

An Early-Modern New College Dynasty: George, Thomas, and Bruno Ryves

The Ryves family of Blandford, Dorset, had its part to play in the history of New College and of the nation at large in the seventeenth century, yet the various Ryves are all but forgotten today, other than perhaps the civil war journalist, Bruno. Nevertheless, they were a dynasty of some importance in public and intellectual life, and George (1569-1613), Thomas (d. 1652), and Bruno (1596-1677) are the subjects of this note. George was Warden of New College from 1599-1613; his brother Thomas was a noted civil lawyer and writer; and their first cousin Bruno was a political journalist who ended his days as the Dean of Windsor.¹

I. George Ryves

George (1561-1613) was the eighth son of the large family of Ryves, of Damory Court, Blandford, Dorset. The family had owned this ancient property since the mid-sixteenth century, and the Ryves were to be remembered in the town through msho he original almshouses were destroyed by the Great F

a letter of 19 April 1605 from Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, to Sir Thomas Lake, secretary to King James and brother to Arthur Lake (

philosophy teaching by examples. The title-page of this volume bears, now very heavily deleted, Ry optat

(It is a very common motto of the time; around two dozen book owners in the period have been found using it to mark their property.)

however altogether more interesting works in context, for both are works of Christian Hebraism.⁹

as the signature of an earlier owner, one Leo Jacques. Galatinus (1460-1540) was an Italian friar with oriental interests. His *De arcanis* was an attempt, in the manner of the foremost Christian Hebraist of the time, Johannes Reuchlin, to argue (in the form of a dialogue) that proper application of the Jewish kabbalah could prove the truth of Christianity from Hebrew scripture itself. The second text bound in this volume is a work on the kabbalah by Reuchlin himself, and this text is heavily annotated, although probably not by George himself, though it was certainly donated along with his Galatinus. Finally, the in fact a Greek-Latin dictionary, but the much more interesting and significant Hebrew concordance of the fifteenth-century Rabbi Mardochai Nathan, translated by another Reuchlin (Anton), and here followed by a separate work by Matthaeus Aurogallus on Hebrew proper nouns for cities, regions, peoples, rivers, and mountains. (This work is really a bibliographical

Dictionarium trilingue (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew); it has been split apart from a Basel 1543 copy of that work and bound in here.) Now the title-page of this last volume is marked , and the inscription is probably in the hand of Charles, not his brother George: it is therefore a presentation inscription. There is at least one other book from Charles in the college library, being the *Commentaria ... in Quatuor Evangelia* (Cologne, 1537;

Greek and Latin historians, and complements the Lonicer volume discussed above. Finally, and most strikingly, there is a copy of works by the Oxonian logician and teacher John Case, a familiar figure in late Elizabethan Oxford. This quarto contains *Lapis Philosophicus* and *Ancilla Philosophiae* (both Oxford, 1599; BT3.260.5), two commentaries once again on Aristotelian physics. What makes this volume special is that it bears an autograph presentation epistle in the final endpaper of the volume. Now Case certainly had some New College contacts – he wrote liminary verse, for instance, for publications by two major writers of the Elizabethan college, the Hebraist William Thorne, and the translator Richard Haydocke (later infamous as t _____ reason for presenting this book to Ryves was both more ceremonial and more personal. Ryves, Case notes, has just become Warden, and as it is also the first of January 1599 (i.e. 1600) he wishes to present him with a _____ received his first education from the college, as a choirboy. The letter is signed

II. Sir Thomas Ryves (d. 1652)¹⁰

Something of Geor _____ glimpsed through his will and his books, although George was no author himself. This cannot be said of his more prominent, and more loquacious brother Thomas, the lawyer.

