IV.—NEW LIGHT ON ST. NINIAN.

By W. Douglas Simpson.

In September, 1940, Dr. Wilhelm Levison, in a very interesting paper contributed to *Antiquity*,[1] called the attention of British scholars to an eighth-century poem upon St. Ninian, *Miracula Nynie Episcopi*, which has survived in a manuscript collection now belonging to the public library of Bamberg. Although this poem had been published in Germany for over twenty years,[2] it had passed almost unnoticed in this country. In particular, I was unaware of its existence when writing my own book on *St. Ninian and the Origins of the Christian Church in Scotland*, which appeared in 1940. The poem was sent to Alcuin by some of his pupils at York, who obtained a copy from *Candida Casa*, where the author lived, as we learn from his frequent use of the word *noster* in referring to the monastery. As Alcuin in a letter of acknowledgment to the monks of Whithorn conveys his congratulations to the author, it is evident that the latter was living at the time, and so the period of the poem is fixed.

Now this eighth-century poem is the oldest source we have for St. Ninian, with the single exception of the short notice in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Clearly therefore it is a fact which must be taken into account by all students of the missionary and his times. In the course of an exceedingly acute and learned analysis, Professor Karl

[1] "An eighth-century poem on St. Ninian," *Antiquity*, vol. XIV, pp. 280-91.

[2] Text in *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, vol. IV, pp. 943-62, published in 1923. See also Karl Strecker, "*Zu den Quellen für das Leben des hl. Ninian*," in *Neues Archiv für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 1920-22, vol. XLIII, pp. 1-26.

Strecker, its editor, has demonstrated that the poem was not the older *Vita, quam sermo barbaricus obscurabat,* which Ailred in his twelfth-century *Life* tells us that he used,[3] but that this older *Life* was the groundwork both of the *Miracula* and of Ailred's tract. The point is an important one, for the older *Vita* is thus carried back at least as far as the eighth century: indeed, Dr. Strecker adduces good evidence that it was also the source from which Bede derived his brief account of Ninian. The older *Life,* which was written in Latin, was certainly available in *Candida Casa* to the poet, and Bede probably got it thence through his friendship with Bishop Pechthelm—or rather, he obtained from Pechthelm some particulars culled from the *Life,* since his use of the phrase *ut perhibent*[4] implies that he had not himself seen the *Life.*

In two ways, our poem compels a reconsideration of the received accounts of St. Ninian's enterprise. On the one hand, it gives us some new information, which we must try to fit into the pattern of our reconstruction of the first Christian mission to the land we now call Scotland. On the other hand, the poem is silent about certain happenings which play a prominent part in Ailred's later biography of the saint. This silence, in so early a source, raises a doubt as to whether the happenings in question are not inventions of the medieval hagiographer.

The *Miracula* agrees with Bede in telling us that Ninian visited Rome and that he dedicated his *Candida Casa* to St. Martin, and it anticipates Ailred in asserting that he was consecrated bishop by the Pope. But it says nothing about his visit to St. Martin on the return journey to Britain. Critics have fastened upon this silence and deduced therefrom that the story is a subsequent fabrication. Dr. Levison has little hesitation upon the matter:

"It is unthinkable that the poet would omit a personal link of his hero with the celebrated bishop of Tours, if he had found it

[3] Ailred, *Vita Niniani,* Prologue.
[4] *Hist. Eccles.,* bk. III, chap. IV.

mentioned in his source. We have here no doubt a later accretion to the legend made either by popular imagination or invented by Ailred himself."[5]

The objection thus raised is a crucial one. If we reject the association of St. Ninian with St. Martin, the Apostle of Scotland is bereft of his moorings in historic time—for Bede, our primary source, gives us no indication as to Ninian's *floruit*, beyond the bare statement that he lived a long while before (*multo ante tempore*) the mission of St. Columba. As Mr. Ian Richmond puts it:

"Dr. Levison's shrewd analysis of the poetical *Life* leaves us in some considerable doubt as to the real date of St. Ninian's activities, since it stamps as a later invention the association of St. Ninian and St. Martin which was the chronological basis for the founding of the *Candida Casa*. We can now no longer connect that foundation with the date of 397, and St. Ninian is left unanchored amid the confused tide of events that ruined Roman Britain."[6]

Even more emphatic is the verdict of Mr. R. H. Hodgkin, who roundly declares that the poem "plays havoc" with the received Ninianic chronology.[7]

With all due deference to the opinion of three such eminent scholars, I cannot feel that we are justified in thus summarily rejecting the association of St. Ninian with St. Martin, on the purely negative evidence of the poem's silence—any more than we ought to reject, for example, the story of the meeting between St. Columba and St. Kentigern told in Joceline's twelfth-century *Vita Kentegerni*, merely because it is not found in Adamnan. Neither Adamnan nor the author of the *Miracula Nynie* were writing formal biographies of their heroes, they were compiling accounts of their wonder-works for the edification of the faithful, and

[5] Levison, *op. cit.*, p. 8. Subsequently (*Antiquity*, vol. XIV, p. 442) he casts all caution to the winds: the tale "must now be considered as worthless." By contrast, it is to be noted that Prof. Strecker makes no point of the omission of the Martin episode.

