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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_evangelical\\_quarterly.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php)

## LIGHT ON ANCIENT SCOTLAND.

A TRUE understanding of Scottish history, alike in its ecclesiastical and political aspects, requires a close and intelligent study of its roots in the remote past. During recent years an intense specialisation in the departments of archæology, Celtic and Scandinavian linguistic studies, folklore and comparative religion has resulted in the accumulation of a mass of data which have been correlated into a pre-history that illumines long and dark corridors which were previously nearly impenetrable. The foundation of Scottish civilisation and culture is now made visible, and the gradual growth of our complex society can be traced from its foundation to the present day super-structure. Since the publication of Skene's *Celtic Scotland* nothing comparable to Mr. Donald A. Mackenzie's recently published volume<sup>1</sup> has been put in the hands of students of Scottish history. It is true that, since then, we had source books like those of Mr. Alan O. Anderson,<sup>2</sup> which are as indispensable to the students of early Scotland as Mirbt's<sup>3</sup> are to the students of the European Reformation, and that we had also Professor W. J. Watson's great history of Scottish topography.<sup>4</sup> In the latter book the place-names of Scotland have been made to yield their secret wealth of history. But it remained for Mr. Mackenzie to weave the valuable material of these rich treasures into a consecutive narrative of rare lucidity. With many standard works to his credit on archæology, ethnology and folklore, he has added the result of his own exhaustive researches to the documentary data available, and he has thus succeeded in visualising for us the life and deportment of people in a period which, to the ordinary reader, was confused and obscure. The aim of what follows is to confirm, and supplement with the help of further available evidence, his general conclusions with respect to the Church in ancient Scotland.

<sup>1</sup> *Scotland: The Ancient Kingdom*, 1930.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Sources of Scottish History, A.D. 500-1286*, 2 vols., 1922. *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers, A.D. 500-1286*, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papsttums und des roemischen Katholicismus*, 1911.

<sup>4</sup> *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*, 1926.

## I

Scotland is a small country that projects into the cold northern seas, yet, from the earliest times, it was the goal of many eastern traders and of large armies of the proud Roman Empire. It was profitable to the former but to the latter it proved itself intractable. Altogether Celtic in its basic stock, though containing a pre-Celtic element, it developed its life along the lines of its own vital interests, aspirations and genius. It was forged into an intensely individualistic unit by the forces of foreign invaders. This individualism bred independence. As far back as the time of Agricola we find this unit emerging, inspired with the ideals "of liberty and independence." That these were not "ideals" in the air requires no further proof than that Hadrian had to build a wall of defence against them, and that that wall, in spite of all the subsequent efforts of the Empire's power, delimited roughly the permanent boundaries of this unit. Much, in Scottish history, of what may seem to some to be obstinacy, and to others an absurdity, can only be rightly understood after due regard has been paid to this individualism. Thus it was that long after Calvinism fell on suitable soil. This unit, at various times, absorbed foreign races without its essential features being changed by the assimilation. It learned the art of war from its Roman enemies, and at an early date it centralised its government as a result of experience. A striking fact in proof of this is that although Columba transplanted to Scotland the whole of the ecclesiastical polity, traditions, and evangelising and cultural apparatus of Ireland, the political polity of the Irish state, with its cumbrous machinery of 150 courts and underkings, was not transplanted.<sup>1</sup> A more effective governing system was rapidly developing there already. This mark of its individualism continued, and it was at once the bulwark and the creator of its great statesmen. It fostered independence, successfully resisted the great Norse aggression; it saved for Scotland its culture, and it culminated in modern united Scotland. Its independence appeared rejuvenated in the Scottish war of independence. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it compelled the Papacy to recognise the separate identity of the Scottish Church (1192), and it kept in check the constant effort of the Papacy to propagate its own authority.

<sup>1</sup> Maclean, *The Law of the Lord's Day in the Celtic Church*, 1926, p. 52.

In subsequent conflicts the Papacy had to suffer frequently in its prestige and power from this assertive independence.

