

Editing the Past: Cosmo Innes and the Scottish Medieval Church

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In 1832 the Maitland Club published an edition of the register of Paisley Abbey, a sixteenth century manuscript detailing, through transcripts of original charters and other documents, the institution's property and privileges.² This publication was the first of its kind in Scotland and was the work of the lawyer, historian and record scholar Cosmo Innes (1798-1874). He went on to edit a further thirteen editions of monastic and Episcopal registers, cartularies and original charters, focusing always on the institutional and legal remains of the Pre-Reformation church rather than on liturgical or doctrinal issues.³ Innes was an important figure in the development of modern Scottish medievalism and was also an advocate for Scotland's Catholic medieval church in a predominantly Presbyterian country. But Innes was not a narrative historian in the mould of Patrick Fraser Tytler or John Hill Burton. Whilst he did produce some original prose works, the bulk of his output was as an editor of a wide range of medieval Scottish sources relating not just to the church, but also to Parliament, law, the burghs, the universities and family history.⁴ Innes presented his depiction of the past not through multi-volume historical syntheses but through the sources themselves. Nevertheless his presentation of those sources was from far from neutral; like all historians

¹ I would like to thank Dr Dauvit Broun and Prof. Colin Kidd for reading and commenting on this paper. It is drawn from my PhD research on *Cosmo Innes and the Sources of Scottish History c. 1825-1875*, which I expect to submit in early 2010.

² *Registrum monasterii de Passelet: cartas privilegia conventiones aliaque munimenta complectens a domo fundata A.D. MCLXIII usque ad A.D. MDXXIX; ad fidem codicis M.S. in bibliotheca Facultatis Juridicae Edinensis servati nunc primum typis mandatum* [Maitland Club 17], ed. C. Innes (Glasgow: Constable, 1832).

³ These works deal with the following monasteries and bishoprics (publication dates provided): Melrose (2 vols., 1837), Moray (1837), Holyrood (1840), Dunfermline (1842), Glasgow (2 vols., 1843), Scone (1843), Aberdeen (2 vols., 1845), Kelso (2 vols., 1846), North Berwick (1847), Inchaffray (1847), Arbroath (2 vols., 1848 and 1856), Newbattle (1849) and Brechin (2 vols., 1856).

⁴ See J.L. Weir, 'Cosmo Innes; a bibliography', *Notes & Queries; a medium of inter-communication for literary men, artists, antiquaries genealogist etc.* vol. 178, no. 8, 128-31; J. L. Weir, 'Cosmo Innes; a bibliography', *Notes & Queries; a medium of inter-communication for literary men, artists, antiquaries genealogist etc.* vol. 178, no. 12, 206-7, and also Innes's biography in *The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Innes had his own biases and agendas and these are reflected in the editions that he produced.

It would, however, be unworthy to critique Innes's achievements on the basis of the hindsight that a hundred and fifty years can provide. Indeed, present-day Scottish medievalism owes much to his prolific editorial output and his emphasis on an institutional analysis of the Scottish past. Moreover, Alasdair Ross has, in a recent article, already highlighted some of the problems inherent to Innes's editorial techniques and the problems that they raise for modern medievalists using his editions.⁵ This article is therefore not concerned with a teleological deconstruction of Innes's work by the standards of the modern medievalist. Instead it follows what Colin Kidd has called the historiographical 'low road'; investigating how Innes depicted his own view of the past through the presentation and interpretation of primary material.⁶ Ideally this analysis would examine all of Innes's editorial efforts relating to the medieval church in detail, and would place Innes's work within the broader context of ecclesiastical record scholarship in the period. Because of the constraints of space, however, this paper will focus primarily on a select group of case studies in order to draw conclusions about his approach to the Scottish past.⁷

The Intellectual Context

Innes the historian operated in a wider societal context that was peculiarly a-historical. Nineteenth century Scotland was at odds with its own history. The Enlightenment had fostered a sceptical and unimpassioned view of Scottish history. Moreover, the Presbyterian and Whiggish sentiments of most urban Scots were ill at ease with the Catholicism of the country's medieval past, a situation exacerbated by the more recent associations between Catholicism and Jacobitism. As a result, Scottish intellectual energies fed not into an emergent Scottish nationalism but rather into an Anglo-British identity based largely on English history. Scottish history, particularly the period from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, during which Scotland was most closely linked with the Roman religion, was deemed by Presbyterian Scots to be both parochial and embarrassing.⁸ Consequently the Scottish Middle Ages became in the

⁵ A. Ross, 'The Bannatyne Club and the Publication of Scottish Ecclesiastical Cartularies', *Scottish Historical Review*, 85 (2006), 202-29.

