

CHAPTER II.

Of the coming of Columba into Britain.—Cursory View of his Life and Character.—To be distinguished from Abbot Columban.—Of the Island of Iona.—Of the Druids.—The Doctrine of the Culdees, and their Mode of Living.

FROM the preceding observations it must appear, that, even on the supposition that the primary mission of Palladius was not to Scots inhabiting Britain, Christianity had been received in the northern part of it long before the age of Columba. The southern Picts being already converted, this good man “came into Britain,” as Bede informs us, “to preach the word of God to the provinces of the northern Picts.”—“He came, at the time that Bridius [otherwise *Brudi*,] a most powerful king, reigned over the Picts, and in the ninth year of his reign; and converted that nation to the faith of Christ, by his preaching and example; on which he received from them the foresaid island [Hii] in possession, for the purpose of erecting a monastery.”¹

¹ Siquidem anno incarnationis dominicæ quingentesimo sexagesimo quinto—venit de Hibernia presbyter et abbas habitu et vita monachi insignis, no-

Columba was a native of Ireland, and a man of distinguished rank. He was indeed of the blood royal, being the son of Felim, the son of Fergus, who was grandson to the celebrated Niall *of the nine Hostages*, king of Ireland. His mother was Aithne, the daughter of Macnave.¹ His paternal grandfather was Connal, from whom, according to Irish antiquaries, the district of Tirconnel took its name.

He was born A. 521, and educated under Finian, bishop of Clonard, Fenbar, Gemman of Leinster, and the far-famed St Ciaran. When he was about twenty-eight years of age, we are told, he founded the monastery of Dairmeagh, in Ireland, that is, *the Field of Oaks*.² Some have understood this of Armagh. Usher explains the term as denoting Durrough,

mine Columba, Britanniam, praedicaturus verbum Dei provinciis Septentrionalium Pictorum, hoc est, eis quæ arduis atque horrentibus jugis, ab Australibus eorum sunt regionibus sequestratæ.—Venit autem Britanniam Columba, regnante Pictis Bridio filio Meilochon, rege potentissimo, nono anno regni ejus, gentemque illam verbo et exemplo ad fidem Christi convertit: unde et præfatam insulam ab eis in possessionem monasterii faciendi accepit. Hist. lib. iii c. 4.

¹ Dr Smith has fallen into more errors than one at the very commencement of his work. For he says that Aithne was the mother of Felim; whereas, according to the uniform testimony of antiquity, she was his wife, and the mother of Columba. Sanctus igitur Columba nobilibus fuerat oriundus gentilibus; patrem habens Fedhlimidiu, filium Fergusii, matrem Aethneam nomine, cuius pater Latine filius Nautis dici potest: Scotica vero lingua *Mucanaua*. Adamnan. Vit. S. Columb. lib. i. c. i. Smith also says, that she was "the daughter of Lorn, who first reigned, in conjunction with his brother Feigus, over the Scots or Dalreudini in Argyllshire." Life of St Columba, p. 5. Note.

² Vir beatus in Mediterranea Hiberniæ parte monasterium, quod Scotice dicitur *Dairmagh* [Campus roboris; Schol.] diuino fundans nutu, per aliquot

in the King's county.² Others, again, view it as pointing out the modern Derry.

Zeal for the propagation of the gospel, among the heathen, has been assigned by some writers as the reason of his leaving his native country, while others have imputed his conduct to very different motives. He has been accused, not only of intermeddling in political concerns, to which the clergy have unhappily been too prone in almost every age, but of abusing his influence so far as to excite great disturbances in Ireland. It has been said, that, in consequence of some real or supposed indignity done to him, his own kindred entered keenly into his quarrel, so as to deluge the country with blood; and that his conduct gave so great offence to the ecclesiastics of that kingdom, that they threatened him with excommunication.

It may be supposed, that, in the earlier part of his life, he might in some instances be carried away by pride or ambition; especially as goaded on by a consciousness of rank, and partially under the influence of the restless spirit of the age in which he lived. But we must conclude, either that his conduct has been misrepresented, or that he learned wisdom from the affecting proofs which he had of his own weakness. For it is acknowledged, by all the writers of his

demoratur menses. Adamn. lib. 1. c. 3. Fecerat autem, priusquam Britanniam veniret, monasterium nobile, quod a copia roborum Dearmach lingua Scottorum, hoc est, Campus roborum, cognominatur. Ex quo utroque monasterio plurimo exinde monasteria per discipulos ejus et in Britannia et in Hibernia propagata sunt. Bed. Hist. lib. iii. c. 4.

