

THE THREE ARCHBISHOPS OF THE HOUSE OF BETHUNE/BEATON¹

This is a paper which might be about the Reformation in Scotland but it is not. I will not attempt in this paper to give an account of the opposition to the Reformation of Cardinal David Beaton which would require a separate paper. What I desire to do instead is to refer to the three Archbishops of the same family over a period of more than 100 years (1493 to 1603), as a background to some general points about power and influence in a society dominated by clans and families and some thoughts on the inextricable binding together of religion and politics in 16th century Scotland as an illustration of that binding together throughout the whole of Europe from much earlier times through to significantly later times.

Scotland and the Scots retain today far more vestiges and survivals of the system of clan or family dependence and support than do most societies in which it occurred. The clan system or family alliances seems to have remained far stronger in Scotland by the 16th century than it was elsewhere in Europe though it was a well known phenomenon everywhere. Accordingly it is worth looking at why the Bethunes were a family of influence and note by the early 16th century.

The first authentic reference to the family is found in 1165 about the end of the reign of William the Lion or the beginning of the reign of Alexander II. One Robert de Beton was witness to an important charter by Roger de Quincey then Constable of Scotland to Seyerus de Seton in relation to lands at Tranent. Somewhat later in a charter of gift of lands near Kirriemuir in the County of Angus to the monks of Arbroath David de Beton and John de Beton are witnesses. In view of the subsequent connection of the family with the Abbey of Arbroath this early involvement is notable. From that time the family seems to have been an important land holding family in the County of Angus. The head of the family in early times seems to have been the Laird of Westhall. At the beginning of the reign of Alexander III, about 1250, David de Beton and Robert de Betun were witnesses to a charter in that area which has survived. Among those who swore fealty to Edward I of England and signed the Ragman Roll was Robert de Betune. Robert de Betune was also present at the discussions as to the respective claims of John Bailiol and Robert Bruce to the throne of Scotland. Among the seals still preserved that were appended to King Edward's decision of 1292 in favour of John Bailiol is the seal of Robert de Betune. David de Betun and Alexander de Betun were at the parliament at Cambuskenneth on 6 November 1314. The seal of one of them attached to an act of that parliament is the same as the seal of Robert de Betune of 1292. That same Alexander Bethune was a supporter of Robert the Bruce, knighted for his valour, who was slain in the Battle of

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Society on 21 April 1994.

Dupplin 12 August 1332. His support for the House of Bruce had benefits for his family. In the fifth year of the reign of Robert II, Robert de Bethune, a younger son of Sir Alexander, married the daughter and heiress of Sir John Balfour of that Ilk and his son, succeeding to the estate through inheritance from his mother, the family was afterwards always called Bethune of Balfour. It was of that family of Bethune of Balfour that the subjects of this paper were descended.

The family of Bethune of Balfour appeared to have maintained satisfactory and political family connections with sound marriages and good politics during the reign of the early Stewarts. By the end of the reign of James III the head of the family was Sir John Bethune of Balfour. His second son David Bethune, by reason of good family connections, was one of the youthful companions of King James IV and brought up with him. James IV when he came to power on reaching adulthood, remained a close friend of David Bethune and gave him a series of appointments later in life. That David Bethune was knighted and was appointed first of all Comptroller of the Exchequer and subsequently Lord High Treasurer of the Kingdom which office he retained until his death. He acquired the lands of Creich from the Littles in 1502 so there were then two Bethune families of land, power and influence — Bethune of Balfour and Bethune of Creich. For a time the Bethunes of Creich gained greater political connections. Janet, the eldest daughter of the Lord High Treasurer married James the first Earl of Arran of the Hamiltons the nephew of King James III. Her eldest son was James, second Earl of Arran, and in February 1549, Duke of Châtelherault, who was also Regent of the Kingdom from 1543 to 1554, and who was therefore through his mother a Bethune. Other daughters of Sir David, the Lord High Treasurer, made favourable marriages with other noble and important houses of Scotland, including Grizel who married the 4th Lord Lyle, and Elizabeth who married Lord Innermeath and a granddaughter Janet Beaton who became an ancestor of the Dukes of Buccleuch. Another Beaton, Elizabeth, had borne an illegitimate daughter to James V. The daughter Jean married the 5th Earl of Argyll.

