



NOTES ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF  
THE CHURCH OF STRATHCLYDE,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE  
APOSTLE OF LANCASHIRE.

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A CERTAIN amount of local interest attaches to the history of the Church of Strathclyde, for, as late as 150 years after the time when our English forefathers began to invade Britain, the kingdom of Strathclyde (or perhaps in speaking of that period one ought to say, the confederacy of which the King of Alclwyd was the head) stretched from the river Clyde to the Mersey, if not to the Dee. It was bounded on the north by the Scot kingdom of Dalriada, on the east by the English kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, and on the south by the British kingdom of Gwynedd, and it thus took in the whole of the southwest of Scotland together with Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, and the West Riding, and (probably) part of Cheshire. Its chief towns were Alclwyd, a strongly fortified post in the extreme north (afterwards called Dumbarton, or the Fortress of the Britons), and Caer-luel, a name scarcely altered by the changes and chances of twelve centuries. The men of Strathclyde were *Welshmen*, *i.e.*, Britons, except in the extreme south-west corner of Scotland, where an offshoot of the Pictish nation inhabited Gallo-

way, sometimes in complete independence, at other times acknowledging the superiority of the neighbouring British king. For our purpose to-night, however, we will consider Galloway as part of Strathclyde, and try to sketch the Church history of this region from the earliest dawn of Christianity in it down to the middle of the twelfth century, when the Bishopric of Carlisle was founded as a diocese in the Province of York and the Bishopric of Glasgow was revived as an integral portion of the Scotch Church.

There is thus in our subject to-night very little room for original research. You may have heard of the man who had to write a paper on Chinese metaphysics, and how he turned in his Encyclopædia to the article on China and to that on metaphysics, and then "combined his information"; in the same way I have turned to every book bearing upon the subject, on which I could lay hands, and combined my information, picking up a few facts here and a few there, which perhaps have never before been collected into one whole, and drawing conclusions from them, which perhaps have never before been inferred. My gratitude is more especially due—not indeed to encyclopædic articles on Strathclyde and the Church, but—to the invaluable work on *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, edited by the late Mr. Haddan and the Bishop, whose loss we of the Diocese of Chester are now mourning, and to Mr. Skene's most painstaking book on Celtic Scotland, and to Mr. Green's *Making of England*, and to Dr. Bright's *Early English Church History*. But, before touching on the history of the Church of Strathclyde, it might be wise to sketch the history of the State, as shortly as possible and with the introduction of as few unfamiliar names as may be.

#### I.—In the latter half of the sixth century Strath-



clyde was full of warring tribes, some pagan, and some already Christian, owing for the most part to the labours of S. Kentigern, of whom we shall have to speak at greater length later on. The battle of Arthuret, a few miles north of Carlisle, in 573 gave the upper hand to the Christians, but did not weld the tribes into one realm, for two years later there were no fewer than four British kings fighting against the English king of Bernicia, whose kingdom only stretched from the Forth to the Tees. The native British party however was now gradually gaining power, and the Romanized semi-civilised Britons were unable to hold their own. After Arthuret (thanks partly to the exertions of King Rhydderch and partly no doubt to the effect of S. Kentigern's successful preaching of Christianity) the north-western Britons became fused into a confederacy, which was glad before long to make an alliance with the Scots of Dalriada against the English of Northumberland, and to follow the lead of the Scotsman Aedhan, who, nearly 30 years before, had been consecrated king by S. Columba. The Northumbrian king, however, crushed this alliance in 603 at the great battle of Dawston, in the valley of Liddisdale—a battle that awakens an unwonted note of triumph in the gentle Bæda. It was an obstinate fight; the English lost their king's brother, and the force that he had led was cut to pieces; but only a few Scotchmen succeeded in escaping, whilst the field was piled with the British dead. The northern part of Strathclyde lay now at the mercy of the English, but no effort seems to have been made to seize the land for settlement. Ten years later the same king of Northumberland won the decisive victory of Chester, and cut short Strathclyde by adding to his own realm all that part of it which lay south of the Ribble. The close of another ten years saw the boundaries of



Strathclyde narrowed again, when King Eadwine of Northumberland finished the conquest of Elmet, a British kingdom which (roughly speaking) answered to our West Riding.