[6] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Newcastle upon Tyne*, vol. IX, p. 229.

[7] *Journal Brit. Archæol. Ass.*, 3rd ser., vol. VI, p. 132.

their approach to their material is frankly selective. So far from being a twelfth-century fabrication, Joceline's account of the meeting between Kentigern and Columba bears the unmistakable hall-mark of a piece of authentic truth based upon older sources. He tells us that the two leaders exchanged their staffs, a purely Celtic and non-medieval practice; and in another place he goes out of his way to note that St. Kentigern's staff was not the crozier of Joceline's own time, but the curved *bachuil* or walking-stick of the Celtic wayfaring monk: *non sperica, sicut nunc temporis est cernere, sed de simplici ligno tantum reflexa.*"[8] So also the description of the large choirs of singing clerics who accompanied the two saints is again pure Celtic practice. There can be no doubt that in the whole story Joceline has preserved for us a genuine parcel of ancient truth; and indeed the conference between the two great leaders of the Britonic and Scotic churches can be satisfactorily fitted into the political and religious circumstances of their time.[9] Yet of all this there is not one word in Adamnan. Surely that ought to warn us against the rashness of jettisoning the association between St. Ninian and St. Martin, merely because the eighth-century poet saw no occasion for recording it in a treatise dealing with St. Ninian's miracles.

Let us remember that the link between our Ninian and the saint of Tours does not depend on Ailred. Both Bede and the *Miracula* tell us that Ninian called his *Candida Casa* after the name of St. Martin. In the ancient legend of St. Cairnech, as preserved in the *Book of Ballymote, Candida Casa* figures as *taigh Martain*, the house of Martin.[10] We have also to explain the associations of the names of the two missionaries in very early ecclesiastical centres such as Brampton in Cumberland, and St. Ninian's Annat of Methlick, the mother-church of the ancient district of Formartin,

[8] *Vita Kentegerni*, chap. XIII. For the exchange of *bachuils* among Celtic clerics, see J. Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. II, App. to Preface, p. liv.

[9] See my *The Historical Saint Columba*, pp. 18, note 3, and 29, note 1.

[10] *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, p. 52.

Martin's land, in Aberdeenshire, both of which I have discussed.[11] A still more striking instance, Strathmartin in Angus, will be dealt with in the sequel. *Candida Casa* was undoubtedly a going concern in the fifth century,[12] which fact is in accordance with the received chronology of St. Ninian. At all events it seems to dispose of any suggestion that his *floruit* can have been later than St. Martin's time.

Mr. Richmond, however, comes forward with the bold and challenging suggestion that St. Ninian may have laboured *earlier*. "It would not now be surprising to find his activity occurring between A.D. 369 and 383 rather than in the later decade." But even if we leave aside the association with St. Martin, it seems to me that the religious and political conditions of the time point distinctly to the traditional chronology. I think we can trace a sort of action and reaction between Paganism and Christianity in Roman Britain during the fourth century. The pagan revival under Julian led in the Western Empire to a burst of renewed vitality among the elder faiths, which in Britain seems to have persisted for a generation or more. Thus we have the well-known dedication by the governor of *Britannia Prima* at Cirencester;[13] the rebuilding of the Lydney Park temple, with great splendour, *circa* 367;[14] the shrine erected about the same date within the ramparts of Maiden Castle;[15] the reconstruction, after 379, of the central temple in *Verulamium*;[16] sun worship at Corbridge in the later fourth century;[17] and, if a recent suggestion be accepted, the

[11] *St. Ninian*, pp. 81-6, 88, 100-1. The Annat of Methlick is on record in 1365—W. Temple, *The Thanage of Fermartyn*, p. 412.

[12] See W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, vol. II, pp. 46-9; W. A. Phillips, *History of the Church of Ireland*, vol. I, pp. 62-76, 132-4, 137; also my own *The Celtic Church in Scotland*, chap. V.

[13] *Archæologia*, vol. LXIX, pp. 188-91.

[14] R. E. M. Wheeler, *Report on the Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire.*

[15] R. E. M. Wheeler, *Maiden Castle, Dorset*, pp. 72-8.

[16] R. E. M. and T. V. Wheeler, *Verulamium*, pp. 31, 131-3.