² Primoid. p. 690.

life, that, after he left Ireland, he conducted himself with exemplary humility and self-denial. The influence, which he afterwards retained in that country, goes a great way to vindicate him. Not only is it asserted by Jocelin¹ and other writers, that he founded a hundred monasteries, while some increase the number, including churches, to three hundred ;² but it is certain that the greatest respect was paid to him at the national council, or parliament, of Drumceat in Ireland, where he appeared as representative of the clergy of North Britain.³

The accounts given of his miracles and predictions should be read with that allowance which we must necessarily make for the credulity of the times. In the memoirs of this saint, nothing is related more ridiculous or incredible than what we find in the page of the venerable Bede.

The names of the companions of Columba, who attended him to Iona, have been recorded by various writers. Usher gives the following list, as extracted from a MS. in the Cotton Library. "These are the names of the men who passed over with Columba from Scotland [i. e. Ireland,] when he first went to Britain. The two sons of Brendin, Baithen and Comin, who were both successors of St Columba ; Cobthach, his brother ; Ernan, the uncle of St Columba ; Dermit his servant ; Rui and Fethuo, the two sons of Ro-

¹ Centum coenobiorum exitit fundator. Vit. S. Patric. c. 89.

² Smith's Life of St Columba, p. 149.

³ Magna concio Drumacet, in qua fuit Columbcille et Aodh Mac Amirech. Ann. Ulton. ad A. 574. This Aodh, or Aidan, was king of the Albanian Scots.

dan; Scandal, the son of Bresail, the son of Endei, the son of Niell Luguid; Mocutheimne, Echoid, Thorannu, Mocufir, Cetea Cairnaan, the son of Branduib, the son of Meilgi Grillaan.”*

Here, it would seem, there is some error in the enumeration, or in the punctuation; as, instead of twelve, we have thirteen persons mentioned.

To prevent mistakes, it is necessary to observe, that there were two eminent men, nearly contemporaries, who were both natives of Ireland, both founders of monasteries, both abbots, and both canonized; to whom the same name is frequently given, and who, from the inattention of ancient writers, have frequently been confounded with each other. These were Columba, and Columban or Columbanus. Our Columba landed in Hii A. 563, and died there in 597. Columban was educated in the monastery of Bangor, in Ireland, under St Congall. He left Ireland, and travelled into Burgundy, A. 589. Like Columba, he took twelve companions with him. Among these, according to Marianus Scotus, was the celebrated St Gall. In Burgundy, he founded the abbey of Luxeville, which he governed for about twenty years; being then ejected by the persecution of Queen Brunechilde.² Cave says, that he was exiled from Luxeville, by Theodoric, king of Austrasia, because he too boldly reprov'd his libidinous life.³ Hofmann calls this Theodoric, *Rex Galliae*.⁴ After

* Primord. p. 694.

² Ware's Writers of Irel. p. 24, 25.

³ Hist. Literaria, 1. 428.

⁴ Lex. vo. *Columbanus*.

this, he travelled through the greatest part of France; and at length retired into Italy. Here, being kindly received by Aigilulph, king of the Lombards, he erected the abbey of Bobio, near Naples; where he died, a year after, A. 615.

His life was written by Jonas, one of his disciples, a monk of the abbey of Bobio; and published by Messingham in his *Florilegium*.

Bede properly designs the apostle of the Picts Columba, according to the best MSS.; although, in some editions, *Columbanus* occurs. He marks the difference of the names, when, in transcribing the letter from Laurence, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Irish bishops, he designs the other *Columbanum Abbatem in Gallis venientem*.¹ Smith is mistaken, however, when he says, in the index to his edition of Bede, that the letter of Pope John² was addressed to this *Columbanus*, among other Irish bishops. For, as it was written A. 640, this was fifty-one years after he left Ireland, and twenty-five after his death.

In the Saxon Chronicle, the Abbot of Iona is denominated *Columba*, and also *Columban*.³ By Sigebert he is designed *Columbanus*.⁴ In the Chronicon Hermanni Contracti, he receives both names;⁵ although the latter is also given to Columban, Abbot of Luxeville.⁶ But in the index to Pistorius, they are both referred to as one person. Both Goldast and Dempster are chargeable with the same carelessness.⁷

¹ Hist. lib. ii. c. 4.

³ P. 21.

⁵ Pistorii Script. Germ. i. 181. 188.

⁷ V. Usserii Primord. p. 688.

² Ibid. lib. ii. c. 19.

⁴ Chronic. Fol. 30. b.

⁶ Ibid. 192, 193, 195.

Dr Smith of Campbelton has fallen into an error, in ascribing to Columba the three poems which he has inserted, with translations, in his Appendix.¹ They were written by the Abbot of Luxeville, and were published by Usher under his name. The Archbishop of Armagh has given another, also by Columban, beginning with these words :

Mundus ille transit, et quotidie decrescit, &c.²

Besides the hymn in praise of St Kieran, and another in honour of St Brigid, three poems have been ascribed to Columba of Icolmkill ; but all different from those published by Dr Smith. The first begins ;

Altus Prosator, Vetustus dierum et Ingenitus.

