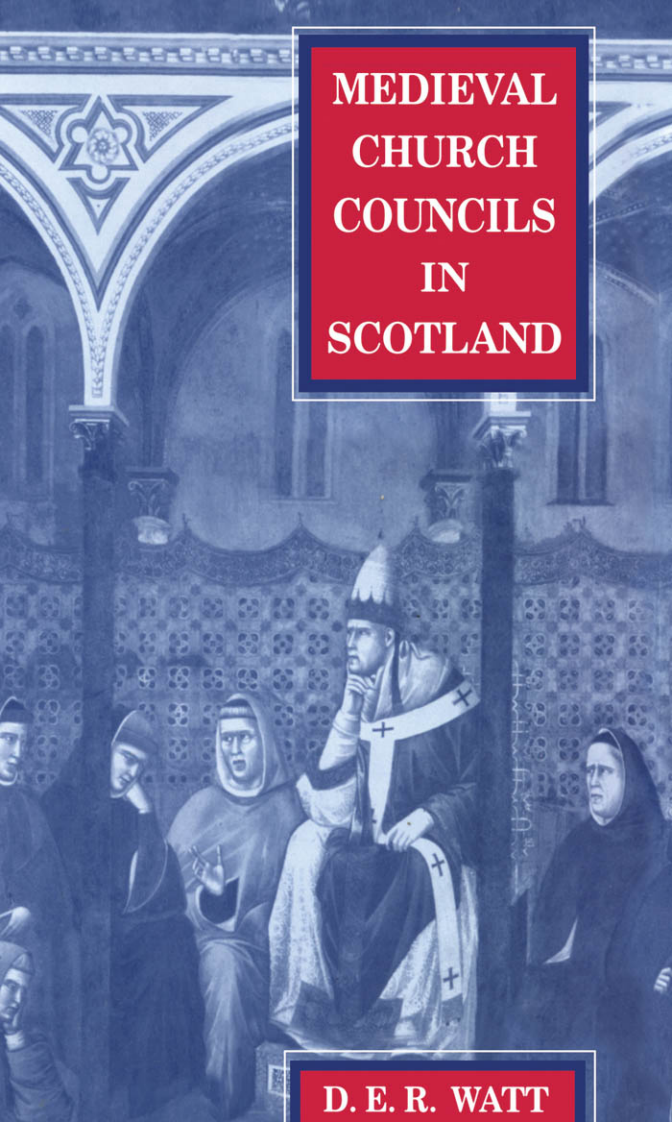
MEDIEVAL CHURCH COUNCILS IN SCOTLAND



D. E. R. WATT

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Preface

This book was commissioned some twenty years ago by Professor Walter Brandmüller (then of the University of Augsburg in Bavaria) as a contribution to the massive *Konziliengeschichte* series, of which he is the general editor. More than fifty authors have been contracted to produce volumes covering the history of councils at various levels of the organised Christian church from the beginning to the early twentieth century. Since 1980 a flow of twenty-six volumes has been published in the German language, covering both general councils drawing members from many provinces of the church, and also a wide variety of more local councils confined to one country or part of a country. Valuable comparative studies are now becoming practicable.

This volume is devoted to church councils in the small independent country of Scotland in the later Middle Ages. It possessed a unique ecclesiastical organisation from the time when political unity was achieved in the early eleventh century to the year 1472, for though it conformed to the pattern of the Western church under Rome with a system of bishops and dioceses, it was only in the changing circumstances of 1472 that one bishopric (St. Andrews) was elevated above the rest with a metropolitan archbishop for the whole Scottish church. Some two-and-a-half centuries earlier in 1225 the Scottish bishops as a group had sought papal authorisation under the universal canon law to act in council so as to tackle common problems; and it was with papal encouragement that the Scottish provincial council was then established, and was instrumental thenceforward in helping the Scottish bishops to keep abreast with each other's problems, and with developments in the church as a whole.