[17] See *Corbridge Roman Station* (Official Guide), p. 23; *Journal Rom. Studies*, vol. II, pp. 136-7; *Corstopitum, Report of Excavations, 1908*, pp. 17-18; *Hist. Northumberland*, vol. X, pp. 508-9.

arrival there of the famous *lanx*.[18] Such indications perhaps hardly square with the idea of an aggressive Christian mission to the tribes beyond the *limes*. On the other hand, as I have tried to show in my former work, St. Ninian's enterprise fits in perfectly with Stilicho's doings in Britain in 396,[19] and may have been just as much a detail of imperial policy as was the mission of Ulfilas to the Goths earlier in the century. Moreover, the viceroy of Britain at that time, Chrysanthus, is known to have been a Christian. Then again, the system of protectorates or client states, organized by the Roman government beyond the northern frontier of Britain during the last century of imperial rule, seems to provide the political conditions for Ninian's undertaking; and this system, as Mr. Richmond himself has pointed out, reached its climax only at the very end of the Roman period. "The consolidation of Strathclyde and Manau," he observes, "is seen as one of the latest manifestations of Roman policy," and it is to this development, reaching maturity at the end of the fourth century, that he ascribes Stilicho's decision not to restore Hadrian's Wall.[20] Now it has long seemed to me that the formation of these client states of Manau and Strathclyde is the prerequisite of the Ninianic mission.

There is a curious phrase in Bede about Ninian being brought up at Rome "regularly in the faith and in the mysteries of truth" (*regulariter fidem et misteria veritatis edoctus*). What is meant by *regulariter*? It can hardly mean *secundum regulam* in the monastic sense, since that would surely be an anachronism. Ducange does not quote this usage earlier than the fourteenth century. Bede is so careful of his language that I feel sure the word is deliberately chosen, and I imagine that it was *secundum regulam* in the sense of canonical, which is found in Augustine and others of the Latin Fathers. On chronological grounds, it

[18] *Journal Rom. Studies*, vol. XXXI, p. 127.

[19] See further on this subject my paper on "Stilicho and Britain" in *Journal Brit. Archæol. Ass.*, 3rd ser., vol. VII, pp. 41-52.

[20] *Hist. Northumberland*, vol. XV, pp. 114-16.

is improbable that the reference is to Pelagianism. Possibly Bede, or his authority, was thinking of the vague semi-arianism which after the Council of Rimini persisted for a long time in the west. Gildas in his thirteenth chapter describes the Arian heresy as causing great dissensions among the British clergy during the last century of Roman rule.

Ninian's journey to Rome, and his sojourn in the capital, are set forth by our poet with much picturesque detail; but Professor Strecker has shown that nearly all these vivid touches are cribbed from Aldhelm's *De Laude Virginitatis*, so that no historical inferences are justified. Only one passage strikes the editor as "*ganz individuell,*" and therefore perhaps to be referred back to the original *Vita*. In this passage the young Briton is portrayed as being fascinated by the ancient monuments and the many churches of Rome, *terrarum domina*. *Candida Roma* the imperial city is termed, and its walls are *candentia moenia* (vv. 43, 49). Dr. Strecker goes so far as to suggest that it was the sight of those gleaming white buildings which gave St. Ninian the idea of his own *Candida Casa*.[21]

One of the reasons why Mr. Richmond is disposed to consider the possibility of St. Ninian's mission having taken place earlier in the fourth century than the date usually assigned is the account given in the *Miracula* of the building of the *Candida Casa*:

> "If the poetical details are true, Ninian's church at Whithorn was a more remarkable building architecturally than is commonly supposed. It had brick walls and a mosaic pavement, which brings it into line with buildings such as the Christian church at *Calleva Atrebatum*. The corollary of this would be that Ninian was in closer touch than often thought with fourth-century Christianity, and perhaps closer to it in time."

Unfortunately for this pleasing suggestion, there is no word

[21] "*Hier sah er die Muster, nach denen er seine Candida Casa, die das Staunen der ganzen Gegend hervorrief, errichten liess.*"—Strecker, *op. cit.*, p. 9: *cf.* his note to the passage cited in the poem.

in the poem about a mosaic pavement. In three separate places (vv. 322, 327, 407) the floor of the church is referred to as *marmora*, but it seems clear from the way in which this word is used that it is no more than a stock poetical flourish for "pavement"; so that it would be rash indeed to draw the conclusion that St. Ninian's church had literally a flooring of marble. As to the brick walls, those of the church at Silchester are not of brick but of stone, though the quoins are carried out in brick. None the less, it remains true that a brick building in Novantia in the year 397 could have been derived from nowhere else than from Roman Britain. But alas! Dr. Strecker points out that the words used by the poet—"*coctilibus muris fundatam et culmine celsam*"—appear to embody a tag from Ovid,[22] and once again we cannot safely draw any conclusion as to the actual character of St. Ninian's edifice. Yet, even if we grant that the poet has cobbled in a picturesque phrase from the *Metamorphoses*, we should not utterly exclude the possibility that, in so doing, he was none the less recording a concrete fact. The ecclesiastical history of Whithorn seems to have been continuous from Roman into Anglian times, and it is not improbable that the original *Candida Casa*, or some part of it, may have survived until the eighth century, just as Romano-British churches were still standing in Kent in St. Augustine's day. Even if the walls were of stone, roughcast, with brick quoins and arches appearing, this might have accounted for the poet's description. Roman brick, used for the pillars of hypocausts, was not unknown in northern Britain; nor, for that matter, is there anything inconceivable in the idea of St. Ninian bringing his bricks by ship to *Candida Casa* from the southern portion of the

