Northern Catholic History

No. 26 Autumn 1987

North East Catholic History Society

NORTH EAST CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society was founded in July 1974 to foster interest and promote research into the history of the Catholic Church in North East England.

A yearly programme of talks and visits to places of Catholic interest is arranged and *NORTHERN CATHOLIC HISTORY*, the Society's periodical, is published twice yearly.

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NORTH EAST CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

The two talks providing the second half of the winter programme were both well attended. For the first time, a members' evening was arranged and on 26 February several members gave brief talks on their chosen topics, one talk being printed in this issue. Then, on 24 March, Fr Luke Magee CP did not disappoint a good turn-out when he spoke on the history of the Passionists in England.

The two summer outings, arranged by Miss Molly Davison with her customary thoroughness and perception of good weather, were both very successful. The first was to Jedburgh on 13 June, a visit prompted by the third centenary of the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. The second was the eagerly awaited trip to the Farne Islands on 9 August. The sun shone and the seas were calm, and, after a boat tour of the various islands, members landed on Inner Farne and our Chairman said Mass in the chapel (illustrated in the Spring 1987 issue) to commemorate the thirteenth centenary of the death of St Cuthbert. Many members also joined in a pilgrimage, largely organised by our Chairman, to Holy Island where Mass was concelebrated in the Priory ruins on a cold and blustery 6 June.

Details of the 1987–88 programme are given on the inside back cover of this booklet, but before it is circulated the Society's thirteenth AGM on 6 October and Dr Derry's talk on 3 November will probably have been held. Thanks are due to Miss Josephine O'Callaghan, our programme secretary, for arranging such a good programme again this year.

St Cuthbert is again commemorated in the first article in this issue, by J.B. Scollen on the twelfth-century wall-painting in Durham Cathedral. This is followed by an account of the Ven. William Southerne by the late Dr Annie Forster, published first in *Recusant History* in 1957–58, to continue the promised sequence of notices of the North East martyrs among the eighty-six to be beatified in November. The editor is indebted to Dom Aidan Bellenger for drawing attention to the hitherto unpublished memorial tribute to Bishop Thomas Wilkinson by the Benedictine historian, Dom Bede Camm, best known for his *Forgotten Shrines* (1910). As a reminder of the cause for the beatification of Cardinal Newman, a letter of his acknowledging the congratulations of the Diocese on the news of his becoming a Cardinal in 1879 is published. Finally, a note on a Conference of the Catholic Young Men's Societies in Newcastle in 1888, completes the issue.

A TWELFTH-CENTURY PAINTING OF ST CUTHBERT

J.B. Scollen

There is an interesting fresco painting of Saint Cuthbert in the Galilee Chapel at Durham Cathedral. [1]

In the middle of the east wall of the chapel (the original west end of the cathedral) there is the large square mass of the tomb of Cardinal Thomas Langley (d.1437), with an altar above it, in front of the permanently closed great west door of the cathedral. On each side of Langley's tomb there is a large recessed arch. Within the arch on the left of the tomb, before the Reformation, stood the altar of Our Lady of Pities. [2] The back of the recess and the soffit or underside of the arch surrounding it are beautifully decorated and they provide a vivid reminder of what much of the interior of the cathedral may have looked like for two or three hundred years before the Suppression.

There is a very fine leaf-frieze decoration around the soffit of the arch and on the back wall of the recess there is a painted pattern of draperies. In the middle of this pattern there is a blank space which was thought to have contained a painting of a *pieta* defaced during the Reformation, because the altar which stood in this recess is described as follows by the author of the 'Rites of Durham' (who was probably a member of the Durham community before the suppression of the monastery): '. . . ye Ladye of pieties alter with hir pictur carryinge our saviour on hir knee as he was taiken from ye cross, a very dolorouse aspecte.' [3]

In 1960—1961, however, these frescoes were thoroughly examined and restored by Mrs Eve Baker, who came to the conclusion that there had never been a middle panel in this fresco, that the draperies had been designed to leave a blank space, and that a cruciform wooden panel may have been mounted there, with perhaps a cross or crucifix painted upon it. [4]

Despite the authority of the expert who came to this conclusion, however, it is hard to dismiss the words of the author of the 'Rites' and reject the picture he describes.

The wooden cross now mounted on this wall was designed by George Pace, the cathedral architect, and placed there in 1967.

On the jambs at each side of this recess there are painted figures. The figure to the left of the altar is much worn away and cannot be identified, but it is probably that of St Oswald. The figure on the right hand side is a splendid portrait of St Cuthbert. It is thought that it must have been painted soon after the Galilee Chapel was completed in 1175 and,considering that it is therefore about eight hundred years old the painting (which, like the other frescos in this chapel — and those elsewhere in the cathedral — was hidden for many years under layers of whitewash which were only removed last century),is in a wonderful condition.

It is of considerable interest as a work of art — it has been referred to as 'one of the finest wall-paintings in Europe' [5] — and it gives an unusually clear picture of the vestments worn by a bishop in the twelfth century. St Cuthbert is shown wearing an amice, alb, dalmatic, chasuble and maniple. His mitre is white, with infulae or lappets (hanging bands) and is ornamented with strips of gold.[6] Its design (with points at front and back) is that which came into use at the end of the twelfth century, and replaced the older type of mitre, which had points at the sides.[7]

NOTES

1. N. Pevsner, *County Durham* (Second edition, revised by Elizabeth Williamson, 1983), p.193.
2. Rites of Durham (*Surtees Society*), Vol. CVII, 1903), p.44. Although 'Pieties' is the reading of the earliest MS of Rites, the word appears at a still earlier date as 'Pitie' and 'Pety' – W. Greenwell, *Durham Cathedral* (Seventh edition, revised, Andrews & Co., Durham, 1913), p.61, n.111.
3. Rites, p.44.
4. M. Johnson and M. McIntyre, 'Wall-Paintings in the Galilee of Durham Cathedral', *T.A.A.S.D.N.*, Vol. XI, Parts III and IV, 1962, p.278.
5. Audrey Baker, 'The Wall-Painting of St Cuthbert at Durham' in *The Relics of St Cuthbert*, edited by C.F. Battiscombe, O.U.P., 1956, p.530.
6. ibid. p.528.
7. ibid.

Wall-painting of St Cuthbert at Durham Cathedral, late 12th century.
Reproduced by courtesy of The Dean and Chapter of Durham.

VEN. WILLIAM SOUTHERNE: ANOTHER TYNESIDE MARTYR

Ann M.C. Forster (1888–1979)

William Southerne, the last martyr to suffer under James I, lived and died during a period of disunion among the English Catholics. They were divided upon several issues: one of these was the lawfulness of taking the Oath of Allegiance. This Oath, introduced by Cecil in 1606,[1] and condemned as unlawful by Pope Paul V the following year, was still favoured by a certain (small) section of the clergy in England. Ven. William Southerne was not of their number: his refusal to take the Oath was the determining factor which brought about his condemnation.

His martyrdom evoked a minor diplomatic crisis. His death became a bargaining-point affecting the lives of many of his fellow-Catholics. From the lowest point of view, that of their material amelioration, he did not die in vain.

King James was negotiating a treaty of marriage between Prince Charles and the Infanta Maria, and prepared to meet the demand of the Spanish king that some undertaking should be given to grant toleration to the Catholics in England. Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador, was on the point of leaving for Spain with the proposals, when the news that, by the blunder of an official, a priest had been summarily convicted and executed, threatened to upset the whole transaction.

James did what he could, protested his innocence, undertook to dismiss Sheffield, (and did so, a few months later); finally, gave orders that every priest then held in an English prison, (over seventy of them are listed by name[2]), should be released and handed over to the Ambassador. When Gondomar rode down to Dover in July, he was followed by a train numbering, it was said, nearly a hundred priests.

A few months later, Sir John Digby was writing from Spain[3] that many of those so released had returned to England. He begged 'that his Majesty will be graciously pleased to suspend the execution of these Priests . . . it will avoid a great distraction to the Business in hand, especially when this suspension is desired but for a short time . . .'

