

**NOTES ON A CATHOLIC MANUSCRIPT COMPILATION IN OXFORD, BODLEIAN
LIBRARIES MS. RAWL. 107 D**

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Bodleian Rawlinson MS 107 D is a manuscript compilation of Catholic writings including poetry, martyrology and apologetical and recusant treatises. If the individual texts are known to scholars, the manuscript as a whole does not seem to have attracted significant interest, although contents, design and palaeographical features suggest that it was conceived as a cohesive unit.

The manuscript is a paper quarto in vellum wrapper measuring between 196 x 148mm (cover) and 187 x 143mm (paper). It has 135 folios and is uniformly foliated in the same hand that copied the texts. The hand is a continuous mixed hand. The main body of the text is within ruled compartments and there are traces of ruling throughout. The watermark is a pot with one handle and initials 'I' or 'L' and possibly 'QG', a decorated lid and a crescent on top of it. The lack of close correspondences in Briquet's Les Filigranes and The Thomas L. Gravell Watermark Archive do not allow for confident identification, but a similar design for comparison is POT.313.1 (IPH key P6.2) in Gravell's Watermark Archive. The manuscript is catalogued as a 16th century collection,¹ but from internal textual evidence it is possible to date it more precisely.

The description of the contents in the catalogue of the Rawlinson manuscripts is misleading because not all texts, in particular the treatises, could be identified by William D. Macray.² The list of the manuscript contents is the following: Nicholas Harpsfield's The liffe of Sir Thomas Moore (ff. 1-90v); Richard Bristow's Demaundes to be proponed of Catholikes to the Heretickes (ff. 90v-123v);

¹ William D. Macray (ed.), *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae partis quintae fasciculus tertius, viri munificentissimi Ricardi Rawlinson, I.C.D., codicum classis quartae partem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893.

² Macray (ed.), Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae, 1893.

the treatise “Certayne considerations and causes moveinge me not to be present at, nor to receive, neither to use the service of the new booke” attributed to the deprived Abbot of Westminster John Feckenham (ff. 124-134); and the ballad “You Catholickes that Protistantes” by an unidentified “R.W.” (ff. 134v-135v).

The copy of Harpsfield’s Life of More is one of the eight manuscripts identified and collated for the 1932 critical edition published for the Early English Text Society.³ The Rawlinson collection preserves another copy of the Life (Rawlinson D 86) apparently unrelated to Rawlinson D 107. Harpsfield completed the Life in 1557, and his work circulated widely even after his death in 1575. Copies of the Life were confiscated by Richard Topcliffe in London in 1582.⁴ This was an important work for the English Catholic community, which emphasized More’s resistance to the King, his works and his controversy with William Tyndale. It recounted More’s imprisonment and celebrated him as the first man in England that died a martyr for the defence and preservation of the unity of the Catholic Church.

The second text in the manuscript preserves a version of one of the most important defences of recusancy of the 1570s. The Demaundes to be proponed of Catholikes to the Hereticke by Richard Bristow had wide circulation in manuscript and print with three editions in 1576, 1597 and 1623, and a rather complex textual history. The Demaundes were in fact the new pocket version of another work by Bristow, the Motives vnto the Catholike faith, which had become difficult to get hold of because the first shipment of copies printed on the Continent had been seized by the English authorities. This work had been conceived at the English Seminary in Douai by Cardinal William Allen, the founder of the seminar of whom Bristow was a close collaborator. The Motives, and hence the Demaundes, were in fact based on a version of Allen’s “Articles” that Allen himself had reportedly dictated or

³ Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock and R. W. Chambers, The life and death of Sr Thomas Moore, knight, sometymes Lord high Chancellor on England, written in the tyme of Queene Marie / by Nicholas Harpsfield and now ed. from eight manuscripts, with collations, textual notes, etc. London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1932.

⁴ Hitchcock and Chambers, The life and death of Sr Thomas Moore, xxxi; Mark Rankin, “Richard Topcliffe and the Book Culture of the Elizabethan Catholic Underground.” Renaissance Quarterly 72, no. 2 (2019), 522. doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.84.

transcribed from memory for Bristow.⁵ The copy in the Rawlinson manuscript has the 51 demands of the 1576 printed edition. The printed edition must have been the copy text for the scribe, who also transcribed its colophon on fol. 121v: ‘Antuerpiæ, Johanni Foulero Anglo excudebat / Lodouicus de Winde 1576 / Cum priuilegio’,⁶ thus providing a terminus post quem for the dating of the manuscript. However, after the colophon, the Rawlinson scribe included a table of the succession of the popes from Peter to Gregory XIII referred to as Edward Rishton’s “Table of the Church”. Reference to this table appeared already in the 1576 edition of the Demaundes (STC 3800.5), in a note printed following the table of contents closing the volume that reads: ‘In M. Edvvarde Rishtons Table of the Church, may be seene vvithe the very eie al vvelneare that hathe bene saide in this Boke’. This note appears in the same position also in the Rawlinson manuscript, but the “Table” itself would only be included in a later edition of the Demaundes (STC 3801) printed secretly in England at Father Garnet’s Press, a press known to have been active 1596-1597.⁷ Since none of the extant identified copies of the 1576 of Bristow’s Demaundes has Rishton’s table,⁸ its presence in the Rawlinson manuscript indicates that it must have been compiled no earlier than 1596-1597. In fact, the table does not appear as a later addition, but is foliated consistently with the rest of the collection and is penned in the same hand as the text of the Demaundes. Furthermore, the layout of the Rawlinson manuscript and of the table in STC 3801 are so close that it is hard not to conjecture an immediate connection between the two.