[22] "*Pyramus et Thisbe, iuvenum pulcherrimus alter,*
Altera, quas oriens habuit, praelata puellis,
Contiguas tenuere domos, ubi dicitur altam
Coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem."
—Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, bk. IV, vv. 55-9. Perhaps it is not without significance that the same verse is cited by Bede, *Hexaemeron*, vol. II, p. 126. For the study of Ovid in the Dark Ages see Sir John E. Sandys, *Hist. Classical Scholarship*, 3rd ed., vol. I, p. 638.

diocese, or even from the continent. This might account for Ailred's story that he obtained his masons from Tours. "British Christianity in the first half of the fifth century," we shall do well to remember with Sir John Edward Lloyd,[23] "was well-organized, cultured, and in close touch with the churches of Gaul."

Yet another indication of the connexion between St. Ninian and St. Martin seems to be the way in which the arrangements of the ecclesiastical centre at Whithorn were modelled on those of Tours. I am myself disposed to lay considerable stress upon this resemblance;[24] and it is interesting to note that a very similar disposition is found, as Mr. Ralegh Radford has recently observed,[25] in the early Celtic monastery excavated by him on the rocky summit of far-famed Tintagel. Here the earthen rampart gave no indication of being older than the monastery which it encloses, hence the investigator concluded "that the structures in question were erected by the monks to form the *vallum monasterii* which was considered desirable to emphasize the severance between the community within and the world beyond." If this was the case, it was the reverse of the usual procedure, by which the local magnate handed over a *cashel* or fort to the brethren, who erected their church and huts within its cincture. Here again, it is possible that the fortifications still traceable at Whithorn may supply a parallel, though with a difference. In the Irish additions to Nennius there is a hard tale how Luirig, a brother of St. Cairnech, one of Ninian's successors at Whithorn, about the middle of the fifth century, "forcibly built a fort within the precincts of the monastery of Cairnech his brother."[26] It is, however, not impossible that Luirig's *cathair* may be represented, not by the *vallum* at Isle of Whithorn, but by the curious rectangular earthwork with rounded corners at

[23] *Hist. Wales*, vol. I, p. 109.
[24] *St. Ninian*, pp. 76-7.
[25] *Antiquaries' Journal*, vol. XX, p. 518; *Journal Royal Inst. Cornwall*, vol. XXV, app., p. 26.
[26] *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots*, p. 53.

Rispain, close west of the royal burgh.[27] If this were so, Rispain would be a unique example of a sub-Roman fort in Scotland, built in the traditional Roman manner. Its whole appearance is that of a Roman permanent fort, yet its excavation yielded none of the relics to be looked for in such a structure.

In Romano-British times the local centre of population at Whithorn was the important group of crannogs at Dowalton; and long ago it was suggested by Dr. John Stuart that the neighbourhood of this community led to the choice of Whithorn as his headquarters by St. Ninian.[28] A parallel to this might be suggested in St. Blane's monastery at Kingarth in Bute, which may have been planted there so as to be in touch with the vitrified fort on Dunagoil.[29] The Latinus stone at Whithorn can be accepted as evidence that, after the introduction of Christianity, the local centre of population was established at what much later became the royal burgh. Did the Dowalton crannog-dwellers transfer themselves thither on embracing the new faith? St. Ninian's choice of the isolated site on Isle of Whithorn for his own monastery, some miles away from the local nucleus of population, seems an obvious imitation of St. Martin's arrangements at Marmoutier, and indeed was in accordance with regular Gallo-Roman practice. No doubt there would be a church, as there certainly was a cemetery in Whithorn itself, for the convenience of the civil community. We may compare Christchurch, Canterbury, within the walls of the Roman city, and St. Augustine's monastery at some distance beyond its gates. It is worth remembering, also, that the Romano-British church of St. Martin, which, when Augustine arrived in Canterbury, he found restored for her use by the Kentish king's Christian wife, was likewise situated without the city walls. St. Ninian's monastery on the Isle, like Tintagel, will have been of the preclaustral

[27] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxxvi, pp. 621-6: *Hist. Mon. (Scotl.) Com., Wigtown*, pp. xxxi, 172.

[28] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. vi, pp. 154-7.

