



Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England (Royal Historical Society Studies in History New Series)

Alexandra Walsham

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A study of the substantial number of Catholics who conformed with Protestantism while insisting on their Roman Catholic identity, and the reactions of Counter Reformation clergy to them. In the study of post-Reformation English Catholicism there has been an enduring overemphasis on the phenomenon of recusancy - refusal to attend the services of the established Church of England. *Church Papists* directs attention to that other, sizeable, if statistically indefinable, category of individuals who conformed with Protestantism, and yet continued to insist on their Roman Catholic identity. It explores the aggressive reaction of the Counter Reformation clergy to the compromising conduct of this target sector of the laity under their charge, and the printed propaganda they produced and disseminated to counter the threat to Catholicism's stubbornly separatist image. A parallel chapter, examining the confidential casuistical discussion which the moral and political predicament of church-going increasingly generated, highlights and explains the way in which pastorally active priests were progressively led to condone qualified conformity. In addition the book undertakes a preliminary investigation of neglected aspects of non-recusant Catholic practice at the parish level. 'Church papist' was above all a nickname, a term of abuse to designate deviance; its incidence draws into focus a wide range of contemporary clerical apprehensions and anxieties, and indexes the tensions caused by per and developing divisions of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart Church. By Alexandra Walsham suggests that recognising the presence of 'Church papists' in gets the sectarian models perpetuated by confessional 'recusant' historiography.

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