After Winchester he went on to New College in 1598, took his B.C.L. in 1605, and his D.C.L. in 1610. He probably spent some terms in France pursuing law, and back

Lawes made by the sayd Emperour which are read in the Code. Which clearly besides other thinges do shew the falsehood of their pretence of beeing exempted from the judgment of Secular Princes. From which they meane to proceed further to bring in an absolute Monarchy or Despoticall dominion over all Princes &c. These are the wordes of the Note.¹⁵

Bedwell therefore wished to hear of the Ryves response. Indeed Ryves, as a civil lawyer, took up the defence of Justinian against Alemannus, but without denying that the Procopian discovery was genuine. This is an almost forgotten chapter of intellectual history, and deserves further enquiry.

most famous and lasting work was the *Historia navalis antiqua* (1629, 1633), a study of ships and maritime affairs from the Ark of Noah onwards, supplemented by the *Historia navalis media* (1640), which brought the history of maritime affairs down to the fall of Constantinople in 1453. It was certainly read in New College: there was a copy in the personal library of the young *artista* John Hutton, who died in college in late 1652; and the college library at some early point acquired a copy too.¹⁶ The diarists John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys talked about the book in the Resto

¹⁷ If there

was such a last part in circulation, it was never published.

III. Bruno Ryves (1596-1677)¹⁸

Bruno (or Bruen, as he often preferred to be called) Ryves was something of a mixture of George and Charles, for he was both a prominent churchman and a prominent political journalist. He was younger than his cousins, becoming a clerk at New College from 1610, taking his B.A. in 1616 and then moving to Magdalen again as a clerk, where he took his M.A. (1619), and eventually his B.D. (1632) and his D.D. (1639). His strong political royalism was evident when in 1639 he debated and rejected for his act thesis the

justifications for rebelling against an impious ruler.¹⁹ Ryves did very well out of the Laudian ascendancy, but with the fall of Laud his fortunes fell too. He joined the royalist army in the civil war (as H(.)] f1 0 0 7(a)4(6(y)20(a)al-3(h tom 333.31 345.17 Tm[]) the)t1 0 Oss

and Bruno in Royalist Oxford sole-authored the *Mercurius rusticus*, the first issue of which was published 20 May 1643. It continued to appear for twenty-one issues, the last on 16 March 1644, so this was not a particularly long-lived mercury. But it was a crucially important propaganda tool, and one indication of how valuable an account both Ryves and his readers felt it to be is that after it had ceased to be a current journal, it was then reprinted in collected form, in 1646, again in 1648, and even twice more, long into the future, in 1685 and 1723. This collected edition formed a

Mercurius Belgicus

(1646), which Ryves then expanded as the *Micro-chronicon* (1647), a work that was appreciatively read by the antiquary Anthony Wood.²¹ In this way Ryves became one of the major chroniclers of the civil war, although of course from a vociferously royalist position.

Bruno inevitably suffered for his politics under the commonwealth administration. He did however lend some assistance to Brian Walton concerning the paper supply for his Polyglot Bible of 1657, and he also managed to bring to the press one scholarly project of his own. In a letter to Gilbert Sheldon in early 1658, Ryves wrote I haue here sent you a Tract of Grosteste, newly printed: how it comes to be made publike the Preface will informe you; being deprived of Liberty to exercise my Calling, I haue

edition from manuscript of the thirteenth-century Bishop of Lincoln and theologian *De cessatione legalium*, an interest in medieval theology that reminds us of some of B

fortunes improved rapidly. In 1660 he was established as Dean of Chichester, a position to which he had actually been appointed in 1646, and by late 1660 he was appointed dean of Windsor. He became scribe or register to the Order of the Garter the following year, and thereafter he was much involved with the records of that order. He has accordingly left many traces in the papers of the herald and historian of the Garter, Elias Ashmole: drafts, transcripts, letters, and material concerning his work on compiling the *Liber Carolinus* (1670), a collection of the records of the order.²³

Windsor, shows him in sober priestly garb, but with long, even luscious hair hanging down almost to the base of his falling bands. We know from his letters to Ashmole that in age he

He died in 1677 and was bur Windsor. Bruno shared the family traits: royalism, ceremonialism, class-consciousness, an interest in making money, perhaps even a certain vanity. In age this did not render Bruno an especially attractive personality, as the principles that had kept him energetic in the interregnum stagnated.

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²¹ Kiessling, *Library of Anthony Wood*, no. 5679.

²² Walker, *Sufferings of the Clergy*; Bodleian, MS Tanner 52, fol. 230, letter of 2 February 1657/[8], also with an apology for the typographical errors in the impression. The copy at Bodleian, 8o Z 192 Th. has the inked attribution in a later hand.

²³ Bodleian, MS Ashmole 1131, fol. 231r (Ryves to Ashmole, 14 December 1668). This MS contains several letters from Bruno to Ashmole.