Study of the sources for the history of this council, of its organisation and achievements, was given a fundamental boost as long

ago as 1866 when Joseph Robertson published in Edinburgh two seminal volumes of *Concilia Scotiae* in the Bannatyne Club series. His work reached a wider readership in 1907 when David Patrick published English translations of Robertson's Latin texts. But since then, scholarly interest in an institution which held the Scottish church together for centuries (as its Protestant successor the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has done since 1560) has lapsed. It has needed Professor Brandmüller's initiative to make possible this study of how the church in one small country on the periphery of medieval Western Christendom managed its affairs. It is being published at Paderborn in Germany as nearly as possible simultaneously in the German language as part of the *Konziliengeschichte* series as *Die Konzilien in Schottland bis zur Reformation.* This English-language text is the one from which the German translation has been made.

DONALD WATT
St. Andrews, Scotland
February 2000

Abbreviations

Aberdeen Registrum	*Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis* (Spalding and Maitland Clubs, 1845).
ALKG	*Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchen-Geschichte des Mittelalters.*
AMW	*Annals of the Reigns of Malcolm and William, Kings of Scotland*, ed. A. C. Lawrie (Glasgow, 1910).
AN	Paris, Archives Nationales
Anderson, 'Beginnings'	J. Maitland Anderson, 'The beginnings of St. Andrews University 1410–1418', *SHR*, viii (1911), 225–48, 333–60.
APS	*The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1814–75).
Arbroath Liber	*Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc* (Bannatyne Club, 1848–56).
AUP	*Auctarium Chartularii Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. H. Denifle and E. Chatelain and others (Paris, 1894–1964).
Bagliani, *Cardinali*	A. P. Bagliani, *Cardinali di Curia*, vols. 1–2 (Padua, 1972).
Balfour-Melville, *James I*	E. W. M. Balfour-Melville, *James I, King of Scots* (London, 1936).
Barrow, *Bruce*	G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm*, 3rd edition (Edinburgh, 1988).

Barrow, *Kingdom*	G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (London, 1973).
Bede, *History*	*Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969).
Bellenden, *Chronicles*	*Chronicles of Scotland compiled by Hector Boece*, translated into Scots by John Bellenden 1531 (Scottish Text Society, 1938–41).
Boethius, *Historiae*	Hector Boethius, *Scotorum Historiae*, 2nd edition (Paris, 1574).
Brandmüller, *Pavia-Siena*	W. Brandmüller, *Das Konzil von Pavia-Siena 1423–1424* (Münster, 1968–74).
Brechin Registrum	*Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis* (Bannatyne Club, 1856).
Brett, *Henry I*	M. Brett, *The English Church under Henry I* (Oxford, 1975).
Burns, *Basle*	J. H. Burns, *Scottish Churchmen and the Council of Basle* (Glasgow, 1962).
C&S	*Councils and Synods*, I, parts i and ii, ed. D. Whitelock and others; II, parts i and ii, ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney (Oxford, 1981, 1964).
CDS	*Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, ed. J. Bain and others (Edinburgh, 1881–1986).
Cheney, *Synodalia*	C. R. Cheney, *English Synodalia in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1941/1968).
Cheney, *Texts*	C. R. Cheney, *Medieval Texts and Studies* (Oxford, 1973).
Chron. Bower	*Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, ed. D. E. R. Watt (Aberdeen, 1987–98).

Chron. Fordun	*Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1871–2).
Chron. Holyrood	*A Scottish Chronicle known as the Chronicle of Holyrood*, ed. M. O. Anderson (SHS, 1938).
Chron. Lanercost	*Chronicon de Lanercost* (Maitland Club, 1839).
Chron. Melrose	*The Chronicle of Melrose*, ed. A. O. Anderson and others (London, 1936).
Chron. Pluscarden	*Liber Pluscardensis*, ed. F. J. H. Skene (Edinburgh, 1877–80).
Chron. Wyntoun	*The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours (Scottish Text Society, 1903–14).
CIC	*Corpus Iuris Canonici*, ed. E. Friedberg (Leipzig, 1879–81).
Coupar Angus Chrs.	*Charters of the Abbey of Coupar Angus*, ed. D. E. Easson (SHS, 1947).
CPL	*Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, ed. W. H. Bliss and others (London, 1893–).
CPL Benedict XIII	*Calendar of Papal Letters to Scotland of Benedict XIII of Avignon 1394–1419*, ed. F. McGurk (SHS, 1976).
CPL Clement VII	*Calendar of Papal Letters to Scotland of Clement VII of Avignon*, ed. C. Burns (SHS, 1976).
CUP	*Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. H. Denifle and E. Chatelain (Paris, 1889–97).
DDC	*Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique*
Delaruelle, *L'église*	E. Delaruelle and others, *L'église au temps du Grand Schisme et de la crise conciliaire 1378–1449* (Paris, 1962–4).