A short time, a brief breathing-space was what Ven. William Southerne had helped to win. Not for ten years was a priest put to death in England.

On 18 April 1579, William Bennet, Vicar of Aycliffe near Darlington, or his deputy, baptised a boy, and entered up the baptism in the parish register: 'Willm. Sutherne'.[4] Three years later he made another entry: 'Christopher Sutheran, son of William Sutheran' baptised 8 July 1582.

William Sotheron, the father of these children, was the son of another Christopher Sotheron, and Isabel Smythe. The Sotherons were a mercantile family, long established in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. There can be little doubt that Christopher Sotheron the grandfather was a member of this family, but the connection cannot be shown.[5] His wife Isabel was the daughter of a cadet (Christian name unknown) of the family of the Smythes of Esh in the county of Durham; the name of her mother has not been ascertained. Isabel had one brother, Cuthbert Smythe of Ketton, who made his will 26 March 1576.[6] To each of his four sisters, Margaret Grymston, Constance Stelling, Frances Layton and Isabel Sotheron, he left £20: and one-third of his residual estate he left to his nephew, William Sotheron.

It was possibly about the time of the death of his uncle that this William (father of the martyr) married and settled at Ketton,[7] in the parish of Aycliffe. His wife was Katherine Willey, and her mother, Dorothy Hodgson, came of a Tyneside family remarkable throughout penal times for their fidelity to the Faith. To William and Katherine Sotheron were born four, possibly more children: William and Christopher, whose baptisms are recorded above, Jane, mentioned in the will of her grandmother, Dorothy Willey, in 1584,[8] and a fourth child, living in 1598.[9] To William, the future martyr, Mrs Willey left '£20 to get him a farmhold where his father shall think meet.'

The first reference to the recusancy of William Sotheron, senior, is of this period. He was convicted, under the statute of 23 Elizabeth, in that he had absented himself from the parish church, for a period of twelve months commencing 2 October 1584. The date of conviction is not given.[10] At the penal rate of £20 a month, he was thus a debtor to the Exchequer to the extent of £240. He was then living at Ketton. A few years later, about 1589,[11] he decided to send his son William abroad for his education. The Jesuit college at Vilna in Lithuania (then

Poland) was the place selected, and possibly it was in one of the ships of his merchant relatives that he made the long Baltic voyage. At Vilna he was admitted to St John's College.[12] This institution, founded in 1577, became a flourishing academy, which under the Jesuits gained a great literary reputation. During the years 1581 to 1591 it was fostered by Prince (Cardinal) Serge Radziwill, and in 1597 it numbered 800 pupils.[13] Here William remained for six years, and then misfortune overtook him: he was afflicted with a chest complaint, probably tuberculosis, the scourge, in a less hygienic age, of institutions and convents. The only known remedy was prescribed for him, a change to his native air.

Meanwhile, things had been going ill with the family at home. In 1591 William, the father, made a journey up to London,[14] under the guidance of one Arthur Lonsdale, whose connection with the family is not clear, but who was evidently either an old friend or a retainer, for he figures as a witness of old Mrs Willey's will. In London, which they reached about a fortnight before Whitsunday (which that year fell upon 23 May) they met, probably by appointment, Nicholas Sotheron, William's brother. Nicholas had been living in Ireland, in the service of the Dowager Countess of Kildare,[15] at Maynooth. The brothers had not met for ten years, and there seems to have been some suggestion already made that William should accompany his brother back to Ireland, for preparations for the journey were in progress.

They returned from London almost immediately, travelling north through Piercebridge, through the counties of Durham and Cumberland, and making, it would seem, for the coast near Whitehaven; but at some point, probably in the vicinity of Penrith, they were stopped by two of the local gentry, who suspecting them to be recusants or seminary priests, conveyed them to Carlisle and handed them over to the Warden of the Western Marches, Lord Scrope. He proceeded at once to interrogate them.

Lonsdale is dismissed as harmless. The latter disclaimed all acquaintance with Papists, unless one of his companions should prove to be such, and 'utterly misliked the religion.' The other two roused suspicion. They were travelling under the name of Smythe.[16] Nicholas admitted that Sotheron was their real name, but explained that his mother was a kinswoman of Sir William Holles, and that he had assumed her name in order to impress his employer, Lady Kildare. Scrope was

not satisfied. He had their baggage searched, and found there damning evidence of papistry, and letters to exiles in Ireland. The letters, most touching but too long to quote here, tell of the conditions in county Durham, from which the Sotherons were trying to escape, of a lull, a 'quietness' preceding the expected persecution which broke heavily upon those regions the following year. Whether the Sotherons ever reached Ireland is doubtful: the outcome of the incident is unknown. Nor is there anything to indicate where they were living at the time their son came home, sick, from Poland, only to leave them again, after a stay of several months, in 1596, for the College at Douay, where he continued his studies, entering upon rhetoric and philosophy. After two years he left Douay and went to Valladolid, arriving there 6 December 1598. Nine days later, 15 December, he was admitted to the College and submitted to the usual interrogations regarding himself and his circumstances.

He stated [17] that he was born in the diocese of Durham, that his parents were noble and had suffered much for the Catholic faith, and that he was twenty-two years of age. The latter statement we suspect to be incorrect. If he was a baby when baptised in 1579, he could now have been only in his twentieth year. He told of his six years in Poland, of the illness that had taken him home, and of his two years at Douay. It was the wish of his parents that he should follow the calling of a priest, even at the cost of his life. Such, the lad said, was his own desire, and for this he offered himself.

The next part of the story is not so clear. Less than a year later (September 1599), we find him setting out once more for Douay, which he reached on 4 November 1599. The reason given for his return was that for the time being, teaching in Positive Theology was not to be had at Valladolid.[18] But he seems to have fared little better at Douay, for after December 1599 his name disappears from the Douay College lists. Nicholas FitzJames and John Knight, who had been his companions on the journey from Valladolid, were tonsured the following year, 4 August 1600, and ordained in April 1601. There is no mention of William Southerne, and it may be presumed that he left Douay in the spring or early summer of 1600. The summary of his life, given in the Valladolid 'Diary' but evidently written up some time after his death, states that after his admission to Valladolid he was sent to Seville. This is possibly an error for Douay, for there is clear

evidence that he went to Douay from Valladolid; on the other hand he may have tried Seville as well.

Eventually he returned to Valladolid and was there made priest. The date of his ordination is not given, but it was probably in 1604.[19] In 1605—06 he had entered upon his mission, and was in Northumberland, at Halton near Corbridge on Tyne. John Healy [20] 'confesses that he hath been at many Masses with the said L. Carnaby his master, at his house at Halton, Northumberland, since Michaelmas last [1605], which Masses were said, sometimes by Sicklemore,[21] the priest, sometimes by one Southern, a priest, and one by Fr Holtby, a Jesuit.'

Southerne was still in Northumberland about 1608 when he received a convert, Cuthbert Reyne,[22] and we may perhaps trace his hand in the arrangement made for the latter, who wished to enter the priesthood, to be educated in Poland. From Reyne's statement, made some years later, it may be deduced that the scene of the conversion was probably Dilston, also in Tyne-dale, the home of the Radcliffes.[23]

In 1615 Southerne came under the observation of a spy. This was a creature of William James, the Bishop of Durham, and his reports, [24] submitted to the Bishop and by him forwarded to the Archbishop of Canterbury, make interesting reading. The spy, Christopher Newkirk, was said to be a surgeon, of Polish nationality.[25] His reports, which according to the Bishop were rendered verbatim, show little trace of foreign idiom, nevertheless he was able to impose upon Southerne who, it must be remembered, had spent several years in Poland.