It was this well-developed individualism that saved for Scotland its life and Christianity, even if both were seriously marred, during the harrowing times of the Viking horrors. The true character of these wild buccaneers is not infrequently hidden under a glamour of romance cast over their doings by sentimental writers who strive to prove on Scotland's part a large indebtedness to these "merry, clean-limbed, stout-hearted gentlemen of the Northlands."<sup>1</sup> But the stern facts of history, again brought into view, are all against these sentimentalists, and the true Viking history as it is before us is wholly corroborated in a book,<sup>2</sup> just published, which is "the best and most comprehensive study of all the aspects" of the subject "which has been published in English." In that book the Vikings are described and proved to be "bloodthirsty and abominable barbarians, enemies of society capable of infamous, indefensible outrages of arson and slaughter."<sup>3</sup> The towns and the religious houses of Francia and Frisia, the monasteries of England and Ireland, and the unprotected monks of the small outposts of Christianity on islands and islets round the Scottish coast, lived for many dark years in urgent terror of these wild marauders, and from church and cell constantly ascended the piteous cry, *A furore Normannorum libera nos, Domine*.<sup>4</sup> Apart from small linguistic influences their only other contribution to the life of Scotland was female servitude!

## II

Research students have accumulated evidence which goes to prove that Christianity was introduced to Britain during the period of Roman occupation. Tertullian's statement, *c.* A.D. 208, confirmed a generation later, A.D. 230, by Origen, that in his own time Christianity was regarded as having penetrated even into districts inaccessible to the Roman army—Wales, Ireland, and north-west Scotland—is receiving confirmation from other sources.<sup>5</sup> Tertullian was too great a scholar, and he was too accurate a writer, to record a matter of such importance to him as this wide diffusion of Christianity without substantial evidence.

<sup>1</sup> R. L. Bremner, *The Norseman in Alban*, 1923, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> T. D. Kendrick, *A History of the Vikings*, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze für Kirchengeschichte*, 1928, p. 192 *et seq.*

Besides, he always paid particular attention to the events of war. In the year A.D. 207 Severus entered Britain, and he led in person a huge army to Scotland, which penetrated northward by an east-coast route as far probably as the Moray Firth.<sup>1</sup> Such an event was so imposing and so important to the Empire that details of it, even if only for the stimulation of the people, were sure to be circulated widely and to reach the ears of Tertullian. Even if we had not the testimony of Tertullian we would be obliged to fix the date of the introduction of Christianity to Britain at least as early as Tertullian's date of about A.D. 200,<sup>2</sup> by the unequivocal fact that the Celtic Church's date and observance of Easter was practically identical with that of the Asian quartodecimans. The divergency between the churches of Rome and Asia on this very point was a matter of acute controversy throughout the second century, which resulted in the excommunication of Asia by Rome about A.D. 195.<sup>3</sup> The Asian custom was, on the authority of the venerable Polycarp who visited Rome on the matter, Apostolic. Yet, such was the growing power of the bishops of Rome, who vigorously denounced the heterodoxy of the Asians on the matter, that even Irenæus, himself a notable and influential Asian, mediated with a letter to Victor which aimed at conciliating him and not at justifying the Asian custom. After A.D. 195 no church in Rome or in the provinces under the jurisdiction of Rome would dare to practise the Easter custom of the Asian group in Rome who, further, were suspected at the time of being infected with Gnosticism.<sup>4</sup> So the learned authority on the point, Ed. Schwartz, comes to the following conclusion: "So much can be said: Christianity did not come to the British Isles by way of Rome or the provinces dependent ecclesiastically on Rome; and probably reached them already in the third century perhaps directly from the Orient."<sup>5</sup> It might have come directly from the East either before or after the ban of the Asian custom about A.D. 195. But Christianity could not have come through Rome or Gaul before or after that time and have its chief festival observed on a date which Rome always repudiated. These facts go far to refute<sup>6</sup> the prevalent view among many writers that the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mackenzie, *Scotland: The Ancient Kingdom*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Holl, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Canon Streeter, *The Primitive Church*, 1929, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Holl, p. 194.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

parentage of Celtic Christianity was in Lyons, and consequently Roman. If that were so the Easter controversy at the Synod of Whitby in 664 would never have arisen. For the Easter dates of the Church of Augustine of Canterbury and of the Church of Columba of Iona would have been the same.