These two blows, however, were speedily avenged by the last Briton, of whom it can be said\* he overthrew an English king—one who certainly had not taken to heart the lessons taught him by the gentle Bishop Kentigern. The absolute severance between conquerors and conquered, between English and Welsh, had ceased; the Britons of Powys had helped the Hwiccas against Ceawlin of Wessex; the Britons of Elmet had sheltered the House of Ælla, when it was ejected by its Bernician rival; and so now Cadwallon, king of the Britons of Strathclyde, Christian though he was, leagued his forces with those of Penda, the heathen king of the March, and defeated and slew King Eadwine of Northumberland in the marshes of Hatfield. It ought to be mentioned that some historians (and amongst them Mr. Green) make Cadwallon a king of Gwynedd, or what we now call North Wales. Neither the Chronicle nor Bæda speak distinctly on this point; the later compilation, which bears the name of Nennius, talks of him as king of "Guenedotia," and indeed (far from thinking of war between Strathclyde and Northumberland) it assigns to the Church of Strathclyde and to a relative of S. Kentigern the work of teaching Christianity to Eadwine and his Northumbrian subjects; this latter statement, however, is certainly incorrect, and Professor Freeman is probably right in connecting Cadwallon with the Strathclyde Welsh. The British king proceeded to "vaunt himself as irresistible" (according to Bæda); the two Christian English kings, who divided

\* Perhaps the defeat of Richard Plantagenet by Henry Tudor at Bosworth might by some be called the overthrow of an English king by a Briton; but Henry's army was English.



Northumberland between them at Eadwine's death, apostatised in order to preserve a shameful royalty, but in vain: Cadwallon took York, and, on being besieged in it by the English, in a successful sally killed one of the apostate kings; the other in the autumn of the same disastrous year (634) came to Cadwallon to sue for peace, and was put to death by his orders. The whole country was ravaged by the heathen Penda and by Cadwallon, whom Bæda calls "a barbarian more cruel than a heathen." Paulinus, the Bishop of York, fled southwards, and Cadwallon set himself deliberately to root out the whole race of the English, neither (says Bæda) did he make any account of the Christianity that had sprung up amongst them. A century later the English spoke of that year (634) as "the hateful year"; but in 635 the battle of Heavenfield saw the definite triumph of our forefathers; S. Oswald's Englishmen put to flight Cadwallon's greatly superior force, and the Britons fled down the slopes into the valley, till they reached the Denisburn east of Hexham, and there the fall of the last great hero of Strathclyde left the English supreme in the north; he had fought, it was said, in 14 pitched battles and 60 skirmishes, and was rarely unsuccessful, but now (in the words of a long-remembered English poem)—

"The corpses of Cadwallon's carls  
"Choked up the Denis beck."

S. Oswald's death at Maserfield checked the power of the Northumbrians for a few years, and the Strathclyde Britons were encouraged also by their victory over their former allies, the Scots; but in 654 they and the English of the March were again overthrown by the Northumbrians at the river Winwœd, which Bæda describes as being "in the territory of Loidis"—a name applied both to the country round Leeds and to the Lothians; Mr. Green thinks that the former is here meant, the

historian of Celtic Scotland argues for the latter. Where two such doctors differ, which of us would venture to decide? Henceforth Strathclyde acknowledged Northumbrian supremacy, and indeed thirteen years later we find that what is now North Lancashire had been incorporated into England, and King Ecgfrith of Northumberland was engaged from 670 onwards in adding the Lake District to his kingdom; but in 685 Ecgfrith's death, in his terrible defeat by the northern Picts near Forfar, restored Strathclyde to independence, though Galloway still remained subject to the Northumbrian throne. In the middle of the next century, however, Eadberht of Northumberland, the son of Eata and the brother of\* the first Archbishop of York—one of the greatest names in the history of the north—marched as far as the Clyde, and, with the help of his faithful Galwegians, stormed the British capital Alclwyd or Dumbarton on August 1, 756: but ten days later his army was utterly routed, and from that time English influence in Strathclyde began to wane once more. The battle of Whalley in 798 still further lessened the power of the Northumbrians. But, before another century had passed, both Alclwyd and Carlisle had been sacked by Northmen and Danes, and there was a great slaughter of "the Strathclyde Welsh," as the English Chronicle still calls them,—of "the Cumbrians," as Æthelweard the historian calls them, this being apparently the earliest use of that name.