Newkirk succeeded in making the acquaintance of Humfrey Clesbie,[26] a Morpeth man, who held some position of liaison between the priests and the laity: their 'Bedall' Newkirk termed him. It was possibly his business to notify people of the time and place of Mass. By means of Clesbie, Newkirk was introduced to Southerne and other Catholics. The spy was convinced, or appeared to be convinced, that the Catholics were plotting against the life of the King. Among those who had conspired at 'Rawer'[27] he named Mr Southerne, William Ogle, Mr Carter a priest, and Richard Ogle.[28] Certainly these reports reveal that there was discontent among the Catholics at the conduct of the King, who had broken the promises of toleration made them on his accession, and something of their hopes for a change in policy; but the disloyal speeches attributed to Mr Southerne and others regarding the preparations for war and the thousands of men on the way to invade

England, cannot be taken seriously. There is nothing in the diplomatic correspondence of the day to support such allegations, and they can only have originated in Newkirk's imaginations, and in his wish to create a sensation. Nevertheless, he has one redeeming feature: he can tell a story. He can conjure up a vivid picture of the conditions under which a seminary priest lived and worked in Newcastle upon Tyne nearly three and a half centuries ago, and for this he has earned our gratitude. Let him speak for himself:

> According [29] to my promise, to meet Humfrey Clesbie the 4 of August, at Morpeth, or else at Capheaton, I went to both places. There I was informed to find him at Newcastle in Pilgrim Street, at a widow's house called Mrs. Pynner, or at Mrs. Watson's. So I came home sore wearied, and not a little discontented of my wearisome travel night and day, and nothing the nearer for my business.
>
> The 5 of August Humfrey Clesbie came to my house in Gateshead. I entertained him friendly, asked him the cause of his absence. He told me I should stay at home, and he would tell me the cause of his not being at home, and I should go with him, but he would first give intelligence to the parties of my coming. So he came again about 3 hours later, bid me go with him, and he would show me the place of meeting.
>
> So we crossed the water from my house, and went over to Newcastle, and there he carried me to a widow's house on Sandhill, where a woman dwelleth, wearing daily on the working days a 4 corner cap, selling some small commodities in her shop, as Ropes, Red herrings and some salt fishes, and many small trifles.
>
> Then came a right fair young woman (I suppose her daughter) upon the stairs standing. Asked who was coming up Friends says Mr. Clesbie. So up we went another pair of stairs; on the right hand is his chamber.
>
> I coming into the chamber saluted Mr. Sutheran and finding nobody there but him alone. He bid me and Clesbie heartily welcome and presently went to a red chest, standing at the left hand in his chamber, where the hosts are in great number in a painted box, books, paternosters or beads, he had many. So he bestowed an altar,[30] 2 books and a pair of black beads on me. He told me it must be a great friend, that should come so far in his trust.
>
> Desired my name and country; I gave him satisfaction. He was glad of it, and told me that he had been in Lituania, in the city of Vilna, in the Academy of the Jesuits in Sancti Johannis, where he received his priesthood. So I recompensed him and Clesbie for the benevolence, with silver and gold. So at last it was determined that I should come the next day to my Confession, so I

promised to do, and did, and heard a Mass, in company of six persons, 3 women, Sutheran's brother for one, who was Clerk to Mr. Sutheran, I myself for the 2nd, Clesbie the 3rd and a gentleman with a red head, whose name I do not know, the woman, the daughter in the house, and 2 women more, whose names I do not know.[31]

7 Aug. 1615.[32] Willm. Sutheran came to my house in Gateshead and enquired for me, what time I and my wife were at Durham; he said he had great occasion to speak with me, and he would come the next morning again.

The 8th of August I came home from Durham. I enquired of my servants if anybody had asked for me. My maid told me, there had been a gent. the 7 of August about 9 of the clock at night enquiring for me, so incontinent I sent my maid to the place aforementioned, on the Sandhill, to entreat him to come unto me; so he sent me word he would be with me about 9 of the clock at night, and so he did.

He coming to my house, I entertained him friendly with wine, pears, walnuts and east country gingerbread. He asked me What news at Durham. I told him none. Then he asked me if I had not heard of the prisoner, a dancer (taken by the sheriff, and brought to Durham to take his oath and confess the Supremacy of his Majesty, which he denied). And further he said that the said dancer had his maintenance from the Catholics.

Then the said Sutheran told me, that he had had 2 priests at his coast house on Tuesday, the 8 of August, namely William Ogle for one, Mr. Rockwood [33] a Worcestershire priest another, and himself was the third. And further told me that his Majesty was going a progress, to meet the Queen coming from the Bath. I told him that it was a pitiful case that he and I could not meet by day time, but by night; then he answered me again that it was but for a short time, for there would be a mighty alteration. Entreated me, for God's sake, to restore him the old book which he gave me (which was the preparation to penance) for that there were 5 to be converted in Newcastle, and that book was the education to bring them to Confession.

A sugar loaf (said he) shall serve the turn, to bring us at liberty. There is a good happy news forth of France, the King of Spain's Infant cometh into France with 20000 men, the Queen of France will aid him with 20000 more, Spiniola is in readiness with 20000 men. Now, what think you, how strong are we all, when are we all in readiness, we with our Consorts are at least 20000 men. But there must first fall an apple from the tree, then the hurly-burly shall be everywhere.

Now Mr. Sutheran is departed towards Hexam, and remaineth there some 6 days, with Mr. Rockwood and Wm. Ogle. Then they will return back again to widow Bungie's house, who weareth a square corner cap, in Newcastle upon Sandhill.

> Further Sutheran told me, that Mr. Swinburne of Capheaton was revolted, only because of fear, and that he had given dispensation to the said Swinburne by authority from his holiness so to do.[34] And said, that the dancer now in prison, hath been a good member unto us, but he shall not want, for we priests gather for him.
>
> Then I said, How shall I do, I am like to incur such danger. Fye, fye, never take such care, said he, you are none of them that convert others, and you are a stranger, and nothing to lose but your goods, and if they banish you, you shall have our letters of preferment; if you be imprisoned, you shall be relieved.
>
> Then we broke up (being almost eleven of the clock), and I brought him home with a lantern to his lodging on the Sandhill . . . and so we parted, and I promised to send Sutheran his old book, which he desired.

Newkirk here names Capheaton as having housed Mr Southerne. Elsewhere he mentions Hebburn-on-Tyne, which, being the home of the priest's relatives, the Hodgsons,[35] was probably his 'coast house'. In fact, the entry 'William Sotheron, servant to Robert Hodgson' in a list of papists of Hebburn in the year 1609, may refer to him.[36] Both as kinsman and as priest he may have visited the Salvins at Croxdale, the Forcers at Harberhouse, and the Trollopps at Thornley. It has been stressed, however, that his mission lay chiefly among the poor, and it was probably in and around the Sandhill and in the many courts and 'chares' which lay around the castle and along the river bank, that the greater part of his apostolate was spent. 'Your Grace may see,' wrote the Bishop of Durham to the Archbishop of Canterbury at this time, 'what flocking of Priests there are together, and that in Newcastle; a haven and walled town, wherein there was, within these few years, not one Recusant.'[37]

Newkirk's spying, which he pursued to other parts of the country, seems to have led to nothing, at least so far as William Southerne was concerned. For the next two-and-a-half years he remained at liberty. During that time William James died and Richard Neile succeeded him as Bishop of Durham. Newkirk faded out of the picture, and this place was taken by an apostate priest, William Johnson, once of Valladolid.

William Johnson alias Wilson came of a decent Durham family. His father had been Bailiff to Bishop James, his brother a seminary priest of Douay, and he himself was a convert.[38] He had been ordained and sent to England in 1603, and must, therefore, at Valladolid have

have been well acquainted with William Southerne. How he had come to turn informer, and by what motives activated, whether by fear, self-interest or family ties, it is impossible to say. All that we know of him in this connection comes from an item in a letter written to the Jesuit superiors at Rome, 15 November 1618, in which the various kinds of pursuivants are described. 'The 9th kind,' it says, 'is William Johnson, a renegade priest. This man . . . denounced to the President all the places wherein he himself had been received and where other priests in the said northern parts have dealings. It was this man who betrayed the above-mentioned priest in Newcastle.'

