal relationships as that with Cawarden into a wider sphere of political affinities leading to local office-holding.¹² He had served during Edward's reign as provost-marshal under the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, William Parr, Marquess of Northampton; named to the ecclesiastical commission in Surrey, More helped to supervise confiscations of plate, vestments and other church furnishings. Holding these offices at the death of Edward, he was briefly a supporter of Queen Jane Grey; but More was not among those who suffered reprisals when her abortive regime failed. During the reign of Queen Mary, he turned his attention to his Loseley affairs and other local activities. More's withdrawal from national political activity during her reign may partly be understood in relation to a document he held listing 'The names of the shyrefes of Surye and Sussex that dyd borne the Inosents with the namis of Suche whom they brent.'¹³ Yet, despite the change of religion enforced by the new regime, More was not without friends and political connections among the traditional Catholic nobility and gentry of Surrey and Sussex. Here confessional differences did not prevent his association with local gentry in another of the basic units of political structure in Tudor England.¹⁴ He made himself useful, for example, to Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, who served the queen by mustering and ordering the county's forces for the unsuccessful defence of Calais. More continued to represent Surrey in parliament and was among those few members of the Commons who opposed Queen Mary's religious legislation, although unlike Cawarden he did not walk out of the parliament of 1554–5.¹⁵

More apparently did give his support to the Act of 1554 that codified the policy of the Pope's legate, Cardinal Reginald Pole, in regard to plundered church property. According to this Act (framed to give the force of law to the papal dispensations that Pole brought from Rome to England), although 'divers and sundry persons' had 'in the time of the late schism' come into possession of church lands and goods 'by gift, purchase, exchange, and other means'; nevertheless, under ecclesiastical or other law, no one was permitted to challenge the current ownership of such property so long as owners held conveyances valid under the law of England.¹⁶ The expectation of Pole and of Pope Julius III appears to have been that eventually, under prolonged moral suasion by Catholic authority, recipients of Tudor confiscations, protected by this statute, would voluntarily restore former church lands and property. Instead the reign ended in 1558.

After the succession of Queen Elizabeth, More was appointed Vice Admiral for Sussex and Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex. His long friendship with Cawarden and his work on behalf of Cawarden's estate, carrying out provisions of his friend's will, led a few months later, after the death of Cawarden's wife, to his inheriting from her some of Cawarden's Blackfriars property, and to his subsequent purchase of nearly all the remainder, including several newly constructed buildings. This windfall gave More a London base in what was then becoming an extremely fashionable neighbourhood. He made one of the new houses his London home and for considerable profit began to rent others to numerous tenants, some of them titled noblemen.¹⁷

¹² As Gunn (1995, 79) observes, 'the ambitions of families or individuals on the wider stage of local politics and government could not be realized without some larger but necessarily looser political unit, an affinity'.

¹³ FSL: L.b.246.

¹⁴ Gunn (1999, 77) analyses this 'small group bound to each other by close ties, very often those of kinship, working together in matters of patronage, royal service and local politics'.

¹⁵ 'More, William II' in Bindoff 1982, 2, 625–6; and also 'More, William I' (Hasler 1981, 3, 86). On More's work for the defence of Calais under Queen Mary, see Montague to More, 3 May 1557; and the royal warrant to Montague and More (among others) directing the Surrey musters, 4 May 1557 (SHC: 6729/8/1 and 2).

¹⁶ Hughes 1963, 2, 225–7.

¹⁷ Examples of correspondence with More's Blackfriars tenants and neighbours are to be found throughout the Loseley manuscripts at SHC, including letters to or from William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke; William Brooke, Lord Cobham; Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, and John Lord Lumley (among others). See also More's lists of Blackfriars tenants of the 1560s and 1570s (FSL: L.b. 454 and 456), and his accounts of Blackfriars rents for 1561–71 (FSL: L.b.35). Christopher More had first purchased some property at Blackfriars in 1540 (SHC: LM/345/101).

More's new income, though it cannot entirely have supported so large an investment, probably was a basis for his decision two and a half years later to begin building Loseley House. Costing More well over £1600, the new construction at Loseley must have required the use of assets beyond those listed in his own accounts of properties already owned in the 1550s. He had improved these properties considerably and, 'partly owing to a judicious exchange of lands, but mainly to the careful attention paid by Sir William to all matters of business', had raised his annual income from lands to about £400.¹⁸ To this amount after 1560 he could add the income from the Blackfriars rentals, amounting to over £100 a year in the early 1560s.¹⁹ The offices More held were another main source of income, especially the fees and salvage accruing to the Vice Admiralty, that would usually be listed apart from the land accounts. Another support for the building of Loseley was Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, who not only donated a significant portion of the building materials but also lent More the use of his own carpenter.