Equally striking is the similarity of the "Fasts" of the Celtic Church with those of the Church of the East. The custom of the Celtic Church can be traced back by means of written documents as far at least as the middle of the sixth century. It is quite clear, as these documents show, that the custom in the Celtic Church, in this respect, was entirely different from what obtained in the Churches of the rest of Europe.<sup>1</sup> In the Celtic Church we have a triad of forty days fasts rigidly observed, and these forty days fasts we meet with frequently.<sup>2</sup> For example, Brendan must suffer, along with his fellow travellers, forty days privations on their voyage to the island of the blessed.<sup>3</sup> Aldhelm writing to Geruntius states that a Saxon Catholic would have to submit to a forty days fast before he was considered fit to associate with the British Christians. The *quadragesima*, or forty days, may be a unit of measure for penance, but it is also undoubtedly an ecclesiastical time of fasting. This triad of fasts took place in the Celtic Church as in the Eastern Church before Christmas and Easter and after Pentecost. And what is particularly striking is that they bore the identical names of the same fasts of the East, viz., "Jesus' fast" for the Easter fast, "Elijah's fast" for the Advent fast, and "Moses' fast" for the fast after Pentecost. The similarity of names and order of fasting in Celtic Britain and the East cannot possibly be a mere coincidence, or an invention on the part of the former, because, as Holl pointedly remarks,<sup>4</sup> they were already in existence in the East, and there only. It is equally impossible to assume that Celtic Britain was influenced in the matter by Gaul, for the Gallic synods (Tours, 567; Macon, 581), which established these fasts within their bounds, took place long after the custom was firmly rooted among the Celts of Britain. We cannot, therefore, escape the conclusion that these fasts were received directly from the East.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Holl, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> e.g., *Corgus Eli isin genrad . . . corgus Jsus i n-errach . . . corgus Moysi is t-samrad*, i.e., The Lent of Elias in Winter (Advent), the Lent of Jesus in Spring, the Lent of Moses in the Summer (after Pentecost), Plummer, *Vitæ Sanctorum Hiberniæ*, I, p. cxx.

<sup>3</sup> Plummer, *Vitæ*, I, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> Holl, p. 197.

There are at least two other deeply significant facts connected with this important question of relationship between the East and the Celtic West. The first of these is what was pointed out long ago, viz., the resemblance between the Greek Liturgy and the Stowe Missal. There is, however, more than a literary or verbal similarity in this point, as the story of Brendan miraculously celebrating eucharist in Greek,<sup>1</sup> of which Brendan was apparently ignorant<sup>2</sup>—hence the miracle—clearly shows. The interesting and apposite point of this story is that Gildas, in order to test the knowledge and saintliness of this strange visitor, stealthily placed a Greek missal on the altar, an incident which points unmistakably to the fact that on occasions the public service was celebrated in Greek.

The next fact is the well-known asceticism of the Celtic Church. Underneath much that is boundlessly adventuresome and grossly fantastic in the Lives of the Celtic Saints there is a pervading emphasis on the momentous fact, also strikingly and exclusively peculiar to Eastern monachism, viz., that the monk is the revealer of man's innermost thoughts, and is on that very account the best soul-friend. The monk who became an *Anmchara*<sup>3</sup> was, as the Gaelic name means, a soul-friend or spiritual consoler. It is interesting to note here that the name used by Adamnam for the retreat or hermitage was the Greek term *erēmos* which was later supplanted by the Latin *desertum*.<sup>4</sup> This soul-friend, because of the great influence of the monks in Christianising the country, became a confessor, but his service had no sacramental significance.<sup>5</sup> This Celtic confession was exactly in accordance with the example of Oriental monks. The penitentials also since Finnian's time (532) follow the penitentials usual in the East.<sup>6</sup> Those of the Greek, Theodore of Canterbury, have been proved, in certain parts, to be purely Celtic. His compromising and accommodating to the Northumbrian Celtic

<sup>1</sup> Plummer, I, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of clerics and monks who were entirely ignorant of the official Latin service in the pre-Reformation church in Scotland abound in Hay Fleming's: *The Reformation in Scotland*.

<sup>3</sup> Reeves, *Vita Sancti Columbæ*, 1874, pp. cl, clxxviii.

<sup>4</sup> Watson, p. 256.

<sup>5</sup> The service of the *anmchara*, as far as can be seen, was not unlike that proposed by Calvin for the Reformed minister as follows: "Let every believer, therefore, remember that if in private he is so agonised and afflicted by a sense of his sins that he cannot obtain relief without the aid of others, it is his duty not to neglect the remedy which God provides for him, viz., to have recourse for relief to a private confession to his own pastor, and for consolation privately implore the assistance of him whose business it is, both in public and in private, to solace the people of God with Gospel doctrine." *Institutes*, Bk. III, Chap. IV, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Holl, p. 195.