The second ; In te, Christe, Credentium : and the third ;
Noli, Pater, indulgere.³

It is the more surprising that Dr Smith should commit so gross a mistake, when he had in his hand Colgan's *Trias*, in which these three hymns of Columba are published.⁴

Perhaps it deserves notice, that Colman, one of the disciples of Columba, the Bishop of Lindisfarne, who, rather than submit to the Roman rites, renounced his bishopric, and who afterwards settled, with his adherents, at Inisboufinde, was sometimes denominated *Columbanus*. As he left Lindisfarne A. 667, Usher very reasonably interprets the language of the annals of Ulster, under this year, as applicable to him.

¹ Life of Columba, pp. 136—141.

³ Ware, ut sup.

² Sylloge, pp. 9—18.

⁴ P. 473, ap. Ware.

A. 667. Navigatio Columbani Episcopi cum reliquiis Sanctorum ad Insulam Vaccae Albae, in qua fundavit ecclesiam. Also, A. 675. Ejusdem Columbani Episcopi Insulae Vaccae Albae pausa ; that is, his decease.* The reliques especially meant are supposed to be those of Bishop Aidan, which, according to Bede, Colman carried with him from Lindisfarne.²

The memory of Columba is by no means lost, even in the Highlands of Scotland. A Highlandman, about to set out on a journey, thus expresses his wish for divine protection ; *Gilli Chalunchilli ghar pilli, agus ghar tiaunda* ; i. e. “ May the servant of Columba of the cell protect and bring me safe home !” This invocation is especially used by Roman Catholics.

Claich Ichalmkilli is the name given to a small pebble brought from the shore of Iona ; that is, “ the stone of Icolmkill.” Stones of this description are still worn, by Catholics, as amulets. They are sometimes set in silver, and suspended over the heart.

A Gaelic proverb is still in use, which has a reference to Columba ; *Uir ! uir ! air beal Orain ma'n labhair e tuile comb'radh* ; “ Earth ! earth ! on the mouth of Oran, that he may blab no more.” Legendary tradition gives the following account of the origin of this proverb. When Columba first attempted to build on Iona, the walls, it is said, by the operation of some evil spirit, fell down as fast as they were erected. Columba received supernatural intimation, that

* Usser. Primord. p. 964.

² Bed. Hist. lib. iii. c. 26.

they would never stand, unless a human victim was buried alive. According to one account, the lot fell on Oran, the companion of the saint, as the victim that was demanded for the success of the undertaking. Others pretend that Oran voluntarily devoted himself, and was interred accordingly. At the end of three days, Columba had the curiosity to take a farewell look at his old friend, and caused the earth to be removed. Oran raised his swimming eyes, and said, ‘There is no wonder in death, and hell is not as it is reported.’ The saint was so shocked at this impiety, that he instantly ordered the earth to be flung in again, uttering the words of the proverb mentioned above.¹ The place is still called *The Chapel of St Oran*.

It is not improbable, that this story was invented by some of the druidical enemies of Columba, in order to expose him, and the christian doctrine, to ridicule ; especially as the savage rite, attributed to him, was practised only by the heathen.

According to the annals of Ulster and of Tighernac, which Archbishop Usher seems disposed to follow, the island of Iona was given to Columba by Conal, or Conval, son of Comgal, king of the Dalriad Scots.² But there ought to be some very powerful reason for rejecting the express testimony of Bede, who was so well versed in the history of this monastery ;

¹ Pennant's Voyage to the Hebrides, p. 285, 286. Macintosh's Gaelic Proverbs, p. 66.

² Johnstone Antiq. Celto-Norm. p. 57. Usser. Primord. p. 703.

especially as Adomnan, the successor of Columba, who wrote his life, no where asserts that this island was the gift of the Dalriadic prince. As, however, it lay on the confines of both kingdoms, it might possibly be claimed by both ; and what the one sovereign had given, the other might pretend to confirm. Adomnan, indeed, speaking of a plague which had been very fatal A. 702, says, that it visited all the world, save “ the Picts and Scots of Britain, who were divided from each other by Drum-Albin,” or the Grampian mountains.¹ But this determines nothing as to the extent of the Scottish territories a hundred and fifty years before, when Columba received the island of Iona in possession ; or only about half a century after the Scots, under Fergus the son of Erc, landed in Argyleshire.

Iona was entitled to no pre-eminence from external circumstances. It is a small island, in the Atlantic ocean, separated from the west point of the island of Mull by a narrow channel called “ the Sound of I.” It is about three miles in length, and from half a mile to a mile in breadth.² “ The view of Iona,” says a pleasant writer, when describing his approach to it, “ was very picturesque : the east side, or that which bounds the sound, exhibited a beautiful variety ; an extent of plain, a little elevated above the water, and almost covered with the ruins of the sacred buildings, and with the remains of the old town, still inhabited. Beyond these the

¹ V. Vit. Columb. Pinkert. Enquiry, 1. 316, 317, 449.

