

Feast of St John Ogilvie 2011

The re-opening of our Cathedral Church of St Andrew in time for Easter is exciting interest both within the Archdiocese and further afield. It was commissioned from the distinguished Scottish Architect, James Gillespie Graham by the priest appointed to look after the Catholic community in the West of Scotland, the Rev Andrew Scott. Scott came from the North East, from lower Banffshire within lands which had been protected from the worst excesses of the Reformation by such noble families as the Gordons, first Earls and then Marquises of Huntly and latterly Dukes of Gordon, *[along with cadet branches of the family and such other families such as the Hays of Errol albeit their holding to the Catholic faith did not, with a few notable exceptions, extend beyond the earlier part of the 18th century].*

From these lands also, from nearby Keith, came John Ogilvie. He was not, it would seem, brought up as a Catholic; his family was Calvinist, but he had a Catholic pedigree since two of his uncles on his mother's side - George and William Elphinstone - were Jesuit priests. Following where many Scots young men had gone before, he journeyed to the continent of Europe as a student, and not unnaturally fell under the influence of the Order to which his uncles had belonged. He converted, and was educated and received into the Church by a distinguished Jesuit scripture scholar, Cornelius a Lapide and entered himself the Society of Jesus being ordained a priest in Paris in 1610.

The call of home was not nostalgic. Scotland by then was a dangerous place for a priest to be - 50 years after the Reformation Parliament of 1560 which had banned the Mass, forbidden recourse to Rome, and proclaimed a new profession of faith authored by John Knox and colleagues. It is true that, certainly in the earlier years of that period, there were many who still entertained the hope that the winds of change would blow out, particularly those such as Bishop Hepburn at Spynie, who secure in their castles, fulfilled the requirements of the law in the disposing of benefices, and presumably in some if not all cases continuing privately to celebrate the Mass.

[Ninian Winzet, confessor to Mary Queen of Scots and defender of the Old Order, and later Abbot of the Scots Abbey at (Ratisbon) Regensburg, did not journey to Spynie to confront a lapsed Catholic bishop but presumably to confer with him and those perhaps of like mind, what their policy might be].

[In Aberdeen the Menzies of Pitfodells received the former parish priest of St Nicholas's into their twon house and remained faithful as a family until the last of their line John Menzies bequeathed to the Church his extensive lands, and in doing so returning much that had been feuded to his family at the time of the Reformation by the last Catholic bishop of Aberdeen, the uncle of the Earl of Huntly.]

Burghers in both Aberdeen and Edinburgh were split in their loyalties and it was uncertain which party might eventually prevail while the tradesmen in Glasgow defended their Cathedral from destruction.

Meanwhile the Jesuits were plotting to influence the young James VI, heir to the throne of England who was crafty enough to keep them guessing. It became clear after 1603 when he ascended the throne, that his policy was to support episcopacy in Scotland but in the reformed manner of the Anglican Church. Final settlement came only in 1688 when his grandson and

namesake James II, having returned to the faith of his forefathers, fled to the continent and in the so-called Glorious Revolution Presbyterianism prevailed in Scotland.

So, for John Ogilvie to return to Scotland in 1610 was to hazard his freedom, if not his life. He must have been well aware of this when he pleaded with the General of the Order, Acquaviva, to allow him to serve the remnant Catholic community, and he was granted that permission in a letter dated 21 May 1613.

He arrived in Scotland wearing the guise and name of a soldier, John Watson. It was to be his death in Scotland and not the amount of time he spent alive on his return that was to leave to the Catholic Church and to the Society of Jesus, a splendid example of bravery.

On arrival in Scotland he spent his first year in Edinburgh. He arrived in Glasgow in August of 1614 to minister in a clandestine manner to a remnant group of Catholics with whom he celebrated Mass, heard confessions and distributed Holy Communion.

These Masses were said in the home of Marion Walker, wife of a Glasgow merchant who herself suffered for the faith, dying in prison at St Andrew's for her temerity in supporting the Jesuit.

Such examples contradict the myth of Scots Catholics having a relatively easy time compared to their co-religionists south of the Border during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, when many were made to pay the ultimate price for their allegiance to the Catholic Church, manifesting their faith and spilling their blood at Tyburn and elsewhere in brutal executions in which they were hung, drawn and quartered. Nonetheless, though in Scotland such brutality was avoided, the suffering that many underwent for fidelity to their Catholic faith was prolonged; priests and lay people dying in squalid prisons were not uncommon.

Generally speaking, and according to the law, a priest who was found in Scotland celebrating Mass was banished, though he could on return and being re-arraigned for a similar crime be put to death. What was exceptional in John Ogilvie's case was that he was arrested for celebrating Mass and put to death. However the indictment had been added to with a charge of treason since it was clear that an example was to be made of him, and repeatedly he was ordered to take an oath of loyalty to the King which would have meant acknowledging him as supreme governor of the Church.

The King's man in Scotland was John Spottiswoode, Archbishop of Glasgow but not recognised as such by the Catholic Church.

[He was, one of those whom the King, wishing to force prelacy on the Church, had ensured was appointed to the ancient sees. A book of common order drawn up by Knox reflecting Calvin's arrangements in Geneva, allowed for the appointment of a Superintendent, and for such to carry the name of Bishops. They were appointed over the years though they lacked both the agreement of the Holy See, and Ordination, which even if it had been illicit, might have set them up as valid bishops.]