[29] A suggestion made by Robert Blain, *Hist. Bute*, p. 80.

type that prevailed throughout the west before the general introduction of the Benedictine rule about the eighth century. We have a glimpse of the scattered cells which made up such an early monastery in the oldest accounts of Glastonbury.[30]

According to the *Miracula*, the foundation of *Candida Casa* took place after the mission to the Picts, whereas Ailred places it before. The poet describes the mission as a resounding success, and perhaps I may transcribe what he says on the subject as a fair sample of his style (vv. 61-74):

> *"Que tibi digna canam, praesul venerandus in orbe,*
> *Vel quis digna potest componere carmina versu,*
> *Prospera qui populis Christi praecepta dedisti*
> *Doctor ubique pius Pictorum examina nanctus?*
> *Idola colentes turparunt mortis in umbra,*
> *Quos ille ad Christum vertit pietate magistra;*
> *Cuncti certatim merguntur gurgite sancto,*
> *Flagitium sceleris purgabant fonte perenni.*
> *Sic namque ore pio seminavit germina vite,*
> *Iam late per populos auxit lucranda talenta,*
> *Plurima basilicis construxit rura novellis,*
> *Que nunc eximio monachorum examine pollent.*
> *Vere Christicole servant monastica iura."*

Such language is, of course, part of the stock-in-trade of the hagiographer, and some of the lines indeed have been borrowed from Aldhelm or Bede. Our passage must therefore be used with the utmost caution in any attempt to assess St. Ninian's achievement; and it is fortunate indeed that we can check it by Bede's sober and positive statement that he brought about the conversion of the southern Picts.[31]

[30] See Willis, *Glastonbury*.

[31] The literary borrowings evinced by the *Miracula Nynie* are investigated with his usual thoroughness by Dr. Strecker. The subject lies, of course, outside the scope of this paper: but a conclusion of some historical importance emerges in the revelation of the contents of the library at *Candida Casa* under Anglian rule in the eighth century. It appears that our poet used, among classical authors, Sedulus, Juvencus, Arator, Cyprianus Gallus, and—I suppose we must add—Ovid, unless indeed he obtained the tag from the *Metamorphoses* at second hand. Among contemporary writers he was acquainted with the works of Bede and Aldhelm.

Sir John Lloyd has pointed out that it was not until the latter half of the sixth century that the British Church took on the predominantly monastic character which afterwards so strongly marked it. In the time of Gildas, he observes,[32]

> "The monastic element in the British Church is not in the ascendant . . . the Church is not governed by monks; one reference there is to an abbot, but the ecclesiastics who fill the scene are bishops and priests, whose power arises out of their office and has nothing monastic about it."

What we know about the ecclesiastical origins of Glasgow is in entire accordance with this development. Sir John notes that by the year 500 Christianity had "firmly rooted itself in the valley of the Clyde," and that Gildas, a native of the district, was "brought up, it is clear, in a purely Christian atmosphere."[33] Of this earliest or secular Christianity St. Ninian's foundation at Glasgow was the local nucleus: his consecration of a cemetery there was plainly meant to serve the needs of a civil community. By contrast, St. Kentigern's subsequent foundation at Glasgow is rightly described by Sir John Lloyd as a "monastic centre"[34]—in accordance, that is, with the trend of the Celtic Church in the sixth century. There is thus no need to assume that in the interval between the two foundations Christianity at Glasgow had lapsed. In this connexion it is well to remember that early Christian cemeteries were by no means always close beside churches.[35] And the lack of mention of a church associated with the Ninianic cemetery at Glasgow may be contrasted with the express statement of Alcuin, in his *Life of St. Vedast*, that this saint, on being sent to Arras, made it his first business to discover and reconsecrate the abandoned church of the Roman Christians.[36] It is reasonable to infer that, had such a church existed in con-

[32] *Hist. Wales*, vol. I, pp. 137-8.
[33] *Op. cit.*, p. 136.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[35] See Stuart's *Sculptured Stones*, vol. II, App. to Preface, p. lxiv.
[36] *Acta Sanctorum*, February, vol. I, p. 866.

nexion with the Glasgow burying ground, and had Christianity lapsed in the interval, we should have been told about its reconsecration by St. Kentigern.

To the list of Ninianic sites in eastern Scotland, brought forward in my book, I am now able to add two more, in both of which, as I submit, the evidence is extremely distinct.

In the Register of the Great Seal of Scotland is a charter, dated 12th February, 1639, granting to Alexander Kenneway the lands, barony and castle of Sauchie, in Clackmannanshire, together with the lands of Coldoun, Cavilston, and Brunthill, with the advowson of the chapelry of St. Ninian, in the county of Kinross, belonging to the barony of Sauchie.[37] The Rev. Dr. William Stephen, in calling my attention to this new Ninianic locality, writes as follows:

"The lands of Coldoun or Colden, Cavilston and Brunthill lie at the west end or south-west side of Lochleven, south of Kinross. The North Queensferry-Perth road passes through them. Part of the lands is the farm of Gouderannet, the steading of which is situated on the west side of the road and close to it, and near it is a stream which flows into Lochleven. Some years ago I visited the locality and confirmed the names and sites. All trace and memory of the chapel are gone; and it may well have disappeared centuries ago, while the patronage and revenues survived in the writs of the lairds."

