









In 1875 the Catholic historian and writer, Lord Acton, published extracts from both Harpsfield's *Life of Sir Thomas More* and from the *Treatise*. He does not acknowledge from which

(1834–1923), who was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. 'Graver historians', wrote Sir John, 'have been satisfied if they found a fact told by him, and it is not improbable that the reason why

historians to reach for a more objective understanding of the Anglican reformation: 'no history of a violent strife . . . can be truly appreciated without carefully examining the question from the points of view of each of the contending parties'.<sup>43</sup>

After this flurry of publishing activity and a general diminution of religious controversy, Sander's legacy seems to have retreated to relatively limited Catholic circles during the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> But more recent appraisals of both his and Harpsfield's work have affirmed their scholarly intent, and pinpointed more precisely their enduring value. Felicity Heal, for example, has observed that Harpsfield and Sander wrote for a predominantly clerical elite and could not compete in populist terms with Foxe. Their work, she argues, was 'valuable no doubt as source texts for polemic and preaching'.<sup>45</sup> Just as Lord Acton recognised, it was probably 'too technical'. Seen in this light, and now largely detached from the partisan designations of former eras, Harpsfield's and Sander's contributions as serious Catholic theologians and historians of the Reformation take on new importance. Even if they did not achieve 'the appropriation of a national history for the English Catholic community',<sup>46</sup> their work can still be viewed as a valuable balance to centuries of a national Protestant narrative of the Reformation. Not only this, but the way their work was circulated and published certainly offers the contemporary reader 'some insight into the power of history as a tool of controversial writing'.<sup>47</sup>

In reassessing the influence