Montague and his father had both been carefully cultivated by the More family and remained for their part loyal servants to four Tudor monarchs. Staunch and outspoken traditional Catholics, the Brownes had nevertheless supported expropriation of church properties. After the dissolution of the monasteries, Sir Anthony Browne, Montague's father, had received Newark Priory among other grants and inherited lands including Waverley Abbey. Montague in turn had inherited these, yet later received his viscountcy from Queen Mary, serving in her Privy Council. This position he relinquished under Queen Elizabeth, although he retained not only the new queen's esteem but also continuing liberty both to enjoy his inheritance and to practise a loyal Catholicism. By 1562 he apparently wanted the ancient stonework of Waverley removed from his land. During Loseley's seven years of construction, William More drew to his building site about 90 loads of stone from Waverley Abbey, a third of it freely given away by Montague, and the rest purchased at a reduced rate.²⁰

More and his family lived in the old house adjacent to the building site, and at their new London home. The education of the oldest child, Elizabeth, evidently continued even after her marriage (at the early age of fifteen) to a neighbour, 22-year-old Richard Polsted. Polsted's father had been a prosperous Guildford miller and lawyer, working for Thomas Cromwell in the dissolution of the monasteries. He had invested heavily in former monastic and chantry properties as a partner of William More, dying when the boy was ten, and naming More an executor of his will. More seems also to have had a hand in the education of Richard Polsted, including his education at Oxford.²¹ The wedding of More's daughter Elizabeth to his ward Richard Polsted took place in November 1567, two years before completion of the house at Loseley. Such a marriage to the son of a deceased local landowner hardly seemed to reflect the More family's prominence in Surrey, let alone their future national prominence.

¹⁸ Evans 1855, 287, with a list of expenses in building Loseley House on 294–310. Considering More's income from lands as listed in these extracts, Evans concluded: 'it seems surprising how he could have borne the expense of building his house'. Evans does not seem to have known about More's income from Blackfriars.

¹⁹ For example, for Easter term 1561, rents totalled more than £22; for Trinity term, £15; for Hilary term, £30; etc. (FSL: L.b.35). By 1598, More's receipts from Blackfriars rents alone had risen to about £288 a year, and he projected after 1601 an income from Blackfriars of about £312 a year (FSL: L.b.318).

²⁰ Evans 1855, 294–310. On both Anthony Brownes, father and son, see 'Browne, Sir Anthony' and 'Browne, Anthony I' in Bindoff 1982, 518–21 and 513–16 respectively. More's co-operation in assisting Montague with various offices continued after the reign of Queen Mary; see Montague to More, 4 April 1562 (SHC: 6729/8/5): 'Thus alwayes bolde to trouble yow and nott as yett satisfyng my desyer by good occasion to shew the like agayne in good will I committ yow most hertily to our Lorde wth my wyfes and my most harty commendacons to good Mrs and yow'. On the lending of Montague's carpenter for the work at Loseley, see Anthony Garnett to More, 5 March 1567 (SHC: 6729/8/20).

²¹ Although Polsted's name is not mentioned in Oxford admissions or graduation records, see the reference to 'That Bedding of Mr Polstedes, whiche I had ready for yor sonne,' in a letter from Oxford written to More by H. Westfaling, acting on behalf of More for the accommodation of George More at Oxford, 26 June 1570 (SHC: 6729/7/23). See also 'Polsted, Henry' in Bindoff 1982, 3, 124–6.

However, the circumstances of this nuptial celebration made it in effect the ceremonial beginning of the family's entry into the ambit of the Elizabethan court. The wedding was a splendid event lasting a full two weeks at the London house in Blackfriars, Cawarden's monastic property converted to use for domestic hospitality. After the nuptial ceremony, about 50 guests ate a lavish, fire- and candlelit meal, the first of many feasts during the wedding party. The cost to More of this fortnight totalled in the end more than £90, even though much of the food consumed – mutton, pork, beef, venison, rabbits, poultry, game birds, sea birds, fish, etc – had been sent in as wedding gifts by the guests or by absent friends. The guest list included not only several prominent courtiers but various members of official Surrey and London society at that day.²² In attendance were old family friends: Edward Lord Clinton, the Lord High Admiral; Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague; and Sir William Cecil, Principal Secretary to the queen; as well as Robert Horne, Bishop of Winchester; Sir Henry Nevill, Sir Henry Weston, Sir Edward Bray, and many other landed gentlemen of Surrey and other shires, most accompanied by wives and children.