⁶ C. Kidd, 'The Strange Death of Scottish History Revisited; Constructions of the Past in Scotland c. 1790-1914', *Scottish Historical Review*, 76 (1997), 87-102 (p. 87).

⁷ A much fuller discussion of the issues raised here will form part of my PhD thesis.

⁸ For a full discussion of eighteenth-century Scottish views of the past, see C. Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689-c.1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

nineteenth century the purview of Episcopalian scholars. Marinell Ash has argued that

[t]he dismissal of the Middle Ages by Presbyterian historians created a large hole in Scots' knowledge of their own history which was to have a profound and deleterious effect on the historical consciousness of Scotland. In the short term the Presbyterian abandonment of the Middle Ages meant that both Catholic and Episcopalian historians were free and even impelled to make it their own field of study, as during this millennium Scotland had been subject to a church governed by bishops just as they were.⁹

Many nineteenth-century historical luminaries were members of the Scottish Episcopal Church, including Innes, Patrick Fraser Tytler, John Hill Burton, William Forbes Skene and Joseph Robertson.¹⁰ To Presbyterians the medieval past was of little relevance to modern society; the Reformation had been a cleansing from which Scotland's religious history could start anew. Yet to these Episcopalian historians the Reformation, whilst laudable, represented a dislocation from a Scottish past that was still valuable and relevant. Furthermore, the Scottish Middle Ages could be used to demonstrate the viability of an Episcopal alternative to Presbyterianism. As a result Episcopalian historians were at the forefront of the medieval dimension of a romantic resurgence of interest in Scottish history in the early nineteenth century.

The key to this resurgence was its emphasis on primary sources, an emphasis that was fuelled in part by an interest in the past for its own sake rather than as a philosophical resource subordinated to universal theories about society and human existence. This can be seen in the popularity of Walter Scott's novels, in the creation of the historical Publishing Clubs, and in the reinvigoration of Scotland's national records under Thomas Thomson.¹¹ It is also significant that most Scottish historians of all religious creeds in the 1800s were lawyers. They applied to the study of history the skills of legal research and advocacy based on direct evidence. This predominance of legally trained historians led to an emphasis on legal and institutional history, as opposed to the sociological

⁹ M. Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History* (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1980), pp. 33-4.

¹⁰ See the biographies of these figures in *The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), henceforth *New DNB*.

¹¹ For a full discussion of this 'historical revolution' see Ash, *The Strange Death*, pp. 13-86.

interpretations of the Enlightenment. Many Enlightenment figures such as Lord Kames, John Millar and David Hume were legally trained and relied heavily on law in their conceptualisations of history.¹² Their emphasis, however, was on certain high profile documents and law codes that were used to support an approach to the past that was primarily philosophical. Nineteenth-century scholars, on the other hand, placed much more importance on a legally inspired investigation of all relevant evidence, which often meant trawling through a great weight of obscure and previously ignored manuscript material. It was this approach that Innes applied to the medieval church, the first of Scotland's new class of lawyerly historians to do so.

Innes's Views of the Medieval Church

The religious agendas that helped to shape the study of the Scottish Middle Ages in the period are amply demonstrated by Innes's positive depictions of the medieval church. In his view the fortunes and character of the church were directly representative of those of Scotland as a whole. A powerful abbey such as Melrose, whose abbots were members of the political elite, which held wide lands across much of Scotland, and which had extensive links to both the ecclesiastical and secular communities, was as much an exemplar of Scotland's medieval past as any single institution could be.¹³ Moreover the church did not merely reflect the Scottish historical experience, but actually drove it. Again with reference to Melrose, Innes wrote that its monks were responsible for

encouraging agriculture and every improvement of the soil; leading the way in an adventurous foreign trade, and in all arts and manufactures; cultivating the learning of the time, and latterly enjoying and teaching to others the enjoyment of the luxuries of civilized life, while they exercised extensive hospitality and charity and preserved a decorum which is akin to virtue. Posterity owes them a debt.¹⁴

Thus the abbey was depicted as an instigator of progress; a key theme in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European constructions of history. Variations of this view are repeated throughout Innes's writings. For example in a prose work called *Sketches of Early Scotch History* Innes described how, across medieval Europe, the church controlled all learning

¹² See the biographies of these figures in the *New DNB*.