The President, Edmund Lord Sheffield, had been in office since 1603, appointed by King James because, it was thought, owing to his Catholic connections (his wife was a Catholic[39]) his appointment might serve to reconcile the Catholics to the King's failure to grant them toleration. The event proved very different. Sheffield was an arrogant, aggressive man, lacking in tact, heavily in debt, corrupt in financial dealings: a protégé of Buckingham, committed with him, at this time, to an anti-Spanish policy, which lent itself to severe repressive measures against the recusants, so much so that now, when violent death had robbed him of five sons, it was whispered that a just retribution was overtaking him.[40] During the years of his Presidency, the Catholics in the northern parts suffered greatly, not only from violence, but from injustice and extortion. They were exposed to the mercy of a host of official and semi-official agents who reaped fortunes out of the business of farming recusants' lands, collecting monies forfeited for recusancy and by the opportunities afforded for bribery and corrupt dealing. One of the most notorious of these was a servant of Sheffield's, Dales by name, credited with more than one murder and other acts of violence. It was to this man that William Johnson came, to enlist aid in the capture of Southerne. The priest was arrested on the highway, and brought before the President.

The Assizes and Gaol Delivery opened at Newcastle upon Tyne on Monday 20 April. At the outset the King's Commission for restoring peace upon the Borders was read and delivered to the Commissioners, members of whom on this occasion formed the Grand Jury. Four days later, the Commissioners, still at Newcastle, addressed a letter to the Privy Council,[41] expressing their appreciation of His Majesty's concern for their welfare, and their gratitude for 'the honorable and religious

Magistrate of experience and sincerity in judgement' appointed to preside over the Commission, Lord Sheffield. By that time, it would seem, the Assizes were over; and on or about that day,[42] 'by a private session' William Southerne was condemned to death.

A private session: does this mean a session held *in camera*, the public being excluded? or a special session, possibly with a packed jury, held after the court had been dismissed? Whatever it was, Sheffield was afterwards held responsible, both for the arraignment and the execution.

The counts against the priest were two: he refused to take the Oath of Allegiance, and he refused, under oath, to admit his priesthood, i.e. to contribute to his own death. He was thereupon found guilty of high treason and sentenced, in the usual formula, to be hanged, drawn and quartered. When sentence was pronounced, Mr Southerne fell upon his knees, thanking God. For him, we know, the thought of martyrdom was no new thing. It had been with him in his college days. He must have had it in mind when he was trying to comfort Newkirk, his would-be betrayer: 'Fye, fye . . . you are none of them that convert others . . . You have nothing to lose but your goods . . .'

He was taken away, and confined in a dungeon, either in the castle or in the Newgate prison.[43] There he lay, awaiting the summons, for six days, during which the authorities sought vainly for an executioner. One at length was procured, and on Thursday 30 April, William Southerne entered into his reward. After the usual barbarous rites, his head was carried on a spear and fixed above one of the city gates; and there the people came flocking, to gaze with wonder at the smile upon his face.[44]

NOTES

1. The Oath repudiated the deposing power of the Pope, terming it 'heretical and damnable.'
2. S.P. 14. 97/95.
3. 1 Dec. 1618: S.P. 94, 23, fol. 80.
4. The correct name appears to be Sotheron, but there are many variants, Sutherar., Southren, Southerne, Sutherne, Sudren, Sutheridge. Throughout the present account the form *Southerne* has been retained in connection with the martyr himself (as being that under which he is best known), except in quotations.
5. Christopher Sotheron had interests in Holland: his son Nicholas was born there. Cf. S.P. 63. 158/26.

6. Surtees Society, vol. 112, p.76, and Surtees, *Durham*, vol. II, p.339.
7. Named in Chalcedon's Catalogue as the martyr's birthplace.
8. Surtees, *Durham*, vol. IV, i, p.5.
9. Will of William Hodgson, Welford, *Newcastle*, vol. III, p.130. The fourth child may have been the Cuthbert Sotherne alias Sutton of Hebburn, convicted of recusancy1606/7, (Recusant Roll, E. 377/16).
10. E. 377/9.
11. This and other dates are calculated from the statement made by William Southerne on entering Valladolid.
12. S.P. 14. 81/54 iv, quoted below.
13. Pastor, vols XX, p.398, XXIV, p.123.
14. The details regarding this incident are to be found in S.P. 15, 32/15, 15 i, ii, iii: S.P. 12. 238/143, 147, 148: S.P. 63, 158/26.
15. Mabel, daughter of Sir Anthony Browne of Cowdrey, and widow of the 11th Earl of Kildare.
16. Robert Smythe *vere* Sotheron, and John his brother, were already at Maynooth. Gervase, son of Sir William Holles, one-time Lord Mayor of London, and Cuthbert Smythe of Esh, cousin to Isabel Sotheron, had both married Freshvilles of Staveley, Derby.
17. C.R.S. 30, p.51.
18. C.R.S. 10, p.9.
19. He is not among those sent out in 1602, 1603 or 1605. The list for 1604 is lacking.
20. S.P. 14.20/45, and Foley, III, p.8. Lancelot Carnaby had been recusant for the two years previous to 1606, at which time he was under suspicion of Complicity in the Gunpowder Plot. He probably took the Oath before 1611.
21. Mr Sicklemore was in custody at the time. Cf. S.P. 14, 19/2.
22. Foley, III, p.114, and VI, p.268.
23. Sir Francis Radcliffe best answers the description of 'a noble Catholic lord' who was Reyne's protector.
24. S.P. 14. 81/54 i, ii, iii, iv. S.P. 14. 81/58, 58 i.
25. Possibly the person referred to in the Municipal Accounts of Newcastle upon Tyne, July 1593, 'paid and geven in rewarde to a Pollonyan fisission lyinge in Newgate suspecte for relygion, 40s.' (Richardson, *Reprints*, Hist, vol. III).
26. Convicted, with Jane his wife, as of Morpeth, in 1606. (E. 377/14).
27. This place has not been identified, but from the context was probably in the north of England.
28. The Ogles were related to William Southerne through the Hodgsons, (see Table of Relationships). Wm. Ogle had been ordained in 1598 (C.R.S. 10, p.318). Mr Carter was presumably the Thomas Carter ordained at Douay in 1608 and sent to England in 1610 (Knox, Douay Diaries, I, pp.19, 34).
29. S.P. 14, 54 iv, spelling modernised.
30. In his covering letter (S.P. 14. 81/54) the bishop describes the altar as being "in a fair

table, as it were . . . at the top whereof Christ is painted, at the bottom Christ sitteth preaching and distributing . . . On either side . . . such parcels of Scripture and prayers as it seemeth they use now at their Masses . . .' The books were (1) 'a manual of godly prayers and litanies . . . a brief form of confession, and order to help at Mass, printed at Douay for John Heigham this 1615 . . . a new printing,' and (2) a 'short treatise of the sacrament of penance.'

31. This was a Sunday congregation!

32. S.P. 14. 81/58 i.

33. Possibly one of the Rookwoods of Euston, Suffolk, of whom there were at this time two priests, Christopher, ordained at Valladolid 1602 (cf. C.R.S. 30, p.46 f.n.), and Robert SJ ordained in Rome 1604 (Foley, III, p.788). Their brother Henry, living in 1602, was also a priest. But the Rockwood in question was said to be a Worcestershire priest.

34. Newkirk makes the same curious statement with regard to Mr Carter and Sir Thomas Blakiston. Possibly both priests were referring to a faculty granted to absolve from schism, and the spy, either through ignorance or intent, misquoted them.

35. A wealthy and influential family on Tyneside, with numerous Catholic connections. Wm. Southerne and Wm. Ogle were equally related, through their Hodgson grandmothers (See Table).

36. Presentment of the Curate and Churchwardens of Jarrow, 1609, MSS. Prior's Kitchen, Durham (by courtesy of Dr Conway Davies). The entry might refer to either the priest or his father, who was living as late as 1607, when again convicted, with his wife (E.377/16).