Following the wedding, according to the terms of an 'indenture of conclusion of marriage', the young couple were to reside at Loseley for at least four years, remaining, though married, still under More's supervision.²³ Before these four years had elapsed, More would organize his family and estate as a virtual arm of the government, to help in carrying out new policies of Cecil and the Privy Council, isolating and rooting out disloyal Catholics in the wake of the Northern Rising of 1569–70. More's increasing prosperity and acquaintance at court led inevitably to expectation among his court connections that the queen would visit his new house during her summer progress in 1569. Responsible for selecting Loseley House as a station on progress was William Lord Howard of Effingham, the Lord Chamberlain, although Cecil and Lord Admiral Clinton probably also were consulted on the proposal to use William More's hospitality as a resource for the court. All three had long been friends of More: Cecil had known him since their younger years, as he mentions in a letter written some years later; Clinton had served with Christopher More in the delegation bringing Anne of Cleves to her royal wedding, and thus probably had known William More for years before appointing him in 1559 his Vice Admiral for Sussex (a post More held continuously until 1594); and as a member of the Howard family, the leading family of Surrey, the Lord Chamberlain's acquaintance with the Mores also was of long duration. None of these men had any doubt that William More had served the government well, with solid support of the Privy Council's policies. Moreover, he was now wealthy enough to support the expense of a visit from the queen.²⁴

However, More evidently was surprised and for some reason reluctant to let the queen and her courtiers descend upon the unfinished Loseley House. Dealing through Anthony Wingfield, an usher at Court, early in August 1569 he sent a description of the new work in progress to the Lord Chamberlain, with a message protesting that his rooms were too small and still too few for the queen's majesty. Howard looked at a floor plan and took it to the queen, soon reporting back to Wingfield that her majesty, after first deciding instead to stay at the royal manor in nearby Guildford, had ultimately determined to come to Loseley after all. Wingfield then consulted the wife of the Lord Admiral, Elizabeth Clinton, in her own right More's influential friend as one of the queen's ladies in waiting. She suggested that More might pay a visit to court in order to appeal through Leicester for the queen to relent.²⁵ Lady

²² As Gunn (1995, 73) notes, 'social occasions in and around London seem to have been more and more often used to entertain other courtiers and councillors'. For particulars regarding this wedding, see Evans 1855–6, 33–52.

²³ The newly wed couple's residence at Loseley, required by their marriage settlement, is certified in Richard Polsted's receipts of marriage money from William More, 10 November 1570 and 21 October 1571 (SHC: 6729/7/35).

²⁴ Cecil's long-standing friendship is mentioned in his letter to More on 11 August 1576 (SHC: 6729/7/41). For More's connections with Clinton and Howard, see 'More, William I' in Hasler 1981, 3, 86.

²⁵ Anthony Wingfield to William More, 2 August [1569] (SHC: 6729/7/86); although this letter omits the year in its dating, its address to 'Mr More' and its content show that it must have been written not only before 1576, when More was knighted, but in advance of the queen's first acquaintance with Loseley.

Clinton's advice seems mischievous and, in any case, hardly the course More would be inclined to take. Instead he evidently reconciled himself to the queen's decision; shortly after mid-August, she and her courtiers came to Loseley for the first of her visits, bringing along with their finery and appetites those peculiar hints of treachery and terror ever attendant at a court.

The queen had heard a rumour about a proposal touching on the succession of her Crown: that Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, the foremost nobleman of the realm, should marry Mary Queen of Scots (detained at Tutbury in the custody of Elizabeth's government) and that Mary could then be restored to her throne, her uncertain intentions ruled and safeguarded by this liaison. Several major figures at court had discussed the plan, including Sir William Cecil and the earls of Leicester, Arundel, and Pembroke, as well as Norfolk himself. Someone (surely not Norfolk) evidently leaked the plan to one of the queen's ladies in waiting. Elizabeth then asked the duke about the matter, but he denied that he would ever consider marrying 'where he could not be sure of his pillow.' This reference to possible insecurity about his pillow alluded to Norfolk's belief, commonly held, that Queen Mary had been complicit in the murder of her second husband by a man who subsequently became her third. However, he must have realized at this point that some person or persons were talking of the secret behind his back. Later again the queen asked him had he any news to tell her. None he knew of, he lied again.²⁶ At Loseley then occurred the already mentioned tableau, Norfolk coming upon Leicester kneeling at Elizabeth's feet in the impromptu privy chamber, while William More's daughter sang pricksong within.