¹³ *Liber S. Marie de Melros: munimenta vetustiora Monasterii Cisterciensis de Melros* [Bannatyne Club 58], ed. C. Innes, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Constable, 1837), p. xxxi.

¹⁴ *Liber S. Marie de Melros*, p. xxix.

and knowledge plus a large share of wealth and power, yet used them for largely positive ends. He went on to paint the monastic church in egalitarian terms, describing how a monkish career could place the son of a peasant or burgess on equal terms with the scions of the aristocracy.¹⁵ In his source edition on Kelso Abbey he explained that the monks were good landlords who helped the population towards emancipation from serfdom, promoted cultivation and practiced hospitality and charity. He even used the impressive ruins of the abbey to dispute the widely-held view of the Middle Ages as dark and ignorant.¹⁶ In these volumes Innes portrayed the church as an instigator of progress in the manual arts, agriculture and trade, as a gatherer of learning and an educator of the people, as an example of charity and virtue, as an encourager of social mobility in a strictly caste society, as a powerful and selfless balance to the vicissitudes of the selfish and violent nobility, and as a champion of the motion of Scottish society away from barbarism and towards civilisation. Meanwhile, in the introductory remarks to the Paisley edition, he observed the importance of ecclesiastical records as:

containing the details of the foundation of religious houses, which may be called the first step in civilization, and marking their rapid acquisition of wealth, until the church accumulated property disproportionate to the narrowness of the county, and formed a counterbalance to the whole power of the aristocracy.¹⁷

Here Innes highlighted the role of the sources that he was presenting in this and other editions in demonstrating the contribution that, he believed, the pre-Reformation church made to the advancement of Scotland. Indeed, it was for that very reason that he invested so much effort in bringing those records into the public sphere.

Innes's Editorial Techniques

Innes's approach to the editing of ecclesiastical records was complex. It is important to understand the philosophical differences between modern editors and those of Innes's time. The aspiration of most modern historical editors is to present the material they are working with as accurately and with as little adulteration as is practicably possible. This

¹⁵ C. Innes, *Sketches of Early Scotch History and Social Progress: Church Organization, the University, Home Life* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1861), pp. 159-60.

¹⁶ *Liber S. Marie de Calchou: Registrum cartarum Abacie Tironensis de Kelso, 1113-1567* [Bannatyne Club 82], ed. C. Innes, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1846), pp. xli-xliii.

¹⁷ *Registrum monasterii de Passelet*, p. xx.

was emphatically not the case for Innes, who saw an overtly interpretational side to his role as editor. In the prefaces to his editions he used the documents contained therein to illustrate a conceptualisation of the Scottish past that was dependent on an Episcopalian outlook that encompassed some level of empathy with medieval Catholicism. Indeed in her *Memoir of Cosmo Innes*, his daughter Katharine Burton notes that Innes was in temperament and ecclesiastical leanings a Catholic in all but name.¹⁸ Even more significant are the ways in which Innes presented the sources themselves. In most cases he chose not to directly reproduce the documents he was drawing on, but instead opted to rearrange their component parts to form constructs that were often fundamentally different from the original manuscripts.

This ‘interpretational’ approach to editing can be illustrated by examining three of Innes’s ecclesiastical source editions. The register of Paisley Abbey, a single well-preserved manuscript from the sixteenth century, was the basis for the first of these editions.¹⁹ Paisley was a Cluniac house founded during the twelfth century, and was representative of the kind of monastic institution to whose records Innes would devote so much of his time over the next twenty-five years.²⁰ The edition was by and large a direct reproduction of the original cartulary; indeed, the manuscript presented a relatively simple editorial challenge in comparison to the records of other religious institutions that Innes would tackle later in his career. As with all his source editions Innes took frequent liberties with the text of individual items. For example, he compiled composite versions of documents from multiple versions to produce what he regarded as the most ‘correct’ readings. Similarly, the ruthless abbreviation of post-fourteenth century material was a hallmark of much of his editorial work. However in the case of Paisley he did not change the actual arrangement of the material at all. The register presented a continual institutional story of Paisley Abbey from its foundation to within a few years of its dissolution. A single scribe compiled it during the sixteenth century from pre-existing documents, and the arrangement of material by granter or by type was fairly logical and easy to follow. Indeed, the edition’s *tabula* was copied directly from that found in the manuscript, indicating how closely Innes followed the original source.