The next text in the collection, attributed to John Feckenham,⁹ is a recusant work stating the reasons for refusing to attend Church of England services and use the Book of Common Prayer. A modern

⁵ A. C. Southern, Elizabethan Recusant Prose, 1559–1582 (London: Sands & Co., 1950), 519-20; Peter Milward, Religious Controversies of the Elizabethan Age: A Survey of Printed Sources (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 39-40. Stefania Tutino, Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early-Modern England, 1570-1625 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 54-7.

⁶ MS Rawl. 107 D, fol. 121v.

⁷ Richard Bristow, Demaundes to Bee Proponed of Catholickes to the Heretickes. London: Fr. Garnet’s second press, 1596-1597. See Antony Allison and David Rogers, A Catalogue of Catholic Books in English Printed Abroad or Secretly in England, 1558-1640 (Bognor Regis, England: Arundel Press, 1956), nr. 70. In the digitised copy from the Folger Shakespeare Library Rishton’s “Table” from sig. F5.

⁸ I am grateful to Mrs Diane Brunning, Lead Library Volunteer at the Abbey Archives and Library of Downside Abbey, Stratton on the Fosse, Bath for checking the copy of the Demaundes in their collection.

⁹ Southern, Elizabethan Recusant Prose, 169.

critical edition of the treatise was published by Ginevra Crosignani, Thomas McCoog and Michael Questier, who collate the printed edition with the two surviving manuscript copies, including the Rawlinson.¹⁰ The copy in MS Oscott 104 preserved at St. Mary's College in Sutton Coldfield, provides the conjectural dating for the text, 1563. Feckenham's treatise was later printed in A confutation of a Popishe, and sclauderous libelle by William Fulke in 1570.

The last text in the manuscript is a ballad calling to resistance the English Catholics, urging them to hold onto their faith, and humorously slandering Protestant divines. This ballad must have been composed in the context of the Jesuit mission in England and in the aftermath of the publication of Edmund Campion's "Letter to the Privy Council", as it targets precisely the Protestant ministers that had answered Campion's 'challenge', William Charke, William Fulke and Meredith Hanmer.¹¹ Conjecturally, the composition of this text must be placed between the break out of the controversy following the discovery of the Jesuit mission (March 1581) and Campion's imprisonment (July 1581). In fact, in the ballad there is no mention of Campion's capture and execution, although death for religion is presented as a realistic yet terrifying possibility:

Ere disputacon should be hade
first Tyburne should him beare
Discreetely he doth goe to worke
and constantely abyde
Leste otherwise the graue sorte
should justly him deride [...]
They blame the hidinge of his heade
their penall Lawes doe vrge him¹²

¹⁰ Ginevra Crosignani, Thomas M. McCoog, Michael C. Questier, and Peter Holmes, Recusancy and Conformity in Early Modern England Manuscript and Printed Sources in Translation (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2010), 30.

¹¹ Angela Andreani, Meredith Hanmer and the Elizabethan Church (New York: Routledge, 2020), 122-3.

¹² MS Rawl. 107 D, fol. 135-135v.

The other texts in the Rawlinson manuscript may also be related to the religious and political context of the 1570s and 1580s, and in particular to the reaction of the English Catholic community to the enactment of the penal laws and the Act of Obedience.

Bristow's Demaundes were formulated as questions that every English Catholic should be able to debate with a Protestant. At the heart of them was the argument that the Catholic Church constituted the authentic continuation of Christianity, but the other fundamental point in Bristow's work was that Catholicism did not interfere with political obedience and posed no danger to the stability of the state. Because of the conception that a sincere profession of the Catholic faith was not incompatible with loyalty to the monarch, Bristow's work has been considered to sustain a moderate, conciliatory view of the relationship between faith and regime,¹³ and one contributing arguments against the equation between Catholicism and treason sustained by the penal laws. Moreover, with respect to the earlier and more controversial Motives, the Demaundes toned down or completely removed those points that had become part of the so called "bloody questions" used by the regime to interrogate arrested Catholics regarding their allegiance.¹⁴

In their rehearsal of the reasons for refusing church attendance, Feckenham's "Certayne considerations" are also immediately relevant to this context. Catholic attendance of protestant service had been ruled not permissible at Trent and on other occasions through the 1560s, but since recusancy was a public act, the question for English Catholics became increasingly vexed under the penal laws and the Act of Obedience, which prohibited Mass and increased the penalties for not attending the Anglican service. The question was further revived in conjunction with the arrival of the Jesuit seminary priests from the Continent, and its urgency is testified by two more texts, the Treatise of Schisme by Gregory Martin and Robert Persons' Reasons for Refusall, which, published respectively in 1578 and 1580, further expounded the position of Catholics on Church attendance.

¹³ Tutino, Law and Conscience, 54-5; Peter J. Holmes, Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 13-22.

¹⁴ Holmes, Resistance and Compromise, 32-3.

In summary, MS Rawlinson D 107 is an important document of English recusant culture, and the texts chosen to be part of this miscellany, an apologetic and a recusant treatise, framed by a biography and a ballad memorialising two Catholics who had suffered persecution and martyrdom, build a narrative of resistance linking generations of English recusants.

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