

**THE CHURCH OF
SCOTLAND, A SKETCH OF
ITS HISTORY: A
SKETCH OF ITS HISTORY**

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The Church of Scotland, a Sketch of Its History: A sketch of its history by Pearson M'Adam Muir

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PEARSON M'ADAM MUIR

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CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

A SKETCH OF ITS HISTORY

BY THE

REV. PEARSON M'ADAM MUIR

MINISTER OF MORNINGSIDE, EDINBURGH

FIFTEENTH THOUSAND

EDINBURGH
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1892

EXTRACT FROM
PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS Sketch of the History of the Church of Scotland is the first of a series which, with the sanction of the General Assembly, the Committee on Christian Life and Work propose to issue, in the hope that they will be used in Guilds and Bible Classes. Mr. M'Adam Muir has done his work with care, and we believe with success. The Committee are much indebted to him for the promptness with which he has responded to their call. He has brought great pains to his difficult task, and with firm though light hand has striven to assign to men and things their true place in the chequered history of the Scottish Church. The Manual gives to young people an amount of information which they can find nowhere else. It does not come into competition with any others.

A. H. CHARTERIS,

*Convener of the Committee on Christian
Life and Work.*

Oct. 20, 1890.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE favourable notices by reviewers of the First Edition, and the rapid sale of 5000 copies, have already justified the high expectations with which the Committee issued this book. The present reissue will doubtless meet with an equally favourable reception. Mr. Muir's ungrudging work and high ability have well deserved the success which, in name of the Committee, I gladly acknowledge.

A. H. C.

Dec. 15, 1890.

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HISTORY
OF
THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

CHAPTER I

A.D. 360-597

§ I.—ST. NINIAN AND ST. KENTIGERN

OF the introduction of Christianity into Scotland, no authentic record remains. It is highly probable that among the Roman invaders there were Christians, and that by their means the name of Christ became known to the inhabitants. So early as the close of the second century a Christian writer¹ asserted that parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans had been made subject to Christ. But we are in reality left almost entirely to conjecture.

The first historical figure in our Scottish Christianity is **St. Ninian**, who seems to have been born about the year 360. His father was a Christian prince, and Ninian was devoutly disposed from his youth. He was "sparing in food, reticent in speech, assiduous in study, agreeable in manner, averse from jesting, and in everything subjected the flesh to the spirit." Tradition tells us that as soon as he could accomplish it, he made a pilgrimage to Rome. There he was warmly welcomed by the Pope, received instruction in Christian doctrine, and was sent back to Scotland as a

¹ Tertullian.

Bishop. On his way home he visited the famous St. Martin of Tours; and, soon after his arrival in Galloway, he built a church which, from the colour of the stones, was known as *Candida Casa*, the White House, Whithorn. Before the church was finished, news came of the death of St. Martin of Tours, and the church was in consequence dedicated to his memory. This fixes the date of the church at 402. After Ninian had for some time preached the Gospel to the Picts of Galloway, he went on a missionary journey among the Picts south of the Grampians, and won them over to Christianity. He built at Whithorn a monastery, which became a training school for missionaries. He led a life of great austerity, often retiring for weeks to the solitude of a cave by the seashore. Many signs and wonders were attributed to him. He was said to be so absorbed in devotion, and to possess so marvellous a power of abstraction from things around, that "his repose no crowd disturbed, his meditation no journey hindered, his prayer never grew lukewarm through fatigue." He died about 432, and for centuries no place in Scotland was regarded as more holy than his tomb. It was the shrine to which pilgrims from all quarters came, sometimes in numbers so great as to call for royal interference. And churches over the length and breadth of the land bore the name of St. Ninian.

The conversion of the people to Christianity cannot have been very thorough. In the course of little more than a century they had almost wholly relapsed into Paganism, and the work of Ninian had to be done over again. Among the most famous of those by whom this second conversion to Christianity was effected stands the name of **St. Kentigern**. He was apparently born about the year 514. His mother was Thenaw, daughter of a Pagan king. It is her name which, under the corrupt form of "St. Enoch," is commemorated in the city of which her son became the spiritual founder. He was brought up at Culross, and, on account of the lovableness of his disposition, was familiarly called Munghu or Mungo, my darling.

When he grew up, he resolved to visit Strathclyde, the territory which extended from the Clyde to the Derwent. He was divinely guided to "Cathures" or Glasgow, where he settled for a time and was invited to remain as Bishop. By and by there arose a king who was for some reason unfriendly to him, and he fled to Wales. There, first of all, he was welcomed at Menevia or St. David's by St. David himself; and afterwards, on the banks of the Elwy, he built a monastery to which "flocked old and young, rich and poor" in incredible numbers. In 573 a battle was fought near Carlisle, the result of which was to set the Christian Roderick "the Liberal" on the throne of Strathclyde. Roderick sent messengers asking Kentigern to return to Glasgow. This request the saint could not refuse, and with 665 companions "went forth by the north door of the church, because he was going forth to combat the northern enemy." He was met at Hoddam in Dumfriesshire by Roderick and a great company; and to them with fervour Kentigern expounded the true Faith, "encouraging the hearts of all who stood around to believe in the Living God." On his return to Glasgow he resumed his interrupted labours and stemmed the tide of apostasy. In the course of his work he was visited by one who was elsewhere labouring with even greater success in the same sacred cause, and who was to leave a yet more famous name. St. Columba came from Iona to "rejoice in the light of Kentigern." The two men, each attended by a band of disciples singing spiritual songs, met on the banks of the Molendinar, "and having first satiated themselves with the spiritual banquet of divine words, they after that refreshed themselves with bodily food"; and when they parted they exchanged their pastoral staffs "in pledge and testimony of their mutual love in Christ."

Kentigern died in extreme old age. His memory is preserved in various churches and parishes throughout the country, notably in the Cathedral of Glasgow, and the tradition of his untiring labours was handed down in a proverb which was current in Aberdeenshire as late

as the beginning of the eighteenth century, "It is like St. Mungo's work, which was never done."¹

§ 2.—ST. COLUMBA

Much as we owe to the labours of St. Ninian and St. Kentigern, it is to **St. Columba** that the name of "Apostle of Scotland" is generally applied. The earlier missionaries of the Cross had kindled a light here and there, but it shone very fitfully and was well-nigh extinguished. St. Columba kindled a light which was shed over all the land and by God's grace endures to this day.

He was born at Gartan, in Donegal, Ireland, in the year 521. Both his father and mother were of royal lineage. His youth was distinguished by such assiduity in learning that predictions of a piety, knowledge, and eloquence which would yet astonish the world were made by his teachers. Arrived at man's estate, he devoted himself to founding monasteries, which, in those unsettled times, were the only refuge for learning and religion. The reasons for Columba leaving his native land have been variously given. One story is that he had secretly copied a psalter against the will of its owner, and that the owner, on discovering what had been done, claimed the copy as his own. The dispute was referred to the King of Ireland, who oracularly said, "To every cow her calf, to every book its copy." With this aphorism, in spite of its neatness, Columba was not satisfied, and he and his friends flew to arms. A great battle was fought, and the king was defeated and slain. But the conduct of Columba did not approve itself to the mature consideration of Irish Christendom. A Synod was held: he was pronounced guilty of the blood which had been shed, and, in expiation of his offence, was enjoined to win from heathenism as many souls as the number of the Christians who had fallen in the battle of which he had been the instigator. He was besides sentenced to perpetual banishment; he was to go where he could not

¹ Bishop Forbes, Introduction to *Life of St. Kentigern*.