Donaldson, *Church History*	G. Donaldson, *Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh, 1985).
Dowden, *Bishops*	J. Dowden, *The Bishops of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1912).
Dumville, *Councils*	D. N. Dumville, *Councils and Synods of the Gaelic Early and Central Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997).
Duncan, 'Early parliaments'	A. A. M. Duncan, 'The early parliaments of Scotland', *SHR*, xlv (1966), 36–58.
Duncan, *Scotland*	A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1975).
Dunfermline Registrum	*Registrum de Dunfermelyn* (Bannatyne Club, 1842).
Dunlop, *Kennedy*	A. I. Dunlop, *The Life and Times of James Kennedy Bishop of St. Andrews* (Edinburgh and London, 1950).
EHR	*English Historical Review*
ER	*The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, ed. J. Stuart and others (Edinburgh, 1878–1908).
ES	*Early Sources of Scottish History 500 to 1286*, ed. A. O. Anderson (Edinburgh, 1922).
Eubel, *Hierarchia*	C. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi*, 2nd edition (Münster, 1913–)
Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*	P. C. Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives in Scotland: Legates, Nuncios and Judges-Delegate 1125–1286* (Stair Society, 1997).
Finke, *Acta*	*Acta Concilii Constanciensis*, ed. H. Finke (Münster, 1896–1928).
Foedera	*Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica*, ed. T. Rymer (Record Commission edition, London 1816–69).

Foreville, *Latran*	R. Foreville, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV* (Paris, 1965).
Formulary E	*Formulary E: Scottish Letters and Brieves 1286–1424*, ed. A. A. M. Duncan (Glasgow, 1976).
Glasgow Registrum	*Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis* (Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs, 1843).
Graham, 'Ottoboni letters'	R. Graham, 'Letters of Cardinal Ottoboni', *EHR*, xv (1900), 87–120.
H&S	A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1869–78).
Hannay, 'Letter to Scotland'	R. K. Hannay, 'A letter to Scotland from the Council of Basel', *SHR*, xx (1923), 49–57.
HBC	*Handbook of British Chronology*, 3rd edition, ed. E. B. Fryde and others (London, 1986).
Hefele-Leclercq, *Conciles*	C. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* (Paris, 1907–38).
Holstein, *Lyon II*	H. Wolter and H. Holstein, *Lyon I et Lyon II* (Paris, 1966).
Hugh the Chantor, *History*	Hugh the Chantor, *History of the Church of York*, ed. C. Johnson (Edinburgh, 1961).
John Le Neve, *Fasti*	John Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300*, ii, *Monastic Cathedrals* (London, 1971).
Kelly, *Dictionary of Popes*	*The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, ed. J. D. N. Kelly (Oxford, 1986).