usages indicate an underlying community of sentiment which at times burst through the hard crust of ecclesiastical necessity.<sup>1</sup> Harnack held that it was from the Scoto-Irish Church, through Theodore, that the practice of private penance before a priest reached Rome.<sup>2</sup> Theodore found the Celtic practice in Northumbria. He adapted it, and from this simple intercourse between a sinful man in spiritual distress and his soul-friend, Theodore developed a private confessional which was introduced to the Continent by Alcuin and other missionaries from Britain and resulted in the Sacrament of Penance, enjoined by Rome in 1215. Against this it is sometimes argued that the genesis of the fully developed mediæval confessional is found in Augustine's ecclesiastical view of private confession. Between this early ecclesiastical penitence and confession there is, however, a great difference. The Augustinian penitence was applicable only to a *part* of the congregation, and it was intended solely to act as a deterrent. It was a warning to the rest of the congregation not to fall into the sins that called for this humiliating public confession. It was disciplinary and reforming in intention, and out of it was developed the discipline of the Reformed Churches. Its very character, and the shame of sin underlying it, precluded this Augustinian penitence from its either being recommended or commanded as a general mechanical procedure for the removal of sin. Celtic monasticism helped to deepen the sense of sin, and the monks by private intercourse and confession developed this sense of sin among the people. Their aim also was reformation of life. This Scoto-Irish example, developed as indicated, was brought before the Continental people as a confession befitting every Christian, out of which ultimately sprang the thought of a *sacrament* of confession.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, there is the pigment used in illuminating ancient manuscripts. That pigment has recently been the subject of close study, and by chemical analysis some of the colours used have been definitely proved to have been of Byzantine or Egyptian origin. It appears to be equally clear now that much of the art on some of the ancient sculptured stones of Scotland,<sup>4</sup> as well as

<sup>1</sup> Meissner, *The Celtic Church in England*, 1929, p. viii *et passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack's *History of Dogma*, V., Eng. trans., 1898, pp. 325, 326.

<sup>3</sup> Holl, pp. 195, 196.

<sup>4</sup> Mackenzie, pp. 195, 196; *A Celtic God on a Scottish Sculptured Stone*. (Proceedings, S.A.S., Vol. LXIII, pp. 196-213.)



the architecture of some of the ancient British churches, is of a distinctly Eastern character.<sup>1</sup>

### III

When Christianity was brought to Scotland it was confronted with a great variety of pagan cults.<sup>2</sup> A "cult-mixing" followed as the inevitable result of the church policy which adapted all that was adaptable in these cults to Christian usages.

In dealing with the various cultural "drifts" into Scotland there is no reason to assume that they all came by the same route.

But as many of these "cults," like the Christian usages already referred to, are demonstrably Asiatic in origin, the problem of direct contact with Greece and Asia Minor has to be considered. For if a direct sea-route can be proved to have been used then the problem of origins has been largely solved. The objection to a sea-route drift has been that of distance and the storminess of the intervening seas. But Britain was not more remote from Palestine and Greece, if a sea-route were taken, than many parts of Europe that had contact with the East. It was certainly not as far from the East as America was from the Norsemen whose claim to its discovery cannot now be reasonably doubted.<sup>3</sup> Nor are the intervening seas more tempestuous than the tumultuous waters and swirling eddies which the coracles of the Celtic missionaries braved in carrying the Christian religion to the western seaboard of Scotland, the Faroe Isles, the Orkneys and Iceland. Was the sea-route made use of in these early times? An answer to this question is furnished by Leontios in his *Life of John of Naples*, who relates the story of an Alexandrian ship-master who was driven in his grain-ship to the coasts of Britain in the time of John the Charitable. If this grain-ship passed through the Straits of Gibraltar in the beginning of the seventh century, is there any reasonable objection to our assuming as Holl pertinently asks,<sup>4</sup> that eastern ships passed through the same straits in the second century? Perhaps we have an echo of these far-off trading times in the still current general Gaelic name for a boat. The word, *eathar*, is derived from *ethaim*, I go; the

<sup>1</sup> F. Haverfield, *The Roman Occupation of Britain*, 1924, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie, p. 111 *et seq.*; Haverfield, p. 253, *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Kendrick, p. 370 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Holl, p. 194.

Greek word *eimi* is cognate with *ethaim*.<sup>1</sup> There are also names for special classes of boats which are of Latin and Norse origin. It may be assumed that the general name is antecedent to the class name. As the special boats have been traced to their originals in the fleets of Severus and the Vikings, the antecedent "going"-boat coincides with the period when Eastern Christian usages came to the Celtic West.