About the year 900 Strathclyde had shrunk to the land between the Derwent and the Clyde, whilst various chiefs maintained a precarious independence in Galloway, Westmorland, and part of Cumberland; and Strathclyde and Lothian were opposed to one another under the names of *Britain*

\* With this time of close connection between the kingly and archiepiscopal thrones of the North, we may compare the days when Reginald Pole ruled at Canterbury and his cousin Mary reigned at Westminster.



and *Saxony*. In 908 a brother of Constantine of Albany was elected to the throne of Strathclyde, and a connection was thus formed between it and its northern neighbour, which gradually grew into incorporation. The 10th century also saw the Strathclyde Welsh joining with the Scots and the gallant Englishmen of Eadwulf's kin at *Bamborough*, and all the Northumbrians, whether Danes or Englishmen, in choosing Eadward the son of Ælfred "to father and to lord," and sharing with them a few years afterwards in the confederacy that was overthrown at the *Battle of Brunanburh*. Then in 945 King Eadmund harried and conquered Strathclyde, and handed it over to Malcolm King of Scots, on condition that he would help the English by land and sea; and before very long Strathclyde or *Cumbria* dropped into an appanage for the heirs of Scotch kingship. The unfortunate country was ravaged more than once by English kings and earls, by Æthelred and Eadwulf and Siward, during the next three generations, and at last was once more cut short in 1092 by William the Red annexing to England the country between the *Derwent* and the *Solway*, and ejecting from *Carlisle* the quasi-independent *Dolfin*, whose father *Gospatric* was great grandson alike of Malcolm MacKenneth King of Scots and of Æthelred "the Unredy" of England, and whose kinsmen (the *House of Eadwulf*, and their direct male descendants, the *Nevills*) formed the greatest family in the north for more than twenty generations. Then in the middle of the 12th century came the last struggle for the independence of *Galloway* from Scotland, its chiefs clinging to English protection so as to evade incorporation with the northern kingdom; in 1126 the see of *Galloway* was revived as a suffragan to *York*, which it continued to be for 230 years, whilst the see of *Glasgow*, revived about the same time, was looked on as part of the Scotch

Church, which was formally acknowledged to be independent of York in 1188. The twelfth century then virtually erased the name of Strathclyde from the map, though British customs held good there till the reign of Edward I, and the boundary of England and Scotland fluctuated, until at last the latter gave up all claim to Cumberland and the other northern counties, in 1237.

II.—I have thus sketched, as shortly as I could, the main points in the secular history of Strathclyde, and we may now piece on to them certain events in its ecclesiastical history. Certainly the latter can not be understood without some knowledge of the former: how it was that the Englishman Cuthberht preached in the same lands as the Briton Kentigern, and even gave his name to a county in Strathclyde, Kirkcudbright,—why Strathclyde conformed to Catholic usages earlier than other British Churches,—how there came to be English bishops in Galloway,—these and other points could not have been entered into, unless something had been said of the history of the country as well as of the history of the Church.

There were individual Christians in Strathclyde at the end of the fourth century, and it seems most probable that the great S. Patrick, whose parents were Christian, was born near Alclwyd about the year 395. The Britons of Strathclyde, however, were for the most part still Pagans when one of their number, S. Ninian, was the first to preach the gospel in Galloway. He had studied at Rome, where Pope Siricius consecrated him Bishop, after which he returned to work amongst the heathen between the two walls of Hadrian and Antoninus. On his way home he became acquainted with, and was profoundly impressed by, the great Gallic Bishop, S. Martin of Tours. Eventually he established a missionary Bishopric on the promon-



tory now called Whithorn, in Wigtonshire, where he built a church, which he hallowed to the memory of his friend, S. Martin, contrary to the custom of British Christians outside Strathclyde; for they never, until the eighth century, allowed any church to be dedicated in the name of any creature, save its founder, or the Blessed Virgin, or Michael the Archangel. The church of S. Martin was built of stone—a material at that time unused either by the Strathclyde Britons or by the Galwegian Picts;—whence, as Bæda tells us, the place was called *Candida Casa*, the White House. At Kirkmaiden, which faces Whithorn over the Bay of Luce, there are three stones in the old churchyard. The character of their lettering and ornamentation carries their inscriptions back to a still Romanized time, and yet bears a strong resemblance to Gaulish monuments; they are probably, therefore, of the fifth century, and their inscriptions, which give us the names of Viventius, Mavorius, and Florentius, may refer to companions of S. Ninian himself.