Kelso Liber	*Liber S. Marie de Calchou* (Bannatyne Club, 1846).
Kemp, *Counsel and Consent*	E. W. Kemp, *Counsel and Consent* (London, 1961).
Lecler, *Vienne*	J. Lecler, *Vienne* (Paris, 1964).
Liber Censuum	*Le Liber Censuum de l'Église Romaine*, ed. L. Duchesne and others (Paris, 1889–1952).
Lunt, *Financial Relations*	W. E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England to 1327: Studies in Anglo-Papal Relations during the Middle Ages*, i (Cambridge, Mass., 1939).
Macfarlane, 'Primacy'	L. J. Macfarlane, 'The primacy of the Scottish church 1472–1521', *Innes Review*, xx (1969), 111–29.
Moray Registrum	*Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis* (Bannatyne Club, 1837).
MRHS	*Medieval Religious Houses Scotland*, 2nd edition, ed. I. B. Cowan and D. E. Easson (London, 1976).
Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*	R. Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1974).
Patrick, *Statutes*	*Statutes of the Scottish Church 1225–1559*, ed. D. Patrick (SHS, 1907).
Pontal, *Statuts*	O. Pontal, *Les Statuts Synodaux* (Turnhout, 1975).
Pontificia Hibernica	*Pontificia Hibernica*, ed. M. P. Sheehy (Dublin, 1962–5).
Registres de Grégoire X	*Les registres de Grégoire X et Jean XXI* (Paris, 1892–1960).

Regestum Clementis V	*Regestum Clementis V* (Rome 1885–92).
Rothwell, *Documents*	*English Historical Documents 1189–1216*, ed. H. Rothwell (London, 1975).
RMS	*Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, ed. J. M. Thomson and others (Edinburgh, 1882–1914).
RRS	*Regesta Regum Scottorum*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow and others (Edinburgh, 1960–).
SAEC	*Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers 500 to 1286*, ed. A. O. Anderson (London, 1908).
St. Andrews Acta	*Acta Facultatis Artium Universitatis Sanctiandree 1413–1588*, ed. A. I. Dunlop (Edinburgh and London, 1964).
St. Andrews Copiale	*Copiale Prioratus Sanctiandree*, ed. J. H. Baxter (Oxford, 1930).
St. Andrews Formulare	*St. Andrews Formulare 1514–1546*, ed. G. Donaldson and C. Macrae (Stair Society, 1942–4).
St. Andrews Liber	*Liber Cartarum Prioratus Sancti Andree in Scotia* (Bannatyne Club, 1841).
Scone Liber	*Liber Ecclesie de Scon* (Bannatyne Club, 1843).
Scot. Pont.	R. Somerville, *Scotia Pontificia* (Oxford, 1982).
Series Episcoporum	*Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae Occidentalis ab initio usque ad annum MCXCVIII*, VI, *Britannia, Scotia et Hibernia, Scandinavia*, i, *Ecclesia Scoticana*, ed. D. E. R. Watt (Stuttgart, 1991).
SES	*Concilia Scotiae: Ecclesiae Scoticanae Statuta tam Provincialia quam Synodalia quae Supersunt, 1225–1559*; *Statuta Ecclesiae Scoticanae*, ed. J. Robertson (Bannatyne Club, 1866).

SHR	*Scottish Historical Review*
SHS	Scottish History Society
Stones, *Documents*	*Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174–1328: Some Selected Documents*, ed. E. L. G. Stones (Edinburgh, 1965).
Tanner, *Decrees*	*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. N. P. Tanner (London and Washington DC, 1990).
Theiner, *Monumenta*	A. Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum Historiam Illustrantia* (Rome, 1864).
Trexler, *Synodal Law*	R. C. Trexler, *Synodal Law in Florence and Fiesole 1306–1518* (Studi et Testi, 268; Vatican, 1971).
Valois, *La France*	N. Valois, *La France et le Grand Schisme d'Occident* (Paris, 1896–1902).
Watt, *Dictionary*	D. E. R. Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to A. D. 1410* (Oxford, 1977).
Watt, *Fasti*	D. E. R. Watt, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae Medii Aevi ad annum 1638*, second draft (St. Andrews, 1969).
Watt, 'Minority'	D. E. R. Watt, 'The minority of Alexander III of Scotland', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, xxi (1971), 1–23.
Williamson, 'Legate Otto'	D. M. Williamson, 'The Legate Otto in Scotland and Ireland 1237–40', *SHR*, xxviii (1949), 12–30.
Williamson, 'Legation of Cardinal Otto'	D. M. Williamson, 'Some aspects of the legation of Cardinal Otto in England 1237–41', *EHR*, lxiv (1949), 145–73.

