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# Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

## Holland, Thomas

(d. 1612)

J. Andreas Löwe

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**Holland, Thomas** (d. 1612), theologian, was born in Ludlow, Shropshire, the second son of William Holland of Burwarton in the same county. He was educated at Oxford, where he gained an exhibition at Oriel College on 23 September 1569 and graduated BA on 9 December 1570. He probably entered the Middle Temple in 1571. On 13 January 1573 he was elected *socius sacerdotalis* or chaplain-fellow of Balliol College, where he was also college reader in rhetoric from 1575–7. He proceeded MA on 21 June 1575, and entered the faculty of theology; he graduated BTh on 13 July 1582 and DTh on 15 July 1584.

In 1585 Holland left Oxford for the northern Netherlands to work as a personal chaplain of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, a known patron of Calvinists in England. A renowned scholar as well as a loyal evangelical, on his return to Oxford in 1589 Holland was appointed regius professor of theology, a post he held until his death. On 9 June 1590 he was made a canon of Salisbury Cathedral on recommendation of the crown. A year later he was installed as rector of St Nicholas, Rotherfield Greys, Oxfordshire.

On 29 March 1592 Holland was elected to a fellowship at Exeter College, Oxford. In an attempt to bring religious conservatives among the fellowship to conformity, he was appointed rector of the college on the instigation of the queen and Sir John Petre. His election was disputed by the fellowship and not confirmed until 24 April, when his opponent 'who was really elected, resigned his claim at Lambeth, before Archbishop Whitgift, the Bishop of Oxford, and ... the chancellor of the University' (Boase, *Registrum Collegii Exoniensis*, 84). He was noted as a skilled disputant in the university, and participated with his fellow doctors of theology at a debate in honour of Queen Elizabeth's visitation to the university in autumn 1592, and again thirteen years later during the visit of James I.

Holland was a gifted linguist, and frequently drew on the Hebrew scriptures and the Talmud in his sermons. At his suggestion John Prideaux, a good friend and protégé, compiled a Greek grammar for his students. His proficiency in biblical languages and his love for the scriptures were reason for his appointment in 1605 to translate,

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together with six other Oxford scholars, the prophetic books of the Old Testament (Isaiah–Malachi) for the Authorized Version of the Bible. He left two discourses in print: an oration on the occasion of Bishop Henry Cotton's graduation, *Oratio habita cum Henricus episcopus Sarisburiensis gradum doctoris susceperit*, was published in 1599; and a panegyric on the queen preached at St Paul's Cathedral, *Panēgyris D. Elizabethae Reginae: a sermon preached at Pauls in London the 17 of November*, appeared two years later. In 1612 Thomas Thompson, of Queen's College, edited and published the notaries' account of two disputations on monastic vows moderated in 1609 by Holland under the title, *Claviger ecclesiae: theses duae de votis monasticis*. On 2 February 1610, towards the end of his life, Holland was made an honorary member of Gray's Inn.

Throughout his life Holland remained a stalwart opponent of Catholicism. At his funeral oration the rector of Lincoln College, Richard Kilbie, recalled that 'a common farewell when he tooke any longer journey was this, Commendo vos dilectioni Dei, et odio papatus et superstitionis (I commend you to the love of God, and to the hatred of popery and superstition)' (Kilbie, 18). Holland died at Exeter College, Oxford, on 17 March 1612, and was buried on 26 March in the chancel of the university church of St Mary the Virgin. He was survived by his wife, Susanna, and was father to two children, Anne and William.

## Sources

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## Likenesses

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Passe, line engraving, BM, NPG; repro. in Holland, *Herōologia Anglica* (1620)

portrait?, Bodl. Oxf., Hope collection

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