James Bethune the First Archbishop

James Bethune was the sixth and youngest son of John Bethune of Balfour and was therefore a younger brother of Sir David Bethune of Creich, the Lord High Treasurer. The mother of James Bethune and the Lord High Treasurer was herself well connected being a daughter of Sir David Boswell of Balmuto. His other brothers and sisters formed valuable connections. One of his sisters married one of the lairds of Clan Hay, and one of her sons became Provost of St Mary's College. Another sister married Durie of Durie, and two of her sons advanced in the church, Andrew becoming Abbot of Melrose and Bishop of Galloway, and George becoming Abbot of

Dunfermline. Another brother of the first Bethune Archbishop, Robert was also for a time Abbot of Melrose.

A sixth son is not going to inherit from parents and is unlikely to work his way up by the death of sufficient older brothers and accordingly at those times had to use family connections along one of two paths: a good marriage or the church. Notable service to King or one of the great magnates was a good way of achieving either a good marriage or progress in the church. Having a brother in an important office of state and other family connections also must be very helpful in a society where helping members of one's own family was not only tolerated but expected.

He was educated at St Andrews (MA 1493). While still apparently quite young he was given his first income by being appointed in 1503 Provost of the Collegiate Church of Bothwell by the Earl of Angus. In 1503 he was appointed Prior of the Cathedral Church of Whithorn bringing a steady but not large income, and in 1504 he became the Abbot of Dunfermline. Being Abbot of Dunfermline gave him a substantial income. There can be little doubt that his advance in the church was the result of the influence of his brother the Lord High Treasurer and no doubt also his father's family and his mother's family.

In 1505 his older brother Sir David Bethune of Creich, the Lord High Treasurer, died. King James IV then appointed James Lord High Treasurer in succession to his brother. Appointments of this kind where sons or brothers succeeded to high offices of state seem curious to modern democratic eyes but a number of things have to be remembered about the appointments in Scotland at this time: there were not all that many qualified people around to choose from; there was not a large civil service on which the king could draw — effectively there was no separate civil service; the king had always the problem of the great magnates of state who were looking after their own interest rather than the king's interest; a member of a family closely allied to the king and dependent upon the king for its favour was therefore a much better bet than selecting somebody who did not have those connections. The Bethune family was trusted by King James IV and Sir David Bethune as Lord High Treasurer had shown that that trust was merited. Further, James had already been provided with an income and accordingly was not going to cost more to appoint.

James, the Abbot of Dunfermline, had to carry out the office of Lord High Treasurer without any extra salary or pay and accordingly lived on his revenues from the Abbey of Dunfermline. To give him a pay rise he needed a promotion. Accordingly in 1508 he became Bishop of Galloway. In the following year he was made Archbishop of Glasgow.

After the death of King James IV (1513) following the disastrous Battle of Flodden the Regent (King James V being only a year old), the Duke of Albany appointed Archbishop James Bethune to be High Chancellor and to give him additional funds to support the high office as Chancellor also appointed him as Abbot of Kilwinning and Abbot of Arbroath. He held both those abbeys *in commendam* which enabled him to draw the revenues without having to perform the duties of abbot. The Duke of Albany seems then to have had the support of Archbishop James Bethune. At least it can be said that Archbishop James never joined the Douglasses (Red Douglasses, Earls of Angus) against the Duke of Albany and/or the Earl of Arran. In 1514 when Queen Margaret and the Douglasses tried to install Gavin Douglas as Archbishop of St Andrews, Archbishop James sided with the Duke of Albany in frustrating that grab for power. John Hepburn who had actually been elected to the archbishopric by the chapter, was never installed. After the Duke of Albany gained control after the rising of Lord Home and the temporary disaffection of the 1st Earl of Arran, and the Pope had been pacified, the Duke of Albany had the long term diplomat and public servant Andrew Forman appointed. John Hepburn was generously compensated with other appointments for himself and members of his family.