37. S.P. 14. 81/58.

38. C.R.S. 30, pp. 46 f.n., 63.

39. Ursula, daughter of Sir Wm. Tyrwhitt of Kettleby, Lincs. They were married with Catholic rites. Cf. S.P. 12. 165/28, and R.P. Tyrwhitt, *Family of Tyrwhitt*, p.28.

40. R.R. Reid, *The King's Council in the North*, pp. 372 et seq. 387 et seq.

41. S.P. 14. 97/37.

42. Assuming 30 April to be the correct date of martyrdom: Chalcedon (Catalogue) gives 26th, Raissius 30 April, as the date of martyrdom. The 26th was a Sunday, therefore the 30th is more probably correct.

43. The County and City gaols respectively.

44. Details given by Raissius.

Editorial Note

This article was originally published in *Recusant History*, Vol. 4, pp. 199—216, 1957—1958, and is reprinted, with a section omitted, by permission of the Council of the Catholic Record Society. In the passage, together with related notes, omitted, Dr Forster proved that Newcastle upon Tyne, rather than Newcastle under Lyme (as hitherto assumed), was the place of martyrdom.

VEN. WILLIAM SOUTHERNE

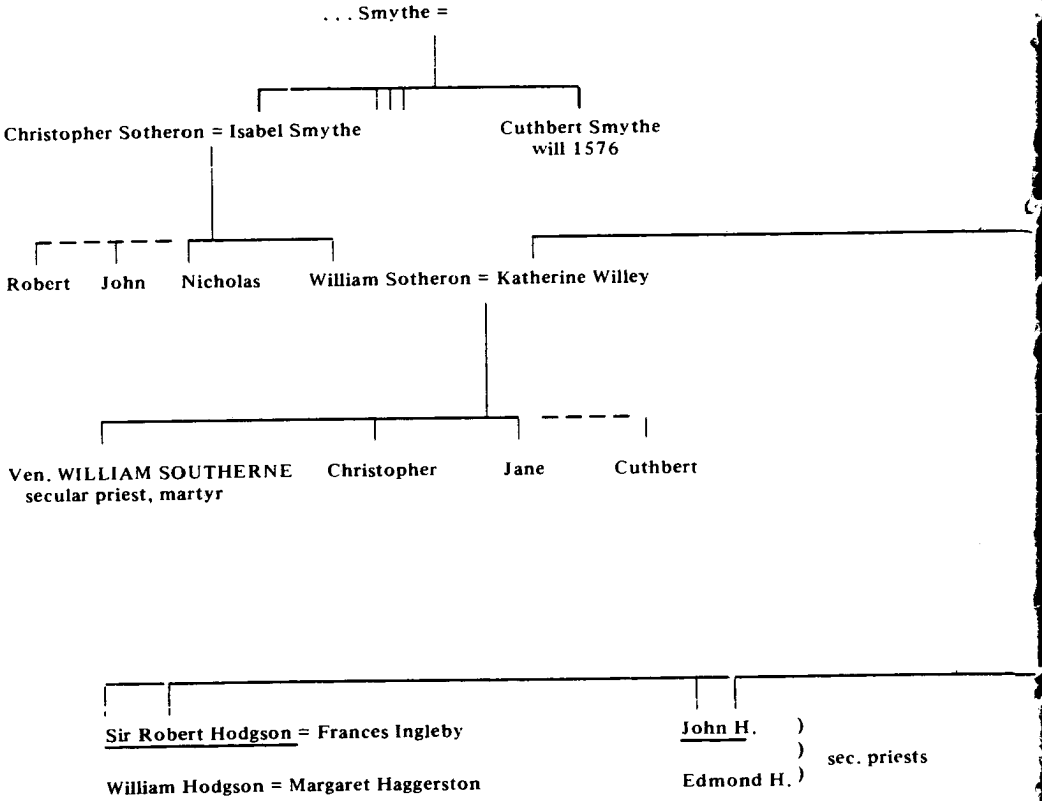
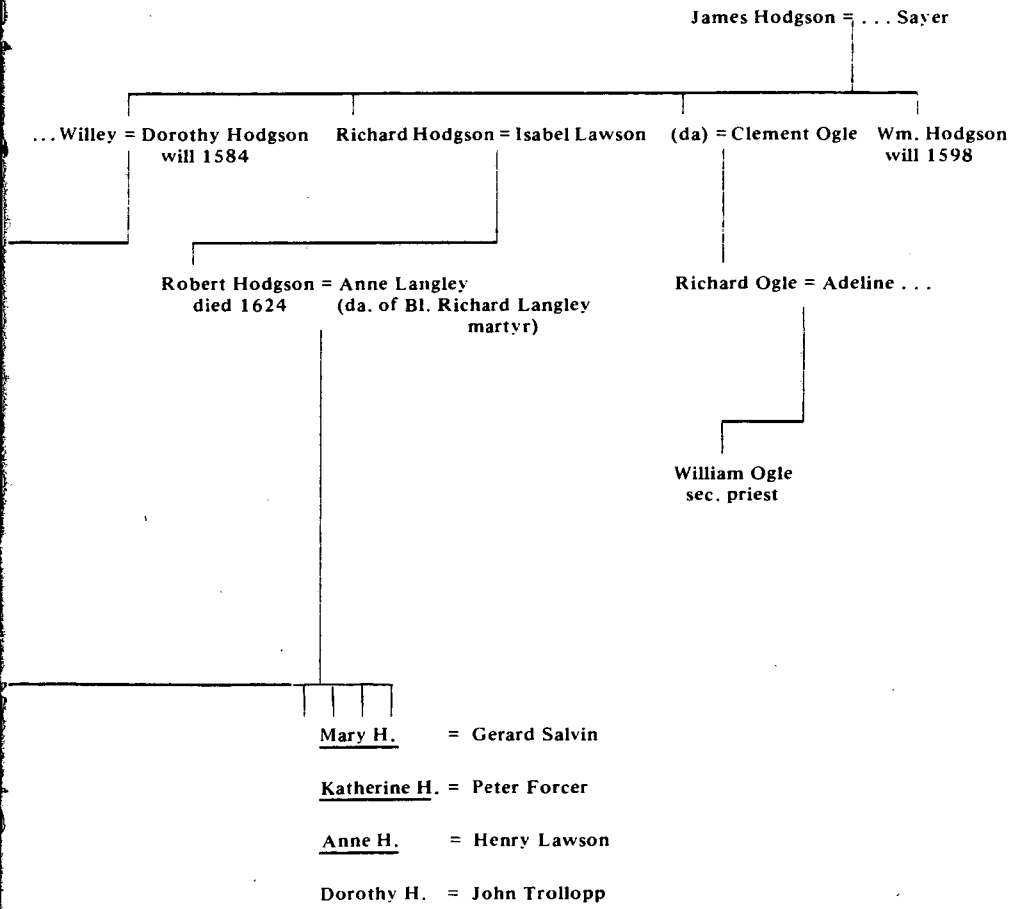


TABLE OF RELATIONSHIPS



THOMAS WILKINSON (1825–1909), BISHOP OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE 1889–1909: A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE, 1909[1]

Dom Bede Camm OSB (1864–1942)

+

In memoriam patris desideratissimi
T.W.W.

It was Saturday in Easter-week, and we monks were about to go to Choir to sing our Vespers, and to pray for one whom we all loved, when the news came that he was gone. Though the news was long expected, long dreaded, yet it seemed impossible now to realise that we should never see him again on earth, never more receive the blessing of that most beloved of Bishops, most venerable of Fathers, true successor in spirit as in office of our dear Saxon Saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. And when at Vespers, amid the Alleluias, the words of the *Capitulum* rang out clear and strong, they fell upon one heart at least, as if they struck the very keynote of the old Bishop's life, that life that had just passed away: *Carissime, Omne quod natum est ex Deo, vincit mundum, et haec est victoria quae vincit mundum fides nostra.* 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith!' If ever there lived upon this earth a man of faith, it was Thomas William, Bishop of Hexham. And it seems to one who loved him that faith was the characteristic virtue of his great soul.

