

**THE CHRISTIAN
FAITH IN
EARLY SCOTLAND**

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The Christian Faith in Early Scotland by E. C. Leal

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BY
REV. E. C. LEAL

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PREFACE.



MUCH has been done of late years to place the Civil History of our country, for the first 1,000 years of our era, on its true basis. The controversial element is being gradually eliminated, and the main facts, gathered from the most ancient sources, may now be found in various writers. Yet, in most of the histories which deal with that period, there is a great deal that is merely opinion, and must be treated as such. The question as to whether the early inhabitants of this country were of Gothic or of Celtic origin, is really of secondary moment. It is of far greater importance to know what the oldest records say of their coming to this country. If we know that, we can all theorize for ourselves, if we are so inclined. In the Introduction, I have given a brief sketch of what those ancient records say of the earliest inhabitants. If the reader cares to compare it with the results of other antiquarian research, he will find that

they agree in the main. He may hold what opinion he pleases as to the national kindred of the various families of our ancestors, it will not in the slightest degree affect the facts narrated.

That no handy, popular, and, at the same time, trustworthy history of that early time has been given to the public, is not due to the want of material. Sometimes the materials are scanty, yet a clear line of kings can be got from the beginning of the 5th century onward, and often a good deal of information about the times. If one tithe of the labour and research that have been devoted to the histories of Greece and Rome had been given to the early history of our own country, it would now be well known to every Scotchman. And there is in the records of that time, a field of study that would repay labour. For it includes not only the wealth of Celtic lore, but opens up also the doings and the beliefs of the old Scandinavians, which must be acknowledged as a healthier moral field than that of Olympus and its immoral crew.

Two things have confused our history: the conflict with England, and the Ecclesiastical conflicts of the last three centuries and a half—the former affecting the early part, and the latter affecting the whole. The struggle with England is a thing of the past, and the histories born of that time are dead or dying.

But the case is different with Ecclesiastical history. Party spirit, which at first confused it, is living and active, and has its effect both on writers and readers ; so that few beyond those who have made it a subject of special study, have any clear notion of what was in the Church before the 11th or 12th centuries. Readers who have no access to original documents may well be excused if, amid the contradictions of writers, they are uncertain what to believe.

Despairing of finding certainty in any other way, I closed all modern books, and turned to the sources from which alone reliable information could be hoped, namely, the most ancient Chronicles and writings concerning that time. I found there that matters were much clearer than I had anticipated, and although a mass of fable has gathered round the facts, yet the facts are there. The following pages are part of the material which I gathered, at first, solely for my own information, and embrace the first 600 years of our era.

Among the Chronicles, those principally relied on are:—The *Chronica de Origine Antiquorum Pictorum*; the *Annals of Tighernach*; the *Annals of Innisfallen*; the *Annals of Ulster*; the *Chronicon Scotorum* (the oldest of those in its present form seems not before the 10th century, but they refer to older books; their

differences show that they are not mere copies of each other, while their substantial agreement proves their authenticity); the *Annales Cambriae*; the *Saxon Chronicle*. Among writers whose names we know, those principally used are:—The *Confessio* and *Epistola* of St. Patrick (before 470, A.D.); Adamnan's *Life of Columba* (before 700, A.D.); virtually embodying Cumine's *Tract* (before 659, A.D.); Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (before 755, A.D.); Ailred's *Life of Ninian* (before 1166, A.D.); Joceline's *Life of Kentigern* (before 1190, A.D.). Other references are made in the Text, but those are the chief authorities. In all cases, I have used the best text I could find, and only in the Gaelic and Welsh Chronicles have I trusted to a translation. Except in a few unimportant and well-known matters, and the identification of some of the localities, I have taken nothing at second-hand.

As to dates, there is sometimes a possible error of three years, to which I have called attention. But besides this, in all the dates after the Roman times, there is a still further possible error of a year backward or forward, but this does not affect the relation of the whole, as the moving of one date backward or forward would move the others also. Where there is a difference of the dates in the various Chronicles, I have given that which seemed most probable after