All the place names mentioned in the charter are shown on the O.S. Map. Gouderannet, as Professor Watson notices, embodies the ancient Celtic ecclesiastical term *annat*, signifying the mother church of a district; and the neighbourhood of the name to a stream, he points out, is very frequent.[38] The significance of this association of a chapel of St. Ninian with the early church word is obvious, and it is reasonable to recognize here another genuine Ninianic site, which helps to fill up the blank between St.

[37] *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, 1643-51, no. 893. *Cf.* also *ibid.*, no. 1490, and *Retours (Special), Kinross*, nos. 7, 22.

[38] *Celtic Place Names of Scotland*, p. 256.

Ninian's at Stirling and the Ninianic locality at Arbirlot.

Equally satisfactory, for the same geographical reason, is my second new Ninianic locality, in the valley of the Dichty, on the northern outskirts of Dundee. The church of the little glen was dedicated to St. Martin, whence the parish takes its name, Strathmartin; and the parish adjoining to the east, anciently known as Mains but now united with Strathmartin, has its church under the invocation of St. Ninian.[39] The existence in the strath of an early ecclesiastical settlement, strongly hinted by the pair of dedications, is confirmed by the presence of an important group of sculptured monuments of the kind distinctively connected with Old Celtic religious sites. In Strathmartin kirkyard have been found no less than thirteen of these sculptured stones, two having Pictish symbols. Close to the churchyard is Nine Maiden's well, quite likely an embroidering of Nine Wells, i.e. Ninian's Well (as at Brampton). Also in the near neighbourhood is a spring known as Sinivee, which has been thought to be a corruption of St. Ninian. Another symbol stone stands beside Strathmartin Castle. At Balutheron, within two miles to the north, is Martin's stone, also displaying Pictish symbols. Strathmartin must have been a most important ecclesiastical locality in early Christian times; and its association with the names both of St. Ninian and St. Martin has a significance that is surely unmistakable.[40]

"Until the Edwardian wars the Solway united rather than severed its two shores." So runs one of the many shrewd *dicta* of the late Mr. W. G. Collingwood;[41] and I have tried to show that this was more true of the Solway

[39] In the ancient *taxatio* of Angus (twelfth century), Stratheymartin and Stratheyninian are listed together—*Registrum Prioratus S. Andree*, p. 35.

[40] See J. Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. I, Notices of the Plates, pp. 20, 34, and plates LXXVII and CXXXII, also vol. II, p. 58 and plate CI; J. Romilly Allen and J. Anderson, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, pt. III, pp. 208, 230-4, 266; A. Jervise, *Memorials of Angus and the Mearns*, vol. II, p. 35; also the same author's *Epitaphs and Inscriptions*, vol. I, p. 203.

[41] *Northumbrian Crosses of the pre-Norman Age*, p. 98.

basin about the year 400 than perhaps at any other time in its history.[42] Hence there is nothing in the least remarkable about the evidence for a Ninianic mission to Cumberland and Westmorland, which the late Professor Collingwood was the first to place in a general historical perspective.[43] Since discussing this Cumbrian mission in my book, I have come across a remarkable confirmation of it in a twelfth-century rhyming chronicler, Geoffrey Gaimar:

"Ninian aveit ainz baptise
Les altres Pictes del regne:
Co sunt les Westmaringiens,
Ki donc esteient Pictiens.
A Wyternen gist Saint Dinan
Long tens vint devant Columban."

"Ninian had formerly baptized
The other Picts of the kingdom:
These are the Westmaringiens
Who then were Picts.
At Whiterne lies St. Ninian
He came long before Columba."

The "other Picts" were those of the north, among whom in the preceding verses the poet says Columba dwelt. The whole passage is obviously derived from Bede; but the identification of his Southern Picts with the people of Westmorland, however absurd, must be a genuine recollection of St. Ninian's mission there.[44]

We have Bede's word for it that Ninian converted the Southern Picts, and that they were still Christians in Columba's time. It is thus odd how so many modern writers have persisted in asserting that the Christianity of the Southern Picts lapsed after Ninian's death. Quite apart from Bede's testimony, there are, as I have elsewhere

[42] *St. Ninian*, pp. 19-21.
[43] *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, p. 310.
[44] Geoffrey Gaimar, *Lestorie des Engles*, ed. Sir T. Duffus Hardy and C. T. Martin (Chronicles and Memorials Series), vol. i, p. 40; vol. ii, pp. 29-30. Gaimar's date is *circa* 1135-1147. For the Westmoringas see *Hist. Mon. Com.; Report on Westmorland*, p. xlviii.