At that moment the queen saw Norfolk and signed to him to enter the room while she continued in conference with Leicester. After a few minutes, Leicester rose and came to the duke, Elizabeth still sitting in the shade, listening to music. Leicester said that he had just been discussing Norfolk's case with the queen, to which the duke replied that had he known he would never have entered. Yet since he had come in, he asked how the queen was feeling. 'Indifferent well', said Leicester and promised that the queen would soon have something to say to Norfolk. A few days further on in the progress, after dinner at Elizabeth's table, the duke had from her what he called a 'nipp': passing from the dining room she whispered to him that she wished he would 'take good heed' to his pillow. The queen's reference to the duke's pillow both alluded to his earlier protestation that he would never marry Queen Mary, and shocked him with the insinuation that Elizabeth knew he had accepted a cushion sent from Mary and embroidered by her with a knife cutting down a green vine. On hearing this warning, a terrific apprehension rose in Norfolk, and he was 'abashed'.²⁷ Within a few months came his arrest and imprisonment in the Tower of London, a prelude to his eventual trial for treason and his beheading.

These ominous events of the 1569 progress were part of a crisis towards which Cecil and his government had been preparing as early as the spring of that year. In this crisis, William More justified the trust already placed in him by the government and proved his reliability through a series of related assignments directed towards the extinction of disloyal Catholicism as a political force in England. After a decade of meticulous containment by Cecil's policy, although the bulk of England's Catholic majority remained indifferent or hostile towards Protestantism, the political and military power of Catholicism by early 1569 was virtually isolated in the ancient nobility of England, men such as the earls of Arundel, Northumberland and Westmoreland. Unlike these men, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, the highest ranking member of the aristocracy, was not a Catholic, but his aims and interests allied him to the Catholics by their shared antagonism towards Cecil and the new nobility and gentry made by Tudor government, all founded on the spoil of church properties during four Tudor reigns. By 1569 many branches of the families of Howard, Percy, and Neville, along with their traditional supporters among the gentry, were gathering strength to weed

²⁶ On these and other circumstances of the so-called plot see Johnson 1974, 166ff; and Edwards 1964, 98ff.

²⁷ 'Confession' of the Duke of Norfolk, 10 November 1571 (*CSP Scotland*, 4: 37). See also Johnson 1974, 168 and 172.

out Cecil and his 'new men' by trying to ensure the succession of Mary Queen of Scots to the English throne. Norfolk's ancient nobility was pre-eminent, the linchpin of these plans; but Norfolk was a Protestant. Nevertheless, Cecil astutely made neutralization of Norfolk's blood the focus of his planning to thwart the Catholics, arranging and revealing evidence of the duke's culpability in the plan for a marriage with the dangerous queen.

At the same time, Cecil had been gathering military resources for an inevitable confrontation with the ancient Catholic nobility, when his political schemes would come to the point of fulfilment. In May 1569, as part of a general effort throughout the realm, the Privy Council directed William More, along with other commissioners for the musters in Surrey, to see that all householders of the county were prepared for war. War came six months later, after Norfolk's confinement in the Tower, when in the north the earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland raised an army in support of the succession of Mary Queen of Scots and restored Catholicism in the districts they could control. William More was now appointed a deputy lieutenant of Surrey, serving under the newly appointed Lord Lieutenant Effingham (one Howard who had prudently thrown his lot in with Cecil's), the better to carry out logistical and recruiting responsibilities in wartime. Serving also as Vice Admiral for Sussex under Lord Admiral Clinton, More co-ordinated naval operations out of Sussex to repel any foreign intervention on behalf of the rebellion and to support an army led north by the Lord Admiral to crush the rebels in Yorkshire and Northumberland before the spring of 1570.²⁸

Amidst these tumultuous events, Loseley became a point of intersection for many important lines of policy and administration, a development that continued to gain momentum after the defeat of the Northern Rising. Sir William More's entire household actively furthered Cecil's policies in a variety of ways that unfolded as a consequence of Loseley's having been a station on the queen's 1569 progress. For example, after crushing Catholic rebellion by military force, Cecil maintained a constant surveillance and manipulation of known Catholic nobility and gentry, if possible to wean them ever more away from their religious allegiance, with a policy that alternately mulcted recalcitrance and rewarded compliance. One critical factor, Cecil saw, was the disposition of those traditional Catholics who remained more loyal to the Crown of England than to the papacy. In this connection, Cecil used William More's good relations with Catholics in Surrey, including many who, like Viscount Montague and his son-in-law the Earl of Southampton, enjoyed the possession of land and other property acquired through Tudor confiscations of monasteries and chantries.

