



The Pictish Nation Its People and Its Church

Archibald Scott

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Pyrrhus Press specializes in bringing books long out of date back to life, allowing today's readers access to yesterday's treasures.

This is a history about the Picts, a group that lived in Scotland during the Middle Ages.

From the preface:

“A HISTORY of the Nation and Church of the Picts is centuries overdue. Others have contemplated the task; but they shrank from it almost as soon as they began to enter the maze of deliberately corrupted versions of ancient manuscripts, of spurious memoranda introduced into ancient documents, of alleged donations to Gaidheals or Scots of what had been Pictish property, and of fabulous claims to great antiquity made for pretended missions of the Church of Rome to the Britons, the Picts, and the Scots. To these the late Dr. Wm. F. Skene referred when he stated, in spite of his regard for the Scotie ecclesiastics, that ‘the fictitious antiquity’ given by Roman ecclesiastics to the settlement of the Scots is accompanied by ‘a supposed introduction of Christianity, by Roman agents, equally devoid of historic foundation.’ Several mediaeval fabricators of early history are now known and have been exposed. The late Bishop Forbes timidly drew attention to the fabulists employed by the prelates of Armagh, York, and Glasgow, in the interests of their Sees and the claims of their Churches to antiquity and primacy. These fabulists were sometimes more honest under one employer than under another. When Joceline wrote up the Life of S. Partick for Armagh, he was much less scrupulous than when he elaborated the ancient Life of S. Kentigern; because in the latter instance he retained much that is valuable from the original which was before him.

Consequently, in writing an Introduction to the History of the Nation and Church of the Picts, the research and patience have at times been exacting. It has not only been necessary, where possible, to get back to ungarbled original sources, or fragments of sources; but, where these have perished, to collect and to compare versions drawn up from motives not often historical, and then by critical examination, and elimination of what might turn out to be mutually destructive, or unconfirmed, to get close up to what had been before the author of the version. Although, for example, there is more than one version of the original Pictish Chronicle; it is not difficult for an equipped and experienced student to isolate what now remains of the original, or at least of the oldest versions, and even to tell the dialects of Celtic in which the latter were written. The mediaeval hands that wrote introduction or added information to this Chronicle have not always revealed their actual identity like the York copyist of the most valuable of the manuscripts, Robert de Popilton; but it is nearly always possible to tell where they wrote, with what motive they wrote, and to identify the source or sources of their additions, when they had any.

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