¹⁸ K. Burton, *Memoir of Cosmo Innes* (Edinburgh: Patterson, 1874), p. 56.

¹⁹ Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland [henceforth NLS], Adv. MS.34.1.10; see G.R.C. Davis, *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain; A Short Catalogue* (London: Longmans, 1958), no. 1174, p. 136.

²⁰ For brief details of Paisley Abbey see D.E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses Volume II; Scotland, with an Appendix on the Houses in the Isle of Man* (London: Longmans, 1957), p. 57.

This close correlation between source and edition was not the norm, however. Innes was frequently compelled to intervene more directly, in part by the nature of the sources at his disposal. In the preface to the *Register of Paisley Abbey* he lays out his editorial perspective:

Where the manuscript is of sufficient antiquity to claim somewhat of the authority of a writing contemporary with the most important deeds recorded [...] it seems to be the editor's duty to give, as nearly as printing will allow, a correct representation of the words and letters used by the writer [...] On the other hand, where the manuscript is a comparatively recent transcript, not approaching the orthography of the original documents [...] it appears absurd to adopt the imperfections which add nothing to its authority or character of genuineness.²¹

Although he was here referring to his editorial license to amend the text of records as he saw fit, the philosophy is equally applicable to the re-arrangement of material. The *Book of Arbroath Abbey*, published in two volumes in 1848 and 1856, furnishes a prime example of this.²² Arbroath Abbey was one of the richest religious houses in the Scotland and was also closely associated with the famous Declaration of Arbroath (1320).²³ Its records were therefore of particular interest to those studying the Scottish Middle Ages and were an obvious choice for publication. However, the task of presenting them in a form palatable to the nineteenth-century Scottish intelligentsia was far less straightforward than in the case of Paisley. Unlike Paisley, for which a single manuscript offered a coherent portrayal of the abbey's history almost in its entirety, for Arbroath Innes was faced with several distinct manuscripts of varying age, reliability, condition and completeness. The oldest manuscript, called the *Ethie Register* by Innes, was fragmentary and dated from the reign of Alexander III. The next oldest was the *Registrum Vetus*, created in the reign of Robert I, whilst the *Registrum Nigrum* was compiled at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Innes also used material from a fifteenth-century list of leases which he called the *Regality Register*.²⁴

²¹ *Registrum monasterii de Passelet*, p. xxii.

²² *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc: Registrum Abacie de Aberbrothoc* [Bannatyne Club 86], ed. C. Innes, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Constable, 1848-1856).

²³ For more details on Arbroath Abbey see Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses II*, p. 58.

²⁴ *Ethie Register*, held by the Earls of Northesk at Ethie Castle; *Registrum Vetus*, Edinburgh, NLS, Adv. 34.4.2; *Registrum Nigrum*, Edinburgh, NLS, Adv. 34.4.3;

Furthermore the *Registrum Vetus*, upon which Innes relied most heavily in Volume One, was compiled by several different scribes and consisted of a disjointed range of entries across a significant time differential. This was in marked contrast to the Paisley register, which was written from start to finish in a single hand over a short space of time. From this pool of source material, Innes compiled what was essentially a new register. In the first volume, covering the period from the abbey's foundation to the death of Robert I in 1329, he retained an emphasis on the structures of the *Registrum Vetus*; for instance, using its table of contents as the basis for the *tabula* in the volume. Material in the manuscript was arranged according to granter, and for the first 226 items Innes reproduced that exactly. However items 227 to 276 of the published version corresponded to material found in the front section of the *Registrum Vetus*, in folios prior to the table of contents. Most of this material was thirteenth-century and roughly contemporaneous with the later sections of the first 226 items. Innes then jumped back to the latter stages of the *Registrum Vetus* with a group of charters from the reign of Robert I in the early fourteenth century, followed by a set of documents with distinctive rubrics and endings. This was followed by another diversion to the front sheets of the register for four documents about ecclesiastical taxation plus a parliamentary statute from the early fourteenth century. The main part of Volume One concluded with 59 items dating from the reign of Robert I, taken from the *Registrum Nigrum* and rearranged into chronological order. Volume Two, meanwhile, was based primarily on the rest of the *Registrum Nigrum* and covered the period from 1329 to the Reformation in the later sixteenth century. In this case, however, the order of material in the manuscript was abandoned in favour of a chronological arrangement, and individual items were often heavily abbreviated.