Others knew him far more intimately than the monk who writes these lines, and perhaps it is presumptuous of him to speak when there are so many others who can testify so far more fully to the virtues of the dear old Bishop, but when the heart is very full it is hard to keep silence. Let him be forgiven then if he ventures to lay one flower on the bier of the Father whom he loved.

Though Erdington is so far from Durham, there were special links which bound Bishop Wilkinson to our cloister. He took the most keen and tender interest in all that concerned us, and he showed that interest in a thousand gracious ways. St Thomas of Canterbury, our patron saint,

was also his, and the reason of this is an interesting one. When as a young man he joined an Anglican Community at St Saviour's, Leeds, he formed a close friendship with one of his companions there, Daniel Henry Haigh, who was to become the founder of the Church and Abbey of Erdington. After many struggles, they made up their minds that they could not conscientiously remain in the Church of England, and they came to this determination on the Feast of St Thomas of Canterbury, and went on that day to see the priest. They were actually received a few days later on January 1st 1847.

The friendship begun at Leeds, and cemented at Oscott and Erdington lasted till death. It is touching to hear that one of the last things the old man said, as he lay on his death-bed, was to speak of Father Haigh. His mind was wandering, and it went back to the old days and the old friends. 'Will Haigh come tonight?', he whispered, as he turned to the devoted friend who watched by his bedside. 'Will Haigh come tonight?' Surely we may believe that in the morning the friend of his boyhood came with the angels of peace to welcome him at the door of God's Paradise! There too would most surely come the holy blissful martyr who had welcomed the friends into the Church of God, and to whose honour each of them had built a fair votive-church of thanksgiving, the one at Erdington, the other at Wolsingham.

When Father Haigh had fulfilled his heart's desire shortly before his death by handing over his Church of St Thomas and his property at Erdington to the sons of St Benedict, the Bishop watched the growth and progress of the infant monastery with the greatest possible interest. Even in extreme old age, he gladdened our hearts by coming to stay among us, and when our first Abbot was solemnly blessed, the venerable figure of the Bishop of Hexham was most noteworthy among the many distinguished guests who did us honour. Another link between us was that his nearest Catholic relation was a monk of our Community. 'Chapman must pray for me', he wrote once, 'for he is my own flesh and blood.' [2]

The visits we paid to Ushaw from time to time, to give retreats in the College, or for some similar purpose, form golden memories full of one venerable form, one kindly face. The welcome which the dear old Bishop gave to one of us on his visit there in 1895, laid the foundations of a friendship which was confirmed by many subsequent visits, and grew in depth and strength as the years went by. The gracious

tenderness of his friendship was indeed a possession to be prized above all others. Happy were those who had the entrée to his room, where he sat writing at his table, or sitting in his big chair with the picture of his beloved Newman looking down upon him. How cheering was his warm welcome, always ready, however busy he might be, and how delightful the kindness with which he at once put himself at the disposition of his visitor! 'How good of you to come to see me', he would exclaim, as if the privilege were his. Generally there would be a boy or two in the room, or some young divine, hanging on his words, with something of that affectionate veneration with which the students of the monastic school at Jarrow sat at the feet of St Bede the Venerable. It was most beautiful to see him with his boys, they were his delight and his consolation, and it was wonderful to see the influence he had over them.

When I think of the hours I spent in that room, I find it difficult to give my impressions, without seeming to say too much. It was to me a lesson in the spiritual life just to sit and look at him, and I have never known anyone whose conversation impressed me so deeply. Every word came from the heart, and from a heart afire with faith and love. His love for the Blessed Sacrament was something quite extraordinary. It was expressed in every movement and gesture when he was in that divine Presence, and it was the favourite theme of his conversation. How earnestly he impressed on his young hearers the duty of intense reverence in the presence of the Most Holy, how sternly he rebuked anything like negligence in genuflecting or in outward reverence, how his voice trembled as he went on to speak of the love of Jesus manifested on the altar. One realised what his faith was, a living, burning fire that inflamed his heart and his whole being.

His love for the Church of God was a veritable passion, and only next to that came his love for his country. I have never known anyone who was so intensely loyal, loyal through and through, to both his spiritual and temporal rulers, to the Pope and to the King. His zeal for the conversion of England seemed to be the master-passion of his heart. To subdue 'this dear, dear land' once more to Christ and Peter, was the one aim of his life, the dearest wish of his soul. His faith was so keen and so intense that anything which in any way savoured of heresy was hateful to him.

And this hatred of heresy, which was in itself the true and holy instinct of a Christian soul, sometimes broke out into a vehemence of

expression that was startling to those who did not know the dear old Bishop. Such expressions were sometimes much exaggerated by those who repeated them, and may perhaps have given scandal now and again to the weaker brethren. But if one knew him, one understood. One saw the humorous twinkle in his eye when he uttered some specially strong denunciation of the heretics and their doings, or inveighed against the misdeeds of a Radical Government, and one realised that he did not always intend to be taken too seriously. But he was a Papist and a Tory to the very backbone, and gloried in it. Nor did he always suffer fools gladly.

But when he spoke of God and holy things, or of the burdens and responsibilities of the Christian priesthood, then indeed he spoke as one inspired. No wonder that the spirit of the College is what it is, with such a head and teacher. One could only wish that all the Church-students in England could have been with those fortunate lads to whom this venerable and apostolic man was wont to enlarge in solemn, broken tones on the sublime dignity of the priesthood, and the sanctity required in those who were called to it. Here his faith found perhaps its highest expression. His horror of bad priests was so intense, his perception of the presence of Jesus in His adorable Sacrament was so real and so penetrating, his love of God was so profound just because faith was the very principle of his being, the motive of every thought and action. His again was a sanctified, a supernatural patriotism that longed for his England's spiritual good first and chiefest, and rejoiced above all in her truest glories, in her saints and her martyrs. And this too was the fruit of his faith.

How passionately he loved the English Martyrs! The Blessed John Fisher he had chosen as patron of his episcopate, the Blessed Thomas Percy and the other martyrs of the North Country were ever in his heart and on his lips. He had a special devotion too to the Blessed Richard Whiting the last Abbot of Glastonbury, and to the faithful Bishops who resisted unto death the sacrilegious innovations of Elizabeth. But perhaps those who were nearest of all to his heart were Cuthbert Mayne and all the Blessed band of his own Douay priests, for he never forgot that not only was he the successor of St Cuthbert, but also, as President of Ushaw, successor of William Cardinal Allen, Founder of Douay College.

I have before me a sheaf of the Bishop's letters written to me

between 1895 and the present year. They are written in that fine, strong hand which was so marvellous in a man of his years. Every one of them is a dear possession, each breathes his own gracious kindliness and simple piety. Most of them are too sacred for quotation. But I may be permitted to cite a few passages because they illustrate his character so far better than I can do in my own words.

On the conversion of two clergymen, he writes:

> God be praised for his mercy to these poor Protestants. You must get Mr B. to write to the poor curate in charge of the church and persuade him to come out of the idle superstitions of ritualistic jumperism into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. I am deeply interested in him, and trust he may make a good Priest ere long. This is to be the history of Newman's great movement of 1833, a continual dropping of all that is real, true, and conscientious into the bosom of Holy Church, and it will go on for years, perhaps centuries yet to come, a much better thing than the rush of crowds of badly instructed people into the Church. Surely this Vicar and curate must bring a good number along with them. This too should be carefully looked after.

Again he writes:

> . . . how I want you to pray, and get everyone you can to pray for our great work at Ushaw. Our Lord and Master orders us to pray for *labourers* for his vineyard, not idlers or pleasure-seekers. Let us have real Priests, spiritual men, men of God, gentlemen in the truest sense of the word; then the work of the labourers will tell. Do pray for this. Now I can say no more, but thanking you all for your kind charity and praying God our Lord to bless you and your work, I am always most affectionately yours . . .

Again he writes:

> Do let me say what great joy I feel in all that you and yours are doing in Erdington. May God bless the work and give more and yet more fruit to it. How we need Priests full of zeal and fervour for our dear English Church, and what a harvest would be reaped by such.

