

# REFORMATION, DISSENT AND DIVERSITY: THE STORY OF SCOTLAND'S CHURCHES, 1560–1960

**Andrew T. N. Muirhead**

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A cursory knowledge of Scottish Church History since the Reformation will indicate that the path travelled has been anything but straight and remains a partial mystery even to experienced initiates; yet Andrew Muirhead, with the meticulous and detailed care which is his hallmark, has performed a great service by disentangling the morass of secessions and reunions which were described to me in my early university days as a range of UPs, 'Wee Frees' and possibly even 'sweet peas' (see his table on page 213)!

The title covers the main themes of the work – dissent and diversity – beginning with the Scottish Reformation (1560) and ending with its 400th anniversary (1960). For good or bad, the identity of the Scottish people has – to a significant degree – been determined by its ecclesiastical history. Three chapters (1, 3 and 7) are described as overviews. These paint the broad canvas of the general history of the church in Scotland with specific focus on the Church of Scotland, often described as the national church, but certainly not established, though it has often given that false impression. Chapter 2 surveys the main episcopal traditions, Roman Catholic and Episcopalian; chapters 4 and 8 the Presbyterian churches originating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; chapter 6 discusses non-Presbyterian dissenting churches such as Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists; chapter 9 focuses on other

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minor churches – Brethren, Churches of Christ, ‘Holiness’ churches, the Church of the Nazarene, Salvation Army, Pentecostal churches, and other less well-known denominations. Chapter 10 considers non-Trinitarian churches, including Quakers, Christadelphians, Unitarians, Mormons and spiritualist churches. Then chapter 5 examines the impact of churches on people’s lives, while chapter 11 investigates the geography of Scottish churches and how they impacted upon the highlands and islands, political and other allegiances, architectural styles and how they transmitted their ethos furth of Scotland. A number of helpful maps are included to indicate the distribution of these churches.

This has been a task of consummate skill carried out with considerable devotion, for which those interested in Scottish history will be indebted. It certainly outlines the massive contribution made by Scottish churches to Scottish history. It is somewhat of a pity that this could not be extended to the contribution of these churches to global history. This book must be read by all who wish to gain an understanding of Scottish church and social life up to 1960. Perhaps the author will consider writing up the history of the next 50 years, which will easily occupy a volume on its own.