These editorial decisions raise the question of what Innes was trying to achieve by arranging his materials in this way. Primarily his aim seems to have been to create order from apparent disorder. His sensitivity to the original records is clear in his adoption of the scheme found in the *Registrum Vetus* for Volume One. However his amendments to that structure, together with his willingness to 'correct' texts, demonstrate a readiness to override the sources. The most obvious example of this is the break he created between the two volumes in 1329, even to the extent of detaching 59 pre-1329 items from the *Registrum Nigrum*, the rest of which was printed in Volume Two, and placing them in Volume One with material taken mainly from the *Registrum Vetus*. Moreover, a

Regality Register, held in Arbroath Burgh Muniments; see Davis, *Medieval Cartularies*, nos. 1117, 1118, 1119 and 1121, pp. 129-30.

disregard for the integrity of the much later *Registrum Nigrum* can be seen in the decision to rearrange its contents into chronological order in Volume Two. This destroyed any correlative relationship with the source itself but, on the other hand, created a well-ordered depiction of the abbey's later history through original material. Essentially, Innes tried to steer a course between two editorial imperatives. On one side is the need to respect his sources. On the other is the desire for a cogent and usable representation of those sources, of the foundation they represent and of the wider society that they illuminate. With Paisley these two goals coincided, but with Arbroath the editorial route was much more difficult to navigate.

This dilemma is illustrated with the *Book of Melrose*, which was a complete editorial construction. Like Arbroath and Paisley, Melrose was an important foundation in medieval Scotland; it was perhaps the most powerful Cistercian house in the kingdom and was also the burial site of several kings.²⁵ In this instance there were only two manuscripts available to Innes, one of which was very incomplete and the other, he believed, of dubious reliability.²⁶ In addition, however, there were 26 linen bags of original Melrose charters from the archives of the Earls of Morton. It must have been an easy decision for Innes to relegate the unsatisfactory manuscripts to a supporting role and build his edition from scratch using contemporary single-sheet documents. Thus he had a free hand with the arrangement of material in a way that was not possible with Paisley or even Arbroath, and the choices he made represent his ideal structure. The records were neatly split, firstly by chronologically-arrayed kings' reigns and then according to the lands to which they refer. Grants made during the reign of William the Lion (1165-1214), for example, were divided into 13 territorial subgroups under place names such as Carrick, Teviotdale, Kyle and Berwick. The presentation of sources in this format implies a sense of chronology framed by regnal dates and also an antiquarian-esque emphasis on topography and locality.²⁷ In the case of Melrose, therefore, Innes did not have to compromise between his two imperatives. Instead he was able to present the sources as he chose and create what he saw as a clean and orderly portrayal of the abbey's history.

²⁵ Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses II*, p. 65.

²⁶ Thirteenth century register: Edinburgh, NLS, Adv 34.4.11; sixteenth century register: British Museum, Harley 3960; Davis, *Medieval Cartularies*, nos. 1167 and 1168, p. 135.

²⁷ For more on the links between the antiquary and his locality see I. Gordon-Brown, *The Hobby-Horsical Antiquary; a Scottish Character 1640-1830* (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1980).