Made an example for the instruction of such Catholics was Thomas Copley of Gatton, a relative of Queen Elizabeth through the Boleyn family, whose sister had tutored the queen in Latin. As a fellow associate of Sir Thomas Cawarden, Copley must have known More at least as early as the reign of Queen Mary. In the last summer of Mary's reign, Copley had appealed to Cawarden for help at a critical juncture. He wrote a strange letter in which (as 'one whom your curtesye and frendshippe hath enbowldened at every need') Copley invited Cawarden to his wedding: 'this marriage which (in an ill howre to me) is leeke to be solemnized one sundaie next'. The wedding was to take place at Nonsuch in connection with a court entertainment, and Copley asked Cawarden 'secretlie to lend me the use of one of your masks', evidently to be played as part of the wedding celebration. Considering this was to take place in the presence of William Lord Howard, whose daughter Copley had jilted, it promised to be an 'ill howre' indeed. Rather listlessly, Copley added, 'my hoape is ther

²⁸ For Cecil's general conduct of policy in this period, see Read 1961, chapters 22 ('The crisis of 1569') and 23 ('The Rising in the North'). On early preparations for war in Surrey, see Privy Council to William Lord Howard and other commissioners for the musters in Surrey, 1 May 1569 (SHC: 6729/4/18); letters patent on 23 and 25 November granted the lieutenancy of Surrey to Howard, along with his appointment of More as a deputy (SHC: 6729/4/7). See also Thomas Browne and William More, deputy lieutenants of Surrey, to the bailiff and constables of Guildford, 27 November 1569 (SHC: 6729/4/21) and William Lord Howard to Browne and More, 1 and 3 December 1569 (SHC: 6729/4/19 and 20).

shall come no harme of hit'.²⁹ At this period Copley was still serving on various royal commissions, even though he was reported to have been a 'hot heretic', actually incurring brief imprisonment for his brash remarks during the parliament of 1558 about Princess Elizabeth's right of succession to the Crown.

At Elizabeth's accession his suffering was rewarded and he enjoyed special favour as a relative of the queen, who was godmother to his son in 1561. Shortly afterwards, however, Copley reverted to the traditional Catholicism in which he had been raised. Moreover, by his failure to marry the daughter of the Lord Chamberlain, William Lord Howard of Effingham, Copley had disappointed Effingham and alienated an important branch of the most prominent family in the county.³⁰ In these respects his overconfidence had made him vulnerable despite his kinship with the queen. Nevertheless, he continued to have a role in local politics, serving as a justice of the peace for the first decade of Elizabeth's reign and his relations with William More remained good. Copley had sent More sheet music to prepare his children's entertainment for the queen before her 1569 visit to Loseley.³¹

But just at this time the instability of Copley's religious affections and his impolitic offence given to the Lord Chamberlain both began to jeopardize his security. William Richbell of Kent filed suit in Chancery to wrest back from Copley his interest in a piece of former church land at Merstham in Surrey, a manor that had been granted by Henry VIII to his Master of the Rolls, Sir Robert Southwell. Southwell's sons subsequently had alienated the reversion of a 1544 lease of the property to Copley; but Richbell claimed ownership through a 1545 lease, superseding Copley's lease which (according to Richbell and his witnesses) had been cancelled by Sir Robert Southwell before his death. Richbell complained further that Copley had directed his farmer on the Merstham land unjustly to take possession of part of the property, preventing Richbell's harvesting of those acres. He asked the Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, to restore his possession under terms of the 1545 lease.³²

Copley in the early stages of this affair seems to have been confident that his blood and political connections, both those to the queen and those to leading Surrey gentlemen, would help him to prevail. At first he succeeded in getting the Lord Keeper to assign the case to two mediators he assumed would favour him – his friends and countrymen Richard Onslow and William More – and he suggested his own house at Gatton as a venue for the hearing. When as Attorney for the Court of Wards Onslow proved too busy to attend a hearing before Michaelmas term, Copley succeeded further in getting his cousin Thomas Browne named by Bacon as a replacement. Since More initially expressed some discomfort at holding a hearing in the home of one party to a dispute, Copley suggested the Half Moon tavern in Guildford instead. There on the appointed day both parties presented evidence; More's notes on the presentations suggest his preliminary conclusion that Richbell had the better evidence. In any case, final recommendations by the mediators were postponed for a week, during which both parties were directed to prepare summaries of the evidence so far presented.³³

Copley's letter enclosing his summary of the evidence also conveyed his quiet disappointment at the way More was conducting the case, disappointment in particular at the delay in final judgment. Copley suggested that, since additional time had been required,

²⁹ Copley to Cawarden, 18 July 1558 (FSL: L.b.303). See also Thomas Browne to William More, 14 December 1558 (SHC: 6729/1/16), referring to 'my cousin Copley' who is a warm friend to 'Mr Cawarden'.

³⁰ 'Copley, Thomas' in Bindoff 1982, 1, 695.