## IV

"Under the later Empire Christianity spread widely over the civil area of Roman Britain."<sup>2</sup> English bishops attended the Council of Arles in A.D. 314. In A.D. 383 Maximus was proclaimed Emperor by the British troops in Britain. In A.D. 387 he led his British troops to the Continent, apparently on a religious crusade against insurgent Gnosticism, at the same time draining the country of its able-bodied men. According to Sulpicius Severus, Maximus and his wife greatly respected Martin of Tours. When the Priscillian heresy was referred to Maximus for decision, Martin used all his power of persuasion to make Maximus promise that under no circumstances should the blood of the accused heretic be shed. Yet, however, Maximus decided finally that Priscillian and his followers should be put to death. In spite of this conflict between Maximus and Martin on the jurisdiction of the civil power in ecclesiastical and spiritual affairs, Martin continued to hold Maximus in the highest esteem, and Maximus responded cordially to this attachment. "In conversation," according to Sulpicius Severus, "Maximus and Martin discussed the present and the future, they talked of the glory of the Saints and the eternal happiness of the Faithful. And all the while, by day and by night, the Empress hung upon the words that fell from Martin's lips. Like the woman of the Gospel she watered his feet with her tears and wiped them dry with the hair of her head."<sup>3</sup> It would seem from all this that in his military enterprise Maximus was actuated by religious motives, and that these, in all likelihood, predisposed him against Priscillianism. In preparing his army of Britons for the Continent he represented the adventure in the light of a religious crusade. There would be no

<sup>1</sup> MacBain, *Gaelic Dictionary*.

<sup>2</sup> F. Haverfield, *The Roman Occupation of Britain*, 1924, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> I owe this and the other references to Sulpicius Severus to Professor W. J. Watson of the University of Edinburgh.

purpose in his doing so unless the youthful Britons were themselves influenced by Christian beliefs. That Christianity was accepted widely throughout Britain at the time is a fact of history.<sup>1</sup> Among the youthful recruits in this army was very probably Ninian, then about twenty-seven years of age, and he was probably then a Christian believer as Ailred strongly asserts.<sup>2</sup> That he belonged to the area from which most of the army was drawn is suggested by the fact that a monk of York wrote a *Life of Ninian in verse*, which is lost. Knowing the attachment of the Emperor to Martin, and considering the fact that the Emperor was very popular with the army, it is easy to understand Ninian's great admiration for the Saint of Tours, to whom he dedicated *Candida Casa*, at Whithorn, the first known Christian foundation in Scotland.

Ninian's early Christian training would have been of the British type, and it was therefore suspect. Accordingly, Bede, himself of the new Roman type, in order to lend authority to Ninian's mission, would require to say that Ninian "had been regularly trained at Rome in the faith and mysteries of the truth."<sup>3</sup> Whether that statement be true or not is of far less importance than the undoubted fact that Ninian introduced to Scotland the Roman type of Christian enterprise obtaining in Gaul. That is the fact emphasised by Adamnan when he solemnly observes Martin's Day<sup>4</sup> and entirely ignores even the name of Ninian. From henceforth Martin, and not Ninian, wields a potent influence in the Church in Scotland. Whithorn was undoubtedly a *Magnum Monasterium*, and continued for a century, although on a descending scale of effectiveness, to be a centre of religious and educational activities of high repute on both sides of the Irish sea. Neither is there any doubt that Ninian evangelised some of the southern Picts, although the effect of it was not wholly permanent, as Patrick's *Letter to Coroticus* clearly proves. But as Whithorn disappeared, and as its founder was receding into the past, the haze of tradition increasingly invested his shadowy figure with the glamour of romance which, as shall be shown, was very serviceable to the Romanising party in the Church in Scotland centuries after.

<sup>1</sup> Haverfield, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita Niniani*.

<sup>3</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, Giles ed., p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> *Vita*, Bk. III, Chap. 13.

The real and permanent evangelisation of Scotland began with Columba who migrated from Ireland to Argyll in Scotland, accompanied by his disciples in A.D. 563. This was a century and a quarter after Ninian's death and thirty-four years before Augustine landed in Kent. The record of the Columban Church as an evangelising force in Scotland, England and on the Continent is well-known. In Scotland it fused scattered tribes into a unit cemented with the bond of Christian brotherhood and disciplined with a culture that was impregnated with the spirit of independence. Columba, like Patrick, was a patron of letters and of the bards and indulged in poetry himself. This outlook on letters and poets, so characteristic of the Columban Church, is another feature of its character in which it diverges widely from the Church of Pope Gregory the Great. That Pope employed his unrivalled authority to denounce all secular learning. To Bishop Desiderius of Vienne who apparently taught grammar and read the poets he wrote as follows: "A report has reached us which we cannot mention without a blush, that thou expoudest grammar to certain friends; whereat we are so offended and filled with scorn that our former opinion of thee is turned to mourning and sorrow. The same mouth singeth not the praises of Jove and the praises of Christ. . . . If hereafter it be clearly established that the rumour we have heard is false and that thou art not applying thyself to the idle vanities of secular learning we shall render thanks to our God. . . ." After such a vigorous effusion it need not surprise us to read in an old preface to the famous *Altus* of Columba that Gregory denounced this beautiful poem.<sup>2</sup> Theology degraded to verse expression would no doubt be offensive to the Pope, but the theology is bad according to him for the reason that Columba praises the Deity rather in His works than in Himself. The observation is certainly applicable to the poem, for God is praised there rather in the wonder and beauty of His creation than in His Being. In this respect Columba agrees with Pelagius and not at all with Augustine. Augustine, in *De natura et gratia*, bears testimony to Pelagius, which is equally true of Columba, not only to Pelagius's character and abilities, but also to his motives; for, if he exaggerates free-will, he does so for *the glory of the God of nature*, and Pelagius, therefore, has the best of