It would also be useful to look briefly at the arrangement of Innes's other ecclesiastical source editions. Several, including the Paisley, Newbattle and Inchaffrey editions, were based on single registers and were, in terms of organisation, fairly faithful representations of the original manuscripts.²⁸ The Dunfermline and Kelso editions were further examples of this, yet in these cases Innes attempted to recreate the original thirteenth- or fourteenth-century manuscripts by removing later additions and relegating them to appendices.²⁹ This is evidence of his preference for earlier material over items dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, also shown by the reorganisation and abridgement of items from the *Registrum Nigrum* in the Arbroath edition. The Brechin edition was also based on a sole register. Here Innes ignored the structure of the source entirely in favour of a chronological rearrangement, possibly because the manuscript was sixteenth-century and the copies it contained were made long after the creation of the original documents on which they were based.³⁰ Others, such as the Melrose, Holyrood and North Berwick editions, were constructed mainly from originals rather than multi-item registers and tended to favour a chronological structure.³¹ Meanwhile, both the Moray and Scone editions were drawn from two principal manuscripts. With Moray Innes embraced several structural schemes, keeping some of the typological and subject-based sections of the manuscripts but rearranging the individual items within them into chronological order; indeed an analysis of this rearrangement formed the centrepiece of Ross's recent discussion of Innes as editor.³² The Scone edition was published a few years later and this time Innes ignored the structure of the sources and instead presented the individual items they

²⁸ *Liber Insule missarum: abbacie canonicorum regularium B. Virginis et S. Johannis de Inchaffery registrum vetus* [Bannatyne Club 85], ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1847); *Registrum S. Marie de Neubotle: abbacie Cisterciensis Beate Virginis de Neubotle chartarium vetus, 1140-1528; accedit appendix cartarum originalium* [Bannatyne Club 89], ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1849).

²⁹ *Registrum de Dunfermelyn: liber cartarum Abbatie Benedictine S.S. Trinitatis et B. Margarete Regine de Dunfermelyn* [Bannatyne Club 74], ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Constable, 1842).

³⁰ *Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis: cui accedunt cartae quamplurimae originales* [Bannatyne Club 102], ed. C. Innes and P. Chalmers (Aberdeen: W. Bennett, 1856).

³¹ *Liber cartarum sancte crucis: munimenta ecclesie Sancte Crucis de Edwinesbur;* [Bannatyne Club 70], ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Constable, 1840); *Carte monialium de Northberwic: prioratus cisterciensis B. Marie de Northberwic munimenta vetusta que supersunt* [Bannatyne Club 84], ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Constable, 1847).

³² *Registrum episcopatus Moraviensis e pluribus codicibus consarcinatum circa A.D. MCCC, cum continuatione diplomatum recentiorum usque ad A.D. MDCXXIII* [Bannatyne Club 58], ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Constable, 1837). See also Ross, 'The Bannatyne Club', pp. 217-23.

contained in simple chronological order.³³ Finally, some other editions, such as those concerning the bishoprics Glasgow and Aberdeen, and to a lesser extent Arbroath Abbey, were built from up to eight different manuscript sources. In the case of Arbroath, as has been shown, Innes maintained a certain level of correlation with at least some of his sources. The difficulties of doing so for Glasgow and Aberdeen, however, proved too great and he instead took items from all available sources and arranged them along his own chronological and, on occasion, typological lines.³⁴

The case studies and survey above demonstrate that Innes's editions were not direct reproductions of the records he was using. Instead, most of them were artificial constructs, drawing upon, but not replicating, medieval sources. The Melrose edition is perhaps the clearest example of this, whilst the Arbroath edition illustrates how Innes was torn between his sources and his organisational preferences. The arrangement of editions took several forms that were by no means mutually exclusive, including typological, topographical, by subject, by granter and, most ubiquitously, by chronology. In other instances Innes sought to actively resurrect the integrity of thirteenth- or fourteenth-century manuscripts that he felt had been degraded by additions dating from the later Middle Ages. This denotes a preference for the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries over the later medieval period, when the church was deemed to be in a moral decline that would lead eventually to the Reformation. In essence, Innes's intention was to present the documentary remnants of the medieval church in a form that would be palatable to his nineteenth-century contemporaries. This meant using arrangements that would seem logical and effective to his readers.

The Critical Reception

The Presbyterian majority harboured an ongoing hostility to Catholicism both in the past and the present, however. Kidd has highlighted how the canon of Whig-Presbyterian historiography had, from the later eighteenth

³³ *Liber ecclesie de Scon; munimenta vetustiora monasterii Sancte Trinitatis et Sancti Michaelis de Scon* [Bannatyne Club 78 and Maitland Club 62], ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Constable, 1843).