In 1517 when the Duke of Albany went to France Archbishop James Bethune was appointed one of the Governors of Scotland but effectively the Earl of Arran, became the real ruler of Scotland in that period. It should be remembered that this Hamilton, the first Earl of Arran, was the nephew by marriage of Archbishop James. One of the things the Duke of Albany achieved in France was to confirm with the Pope the Scottish crown's rights in respect of ecclesiastical appointments. Also, the Treaty of Rouen, 26 August 1517, was crucial for James V's foreign policy.²

Archbishop James Bethune supported the Earl of Arran in the struggle against the Douglasses led by the 6th Earl of Angus in April 1520 (known as "cleanse the causeway") — the occasion when Archbishop James Bethune put on armour under his cassock. After a battle in the streets of Edinburgh the Earl of Arran's party having been defeated and the Hamiltons driven out of Edinburgh by the Earl of Angus and the Douglasses, Archbishop James Bethune fled for sanctuary to the church of Blackfriars but was dragged out of the church and was in danger of being slain had not another Douglas, the Bishop of Dunkeld, interceded for him.

In 1521 the Duke of Albany returned from France and resumed the Regency. In 1523 the Primacy of Scotland, the Archbishopric of St Andrews fell vacant on the death of Forman and the Duke of Albany appointed the long term loyal Archbishop of Glasgow to be the Primate as Archbishop of St

2 G. Donaldson, *James V-VII*, Vol. 3, *Edinburgh History of Scotland*, Edinburgh, (1965, repr. 1990) pp. 19-20.

Andrews. Not only did this reward and pay the salary of a loyal civil servant but also put Archbishop James into a position to lend money to the government impoverished by the aftermath of Flodden and the heavy expenses under Albany. So in 1525 Archbishop James lent the government £860 Scottish which was not repaid to him until 1538.³

In 1526 the Duke of Albany's powers were abrogated by a parliament and the 6th Earl of Angus was the head of the government and the Douglasses and the English party were in power. He then dismissed his former enemy the Archbishop James Bethune who had opposed the Douglas appointment, dismissed him from the court and obliged him to resign the office of Chancellor in July 1526. In due course when James V began to rule in person and the Douglasses were driven out in 1528 Archbishop James Bethune again came to a position of authority but did not resume the office of Chancellor.

From the time that he ceased to be Chancellor he remained primarily resident at the Castle of St Andrews where his nephew David Beaton pressed him to take action against the Protestant heretics. Archbishop James Bethune was responsible for the trial and execution of Patrick Hamilton in 1528 who was burned to death, one of the first and in many respects the most prominent of the Protestant martyrs of the Reformation in Scotland. His heresy had been to adopt the Lutheran doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. The execution was not the sole responsibility of Archbishop James. The sentence was signed by both of the Archbishops of Scotland, St Andrews and Glasgow, three other bishops, six abbots and friars and eight other divines. It was said that one of Archbishop James's notable supporters, a relative by marriage, John Lindsay, said to the bishop after the burning of Patrick Hamilton: 'If you burn any more of them, take my advice, and burn them in cellars, for I dare assure you, that the smoke of Mr Patrick Hamilton has infected all that it blew upon'. Archbishop James Bethune thereafter tried to stay out of the trials personally as much as he could. The Archbishop is said to have been reluctant about proceeding against Patrick Hamilton — he was, after all, the son of the illegitimate half-brother of the Archbishop's nephew by marriage, the first Earl of Arran — his nephew's nephew.

After the execution of Patrick Hamilton the Archbishop granted commissions to others to proceed against those who preached against the doctrines of Rome and indeed he seems to have handed over much of the authority for the administration of the church in Scotland to his nephew. In the last year of the life of Archbishop James his nephew was both a Cardinal and his coadjutor Bishop.

Another incident shows that Archbishop James Bethune had little taste for the burning of heretics. One, Alexander Seton a Black Friar, preached

3 The approximate ratio was £4 Scottish to £1 Sterling in the 1520s.

openly in the Church of St Andrews that, according to St Paul's description of bishops, there were no bishops in Scotland. This got back to Archbishop James Bethune who sent for Seton who then preached to him at some length on the biblical texts as to the duties of bishops with a clear inference that the Scottish bishops were not performing according to biblical instructions. A more determined archbishop might have taken some action against this disrespectful friar but Archbishop James merely dismissed him. Friar Seton however took the hint and left Scotland in 1536.

Archbishop James Bethune founded the New College in the University of St Andrews and left the best part of his estate after his death for that purpose. One of the last acts of Archbishop James Bethune's life was being present at the baptism of the young prince who was born at St Andrews in 1539. James V had two sons, both of whom died young. The Archbishop was interred in the Cathedral Church of St Andrews before the high altar. He had been Primate of Scotland at that time for sixteen years.