³¹ Copley to More, 17 August 1569 (SHC: LM/COR/3/106).

³² *VCH*, 3, 215. As Gunn (1995, 75) observes, one can learn much about the structure of Elizabethan politics from 'litigation and other kinds of conflict over private interests', whether concerning 'the leading figures of the court and council themselves or their dependants'.

³³ Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, to Richard Onslow and William More, 3 July 1569 (SHC: LM/COR/3/94); Copley to More, 5 July 1569 (LM/COR/3/95); Bacon to Thomas Browne and More, 15 July 1569 (LM/COR/3/101); Browne to More, 17 July 1569 (LM/COR/3/102); Copley to More, 17 July 1569 (LM/COR/3/103); and William More's notes 'Ex parte William Richbell' [22 July 1569] (LM/COR/3/97) and 'Ex parte Thos Copley' [22 July 1569] (LM/COR/3/98).

More might also wish to confer with Onslow about any difficulty in rendering a judgment against Richbell. Moreover Copley presumed to enclose his proposed draft of a letter to Richbell from Browne and More (or Onslow if, Copley pointedly suggested, More might wish to bow out of the case). Finally, Copley's chagrin emerged in his 'feare lest by the Rudenes of some, blowes may happ to followe', warning of possible violence on the land in dispute should Richbell seek to harvest the corn.³⁴ At the next scheduled meeting, final judgment was again postponed, at least partly because Onslow had not yet returned to confer with More. Nevertheless, More did indicate to Copley at this meeting that he was inclining to decide in favour of Richbell. At this point Copley began himself to seek further delay until the return of Onslow, while seeking also to avoid any open breach with More (even though Richbell had, on the strength of preliminary judgment in his favour, already begun to harvest corn). Here the matter languished for over a month, during which Copley attempted to smooth over his differences with More.

At least in Copley's mind, the case now seemed to take on distinctly more ominous proportions, as he concluded that his former friends might be deciding against him on the underlying grounds of confessional divergence or county politics. In one letter to More, he pleaded his concern in remarkably explicit terms: 'Your loving, and Frendly minde toward me I knowe well Inough. And youe (I hoape) know myne toward youe, which (I protest) is siche, as he is not in this sheere (besids them toward whom nature byndith me) whom I doo more hartely loove, or better leeke of, as one that in leekenes of disposicons, and affections of mynde, I finde so agreeable to me, (only one thing exceptid, wherein libertie of Conscience dutifully used, is in reason to be permitted to either of us, till Godd otherwise dispose of our mindes, and Iudgments) as that I coulde well finde in my harte, to Ioyne with youe summe faste and induring knott even of brootherly loove firmly to Continew betweene us and oures'. Here Copley went on to speak of the sheet music he had once enclosed for the use of More's children in preparing to entertain the queen on progress.³⁵ At this point the details of the Richbell dispute seemed to diminish in importance for Copley, who lost heart after declining to accept the recommendation of the mediators; he promised to pursue his interests in Chancery but apparently dropped the matter instead.³⁶

At the eruption of the crisis with the Rising of the Earls in November 1569, the Privy Council sent to Surrey and the other shires the text of an oath based on language of the 1559 Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, to be signed by all justices of the peace. The Council was trenchant in explaining the motive for this requirement: 'Thies are to signifye unto yow that we have ben informed that some of you, beinge in comyssion of the peace within that countie, whose office and dutie is to set forth and see maynetayned the Quenes Majesties lawes ordynances and proceedings [...] doo neverthesse contemne (and that of sett purpose) to doo the same in certen points concernynge the state of Relligion, establyshed by the realme with authoritie of Parlement, [...] as by not resortinge to the comon prayer and Devyne service and not receyvinge the hollie sacraments accordinge to the orders prescribed by lawe agreeable with the ordynance of almyghtie god, thereby sekinge to breede and bringe forth such sects and factions as be the verie seedes and rootes of sedicon, amongst her Majesties people and lovinge subiectes, a thing besides the dyshonerings of almyghtie god verie perilous, and full of Daunger to the Common quiet and care of the contrey'.³⁷ Everyone refusing to subscribe was required to post a bond (£200 for knights, 200 marks for esquires) to ensure good behaviour.

Copley remained a justice of the peace, but (still smarting over his reversal in the Richbell case) failed to appear at the time and place appointed for subscribing, sending instead a letter

³⁴ Copley to More, 24 July 1569 (SHC: 6729/1/35/2).

³⁵ Copley to More, 17 August 1569 (SHC: LM/COR/3/106); see also same to same, 30 July 1569 (LM/COR/3/105).