<sup>1</sup> Reginald Lane Poole, *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning*, 1920, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Donald Mackinnon in *The Old Highlands*, 1907, p. 65.

intentions.<sup>1</sup> So had Columba. As a matter of fact the Columban theology was more akin with the theology of the East than with that of Rome. Its Christian life was ascetic and legalistic. Salvation was life eternal, which meant the transformation of sinful mortality into blessed immortality without any definite doctrinal basis for that transformation. Hence was it that they laid emphasis on the incarnation, and on the person of Christ as an Exemplar rather than as a Restorer. The Roman conception, on the other hand, was that salvation consisted in the establishment of right relations with God and the forgiveness of sins. It laid chief emphasis on divine grace, the death of Christ and the atonement. The Columbans strove after personal piety that should pervade life and conduct without any formal adherence to the great doctrines implicit in such piety. Columba illustrates this by admitting to all the privileges of his Church a pagan who attained to his goodness by his own unaided effort.<sup>2</sup> If this was not Pelagianism it was certainly not Augustinianism, for it appears to ignore divine grace as set forth in Augustinianism, and it was a practical protest against the dogma of the same system, that the Church was the sole channel of grace. The aim of their religion was to follow Christ whom they adored with a profound reverence, and to attain to that holiness without which eternal bliss would not become their possession. For this they did not rest on their doctrinal beliefs but on keeping the commandments, and showing the Christian graces of continence, humility, love, peace and charity to the ignorant, the afflicted and poor.<sup>3</sup> They practised the apostolic teaching as they received it at an early stage before that teaching was systematised into dogma or doctrine. In their isolation, without the Empire and Roman jurisdiction, they seem to have been unaware of the doctrinal developments within the Church of the Empire, and as they were no theologians but practical Christians they developed none of their own. But for the doctrinal safeguards which the Roman Church prescribed for her members they substituted the warnings and consolations of the Soul-Friend and the crude and elemental

<sup>1</sup> B. J. Kidd, *A History of the Church*, Vol. III, 1922, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Of Artbranan in Skye Adamnan relates: Wonderful to say, my dear sons, today in this spot of this place a certain heathen old man who preserves his natural goodness (*naturale bonum custodiens*) throughout his whole life, will be both baptized and die and be buried. . . . [The aged man] was baptized by Columba. *Vita*, I, 27. The story of Emchatus in Glenurquhart is similar, inasmuch as he has preserved his natural goodness (*naturale bonum conservans*) throughout his whole life, even to extreme old age. *Vita*, III, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Bede, p. 116.

charms of Patrick's *Lorica*, Columba's poems, the psalms and other portions of Scripture. Again let us say of them as Augustine said of Pelagius, that they "had the best of intentions." They had their own Sabbatic Law,<sup>1</sup> which was different from that of the Church of Gregory the Great. It was strict and severe, but it had a highly ethical purpose, and it aimed at effecting holiness in life. Their Eschatology, which had distinctively native features, was in the main of the Asiatic type.<sup>2</sup>

If a Church is defined as an autonomous, self-governing body of Christian people with certain definite doctrines and practices, then the Celtic Church was a distinct *Church*, and not part of another. It held doctrines in common with the Church of Rome as Protestants Churches do today, but the identity of a Church depends not on its common denominator, but on its distinct doctrine, government and practice. That being so, the Church of Columba was so definitely different from the Church of Augustine and Gregory in these particulars as entitles one to regard it as a separate Church.<sup>3</sup> It was self-governing, for external rule was not only impracticable but impossible. The government was centralised in the abbot, and from his administration there was no appeal. There was no diocesan episcopacy in the Columban Church in Scotland. The abbot belonged to the chief's family, and jealousy of status and dignity excluded the possibility of unification of administration under the primacy of jurisdiction over the widely scattered monasteries. So the recognition of the Pope, a foreign ruler, was a political and practical impossibility. Of popes there was an abundance, for every anchorite was a pope, as the Norsemen found to be the case in the western isles of Scotland.<sup>4</sup> The primacy of honour was held by Columba, as Colman clearly indicated at Whitby. If Christianity came to the Western Celts directly from the East, as we think it did,<sup>5</sup> it would have come before the primacy of