John Knox, in his *History of the Reformation*, said of the first Bethune Archbishop, with characteristic generosity that he was 'a conjured enemy to Jesus Christ'.⁴

Cardinal David Beaton

David Beaton was the third son of John Bethune of Balfour the elder brother of Archbishop James Bethune. Other family connections have already been referred to but his brothers and sisters were also significant. Two of his sisters married Grahams — Katherine married William Graham of Fintry; Margaret married his cousin John Graham of Claverhouse and was the great-great grandmother of "Bonnie Dundee". Another sister married Wardlaw of Torry who tapped commercial resources in Fife by having a burg with market privileges erected on his land. David's mother was Isobel, daughter of David Monypenny of Pitmilley. He was born in the mansion house of Balfour *circa* 1494. In 1511 he became a student at the University of St Andrews. By that time his uncle was already the Archbishop of Glasgow. He progressed rapidly through St Andrews and was thereafter sent to Paris to study theology and canon and civil law. His first advancement in the church was to be appointed Rector of Campsie in Stirlingshire in his uncle's diocese of Glasgow. David however remained in France. In 1519 the Duke of Albany then still resident in France appointed David as resident for Scotland at the French court. Since David Beaton was only 25 at that time it must be assumed that no matter how great his talents and ability, the appointment was in part at least a gesture to maintaining the good relationship between the Duke of Albany and Archbishop James Bethune, then one of the Governors of Scotland, in the

⁴ John Knox, *History of the Reformation*, Book I, p. 7; cited from the 1831 edition of William M'gavin.

Duke of Albany's absence, and also to ensure that the Scottish resident was of the right political party.⁵

After the Duke of Albany returned to Scotland David Beaton remained in Paris as the Scottish resident but managing on the small income that he had as rector of Campsie. On his uncle James Bethune becoming Archbishop of St Andrews (1523), Archbishop James Bethune resigned the Abbey of Arbroath in favour of his nephew David Beaton but Archbishop James Bethune of St Andrew's retained one half of the revenues of the Abbey for himself. This arrangement subsequently led to a temporary falling out between David and his uncle the Archbishop.

David Beaton returned to Scotland in 1525 having been by that stage resident in France for over 10 years. As Abbot of Arbroath he took his place in parliament.

In 1528 the young king James V, having dismissed the Douglasses, appointed the Abbot of Arbroath to be Lord Privy Seal in place of the Douglas nominee, Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld (the same one who had rescued Archbishop James Bethune from Blackfriars Church). The selection of David Beaton is no doubt a reflection of the considerable abilities that he had already shown in his years in France, and in his position in the Scottish parliament as Abbot of Arbroath, but two other things are also obvious. He could not have been appointed to the position if he did not have enough income to support it and therefore his position as Abbot of Arbroath, even with half the revenues, was a pre-condition of a ministerial appointment; and he and his family had been long associated with the political group opposed to the Douglasses and hence were the natural people to turn to on the fall of the Douglasses.

David Beaton continued in various public positions and appears to have maintained the King's confidence. In 1533 the Abbot of Arbroath was sent as Ambassador to France with Sir Thomas Erskine to renew the "Auld Alliance" and to negotiate a marriage between James V and the Princess Madeline. Having been a long time resident at the French court his embassy was successful not only in arranging the marriage but also passing back to James a great deal of information relating to what James's uncle Henry VIII was doing in England. James V went to France in September 1536 to confirm the Treaty of Rouen, ultimately persuading Francis I to consent to his marriage to the Princess Madeleine which took place on 1 January 1537. After a lengthy honeymoon in Provence James V and his bride returned to Scotland in May 1537 accompanied by David Beaton.⁶ When Queen Madeleine died of consumption only eight weeks later David Beaton was again sent as the trusted

⁵ Margaret Sanderson, *Cardinal of Scotland, David Beaton, c.1494-1546*, (Edinburgh 1986).
⁶ G. Donaldson, *James V - James VII*, p. 49.

ambassador to France to arrange another suitable French marriage with Mary, the daughter of the Duke of Guise and the widow of the Duke of Longueville. Mary was married by proxy on 18 May 1538. She landed in Fife about 10 June and David, in his clerical capacity, actually solemnised the marriage of James V and Mary of Guise, in the Cathedral Church of St Andrews at which his uncle was Archbishop. In November 1537 Francis I granted David Beaton a substantial French pension and gave him all the privileges of a native born subject of France and appointed him Bishop of Mirepoix in Languedoc. On his return to Scotland in 1538 he became coadjutor bishop to his uncle in the Archdiocese of St Andrews.⁷

On 28 December 1538 on the recommendation of the King of France not, be it noted, of the King of Scotland, Pope Paul III advanced David Beaton to the dignity of a Cardinal.