³⁶ Copley to Browne and More, 1 September 1569 (SHC: LM/COR/3/110); *VCH*, 3, 215.

³⁷ Privy Council to Surrey justices of the peace, 5 November 1569 (FSL: L.b.229).

with a request for 'reasonable tyme to informe my conscyence in that matter'. A second appointment made for laggards like Copley prompted another letter requesting 'longer respite for th'enforming of my conscience in this case'. Copley now also spelled out his scruples about signing the oath, a confession made in terms that, reported to the Privy Council, must have hardened attitudes against him. He asserted, among other things, that 'the true knowledg how God should be served, and the true order of the Administracion of the Sacraments was knowen, practised, and established in the Church of God longe befor the Acte of Parlement was made whereunto I should now subscribe'. The Privy Council's response to Copley's failure to certify his loyalty at this time of crisis is not known; but it must have led directly to his fleeing the country early in 1570. An act of the 1566 parliament, providing for confiscation of the property of fugitive office holders, now led also to confiscation of almost all Copley's property, a process supervised in the Council by the vindictive Lord Chamberlain, Howard of Effingham, his chief antagonist in Surrey.³⁸

Meanwhile, William More's faithful service to the Court continued, a further example being his careful safekeeping and management of Henry Wriothesley, 2nd Earl of Southampton, in the crucial months following the Northern Rising. Although Wriothesley's father had been created a Tudor earl, enriched with expropriated church lands, his widowed mother had raised him with traditional Catholic fervour, purchasing his wardship in 1550 when he was five years old and protecting him from Protestant influence after the accession of Queen Elizabeth. As soon as he was 21, Southampton married the daughter of More's friend Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, a like-minded traditional Catholic. Both Montague and Southampton were soon after approached to take part in the Northern Rising. Neither had felt the particular animus against Cecil and Tudor religious reform evinced by the ancient Catholic nobility; but both had temporized in view of the rebellion's uncertain outcome. After many rebels had been hunted down and hanged, and after news broke that Pope Pius V had excommunicated Queen Elizabeth, Montague and Southampton felt sufficiently implicated to take flight (like other Catholic refugees) for Flanders. Forced back by contrary winds, they were interrogated but were handled gently by the Privy Council, in the hope that their loyalty might thus be bolstered. Southampton, however, soon gave further cause for concern: he was surprised by the night watch, secretly conversing in the marsh at Lambeth with a London agent of Mary Queen of Scots, John Leslie, the Catholic bishop of Ross. The earl was arrested and at first imprisoned in the house of Henry Beecher, one of the sheriffs of London. Soon he sought escape from the city that was ravaged by contagion in the summer of 1570.³⁹

By this time Cecil's policy had already been similarly applied through the imprisonment of several other Catholic nobles whose loyalty came in question. Among them were John Lord Lumley, confined to the Tower of London since two months before the outbreak of the rebellion, and Lumley's father-in-law, Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, with Lumley involved in scheming to restore Catholicism through the succession of Mary Queen of Scots. To their number in the spring of 1571 was added Henry Percy, 8th Earl of Northumberland, certainly the most dangerous member of the group from Cecil's point of view, partly because of the virtual sovereignty traditionally exercised by Percy earls in the northernmost shires, where people were said to have 'no prince but a Percy'. Cecil regarded all these men with

³⁸ On the events leading to Copley's flight see, in addition to the Privy Council's letter to the Surrey justices: Copley to Sir Henry Weston, Sheriff of Surrey, and the justices of the peace of Surrey, assembled at Leatherhead, 17 November 1569 (SHC: 6729/7/20); and same to same, assembled at Dorking, 23 November 1569 (SHC: 6729/7/19). Copley's vain protests and appeals later addressed from exile to Burghley among others, always stressed his blood relation to the queen and his wish to obey and serve her, saving only in religious belief and practice. These letters continued until his death, languishing in the camp of the Prince of Parma at Antwerp, in 1584; see 'Copley, Thomas' in Hasler 1981, 1, 651; and Copley to Burghley, 7 April, 23 May, and 18 June 1573 (BL: Lansdowne 16/91-3); 13 March 1576 (21/37); 24 September 1581 (32/50); 5 and 18 May and 8 July 1583 (38/42, 43, and 46); and 31 July 1584 (42/17).

³⁹ Akrigg 1968, 8-9.

suspicion, a mistrust justified in his mind by their ancient lineage, but he hoped that, because they had accepted and still held former church properties, their attenuating loyalty to the Crown might be retained.