S. Ninian did not confine his labours to Galloway. Strathclyde also felt his influence: but shortly after his death, in 432, the whole land seems to have fallen back into heathenism, with the exception of his monastery at Whithorn, which throughout the sixth century was frequented by the Irish for instruction. It is strange, however, that we hear of no one succeeding S. Ninian in his see. S. Patrick bitterly mourns over this wide-spread apostacy, and Gildas, the historian missionary and saint (who was born at Alclwyd in 516), draws a grievous picture of the state of things amongst the Britons of his day, for they seemed to be relapsing into barbarism under the pressure of the English conquests. Gildas appears to have been able to effect some good in Ireland and amongst the Britons in what we now call Wales, but Strathclyde continued in darkness, until the sun, which had set with

S. Ninian's death, rose again, brighter than before, with S. Kentigern, whom after-ages have named the Apostle of Strathclyde.

We are unfortunate in our means of enquiring into the life of Kentigern. One complete biography and a fragment of another have come down to us, but neither of them is earlier than the twelfth century. Bæda tells us nothing of him. Of course he only meant his book to be the Church History of the *English* nation, but still Ninian and Columba find a place in it, and it is strange that he says not a word of Kentigern. It is impossible altogether to separate the history of his life from the legends connected with it. Well known is the tale of his innocent mother's betrayal by her suitor, and of her being exposed in a boat which drifted to the north shore of the Forth, where she and her baby were cared for by S. Serf: though indeed S. Serf was in reality separated from Kentigern's mother by a broader stream than the Forth,—the stream of 200 years; and still better known (for it is commemorated in the shield of the city of Glasgow) is the legend how Kentigern's school-fellows tried to get him into trouble, and would have done so, had not the slaughtered robin-redbreast been restored to life. It was S. Serf who (according to the same legend) gave to the lad the name that has almost displaced his baptismal name of Kentigern, the name of MUN-GHU, *i.e.*, gentle and beloved,—the name in which the Cathedral of Glasgow is dedicated.

The undoubtedly old *Triads of King Arthur* make Cyndeyrn (as the Welsh spell Kentigern) a contemporary of "the blameless king," and another ancient British work gives his father's pedigree and his mother's name, asserting that she was the daughter of a chieftain "of Ddinas Edwin in the "north." By Ddinas Edwin, of course, is meant the city of "Dun-edine, called in the Anglic tongue



“Edinburgh.” Here S. Monenna, who is also connected with Galwegian Christianity, had founded a nunnery, to which S. Kentigern’s mother may have belonged. When her vow was broken, the boat in which she was exposed may easily have drifted to Culross, the place named in the legend; and certain it is that there was a chapel dedicated to her son at the spot where she was said to have landed.

S. Kentigern, after leaving S. Serf, was miraculously guided by two untamed bulls whom he yoked to a new wain, and came to Glasgow, where he repaired a ruined Church that had been built by S. Ninian. Here, in due time, he was consecrated by an Irish Bishop, much against his own will; and after his consecration (which took place in 543, when he was only 25 years old) he devoted himself to missionary work in his diocese, which stretched from the Clyde to the Mersey, including in England the three northern counties west of the watershed, and in Scotland apparently reaching from sea to sea, so that the sites of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Liverpool, were embraced in the one bishopric. He fixed his see at one time (as we shall hear) at Hoddam in Dumfriesshire, but for the greater part of his long episcopate of 60 years his Cathedral was (as was usual) near, but not at, the civil capital; the King of Strathclyde lived at Alclwyd, or Dumbarton; its Bishop fixed his residence at Glasgow. The distance from each other of the churches dedicated to him shew S. Kentigern’s wide-spread activity; the name of a church near Balmoral in Aberdeenshire speaks of his missionary journey to the far north; of his sojourn in North Wales we shall have to say something in a minute; churches dedicated to him in Midlothian and at Glasgow and in Cumberland were, of course, in his own diocese; so was a church well known to some of us, and which may (I think) originally have been