The last Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow prior to the restoration of the hierarchy in 1878, had been James Beaton who died in Paris in 1603 seven years before John Ogilvie's ordination, and indeed the same year as James VI of Scotland became also the first of England. Ironically Beaton had been restored with the remaining temporalities of the See of Glasgow towards the end of the century in recompense for his acting as Ambassador of the Scottish Crown in Paris, and this

enabled him to leave sufficient money to the Scots students in Paris to enable him to be considered the second founder of the Scots College there which retained also the relics and papers that the Archbishop had taken with him when he fled in 1560, many of which were lost at the time of the French Revolution, along with the College itself as an institution.

A historian, Daniel MacLeod, has recently described Spottiswoode as "a consummate churchman [who] sought the political stability that a secure religious settlement could provide the Scottish kingdom. Perhaps because of this desire, Spottiswoode had a particular distaste for the Jesuits; whether they deserved the label or not, Jesuits in Britain were consistently associated with the subversion of good government" and the historian further noted that "the Gunpowder Plot Act [1605] did not help matters and this conspiracy was front and centre of Ogilvie's trial in which his membership of this 'rebellious sect' was steadily derided by Spottiswoode".]

Spottiswoode was expected to do the King's bidding, and he did so by writing to the king and asking him what questions he should put to the prisoner Ogilvie. He was told that he should enquire as to whether the priest believed that the Pope had power over the King in both spiritual and temporal matters, and furthermore whether it would be murder to kill an excommunicated King.

Under questioning, John Ogilvie showed both purpose and wit "I will not acknowledge him [i.e. James I and VI] more than this old hat!" he said, adding that the Oath of Allegiance was "a damnable oath... a treason against God to swear it". He did not deny that James I and VI was King but he would not give him the title of Supreme Governor of the Church. Nothing would move him from that position, neither his being deprived of sleep day and night, for over a week, nor a particular torture whereby his leg was crushed within a wooden box and pins forced into the quick of his nails.

On 10 March 1615, after all attempts to force him to change his position had failed, he was taken to Glasgow Cross and publicly hanged. His body was not given to his friends for burial and lies somewhere unknown in Glasgow, very probably near to St Mungo's Cathedral, close to the founder of the City of Glasgow and its Archbishopric.

Ogilvie had no doubt about the real motive for his death: "I am sent to my death for religion alone" he said, moments before he died. By his life and martyr's death he qualified for beatification and when the remarkable cure of a moribund cancer patient in Easterhouse was verified as miraculous, he was canonised.

This Canonisation took place in October of 1976, one year before my appointment as Bishop of Aberdeen, the diocese of his birth and 26 years before my induction as Archbishop of Glasgow, not in succession to John Spottiswoode, but to Archbishop James Beaton, and actually to a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Thomas Cardinal Winning, the surest sign that John Ogilvie's death had not been in vain. The Catholic Church had survived in Scotland and been revived in the city which witnessed his martyrdom.

[I find it a terrible irony that the first parish I went to visit after my installation was that dedicated to St John Ogilvie, a parish which I have subsequently had to suppress, and a church which I have had to take down, though its parishioners are now associated with St Jude's which has now also assumed the title St Jude's and St John Ogilvie's Barlanark. Its church holds the stained glass window of St John which formerly adorned the previous parish church.

The altar erected in his memory and the statue which represents him here, erected by the Society of Jesus in the Church of St Aloysius in Garnethill continue to commemorate him. And now in our restored Cathedral, a painting of Ogilvie by the outstanding Scottish artist, Peter Howson will hang in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel over the altar and tabernacle of the Lord's presence. This surely is most fitting since it was out of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Mass and for the sake of the people's need of it that John Ogilvie came home to Scotland and eventually was martyred. Above the painting is the depiction of the chalice and host, and the monogram of Christ - the badge of the Society of Jesus.]

St Andrew's Cathedral was built exactly 200 years after the martyrdom of St John Ogilvie. We will therefore be celebrating its bi-centenary and at the same time marking the 400th anniversary of St John Ogilvie's death in four years time. The dedication of the Cathedral to St Andrew albeit when it was first a "chapel" rightly pays tribute to the patron of Scotland chosen at a time when our country was establishing its nationhood and forming a Christian society.

St Andrew's Cathedral is also associated with St Patrick, whose sons and daughters in the early 19th century sought work and a livelihood in a land whose name they once shared, *Scotia Magna*, greater Scotland. Their arrival gave added reason for the Cathedral's building and they contributed generously to it as they have done in the development of today's Archdiocese. It is right that St John Ogilvie's name should also be associated with the Cathedral, reminding us of the Vicars Apostolic and priests from the highlands without whom the survival of the Catholic Church in Scotland and its revival, would have been barely possible.

We need to hold up the example of St John today to our young men who might with equal generosity give themselves to the service of Christ in the priesthood of the Catholic Church. Perhaps another Archbishop, in 200 years time, will remark that, but for them, the Church would not have survived through our own predictably turbulent days. Nor should we forget Marion Walker, wife of a Glasgow merchant, who suffered for her support of the priesthood.

Perhaps we should ask both of them to pray for us!