

THE TRICENTENARY OF THE REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND.*

When the close of the year 1560 is mentioned as the suitable commemorative era of the Reformation in Scotland, we are not to infer its commencement at that period. The blessed work had by that time gained a high ascendancy; and the reformed Church was now fully and conclusively organized. There are properly four periods or eras which precede and pave the way for the climax of 1560. There is the time of the ante-reformers, or of the reformers *prior to* the reformation, and reaching back to those centuries when the Culdees of Iona diffused a comparatively pure theology over much of Britain and Ireland, and when a heavenly light shone from the College of an obscure islet of the West, while the rest of Europe was wrapt in darkness. The traces of the labours of the Culdees and their descendants may be seen in the west of Scotland down to a period not very far removed from that of John Wickliffe and his followers, the Lollards of Kyle; and we find not a few faithful witnesses in the counties of Fife and of Perth, headed by such men as Resby and Craw, and the thirty noble confessors of that age, whose names though passed over by human records, are enrolled in the ancestry of heaven. And then, there is the era of Patrick Hamilton, abbot of Ferne, and the proto-martyr of the reformed faith in Scotland; during the lapse of whose years also, though few, the translated New Testament of William Tyndal had been imported by merchants and seafaring men into many Towns and Villages of the Kingdom; thus diffusing a genial influence, and co-operating with the living voice in proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. The names of Alesius, and of Seyton, and of Forrest, stand forth conspicuous in this period also; and in 1543 a noble victory is gained in the highest places of legislative and executive power, on behalf of the free circulation and use of the inspired oracles. The next period, that of George Wishart and his adherents, from 1542 to 1554, presents to us a man of high abilities, and of Cambridge renown, travelling as a missionary from place to place, and sometimes in the more rural districts of Ayrshire, and at othertimes in the season of a raging pestilence, from the balcony of the still massy gateway in the town of Dundee, directing listening multitudes to the city of refuge. The disgraceful apostasy of the Regent Arran from the reformed faith, and the violent persecution which followed this sad step, checked the progress of truth, but the boldness of Wishart grew with opposition, and his ministry of three years told most successfully on a large and extended scale. His death by martyrdom sealed

* The Rev. Dr. Burns, Professor in Knox College, delivered an admirable speech on this subject, at a soiree held in Gould Street U. P. Church, Toronto, on the evening of Thursday, 26th December last; and has, at our request, most obligingly prepared this outline of it for the *Magazine*. Almost all our congregations, we presume, have of late been listening to addresses on the Reformation: but unless we are much mistaken all our readers will feel grateful for this article.—ED.