This was pure politics and only marginally to do with religion. During the almost continuous struggles between the France of Francis I and the England of Henry VIII, Scotland was used as a counter in the French cause. The politically dominant group in Scotland favoured supporting the French cause because without such an ally its position of independence from its southern neighbour may have been difficult to maintain. Further, France drew considerable support from its retention of its alliances and support for the Pope and the traditional Catholic faith. Accordingly it was important for France to keep Scotland Catholic and to put into a position of power in Scotland clergy whose political loyalty to the Scottish-French alliance was not in doubt. David Beaton must also have been fully conscious of the fact that his political advancement and his retention of political power depended upon continuing support from Catholic France, Rome and of course King James V and his French wife. The politics aside, it would also appear to be tolerably clear that David Beaton personally believed that Scotland's political survival and future depended upon that alliance with France and therefore depended also upon keeping Scotland Catholic. There is not much to indicate that David Beaton supported the persecution of heretics from religious zeal but there is certainly plenty of evidence that he was zealous in trying to stamp out the Protestant cause in Scotland and it is also apparent that when one looks at the other aspects of David Beaton's life that he did very few things that did not have some political connections.

On his uncle's death in 1539 being at that time already as a cardinal the senior Catholic in Scotland and being his uncle's coadjutor and also being regarded as a loyal servant and supporter of the king and queen, he was appointed as Archbishop of St Andrews and Primate of Scotland.

⁷ M. Sanderson, 'The Old Faith and the Auld Alliance', in *The Story of Scotland*, Vol 1, Glasgow, (1988) p. 303.

It seems to have been basically accepted in the Catholic church in the 16th century, and indeed earlier centuries, before the so-called *Counter Reformation* that priests although not permitted to marry might have liaisons with the other sex and even acknowledge the offspring of those liaisons. The Cardinal, long before he became a Bishop and, it would seem, before taking any priestly orders, had had eight children by the lady we would now refer to as his *de facto* wife, Marion Ogilvy, of the very well connected and powerful family of Ogilvy of Airly. During his period of ascendancy he married off his four daughters in every case in a highly advantageous way. His oldest daughter Margaret he married to the oldest son of the Earl of Crawford — later the 10th Earl of Crawford. Her two sons were David the 11th Earl of Crawford and Alexander, Lord Spynie, Chamberlain to James VI. His second daughter Elizabeth married Alexander Lindsay of Vayne. His third daughter Agnes married three times, twice to prominent Gordons. His son David married a daughter of Lord Lindsay of the Byers (the ancestor of the Earls of Lindsay). Two of the Cardinal's sons in turn entered holy orders and were advanced quite rapidly in the church but the marriages of the rest of them reflect the power which the Beaton family held and the respect which other families had for an alliance by marriage with the Beatons. In some cases the substantial dowry which the Cardinal was able to provide for his daughters was no doubt an additional factor.

It falls outside the scope of this paper to discuss the details of the years of Cardinal Beaton's power. It is sometimes said however that the murder of the Cardinal on 29 May 1546 was a big step in the Scottish Reformation. It was presented as a just retribution for the Cardinal's burning of the great Protestant preacher, George Wishart, but it seems to me that that murder was far more a political act than a religious one. The conspirators who murdered him were two Leslies (of the family of the Earl of Rothes), William Kirkaldy of Grange, Peter Carmichael of Fife and James Melville of Carnbee, most of whom seem to have had some private grievance against the Cardinal of a non-religious kind and all of whom were certainly politically opposed to the Cardinal and his policies. Connecting the murder with retribution for the execution of Wishart was in any event a way of gathering political support for the murder.⁸

The death of the Cardinal did not bring about the instant change of the religion of Scotland and the Kingdom remained largely Catholic for a long time after that. Further, the power of the Beatons, although deprived of their most brilliant and prominent member, seems to have continued with great strength and the family still continued to be able to make favourable marriages and alliances including the as yet unmarried illegitimate children of the Cardinal.