hallowed in his name—I mean, Wallasey Parish Church in Cheshire. This sounds ridiculous, for we know that Strathclyde, in Kentigern's time, reached to the northern bank of the Mersey, whilst Wallasey lies to the south of that river, and that Wallasey Church is dedicated (not to S. Kentigern but) to S. Hilary. Yet, on the other hand, it is plain that Wallasey (or the *Welsh Isle*, the stronghold which Britons continued to retain for a time, when the rest of Wirrall was Englished) used to be an island between two mouths of the Mersey; and from the fact that in the days of Eadward the Confessor and Harold, Godwine's son, Wallasey alone of Cheshire townships belonged to Uhtred, the chief land-holder in the country between Ribble and Mersey, it would seem that only a few generations before the Conquest the southern mouth of the Mersey must have been the more important of the two; and thus in the days of S. Kentigern Wallasey belonged to the kingdom and diocese of Strathclyde, and not to its southern neighbour, the principality of Gwynedd and the bishopric of Llanelwy. Moreover, S. Kentigern is commemorated on the same day (Jan. 13) as S. Hilary, by whose name the church is now called. If the Britons of Strathclyde had built a little church, crowning the long, low, hill that formed the island of Wallasey, and hallowed it in the name of "Kentigern the Gentle and Beloved," is it possible that, when Wallasey ceased to be part of Strathclyde, its new possessors, knowing little and caring less about British Saints, but finding that Jan. 13 was the dedication-day of the church, re-named it after the great Saint whom they had been taught to commemorate on that day—S. Hilary?

To return, however, from conjecture to history:—The Pagan party was still in power in the north of Strathclyde, whilst the south of that kingdom was entirely heathen, though the



Britons of Wales and Cornwall were of course Christians ; and Morcant, the heathen king of a portion of Strathclyde, finding that many of his subjects were becoming Christian, took every opportunity of shewing his scorn for S. Kentigern. After Morcant's death, however, the bishop (says his biographer) "for many days enjoyed great peace and quiet, living in his own city of Glasgow, and going up and down throughout his diocese ; but, when some time had passed, certain sons of Belial, a generation of vipers of the brood of the aforementioned King Morcant, took counsel together how they might lay hold on Kentigern by craft, and put him to death." In consequence of this the bishop determined to leave the north for a time, and go southwards to Menevia (now S. David's), where S. David himself at that time ruled as bishop. Kentigern's twelfth century biographer describes him as proceeding by Carlisle, and says that, "having heard that many among the mountains were given to idolatry, he turned aside, and (God helping him and confirming the word by signs following) he converted to the Christian religion many of the heathen and others who had erred in their faith. He remained some time in a certain forest, where he erected a cross, as the sign of the faith, whence it was called in English Crosthwaite, in which very place a church recently erected is dedicated to the name of the blessed Kentigern. Afterwards turning aside from thence the saint directed his steps by the sea shore, and, throughout his journey scattering the seed of the Divine Word, he gathered in a plentiful harvest to the LORD." Kentigern's journey, then, from Glasgow to Wales was the means of bringing Christianity to these parts, and Lancashire, Westmorland, and Cumberland may look upon S. Kentigern as their Apostle ; and certainly his name is not unworthy to rank on a level with those of

the three great saints, to whom the more Teutonic parts of the north of England owe their Christianity—Aedhan, Ceadda, and Cuthberht. Moreover, we should notice that the Christianity of Lancashire has been continuous since the days of Kentigern, for, before the English conquered it piecemeal, they themselves had become Christian, and we find S. Wilfrith claiming, as a matter of course, for the English Church, the lands that had belonged to the fugitive British priests, and receiving himself, for the furtherance of the gospel, lands in Amounderness and on the Ribble, as soon as that part of Lancashire was occupied by the English. There is no break, then, between the Christianity of S. Kentigern and of us Lancashire folk of this generation, as there is between the Christianity of S. Alban and of the men of Hertfordshire, and we may fairly claim him as our *first Bishop and Apostle*.