Again, 21 December 1902:

> It is fifty-five years last week since I was ordained Subdeacon by Wiseman at Oscott, and on Tuesday next it will be fifty-four since my Priesthood, so you see real old age is weighing me down. All my fellows are dead and gone, and I am a last leaf on the tree. What grand people I have known in all these years, who left all to follow Christ, and have now gone to their reward. . . My lads

and young men are the greatest consolation I have on this earth, they never think they have done enough for me . . . I am going to make a great effort to Pontificate on Christmas night, if I possibly can, and also on St Thomas's day when I shall ask him to take great care of all of you at Erdington.

Again, in 1903:

I am glad once more to welcome you to my Diocese. May your visit to us help to increase our devotion to our ever glorious Martyrs and to the Church for which they died. Will you look up the history of 'the rising in the North'? Frederick George Lee of Lambeth writes somewhere that in one day some 400 men of South Durham were put to death at Darlington, Staindrop and Barnard Castle. This must have been nearly the male population of South Durham, and is a glorious testimony of the faith for us. If these were not all Martyrs, all certainly had the spirit of martyrdom.

Again, 30 December 1903:

It is fifty-seven years today since Macmullen, Haigh and myself went to the Priest in Leeds to ask to be received, and I shall shortly enter my eightieth year. My two companions both persevered to the end, may God grant me the same grace . . . I hope I can still do a real good work in the College having many most delightful lads and young men to work among. They seem to me to grow better and better as time goes on . . . I always visit the Tyburn Convent when I go to London and am most deeply interested in it. I am delighted to hear your account of it.

The last letter ends characteristically: 'I am too old to write more. May God bless you all.'

I will just add one more word. Among the dearest memories of my life are the words he once addressed to me with very special solemnity. I had made my confession to him, during a visit to Ushaw, where I had been giving some lectures on the English Martyrs. And while I was still kneeling at his feet, he said to me, with an extraordinary solemnity of tone that I can never forget: 'I want, as a Bishop of the Church of God, to tell you one thing. You are doing a great work by teaching our English Catholics to know and love their Martyrs. I bless and encourage that work with my whole heart. I tell you this in the name of God, and I exhort you to work your very utmost in this holy cause, and be sure that God will give you a great reward.' Perhaps this is too sacred a memory to make public, but I write it now in the hope that it may encourage others to do what I have failed to do, and to become Apostles of the English Martyrs.

Bishop Thomas Wilkinson [1825–1909]

There is much more that one would like to say, but this is enough to show the spirit of the man, and the wonderful faith that in him was victorious over the world and has now gained the final triumph over death. He has left a blank which nothing can ever fill, his children may well feel desolate, but faith too is one consolation. Surely he will do more for us and for England now that he is with God, than he could do here on earth. Surely the College which he loved so tenderly, the diocese that he ruled so wisely, the friends to whom he clung so loyally, the young men who were his joy and his crown, surely these will feel the inspiration of his example, and experience the power of his intercession.

We pray for him indeed, for fifty years of priesthood and a long episcopate are heavy charges for which to render account, yet there are some of us who find it easier to pray to him. His long and painful illness of three weary months, borne as his nurses testify, without one word of complaint, surely must have been his purgatory; and may we not hope that he is now crowned with the victor's laurel by the God whom he loved so well and served so faithfully? And thus with Cuthbert, Wilfrid, Bede and Benet Biscop and the Blessed Martyrs of the Anglican Persecution, there will be one more saint of the North Country to pray for this England of ours, which so sadly needs such prayers.

D.B.C.

21 April 1909

NOTES

1. *Editor.* I am grateful to Dom Aidan Bellenger OSB for drawing attention to this hitherto unpublished manuscript which is among the papers of Dom Bede Camm preserved in the Downside Abbey archives, and for permission to publish it in full. For a short biography of

Bishop Wilkinson, see L. Gooch, 'Thomas William Wilkinson (1825–1909), Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle, 1889–1909' in *Northern Catholic History*, no.13, Spring 1981, pp.26–31. For a biography of Dom Bede Camm, see Dominic Aidan Bellenger OSB, 'Two Antiquarian Monks: The Papers of Dom Bede Camm and Dom Ethelbert Horne at Downside' in *Catholic Archives*, No.6, 1986, pp.11–16.

2. There is a brief reference to Dom Bede Camm and Dom John Chapman in Fr Philip Fletcher, *Recollections of a Ransomer* (1920):

> I then went on to the great Benedictine monastery of Maredsous. Here I found two recently converted clergymen who had joined the Benedictines – they were Dom John Chapman and Dom Bede Camm, who have since become well known in England. On finishing at Maredsous they came to England and entered the Benedictine monastery at Erdington, near Birmingham. I became a constant visitor, and the abbot and I became close friends . . . Father Bede Camm had collected many relics, and it was agreed that we should establish an annual pilgrimage on the last Sunday in July, in honour of the martyrs. This became a great success, and went on until the war (1914–1918) broke out.

THE HIBERNIAN SOCIETY

From a few documents among the Diocesan archives it is evident that the Church in the 1850s and 1860s was very concerned about the involvement of Catholics in the activities of The Hibernian Society, The Knights of St Patrick, Freemasons, and other secret societies with apparently beneficent and religious motives but overt political objectives. Members of such societies were not to be admitted to the Sacraments (1857) unless they renounced their membership oaths. Participation by Catholics on Tyneside in a procession in Newcastle on the occasion of the monthly memory of Allen, Gould and Larkin, executed in Manchester on 23 November 1867, was proscribed. However, calm appears to have been restored by the extension to the Diocese of the 'Truce of St Patrick' in 1868.

Further information is solicited on this aspect of Irish Catholic life on Tyneside and elsewhere.

LETTER OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (1801–1890), 1879

The news that Leo XIII intended to raise Newman to the Cardinalate was strongly rumoured early in 1879 but it was not until March that Cardinal Manning was able to write, albeit semi-officially, to Newman to end the 'suspense' which Newman said he felt while the news seemed to be known to everybody but to him had never been formally announced. When the news thus became common knowledge, Newman received many letters of congratulation, among them a letter from Edward Consitt, Provost of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, on behalf of the Chapter of the Cathedral, and this letter prompted a reply from Newman, which is preserved among the records of the Chapter. Newman received the Cardinal's hat in Rome on 12 May, choosing *Cor ad cor loquitor* as his motto and St George in Velabro as his titular church.

Letter of Provost Consitt, [19 March 1879]

[19 March 1879]

Very Rev & Dear Dr. Newman,

Our Chapter Meeting was held on Tuesday the 19th inst. & the Canons commissioned me to offer to you our united unanimous & warmest congratulations on the high dignity to which you are about to be raised by the Holy Father. You have not more sincere & devoted friends & admirers than the Clergy of this Diocese, & I am sure it will please you to know that many of us are indebted to your writings for a deeper appreciation of the beauty & truth of our holy Faith.

We rejoice exceedingly that your most valuable services to the Clergy & the Church have met with their fitting recognition & recompense.

It is a special subject of congratulation to us that you who on more than one occasion have been our Champion & defender should be the first amongst the second order of the English Clergy to be made a Prince of the Church.

We pray that your life may yet be prolonged to add lustre to the purple, & to edify the Church by your writings & your virtues.

I have the honour
to be
Very Rev. & Dear Dr. Newman,
with great respect,
your faithful servant in Christ,

Edward Consitt
Provost of Hexham & Newcastle.

Letter of John Henry Newman, 22 March 1879

The Oratory March 22 1879

My dear Right Rev. Provost of Hexham

I do not know how adequately to express the great pleasure which I have received the congratulations of yourself and your Chapter on occasion of the singular honour which the Holy Father proposes to confer on me.

That honour is the highest that I could receive at his hands. I should be utterly heartless, if it did not touch me and gratify me deeply. But it is no want of due appreciation of it or ingratitude to the Giver, if I say how greatly it adds to my happiness to find his condescension on my behalf so warmly welcomed, nay hailed with so generous an impulse, by my brethren in the Priesthood and by Ecclesiastics so highly placed as yourselves.