<sup>1</sup> Maclean, *Law of the Lord's Day*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> St. John D. Seymour, *Irish Visions of the Other World*, 1930, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Alexander MacBain, an eminent Celtic philologist, but without any claim to a special knowledge of theology, wrote that, "the doctrines and dogmas [of the Celtic Church] were those of St. Jerome, St. Augustine and the Bishop or Pope of Rome in the first half of the fifth century." (*Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, vol. XXIII, p. 148.) Numerous instances of a serious difference have been given above. Many of them have been brought to light since MacBain wrote those words; and if he had these results of research before him, his well-known respect for real scholarship would have obliged him to give a totally different opinion.

<sup>4</sup> Plummer, I, p. lxii.

<sup>5</sup> Celtic scholars like Zimmer are of a different opinion. But his equally erudite fellow-countryman, Karl Holl, after wide and deep research in the Church History of the East, came to the above conclusion. Kuno Meyer agreed with Holl. Only in the light of such a conclusion can much in the Celtic Church that is unintelligible become clear, and its independent development become evident.

jurisdiction was evolved at Rome. It developed its own government and practice from the simplicity of its beginnings, entirely different, and independent of the procedure at Rome, and accordingly the question of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome would not have arisen. Nor did it, and a proof of that is the entire absence of reference to Popes' names in the earliest authentic records. This fact alone should dispose of the question of the primacy of the Pope over the Celtic Church of the West, and of that Church being an integral part of the Church of which he was the acknowledged head, in an emphatically negative manner.

## V

Most scholars are agreed that a dominant feature of Columban Christianity was a striving for personal freedom and personal holiness<sup>1</sup>; and this discipline had a more determinative influence in shaping the destiny of the Scottish nation than the discipline of secular law or military organisation. For it united people in the spirit of Christian brotherhood and in loyalty to a common desire. The credit of laying this foundation, by Christianising the spirit of freedom inherent in the race since the days of Agricola, lies with the missionaries and schools of the Columban Church. Those who laid the foundation of the Scottish Church and nation had, like all missionaries, a heavy task. Therefore the interactions between personalities and testing situations, and between a new religion and age-long cults of great tenacity, could not fail to leave on the foundation traces of idiosyncrasies inevitably emergent in such circumstances. But one thing is clear, and that is, that the foundation was laid on Christ. For the key to open the door to the secret of Columba's greatness and success is that authentic utterance of his, delivered with the confidence of an amazing faith before the pagan court of King Brude at Inverness, viz., *My Druid is Christ the Son of God.*<sup>2</sup> In Him was the omnipotence of God and the infinite love and compassion of man

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zimmer, *The Celtic Church in Britain and Ireland*, 1902, p. 130. M. V. Hay in his *A Chain of Error in Scottish History*, 1927, p. 69 *et seq.* disagrees. But ardent Roman Catholic protagonist as he is, Major Hay admits in the case of Columbanus's correspondence with the Pope that whatever the opinion of the Pope might be it would not change the Celtic practice. That was surely independence. It is not in such language as the following Columbanus would address the Pope if he accepted his primacy:—"Your equal," "brotherly interest," "do not refuse my (Columbanus's) advice as if you (Pope) were above criticism." "I do not accuse you, but I ask you to justify yourself." (See *Times Literary Supplement*, April 5, 1928.) Patrick and Columba were the acknowledged vicegerents of God and not the Pope. In nearly all instances it is the "Apostolate" of John, Peter, and Paul that are referred to and with equal deference.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Poem in *Annals of Tighearnach*.

which, Columba believed truly, would triumph over every possible obstacle. This Great Exemplar he placed before himself and the pagan world, with an unrestricted access to His presence, with such results as were not remotely approached anywhere else in Europe at the time. The people canonised these "holy" men, they formed their personal names from their names, and called places hallowed by their presence after them. These three impressive and convincing witnesses to the intensity of the admiration and reverence in which they were held by the common people are still in Scotland. In the long dark night of the Viking horrors this Church kept the soul and body of the nation alive—an achievement of incomparable greatness. It emerged from the struggle impaired in strength and culture, but with a free people. It had, however, enough vitality in itself and its old message to rejuvenate itself and the nation, and develop the nation on the lines of its own individualism with a revived Church of its own.