With Kentigern's doings in Wales (interesting as they are) we to-night have no concern. It is enough to say that he founded the monastery of Llanelwy, afterwards called by the name of one of his disciples, S. Asaph; it is in the Vale of Clwyd, at the confluence of the Elwy and the Clwyd, which latter river was perhaps named by Kentigern from some fancied resemblance to the river and valley of his northern home, to which he was longing to return. The battle of Arthuret, in 573 (which we have already mentioned as giving the upper hand to the Christian party in Strathclyde), established Rhydderch on the throne, and he at once recalled Kentigern. Kentigern consecrated Asaph to succeed him at Llanelwy, and then left the church by the north door, which was never afterwards opened (excepting once a year) in deference to the sanctity of him who through it had gone away for ever from his spiritual children. Two-thirds of his monks, we are told, accompanied him, only three hundred remaining with S. Asaph. At Hoddam, in



Dumfriesshire, King Rhydderch met him, and Kentigern addressed the assembled multitude; the ground on which he sat (according to his biographer) grew into a little hill, "which remaineth there unto this "day." Here he fixed his see for a time, but afterwards transferred it once more to Glasgow. We may gather from the dedication of certain churches that the monks, who had accompanied him from Wales, penetrated with him as far north as the upper valley of the Scotch Dee; but no doubt his vast and half-converted diocese left little time for missionary effort outside it.

The only remaining incident in S. Kentigern's life, which may be considered historical, is his one meeting with S. Columba. His biographer gives a graphic account of the meeting of the two companies, how the two choirs approached each other, singing psalms with tuneful voices, how the two saints met and kissed each other, how, "having "first satiated themselves with the spiritual banquet "of divine words, they after that refreshed themselves with bodily food," how during several days they conversed on the things of God and that which concerneth the salvation of souls, and then, saying farewell with mutual love, they returned to their homes, never to meet again. They exchanged their pastoral staves as a token of their love, and the one which Columba gave to Kentigern was for centuries preserved at Ripon.

Twenty years more of hard work lay before S. Kentigern, though he was already old. At the age of 85 he died, whilst preparing himself on the morning of the octave of the Epiphany, Jan. 13, 603, (which fell on a Sunday in that year,) for the work of baptising a multitude of people—a work which he had been wont to perform on that day every year. The saint was in his bath, when, "lifting up his hands and his eyes to heaven, and "bowing his head as if sinking into a quiet sleep,

“he yielded up his spirit.” His friend, King Rhydderch, died in the same year, and the leadership of the loosely knit confederacy of Strathclyde passed to the Scot King Aedhan, of whom we have already spoken.

I must bring these notes to an end, for I have tired you enough. I had intended to trace the history of Paulinus' short visit to Strathclyde 30 years later, though indeed he only just crossed its boundary as far as Whalley; of S. Cuthberht's stay at Carlisle, 80 years after S. Kentigern's death, and the pathetic last meeting between him and his friend Herberht of Derwent Water; of the adoption of various customs of the Catholic Church by the Strathclyde Christians in 704, sixty years before their kinsfolk in Wales did so; and of the English Bishopric of Whithorn in Galloway, which lasted some 80 years. I should like to have spoken also of the decline of English influence in Strathclyde, the claims of Lindisfarn over Cumberland, the revival of the Sees of Glasgow and Galloway, and the foundation of the Bishopric of Carlisle. But I have lingered so long over the general history of Strathclyde and the life of the “Gentle and Beloved” Apostle of Lancashire, that there is no time left. Moreover, I am painfully aware that these subjects would even more (if possible) than those, which we have dwelt upon to-night, come under Hamlet's famous description of the play that he had once seen, “caviare to the general,” utterly uninteresting to most folk. I only wish that I could hope that any one's opinion of this evening's paper would coincide with what Hamlet went on to say was his opinion about the play, which most people had thought dull, that it was “set down with as much “modesty as cunning.”