

MORGAN, THOMAS (1543 - c. 1605), Roman Catholic conspirator

Name: Thomas Morgan
Date of birth: 1543
Date of death: c. 1605
Gender: Male
Occupation: Roman Catholic conspirator
Area of activity: Anti Establishment; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Religion
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

claimed descent from a 'right worshipful family of Monmouthshire'; *D.N.B.* surmises this to have been the **Morgan** family, Llantarnam and David Mathew (*Celtic Peoples and Renaissance Europe*, 89), those of **Machen**, but he cannot be fitted into the pedigree of either family as given in **Clark**, *Limbus*, 311-3, 322-3. After education at Oxford (college unknown) and service in the households of the bishop of Exeter and the **archbishop of York** (1561-8), he was recommended in 1569 by the **earls of Pembroke** and Northumberland to the service of George Talbot, 6th earl of Shrewsbury, at whose house at Tutbury, Mary Queen of Scots was then a prisoner. Morgan attached himself to the queen, conveyed her secret letters, and after examination by the council (15 March 1572) was imprisoned in the Tower for nine months as an accomplice in the Ridolfi Plot. On release he went to Paris, where as secretary to Mary's ambassador, James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow, he continued to manage her correspondence till, in 1583, he was accused by **Dr. William Parry** of originating the assassination plot for which **Parry** was executed in 1585. In the preceding year (1584) had appeared the anonymous libel on Elizabeth's Protestant advisers known as *Leycester's Commonwealth*, of which Walsingham was convinced that Morgan was the principal author; Mary believed it was on this account that Elizabeth's government implicated him in **Parry's** 'plot' to give grounds for a demand for his extradition. Although Henry III dared not offend Spain by complying, he kept Morgan in the Bastille (1585-90), where he continued his correspondence with Mary (which was betrayed to Elizabeth), and helped to organise the Babington Plot (1586). After Mary's execution he adhered to her son James VI, maintained contact with Catholic friends and relations in South Wales, and tried to use them in his schemes (*Cal. Scot. Pap.*, v, 87, 142, *Hist. MSS. Com.*, *Cecil*, iv, 1, 6-10). When he was freed in 1590, his patroness's death had robbed him of his standing and his pension, while open opposition to the Jesuits and support for the claims of Mary's son raised against him powerful enemies in his own camp. As a counterpoise to the influence of Parsons and Allen he urged the advancement of **Owen Lewis**, bishop of Cassano, whose views on English affairs he found more acceptable, and sent a Welsh Carthusian to Rome with that object. Expelled from France, he went to the Spanish Netherlands, where the Jesuit faction procured his imprisonment for another three years (1590-2). For the rest of Elizabeth's reign he drifted ineffectually about Europe, and early in James I's he approached **Sir Thomas Parry** (died 1616), our ambassador in Paris, with plans for reconciling the English Catholics and spiking the Jesuits' guns. In January 1605 he was accused of conspiracy with Henry IV's mistress (whose sister was in touch with the English Catholic malcontents) and was condemned to death, but at the end of the year he was still alive in Paris and in expectation of the legacy promised by Mary, Queen of Scots. After that he disappears from view, but it is possible that he was alive in 1611.

Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

Sources

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Further Reading

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