³⁴ *Registrum episcopatus Glasguensis: munimenta ecclesie metropolitane Glasguensis a sede restaurata seculo ineunte XII ad reformatam religionem* [Bannatyne Club 75 and Maitland Club 61], ed. C. Innes, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Constable, 1843); *Registrum episcopatus Aberdonensis: ecclesie Cathedralis Aberdonensis regesta que extant in unum collecta* [Spalding Club 13 and 14, and Maitland Club 63], ed. C. Innes, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1845).

century, been undergoing a process of disintegration.³⁵ Nevertheless, anti-Catholicism coupled with a more general view of the Middle Ages as barbarous and ignorant were, in the 1800s, still powerful influences. Alexander Stewart's 1829 work *Stories from the History of Scotland* was aimed at younger readers and delivered in an accessible format a summary of Presbyterian attitudes towards Catholicism in the Middle Ages. In a discussion of the Reformation, Stewart accused the medieval church of the abandonment of true Christianity and an avaricious lust for power based on deceit and superstition.³⁶ He went on to state that:

Such power, exercised in such a manner, could not but excite the dislike and ill-will of those whom it oppressed. The vices and misconduct of the clergy increased this discontent, and lessened the general veneration for the priestly character. This veneration was established on the ignorance of those times, which, from the total absence of the light of learning and knowledge, were called the Dark Ages; and the Pope and his inferiors, aware that this ignorance was the main pillar of that fabric of superstition, in which they kept the minds of men as it were imprisoned, employed every art to keep the people in this state of darkness.³⁷

This view was reflected in the reception that Innes's edition received. In 1847 a contributor to the *English Review* gave his Aberdeen edition measured approval for its learning and erudition, but argued that it only held real value for the antiquary. The general reader, the reviewer believed, would gain greater benefit from other editions of post-Reformation records reviewed in the same article.³⁸ Moreover, two years earlier a scathing attack on the Paisley, Moray, Holyrood, Dunfermline, Melrose and Glasgow editions was printed in the *North British Review*, a periodical with strong links to the Presbyterian Free Church.³⁹ The reviewer praised the diligence and learning with which Innes had set about the task of editing his materials and stated that the editions illustrated the birth of modern Scottish jurisprudence. Yet, the overriding theme of the article was a negative judgement on the Scottish medieval church that directly contradicted Innes's own interpretations of the sources he edited. It described how churchmen prayed on the fears of the dying and exerted moral blackmail over unwary travellers to persuade

³⁵ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, pp. 185-204.

³⁶ A. Stewart, *Stories from the History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1829), pp. 168-79.

³⁷ Stewart, *Stories from the History of Scotland*, p. 174.

³⁸ Anon., 'Ecclesiastical History of Scotland', *English Review*, 8 (1847), 384-400.

³⁹ Anon., 'The Scottish Monks', *North British Review*, 2 (1845), 360-89.

them to make over their wealth to the church. It labelled the monks avaricious, luxury-loving, selfish and over-privileged. The article disputed Innes's view of monasteries as centres of learning, arguing instead that the monks were misguided and ignorant, possessed of no intellectual impulses and leaving no evidence of intellectual achievement. Furthermore, according to the review, the monks were immoral and irreligious, ignoring their own rules, seizing privileges and property and exerting a destructive influence over the rest of society. It then characterised the Reformation as a heroic struggle in which a thousand-year-old religious Empire was put on trial by the people and found unequivocally guilty. Indeed, the article concluded with a parting salvo aimed at both Innes in particular and the medieval church in general:

Mr Innes has departed from the example of the illustrious judge and antiquary to whom we have referred [Lord Hailes], and instead of giving a cautious balancing of conflicting views so as to allow each reader to form his own opinions, he has laid down only the result of his own reflections [...] No-one can look without interest on such excavated memorials of a society which has perished. They tell the true story of monkish times. They strip it bare of all the decorated drapery with which poetry, or romance, or distance has invested it, and leave only the naked skeleton in all its grim deformity, a warning and example for our instruction.⁴⁰

This review encapsulated an important strand in the attitudes of nineteenth-century Scots towards the medieval Church. Innes's arguments and the evidence he arrayed in support of them made little headway against it.