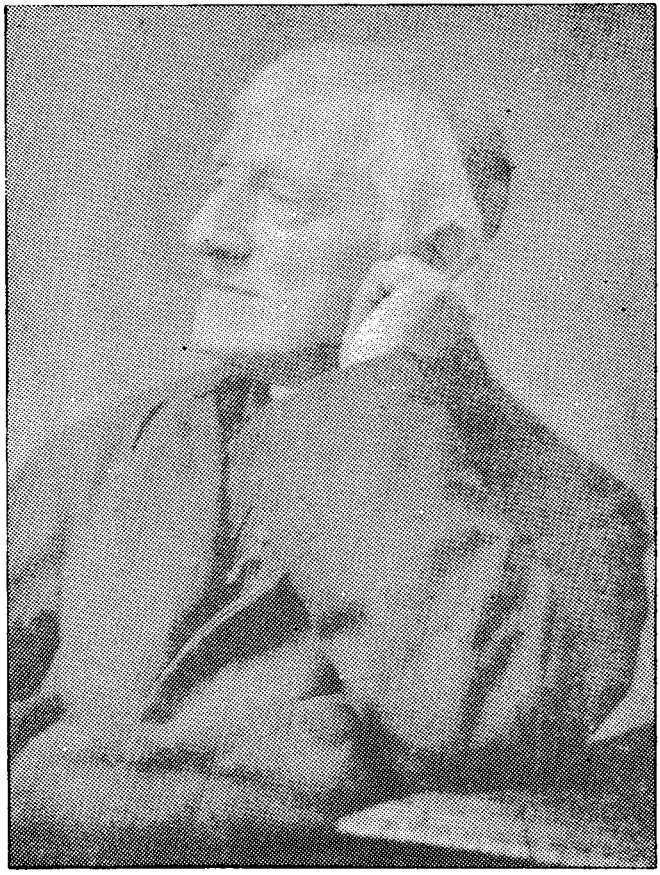
I have no fear, lest, in so speaking, I should be mistaken by him who has been so good to me; for I have reason to know that, with an affectionate thought, not only of me, but of his children in these parts generally, and as realizing my antecedants and my present circumstances in my own country, it has been his express intention, in bestowing on me this high dignity, to do an act which will be grateful to the Catholic body, and even to England itself. You will understand how proud I am, that what in you has been a spontaneous kindness towards me should have been in the Holy Father a sure anticipation of it.

I take for granted that those who have been so considerate towards me in other ways do not forget how old I am and the needs of old men.

I am, My dear Provost of Hexham
Sincerely yours in Christ

John H Newman
of the Oratory

The Very Revd.
Provost Consitt



John Henry Newman, 1879

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETIES AT NEWCASTLE, 1888

The following notes are extracted from a printed report of this Conference among local tracts in the Newcastle City Library (ref. Local Tracts, D.74, Miscellaneous).

The Catholic Young Men's Society was founded by a Mr O'Brien in Limerick about 1848 with the objects of the intellectual and moral improvement of young men and the regular practice of their religion, especially the frequenting of the Sacraments. Branches were quickly established throughout the British Isles but although a meeting had been held in Newcastle as early as 1850 it was not until 1881 that a branch was formed. The first room taken was soon too small and another was found in a temperance hotel. Finally, a former Baptist chapel, with an adjoining house, in Marlborough Crescent, was purchased by Canon Franklin and let to the Society. The hall, renamed the Drysdale Hall in memory of Canon Drysdale, who had taken a great interest in the Society, and the house next door were altered to provide rooms for lectures, entertainments, tea-parties, library, reading-room, billiards, conversation, smoking, and for offices. The hall was opened in September 1886 by Bishop Bewick and was said to be one of the 'most commodious and popular' halls in the city. Temperance meetings were held each Saturday evening.

Drysdale Hall was the venue for the Conference of the whole Society on 5 and 6 August 1888. The proceedings were opened by Fr O'Brien, chaplain of the Newcastle branch, who welcomed representatives of branches throughout the British Isles, and this was followed by a sermon by Fr Joseph Dunn of St Michael's. The Conference then went on to receive reports from various branches, including Aberdeen (1873), Birkenhead (1859), Kilmarnock (1855), Dumbarton (1858) and several in Liverpool (1854). Reports from three parishes within the Diocese were heard. St Charles, Gosforth (1883), had eighteen members and held monthly meetings. Lectures had been given by Rev. P. Perrin on 'The Dissolution of the Monasteries' and by Signor Carlos Diaz, Spanish Vice-Consul, on 'A Defence of the Jesuits'. St Cuthbert's, Durham (1884), had fifty members, three guilds and held weekly meetings.

The Newcastle branch, dedicated to St Mary and St James (1881), was evidently flourishing. It had 317 members, five guilds, and held

weekly meetings. Forty-seven new members had joined during the year against a lapse of thirty, the loss being put down to 'defective working of the guilds' which had been rectified. Excellent work had been done in promoting the work of The League of the Cross, by providing weekly temperance entertainments and lectures, attended, it was said, by an average of 450 young men. A dramatic society had produced 'another of Fr Chapman's excellent cantatas entitled *The Burgomaster of Blokerdam*, three performances of which had been given in the hall and one at Birtley in aid of that Mission. The library contained some eight hundred volumes, augmented during the year by gifts from Signor Diaz, Provost Consitt, and others. There were 15 weekly and 5 daily papers available in the reading-room. Fr Chapman had started a 'mutual improvement class' and Fr O'Brien had given an 'instructive course of lectures'. Lectures had also been given by Rev. Dr Prior 'On Rome', Fr Chapman on 'Spiritualism' and 'Artemus Ward', and by Fr Anderson SJ on 'The Oxford Movement', 'Travels in the East', 'Twenty-five Years' Experience', 'The Jesuits', 'Evolution', and 'Temperance'.

The Conference continued with committee meetings at which special papers were read. Br J. Wrigglesworth (Hull), in a paper on 'The Young Men's Societies and Catholic Literature', recommended the formation of a central committee to obtain Catholic books and periodicals wholesale for branches to retail to members. He congratulated branches for distributing books published by the Catholic Truth Society which had been established in 1884. Br P. Machan (Glasgow) spoke on 'The Use of Free Libraries', Br M. Fitzpatrick (Liverpool) on 'Technical Education', and Br J. King (Leeds) urged 'The Formation of New Societies in Catholic Centres'.

> The necessity for the establishment of Young Men's Societies is perceptible [he said] to the most casual observer passing through the thickly populated districts of our large towns, where the means of innocent amusements or recreation are few, where religious associations are entirely unknown, and where no opportunity is afforded to young men of the district to congregate in harmony and friendship. It would, however, be well and serve the object of the promoter of religious associations to point out what is to Catholic young men a great danger. I mean the so-called Catholic clubs, where no strict rules of religious discipline are observed, into which are admitted non-members of the Church, and where drink is sold, [which tended] not to improve members and make them respected, but to demoralize them and to degrade them.

Fr O'Brien closed the Conference, during which a new society, in Gateshead, was affiliated, and a visit also paid to Durham Cathedral.

PROGRAMME 1987/88

All lectures will be given in St Mary's Cathedral Centre, Clayton Street West, Newcastle upon Tyne, on Tuesdays, at 7.00 p.m.

6 October 1987	Annual General Meeting. Rev. W.J. Nicholson (Chairman), *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, with slides.
3 November 1987	Dr John Derry, *The Catholic Question in British Politics, 1790–1829.*
1 December 1987	Dr Ewan Cameron, *Thomas More: The Renaissance resists the Reformation.*
23 February 1988	Dr Elizabeth Redgate, *Saint Cuthbert.*
22 March 1988	Dr Judith F. Champ, *The Crown of the Diocesan Structure: Ullathorne and the foundation of Oscott College.*

Coach Excursions

17 October 1987 (Sat., half-day)	Bellingham and Hesleyside.
May 1988	York, The Bar Convent Museum.
June 1988	Naworth Castle, Cumbria.

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