⁸ G. Donaldson, *James V - James VII*, p. 74.

Mary Beaton/Bethune, one of Mary Queen of Scots four Maries (Mary Beaton, Fleming, Seaton and Livingston) was the granddaughter of Sir David Bethune of Creich who was the Cardinal's uncle, another brother of the first Archbishop James Bethune. Accordingly the Mary Beaton, Queen Mary's longterm childhood and adulthood friend, was the Cardinal's first cousin once removed. That Mary Beaton ultimately married Ogilvy of Boyne.

The Second Archbishop James Bethune

He was born in 1517 when his grand uncle the first Archbishop James Bethune was one of the Governors of Scotland. His uncle David Beaton was at that time resident in France.

If anything was required to show the continued power and influence of the Bethune family and the continued survival of Catholicism as the dominant religion of Scotland politically after the assassination of Cardinal Beaton, it is the progress of his nephew James a son of one of the Cardinal's older brothers.

This second James Bethune had also been educated chiefly in France. This James Beaton's first recorded appointment was as chanter to the Church of Glasgow. He received his first major benefice when his uncle, the Cardinal, resigned his commendatorship of the family Abbey of Arbroath in 1543 to his nephew, reserving however the income of the churches of Momfieth and Abernethy for the Cardinal's illegitimate son Alexander Beaton — who later became Archdeacon of Lothian.

On 4 September 1551 at the age of 34 he was appointed Archbishop of Glasgow. The chapter had elected Alexander Gordon, brother of George, 4th Earl of Huntly, and his wife Jane the natural daughter of James IV. The 2nd Earl of Arran opposed Gordon's appointment because he had sided with Mary of Guise and wanted his own kinsman, James Hamilton, appointed to the See of Glasgow. Gordon received as consolation the appointment to the nominal dignity of Catholic Archbishop of Athens and the promise of the first Scottish bishopric to fall vacant which turned out to be the Bishop of the Isles in 1553, but shortly afterwards he was translated to Galloway.

This Bethune was actually appointed Archbishop on the same day as the then Governor of Scotland, James Hamilton, Duke of Châtelherault, procured the appointment of Gavin Hamilton as coadjutor of St Andrews and his son John Hamilton as Abbot of Arbroath, (Bethune gave up this Abbey as part of the deal). But it would seem that notwithstanding the murder of Cardinal David Beaton five years earlier, the influence of the Bethunes was still sufficiently strong and their support for the Hamiltons sufficiently important to get this political deal done.

He was actually consecrated as Archbishop of Glasgow at Rome by Pope Julius III where he had been sent to give the Pope an account of the ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland. On appointment he was still in lower orders. He was raised to the four minor orders and ordained sub-deacon at Rome on 16 July 1552. Next day he was ordained deacon. On 20 July he was ordained priest. He was consecrated bishop on 28 August 1552. On 4 September 1552 Pope Julius III issued a mandate to the people of the city and diocese of Glasgow enjoining them to render due honour and obedience to their archbishop.

In 1557 he was one of the commissioners appointed to witness the marriage of the young Queen Mary to the Dauphin of France and was present in Notre Dame Cathedral on 24 April 1558 — the ceremony when the bride wore white for the first time. On his return to Scotland he acted as a Privy Councillor to Marie de Guise-Lorraine who was appointed by the Parliament of Scotland in April 1554 as Regent for her daughter.

There is an interesting surviving document of 6 February 1557/8 by which the Earl of Arran/Duke of Châtellherault granted a bond of maintenance to the archbishop and his chapter by which he undertook to support them.⁹ Notwithstanding this bond he joined the Lords of the Congregation in 1559 and in Glasgow Arran/Châtellherault caused all the images and altars to be pulled down and seized the archbishop's castle. The archbishop then recovered it with the support of Marie de Guise, French soldiers and the lords of Seaton, Semple and Ross (Keith), indicating that changes of political allegiance can go both ways.