Conclusions

The historical views of most members of the nineteenth-century Scottish *literati* were moulded by an intellectual anti-Catholicism derived from the Enlightenment. This provided the *raison d'être* for the production of the editions discussed in this article. They were designed to raise the profile of the medieval church in the minds of educated Scots and rehabilitate that institution's blemished reputation. As has been demonstrated, Innes's editions were artificial constructs built from existing registers and single-sheet originals. They were products of Innes's intellectual and cultural context and were designed with a specific purpose in mind. The same can be said of the medieval registers upon which Innes was drawing, however. These manuscripts were also artificial constructs compiled from

⁴⁰ Anon., 'The Scottish Monks', p. 389.

pre-existing originals and older registers. They were designed as administrative tools, as judicial proofs of rights to land and privileges, and as exemplars of an institution's history and identity. After substantial periods of time these documents were often no longer fit for purpose. Times changed and with them changed the needs of the people who used them. In such cases new registers would be created that were in part based on material from older manuscripts, often rearranged to serve a different purpose, and also included copies of newer deeds.⁴¹ This is why there are no fewer than four different registers relating to the abbey of Arbroath. In this sense, Innes's editorial activities can be seen as the resumption of a medieval tradition of re-focusing the past as changing needs demanded through the presentation of original sources. In effect, his volumes were modern registers, designed to support the argument that the medieval Church was not the oppressive tyrant that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Presbyterians depicted it as. Moreover, their function was as an expression of historical identity in a country that was ideologically dislocated from its own past. The chronological arrangement that featured so heavily in Innes's editions emphasised not only a sense of temporal continuity but also underscored the notion that medieval progress towards modern civilisation was achieved through the agency of the church. In this way, Innes's efforts can be read as attempts, motivated by his Episcopalian faith, Catholic sympathies and empathy with the pre-Reformation period, to re-attach Scotland to its own medieval past.

Despite the aura of pseudo-objectivity that surrounds modern historical research, some recent source editions show that Innes's editorial philosophy is not as consigned to the past as is commonly assumed. The urge to reorganize and categorise is still very much alive, as can be seen from the ongoing work publishing royal charters in the *Regesta Regum Scottorum* series.⁴² Under this project, charters are gathered not only from

⁴¹ For more on the arrangement of material in medieval cartularies and registers see T. Foulds, 'Medieval cartularies', *Archives*, 18, (1987), 3-35, and D. Walker, 'The organization of Material in Medieval Cartularies', in *The Study of Medieval Records. Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major*, ed. D. Bullough and R.L. Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 132-50.

⁴² *Regesta Regum Scottorum I, The Acts of Malcolm IV, King of Scots, 1153-1165: together with the Scottish Royal acts prior to 1153 not included in Sir Archibald Lawrie's 'Early Scottish Charters'*, ed. G.W.S. Barrow (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960); *Regesta Regum Scottorum II, The Acts of William I, King of Scots, 1165-1214*, ed. G.W.S. Barrow and W.W. Scott (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971); *Regesta Regum Scottorum V, The Acts of Robert I, King of Scots, 1306-1329*, ed. A.A.M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988).

contemporary single-sheets but also from medieval cartularies where no corresponding original survives.⁴³ They are then arranged in chronological order, just like the material in many of Innes's own editions, and are centred around certain implied themes. For example, J.C. Holt has argued that the dominant concern of Volume Two of the collection is the effort of the Scottish monarchy to expand its control both north and south of the Forth.⁴⁴ In other words, the theme is state-formation and it is highlighted through the selection and organization of primary material in a way not very far removed from that employed by Innes a hundred and fifty years before. Thus, an agenda-driven editorial approach can be discerned in the Middle Ages, the nineteenth century and in the present day. With each new encoding the messages change but the mode of communicating those messages, through the selection and arrangement of supporting source material, remains the same.

⁴³ Bruce Webster discusses the reliance on cartularies in *Regesta Regum Scottorum VI, The Acts of David II, King of Scots, 1329-1371*, ed. B. Webster (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), pp. 30-1.

⁴⁴ J.C. Holt 'Regesta Regum Scottorum II; the Acts of William I 1165-1214', *English Historical Review*, 88 (1973), 846-8.

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