shown,[45] not a few literary indications pointing to a continuance of the faith in Scotland during the fifth and sixth centuries. A fresh piece of such evidence, to which attention has recently been called, is supplied by the account of the war of Catraeth in the *Gododdin* of Aneirin.[46] This Welsh poet lived in the later sixth century, and so was a contemporary of the campaign he describes, whose date, as near as can be ascertained, will have fallen somewhere in the last years of the century, during the reign of Ethelfrith of Northumbria (592-617). The poem gives us a vivid picture of a British chief, Mynndawg Mwynifawr, ruling from *Dun Eidyn*, Edinburgh, in the old homeland of the Votadini. In the expedition in question he led his war-band against the Northumbrian Angles, and all but one of the Celtic heroes perished in a hard battle fought at Catraeth, probably Catterick, the old Roman Station of *Cataractonium*, where the Stainmore Road branches off from the Dere Street. For our present purpose, the point to be noted is that this British war-lord and his followers, seated at Edinburgh about the end of the sixth century, are represented as all Christians. They "go to churches to do penance," and "present gold to the altar."[46]

Let us look finally at the archæological evidence. Perhaps it is not generally realized how this has been piling up in recent years. First of all there are the inscribed Christian stones. In addition to the famous group from Whithorn and Kirkmadrine, we have the Brox stone from Liddisdale, the Yarrow stone, the Kirkhope stone from the Manor Water, south-west of Peebles, and the Catstane near Kirkliston : to these we should add the Brigomaglos stone from *Vindolanda* (Chesterholm) on Hadrian's Wall. Upon these stones I may be allowed to quote from the Foreword to the Ordnance Survey Map of Britain in the Dark Ages

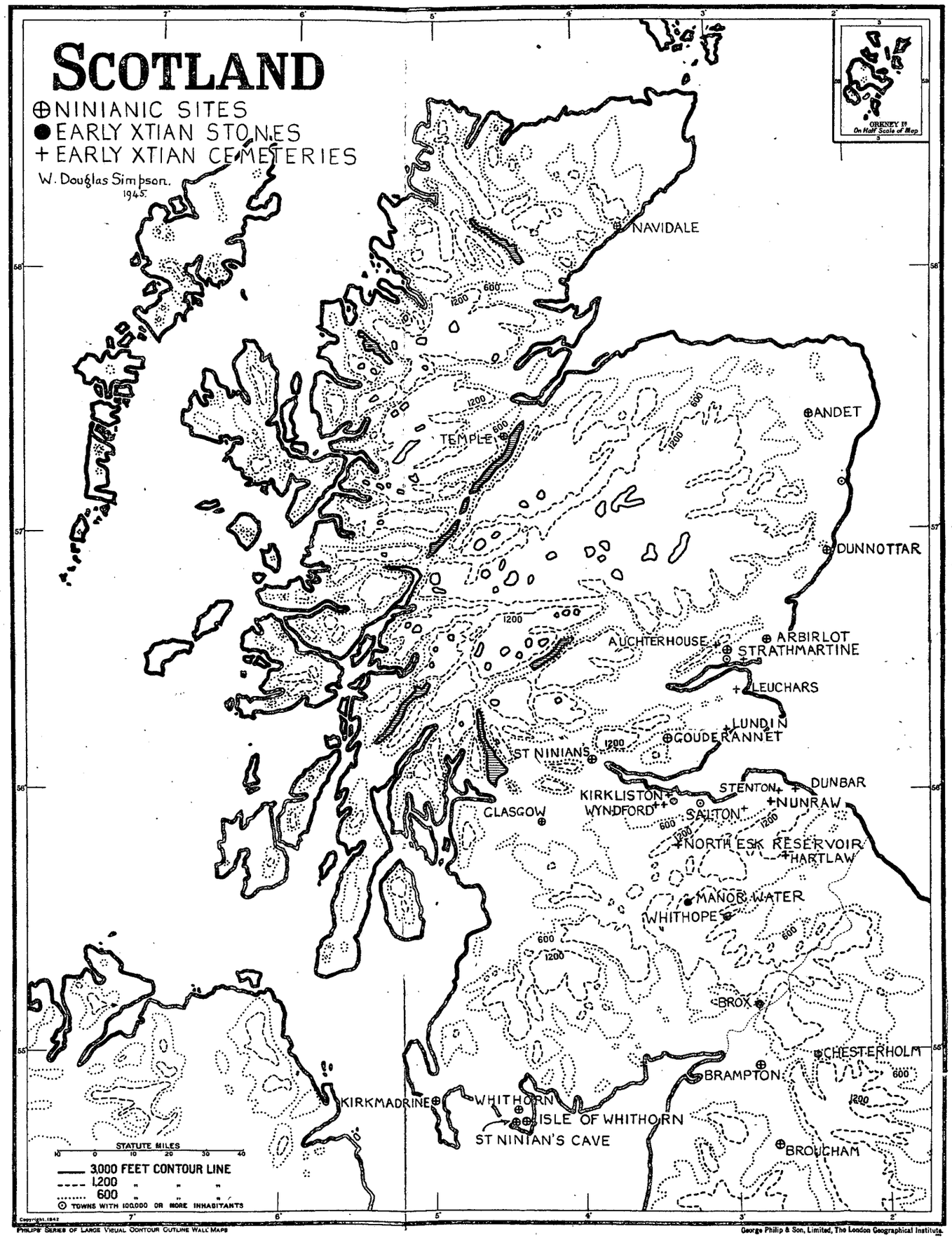
[45] *The Celtic Church in Scotland*, chap. v.

