

**IONA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649130979

Iona by W. Lindsay Alexander

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**W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER**

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I O N A

BY THE

REV. W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, D.D.,

FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF SCOTTISH ANTIQUARIES.

"That illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion."—DR. JOHNSON.

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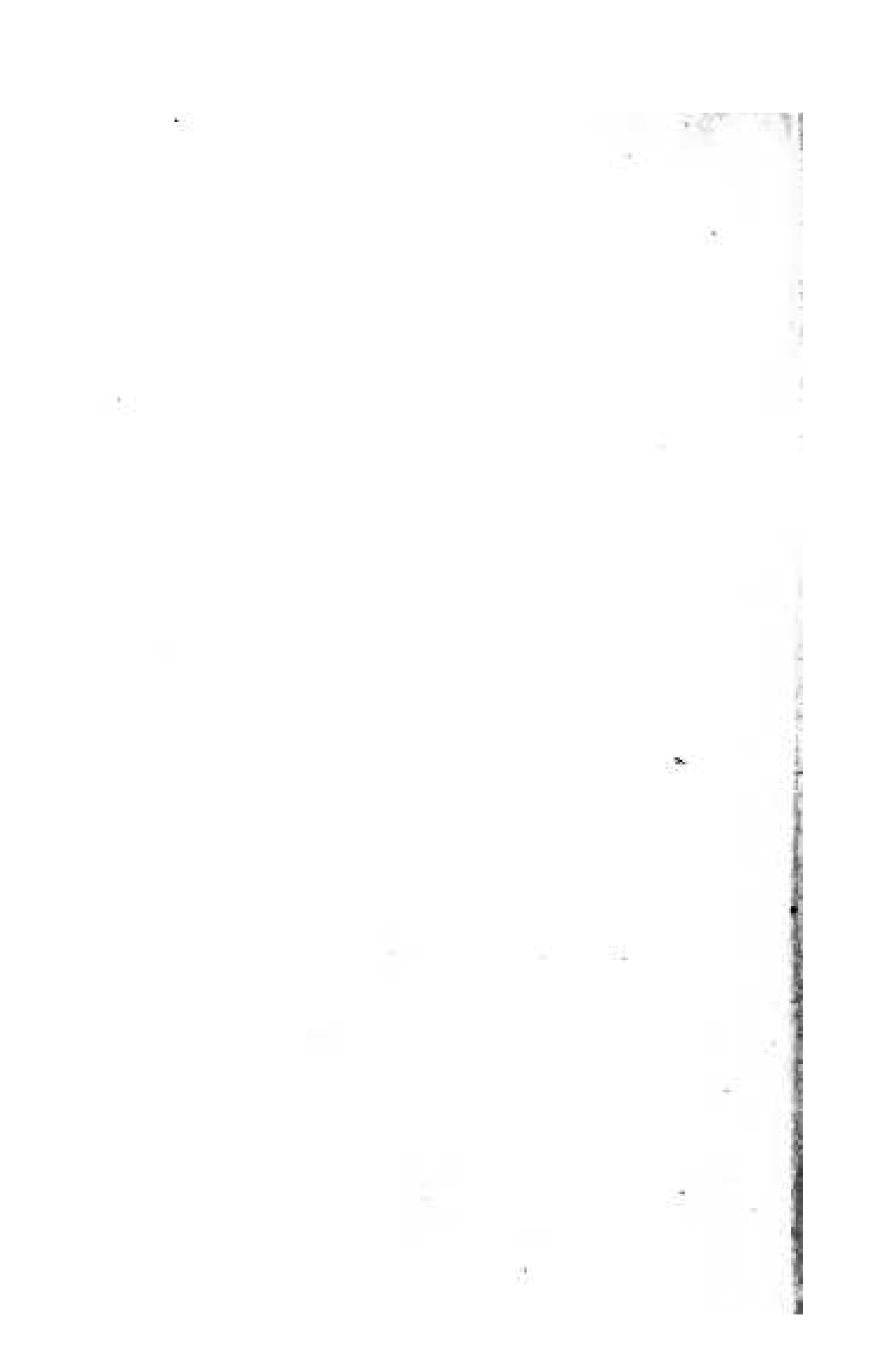
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

Instituted 1789.

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# I O N A.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ISLAND,

"How beautiful beneath the morning sky  
The level sea outstretches like a lake  
Serene, when not a zephyr is awake  
To curl the gilded pennant gliding by!  
Within a bow-shot Druid Icolmkill  
Presents its time-worn ruins, hoar and grey  
A monument of old, remaining still  
Lonely, when all its brethren are away."

D. M. MOIR.

God is often pleased, in the administration of the affairs of earth, to employ the feeblest instruments, as they appear to us, for the accomplishment of most important ends; and to select what we might be apt to deem the most unpromising spots, as centres of great and world-famous changes in the affairs of men. Of



this the entire course of the church's history furnishes striking illustrations. The calling of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, a locality otherwise so utterly unknown to history, that it is only by conjecture that its position on the map can be now identified; the selection of Judæa, a mere corner of the earth, and connected with none of the great monarchies of the ancient world, as the scene of those special revelations of His being and perfections, by the knowledge of which the whole world is ultimately to be recovered from a state of rebellion and misery to a state of joyful submission to his will; the choice of Bethlehem, a small village appertaining to the smallest of the tribes of Israel, as the birthplace of the great Deliverer, by whom the race of man is to be saved; the appointment of twelve humble, poor, and for the most part illiterate men, as the apostles of that faith which is destined to supersede all others, and regenerate the whole aspect of human society:—these, with a multitude of like instances, strikingly show that, in this respect as in others, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways. When man would produce any great result, he betakes himself to what appear the mightiest agents

and the most promising circumstances for the carrying out of his plan : when God would effect any of his great ends, he chooses "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence," 1 Cor. i. 27—29.

It is the design of this book to unfold the history of a locality, which human wisdom would never have selected as a centre of influence, but which God was pleased to employ, many ages back, as the scene of some of the most important events in the early ecclesiastical history of this and adjoining countries. One of the smallest of the British isles, situated near a rugged and barren coast, surrounded by dangerous seas, and possessing no sources of internal wealth, IONA, has obtained an imperishable place in history, as the seat of civilization and religion, at a time when the darkness of heathenism hung over almost the whole of northern Europe, and as the source whence these blessings were very widely diffused in countries

whose inhabitants have ever since been in the foremost ranks of the human race.

This interesting little island has been known by different names, all of which are of Celtic origin, and all of which have a reference more or less directly to its reputation as a seat of learning and religion. In the earliest times, before the introduction of Christianity, it received a name, by which it is sometimes still designated by the Highlanders, *Innis-nan-Druidneach*, the Isle of the Druids, from the circumstance that this body had a college there. By the early writers it is frequently called *Iy* or more correctly *Ii*, (pronounced *Ee*), which means island, a name which it seems to have borne by way of eminence, just as in Scripture the Euphrates is called "*the river*," and as among the ancient Romans "*the city*" meant Rome. After St. Columba, by his residence in it, had associated it inseparably with his name, and when, in consequence of this, it became a favourite place of sepulture for those whose rank entitled them, and whose devotion prompted them to ask a resting-place for their bones among its sacred dust, it came to be called *Ii-Cholum-chille*, that is, the island of Columba's cell, or cemetery, a name which it still retains