The Archbishop seems to have been a prominent supporter of the reforms within the Catholic Church in Scotland. The provincial Council of the Church in Scotland met in 1549, 1552 and in 1559. They were overall reformist, and have been seen by some historians as anti-Papal. They certainly preceded in their thinking some of the reforms of the Counter-Reformation. Archbishop James began to implement the reforms recommended by the Provincial Council of March 1559 within days of the end of the Council but it was all too late. The place where the Council had been held, the Dominican house in Edinburgh, was sacked by a protestant mob within months.

In 1560, Arran/Châtellherault with the support of the Lords of the Congregation and 8,000 English horse soldiers sent by the new English Queen, Elizabeth, and supported by Argyll, Moray and others, took control — aided no doubt by the convenient death of Marie de Guise on 10 June 1560 at Edinburgh.

⁹ Sir James Marwick, *Charters and Other documents relating to the City of Glasgow*, Glasgow (1844).

The political troubles and the struggles of the reformers, usually called "the first reformation crisis", became alarming, and in July 1560 the Archbishop went to France taking with him the treasures and records of the Archbishopric of Glasgow. He left with the French troops who departed pursuant to the Treaty of Edinburgh (July 1560). The records were then carefully deposited with the Scots College in Paris. The Reformation Parliament in Scotland in August 1560 passed various laws effecting basic religious changes. Some of the bishops suffered unauthorised expropriation at the hands of local powerful lords. Some of them were able to stand firm by reason of their powerful families — eg Châtelherault's half-brother, the Archbishop of St Andrews, John Hamilton, two close kinsmen of the Earl of Huntly who were bishops of Aberdeen and Galloway (the one who had been appointed Bishop of the Isles earlier), a royal Stewart who was Bishop of Caithness, and a Hepburn of the family of the Earls of Bothwell who was Bishop of Moray. Some other bishops voluntarily joined the reformers. Professor Gordon Donaldson suggests that the Archbishop of Glasgow, James Beaton, should have led the traditional Catholics in their period of persecution following the parliament of 1560, and that he failed in his responsibilities by going off to France and staying there.¹⁰

While in France from 1560 to 1587 Archbishop James Bethune did not receive all of the Glasgow Archbishopric revenues from Scotland. Marwick records that although Arran/Châtelherault seized some of the archbishop's important properties, including the castle and the Manor of Lockwood, he continued to receive the other income from rents and his agents administered properties in his name until 1570. In the meantime he had acquired several ecclesiastical preferments in France, from the Abbaye d'Absie in Poitou, and the priory of St Peters and the treasurership of St Hilary.¹¹

The Protestants seized the cathedral of Glasgow upon Archbishop James Bethune's departure and removed from it all of the ornament and decoration not removed by Châtelherault the previous year, so that Glasgow Cathedral still stands internally in a very stark condition. The reformist preacher John Willock took over the church and was for a time called the Bishop of Glasgow. Willock had been a Scottish Franciscan Friar, who had been converted to protestantism and who had studied with the English protestant Harlow during Harlow's period in Ayrshire escaping from the pursuit of Mary Tudor. Willock seems to have been a notable success in support of the protestant cause. According to Tytler, it is said that his affability, moderation and address were equal to his learning and piety. Willock's return to Scotland in 1558 gave added impetus to the Reformation. He played a part for example

¹⁰ G. Donaldson, *James V - James VII*, p. 153.

¹¹ R. Keith, *Scottish Bishops*, in *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*, (ed) JFS Gordon, Glasgow (1867).

in the Tolbooth meeting of 21 October 1559 which led to the deposing of Mary of Guise.

When Mary Queen of Scots returned to Scotland after the death of her first husband Francis I in 1561, she placed all her affairs in France in the hands of Archbishop James Bethune. In 1561 he was declared her Ambassador to France and his commission as Ambassador was renewed in June 1564.

The Archbishop seems to have been a conscientious ambassador occupying Mary's most important diplomatic post other than perhaps England. Many letters written to him by Mary herself and by other Scottish officials and men of power were preserved by him in the Scots College in Paris where they were a valuable source for historians of later generations. For example, Tytler's *History* quotes the letters to the Archbishop extensively.¹²

Queen Mary's endeavours at appeasing the religious reformers led her not to appoint any Scottish representative to the final session of the Council of Trent in 1563, which drew the rigid boundary between the Roman Church and protestantism. Archbishop James Bethune then in France would have been the obvious representative to have been sent and, according to Marwick, indeed he was expressly invited to attend by Pope Pius IV.