[46] See Kenneth Jackson, "The Gododdin of Aneirin" in *Antiquity*, vol. XIII, pp. 25-34.

(North sheet)—an opinion all the more valuable because of the wholesome caution that properly guides the utterances of a government publication :

"These were the tombstones of important persons who were also Christians. The inscriptions are in Latin, in late Roman capitals. They are evidence of the early existence of Christianity, and with it perhaps of some degree of Roman culture and literary (however slight and restricted) throughout what may be called the intra-mural region. It is usual to connect some of them with the mission of St. Ninian (about 400). The presence of other inscribed stones both at Whithorn itself and at Kirkmadrine close by, supports this view. The date of these stones is uncertain. None is likely to be later than 600. The Catstane must surely be earlier than the foundation of the Anglian bishopric of Abercorn close by, in 681; and the Liddisdale stone is unlikely to have been erected after the battle of Daegsanstone (603), which took place only a few miles away. For the stone is a monument of British culture and it was the Britons as well as the Scots who were defeated there, thus permitting pagan Anglian culture to penetrate westward. Indeed if we can trust the late Life of St. Kentigern, that influence had already reached Dumfriesshire; for he rebukes the inhabitants of Hoddam on account of their worship of Odin."

Now, when "important persons who were also Christians" embraced the new faith, it followed as a matter of course that their dependants accompanied their master in the change-over. Our scattered inscribed stones are certainly not the monuments of isolated believers; they presuppose communities of humbler folk for whom no tombstone was provided. Proof of this has been forthcoming at Kirkliston, where the inscribed stone was surrounded by a cemetery of anonymous burials interred in the Christian fashion, at full length, with the feet to the east, and without grave goods. In all, there were fifty-one of these graves. The presence, in this instance, of Christian monuments enables us to recognize as Christian burial places similar cemeteries of full length, orientated graves, though no inscribed stones are present. On the accompanying map I have marked in the sites of some dozen cemeteries of this kind, south of the Mounth, containing amongst them not


SCOTLAND
⊕NINIANIC SITES
●EARLY XTIAN STONES
+EARLY XTIAN CEMETERIES
W. Douglas Simpson.
1945.
ORKNEY IS
On Half Scale of Map
NAVIDALE
ANDET
DUNNOTTAR
TEMPLE
AUCHTERHOUSE
ARBIRLOT
STRATHMARTINE
LEUCHARS
LUNDIN
GOUDERANNET
ST NINIANS
DUNBAR
STENTON
NUNRAW
KIRKLISTON
WYNDFORD
SALTON
GLASGOW
NORTH ESK RESERVOIR
HARTLAW
MANOR WATER
WHITHOPE
BROX
CHESTERHOLM
BRAMPTON
KIRKMADRINE
WHITHORN
ISLE OF WHITHORN
ST NINIAN'S CAVE
BROUGHAM
1200
600
STATUTE MILES
10 0 10 20 30 40
3,000 FEET CONTOUR LINE
1,200 " " "
600 " " "
TOWNS WITH 100,000 OR MORE INHABITANTS
Copyright 1942
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George Philip & Son, Limited, The London Geographical Institute.

far short of three hundred burials. When we reflect how purely fortuitous is the discovery of such early Christian graveyards, it is obvious that we have here a useful commentary on Bede's statement that the Southern Picts had been converted by St. Ninian. And such cemeteries, we may imagine, will have been among the "*loca sancta in diversis regionibus quae clerus Brytannus aciem gladii hostilis manu gentis nostrae fugiens deseruit*" to which Wilfred alluded in his dedication sermon at Ripon, *circa* 675.[47]

[47] Eddius, *Vita Wilfridi*, chap. XVII (ed. B. Colgrave, p. 36).

ADDITIONAL NOTE TO P. 85.

In connexion with the possible use of Roman brick in the *Candida Casa*, it is worth noting that there was an important tilery at *Clanoventa* (Ravenglass), across the Solway from Whithorn. But it is not meantime known whether this tilery was working so late as the fourth century. See R. G. Collingwood, *Roman Eskdale*, pp. 17-19.