Montague (not imprisoned but also closely supervised) and Southampton were less of a problem to Cecil, but clearly they too called for careful handling. Cecil extended to Southampton the favour of release from his imprisonment in plague-ridden London, confining him instead to the custody of William More at Loseley.⁴⁰ This seemed a relatively pleasant prospect, as Southampton wrote to More from London on 16 July: 'I ame glad they have placed me with so honest a gentleman and my frend. And so, desiring you to cum to morowe that I wer owght of the towne, I bid you farwell with harty comendacions to yor wife'. The earl's intimate tone of relief was dashed, however, when he found his freedom just as restricted at Loseley as at London; he was allowed only one manservant and no access, either of visitors or even of letters, without supervision. Montague, learning from his daughter that she had not been permitted free visits to her husband, complained mildly in letters to his friend More that he 'thoughtt I shoulde have herd (before this) from yow: the state and maner of his committing unto yow'; and he registered to More his hurt feelings on receipt of 'a letter by youre sufferance from my lord of Sowthampton, so send I one other to his lordship open and by yow to be eyther deliveryd or stayed'.⁴¹

Such constraints, however onerous they seemed to Montague and Lady Southampton, were just as troublesome for More himself. He pleaded with the Privy Council to be discharged of these irksome duties and protested to the Lord Chamberlain Effingham that devotion to them was confining him to his house and distracting him from other business on behalf of the queen. To Southampton's first custodian at London, Sheriff Henry Beecher, More complained that Beecher's alarming representations to the earl and the Privy Council about infectious conditions near his house had been exaggerated. And after the first month of imprisonment at Loseley, More began to urge Southampton's harmlessness and to suggest that he soon be released. Far from acceding to these requests, the Privy Council directed More to straiten Southampton's regimen by requiring him to attend sessions of common prayer, after which More was to report to the Council on the earl's reaction to this pressure.

More without prompting had already asked Southampton to attend prayers at Loseley, and had moreover asked the earl to attend the preaching of sermons in his house: 'sins thorowgte his remeyning with me, I was inforsyd so to kepe home, as nether I nor my familie could be at any service abrode, I dyd determyne to have one well lernyd to enstruct them one daye in my howse'. Southampton easily acceded to this suggestion, attending the services entire, and also began to attend common prayer with More's family and servants twice a day.⁴² All the household at Loseley had thus been enlisted to play their parts in the effective supervision and management of Southampton, whose compliance with all requirements secured his release by mid-November 1570.

He was at liberty for less than a year, however, when the Council learned more about the content of his twilight conversation with the bishop of Ross. Ross under lengthy interrogation admitted that just before his arrest at Lambeth marsh Southampton had asked whether the bull of Pius VI excommunicating Queen Elizabeth required his disloyalty to the queen.⁴³ The earl was again arrested and this time sent to the Tower of London for eighteen months, during which his spirits drooped so badly that William More drafted a letter to Leicester asking him to intercede on behalf of Southampton. Perhaps after Leicester's assistance failed or was

⁴⁰ Privy Council to William More, 15 July 1570 (FSL: L.b.566).

⁴¹ Southampton to More, 16 July 1570 (FSL: L.b.568; published in Kempe 1836, 231); and Montague to More, 24 July and 5 August 1570 (FSL: L.b. 569 and 570; published in Kempe 1836, 232).

⁴² Effingham to More, 9 August 1570 (FSL: L.b.571); Beecher to More, 14 August 1570 (FSL: L.b.572); Montague to More, 5 September 1570 (FSL: L.b.574); Privy Council to More, 23 October 1570 (FSL: L.b.575; published in Kempe 1836, 233, misdated as 18 October); and, in answer, More to Privy Council, n.d. (FSL: L.b.576; published in Kempe 1836, 233–5).

⁴³ Akrigg 1968, 10.

withheld, Southampton himself wrote both to Burghley and the whole Privy Council that he wished Burghley to convey to the queen his letter of humble submission and request for favour. At the beginning of May 1573, the Council finally released the earl again to the custody of More at Loseley for a few weeks, whereupon he was permitted to reside with his father-in-law Montague.⁴⁴

By this time More's services to the Crown in various matters, including anti-Catholic policy, had secured his recognition as a faithful servant. Knighthood came three years later at the hands of the Earl of Leicester in the presence of the queen. The ceremony took place in the garden at Pyrford Place in Surrey, an estate belonging to the Earl and Countess of Lincoln. The queen gave Sir William her hand to kiss and told him that he 'well deserved the honour which she then conferred upon him'.⁴⁵ Later in the year the queen again visited Sir William at Loseley; and in the following year More's daughter Elizabeth, widowed after the death of Richard Polsted in 1576, married the queen's Latin Secretary John Wolley, helping to establish her father's national stature even more prominently when later she became a lady in waiting to the queen.

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