But developments were taking place on the Continent which were in no small measure due to the spiritual success of the Celtic Missionaries abroad. A far-reaching movement of diocesan organisation had begun which coincided with Cistercian foundations in Ireland, and in Scotland with Queen Margaret's reign. On the balance, however, Queen Margaret's sympathy with the old Celtic system seemed to outweigh her enthusiasm for the new order. In the twelfth century the whole of the ancient ecclesiastical system was completely changed in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> In Scotland a similar change took place which submerged the name, government and cardinal teaching but not the spirit of love of independence, of the ancient Celtic Church. The supreme agent in this change was David I, whom James VI with mordant wit described as the *sair sanct* of Scotland. A *sanct* he was indeed, if devotion to the Roman Church entitled him to sainthood. *Sair* he was, too, as the sordid ecclesiastical history of Scotland during the latter middle ages can tell. But the Columban Church was too deeply rooted in the traditional reverence for the memory of the doctrines and examples of its great missionaries to be easily removed. Hence it was that the shadowy figure of Ninian was introduced at this stage. The new diocesan changes were not palatable to people accustomed to the simple government of their ancient Celtic Church, and therefore a "saint" must be found who would make a popular appeal.

<sup>1</sup> H. J. Lawlor, *St. Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of St. Malachy of Armagh*, 1920, *passim*.



That Ninian was obscured by a haze of tradition, which accredited him with greater service than he really accomplished, is clearly shown by the fact that, among the many variants of his name to which there are dedications, there is none to the native form of his name. "What appears is either the latinised form or a Gaelic form derived therefrom through Scots vernacular. He is thus a notable exception to the rule that though the name of a native saint may be found latinised in a Latin document, it is the native name, handed down by tradition, that appears in commemorations. It is also notable that we have no record of any personal name formed from his name with *maol* or *gille* prefixed; nor have I met an instance of a fair being named after him. All this points to a tradition broken and subsequently revived, and I have already suggested that the revival of the Ninian cult took place in the twelfth century, and that it was then revived for the purpose of lending a sanction in the eyes of the people to the changes introduced by David. When Ailred states that 'the holy pontiff (Ninian) began to ordain presbyters, consecrate bishops, distribute the other dignities of the ecclesiastical ranks, and divide the whole land into definite parishes,' he is ascribing to Ninian exactly what was being accomplished in David's time, and at the same time insinuating that David's changes, instead of being innovations, were in reality a restoration of the ancient and pure system of Ninian: the monastic Scoto-Irish Church was regarded as an unauthorised and discredited interlude."<sup>1</sup>

The Gaulish-Roman ecclesiastical character of *Candida Casa* need not be disputed. The only way, therefore, to enhance the claims of the new movement and make it successful in suppressing the Columban system, was to link it on to Whithorn through the name of a saint with achievements to his credit that would rival those of the founder of Iona, and with credentials stamped with Roman authority such as Columba could not produce. The whole procedure, and its subsequent results, shows clearly that the Columban Church was not regarded as even a part of the Roman Catholic Church, otherwise why was it suppressed?

David was brought up in a Norman Court, and he was determined to introduce its culture into Scotland. Part of the new civilisation, by which the whole character of the Scottish nation was changed, was the establishment on a large scale of the

<sup>1</sup> Watson, *History of Celtic Place-names*, pp. 295, 296.

Roman Church system in Scotland. It is a suggestive fact, therefore, that many of the Ninian commemorations are in the vicinity of great Norman castles like Stirling, Dunottar and Glenurquhart. These were symbols of the new civilisation, and the Barons, like English lairds in Scotland even to the present time, disdaining the form of faith of the surrounding community, established chapels of "the King's religion"—an adulatory phrase common in the reign of James VII—for their own use and for the civilising purpose, as they thought, for which the castle stood. In support of this suggestion, it is striking that there are no Ninian commemorations in the Kingdom of the Isles, with one or two doubtful exceptions, just because the King's writ did not run where the feudal system did not penetrate. But the dooms-day of the Columban Church had arrived with the coming of Norman state and church politics. Scottish nationalism then received its first and severest blow. But although the nation's Church was crushed by it, the spirit of independence and love of freedom, which that Church fostered, remained, albeit in thrall, until it was liberated from its shackles by the Scottish Reformation.

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