Winning, 'Church councils'	T. Winning, 'Church councils in sixteenth-century Scotland', *Innes Review*, x (1959), 311–37.
Wolter, *Lyon I*	H. Wolter and H. Holstein, *Lyon I et Lyon II* (Paris, 1966).

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I

Early evidence of church councils in Scotland to *c.* 1100

ASSEMBLIES of bishops and other senior officers of the Christian church to regulate doctrine and discipline (usually called councils, but sometimes synods) can be traced from the earliest days of the church at Jerusalem soon after the death of Christ, and on a fully developed imperial, provincial or more local basis by the time of the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century.[1] But though various parts of the area which now comprises Scotland were evangelised from about a century after that time, little evidence survives to illustrate the activities of councils there until the late eleventh century[2] – a circumstance which means that the early history of councils in Scotland is necessarily very sketchy indeed compared with that of councils on the Continent,[3] in Anglo-Saxon England,[4] or even in Ireland[5] (which like Scotland received Christianity while politically outside the bounds of the Roman Empire). It was only by the early eleventh century that anything like a single royal administration for what is now mainland Scotland (leaving the Western

[1] *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, iv, 373–7.

[2] The comprehensive modern studies are: *Concilia Scotiae: Ecclesiae Scoticanae Statuta tam Provincialia quam Synodalia quae Supersunt, 1225–1559: Statuta Ecclesiae Scoticanae* [*SES*], 2 vols., ed. J. Robertson (Bannatyne Club, 1866); A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* [H&S], II, part i (Oxford, 1873); *Statutes of the Scottish Church 1225–1559*, ed. D. Patrick (SHS, 1907).

[3] C. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* (Paris, 1907–38).

[4] H&S, I and III; H. Vollrath, *Die Synoden Englands bis 1066* (Paderborn, 1985).

[5] D. N. Dumville, *Councils and Synods of the Gaelic Early and Central Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997).

and Northern Isles as part of the kingdom of Norway) was replacing the earlier petty kingdoms, each of which must have had its own way of harnessing the clergy to the service of the state.[6] Before then for centuries the four-fold division of authority north of the old Roman boundary of Hadrian's Wall between the Solway and the Tyne (among the Britons of Strathclyde/Cumbria, the Angles of Lothian/Northumbria, the Picts of Pictavia north of the Forth, and the Scots of Argyll) had kept political rivalries fresh and must have inhibited ecclesiastical inter-kingdom co-operation. There was apparently a system of episcopal oversight of a kind, even if the succession in specific sees was at best irregular;[7] but political disunity must have militated against conciliar co-operation among such few bishops as may have been contemporaneously in office.

This does not appear to have been the case in Ireland. There from the time of St. Patrick in the fifth century council meetings must have been held which approved successive collections of *acta* or canons which were confirmed and enlarged at subsequent meetings until finally *c.* 700 an edited *Collectio canonum Hibernensis* was put together.[8] It is true that for the next four hundred years evidence for council meetings in Ireland is as exiguous as in Scotland.[9] But the church in Ireland did have this lasting definition of its customs which gave it an individual character. Remembering how much the church in Scotland was the offspring of the mid-sixth-century mission of St. Columba from Ireland to Iona and beyond, we might expect to find mention of some of these Irish rules in their mission area in Scotland, and perhaps even evidence that they had been formally confirmed by councils there. But the most famous examples, the individual ways in which the Irish calculated the date of Easter and shaped their tonsures, attract attention mainly when the leaders of the Scottish

[6] For a general guide to political developments see A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1975).

[7] Cf. G. Donaldson, *Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh, 1985), chapter 2, 'Bishops' sees before the reign of David I', for presentation of maximum evidence for episcopal continuity.

[8] Dumville, *Councils*, 2–3. Cf. *Life of St Columba* by Adomnán of Iona, ed. R. Sharpe (Harmondsworth, 1995), 346–7, n. 341 for a discussion of Irish synods.

[9] Dumville, *Councils*, 32–3, 53–4.