Following the murder of Darnley on Sunday 9 February 1566/67 Archbishop James wrote to Queen Mary a letter of strong and sound advice. It was dated a month after Darnley's death and in response to a letter the Queen had written to her French ambassador the day after setting out the bare details of the murder. The Archbishop implored the Queen to lose no time in prosecuting the murderers and in vindicating herself in the eyes of the world. He repeated the common opinion in France that she was the principal cause of the King's death and that nothing had been done without her consent.

He said: 'It is spoken here and also in England that yourself is greatly and wrongously calumniated to be the motive principal of the whole, and all done by your command ... since it hath pleased God to preserve you to take a rigorous vengeance thereof, that rather than it be not actually taken, it appears to me better in this world, that you had lost your life and all.'

Paraphrase: 'In France and England everyone is saying that you are much to blame and that the murder was set in train by you and that you commanded it, since you are able to do something about bringing the murderers to justice, if you do nothing you would be better off dead.'

Strong sentiments — and he turned out to be right.

¹² P F Tytler, *History of Scotland (1249-1603)*, 10 Vols, Edinburgh, (1866).

In the early years of Mary's imprisonment in England and particularly 1567 and 1568 there was vast confusion about the divisions of politics. The Queen's party was not limited to the anti-Reformation pro-European party, but of course the King's party (those supporters of the infant James VI), took their stand on the Reformation. The Archbishop of Glasgow remained firmly on the papal side and worked to advance Mary's cause in France.

On 12 February 1574 the Scottish Privy Council passed an act forbidding, under pain of death, any dealings with various ecclesiastics who were declared to be rebels and outlaws. Archbishop Beaton was one.

Archbishop James Beaton revived his strenuous efforts for Mary again in 1578 when James Douglas 4th Earl of Morton was temporarily out of power and the Earls of Atholl and Argyll were in power — the Earl of Atholl having been one of the leaders of the Catholic interest and Argyll at least sympathetic — although outwardly conforming to the Reformed church. Of the powerful magnates only Lord Maxwell in Dumfriesshire and perhaps Lord Seton, seem to have maintained actual Catholic practices.

The exiled Archbishop of Glasgow was involved again in the ambitious but unrealistic plans hatched in 1582 between the Catholic missionaries to Scotland led by the Jesuit, William Crichton, and Cardinal Allen (head of the English Roman Catholic interest) and the Duc de Guise, to supply the Earl of Lennox in Scotland with a large Spanish and Papal force which would secure Scotland and from which basis the Roman Catholics in England could be supported. The extensive plans came to nothing.

James VI when he took over government personally favoured conciliation with the Catholic party which still included many powerful magnates. After Mary's execution in 1587 the Catholic party had lost some of its political purpose but it was still important. James VI tried to conciliate the northern Catholic Earls and kept the law mild in dealing with the Roman practice. This kept him friends in Catholic Europe and among the Catholics of England. He also wanted to keep lines of communication open. Accordingly in 1587 he reappointed the Archbishop as ambassador to France. This was done in face of the opposition of the kirk. The circumstance that the Cardinal's grandson Lord Syrie was the Chamberlain and that his near relative Margaret Beaton, Lady Reres, had been James VI's wet nurse may have been of assistance in this restoration to favour. By all accounts the Archbishop then served his new protestant sovereign as capably and faithfully as he had served Mary. He remained ambassador until his death.

In 1598 the king obtained the restoration of his ambassador's honours and dignities and benefices without his being required to conform to the religion then established in Scotland. He even got back the castle and the manor of Lockwood in 1600.

He is reported as having arranged a fireworks display in Paris when James VI inherited the English throne. James VI and I received word of the death of his French ambassador while on his journey to London to assume the English throne later in 1603.

Throughout that 16 years he enjoyed the highest confidence of the King. It is reported that throughout the 43 years he lived in Paris in exile the Archbishop remained proud of being a Scot. His house in the University quarter of Paris was a rallying point for Scottish Catholic students, clergy and travellers by whom his friendship and hospitality were remembered.

Archbishop James Bethune died on 24 April 1603 aged 86. In many respects he served his church better than either of his predecessors.

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