² Statist. Acc. xiv. [171.]

island rises into little rocky hills, with narrow verdant hollows between (for they merit not the name of vallies,) and numerous enough for every recluse to take his solitary walk, undisturbed by society.”²

This celebrated island has been variously denominated. “Its ancient name,” we are told, “was *I, Hi*, or *Aoi* (as written in the annals of Ulster,) which were Latinized into *Hyona*, or *Iona*. The common name of it now is *I-colum-kill* (the Isle of Colum of the Cells), included in one of the parishes of the island of Mull.”² According to Toland, *I* signifies in Irish an island, and is often written *Hii, Ii, Hu*, to avoid making a word of one letter.”³ But *Hu*, I suspect, must, in the first instance, have been merely an inaccuracy, in consequence of the double *i* being mistaken by some transcriber for *u*. Pennant gravely tells us, that “*Iona* derives its name from a Hebrew word, signifying a dove, in allusion to the name of the great saint, *Columba*, the founder of its fame.”⁴ But this is scarcely more plausible than the traditional account of the etymon of the name *Hii*, as related by Martin. “The natives have a tradition among them,” he says, “that one of the clergymen who accompanied Columbus,” as he erroneously designs him, “in his voyage thi-

² Pennant's Voyage to the Hebrides, p. 277.

³ Smith's Life of Columba, p. 5.

³ Nazarenus, p. 53. N.

⁴ Voyage to the Hebrides, p. 278. This he has probably borrowed from Fordun, who says of Columba, Hic cum Iona propheta sortitus est nomen; nam quod Hebraica lingua *Iona*, Latina vero *Columba*, dicitur. Scotchron. Lib. iii. c. 27.

ther, having at a good distance espied the isle, cried joyfully to Columbus, in the Irish language, *Chi mi*, i. e. I see her; meaning thereby the country of which they had been in quest: that Columbus then answered, it shall be from henceforth called *Y*." What is said by Toland is far more natural. It seems to have been thus denominated from peculiar respect. "Bede," says an intelligent writer, resident in that district, "calls it *Hii*, but the proper name is *I*, sounded like *ee* in English, which in the Gaelic signifies an island, and [it] is called so by way of eminence to this day. Bede's mistake proceeded from his ignorance of the Gaelic. In [By] monkish writers it is called *Iona*, which signifies, the Island of Waves. *Iona* is, in Gaelic, spelled *I-thona*; but, as the *th* is not sounded, Latin writers spell it *Iona*. The name is very characteristic of it in times of storm." ² But although *I* in Irish signifies an island, it affords no proof that Iona originally belonged to a Celtic people. For it is evidently the same word which occurs, in the very same sense, although in a variety of forms, in almost all the Gothic dialects; Islandic *ey*, Suio-Gothic and Danish *oe*, Anglo-Saxon *ig*, *eage*, Frisic *oge*, German *ey*.

There is, I am informed, a pretty general tradition in the highlands of Scotland, that the Culdees immediately succeeded the Druids, as the ministers of religion; and it is said, that they received the name of *Culdeach*, mentioned above, as delighting, like the priests of heathenism, in retired situa-

¹ Western Islands, p. 256.

² Statist. Acc. xiv. 198.

tions. The reader may lay what stress he pleases on this tradition. But it perhaps deserves to be mentioned, that, according to a writer formerly quoted, “the Druids undoubtedly possessed I, before the introduction of Christianity. A green eminence,” he says, “close to the sound of I, is to this day called the *Druid's burial place*; Gael. *claoth nan Druidneach*. A cottager, some years ago, planting potatoes in this spot, and digging earth to cover them, brought up some bones, which the people of the island immediately concluded to be the bones of the Druids. The tradition is, that the first Christians banished the Druids, and took possession of their seats.”¹

The tradition that the Culdees succeeded the Druids, at no great distance of time, might seem to be supported by a circumstance of an interesting nature, which has been mentioned by several writers in our statistic accounts; that *Clachan*, the name still given, in the Highlands, to the place where a church stands, originally belonged to a druidical temple. Hence it is still said, “Will ye go to the stones?” or “Have you been at the stones?” that is, “Will you go to,” or, “Have you been at church?” But it is unnecessary to enlarge on this singular circumstance, as I have illustrated it pretty fully in another work.²

It is probable that druidism was not extinct even in the age of Columba. The history of Bede has been appealed to in proof of this: but many will hesitate as to the propriety

¹ Stat. Acc. xiv. 199.

² V. vo. CLACHAN, Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, vol. i.

of the appeal, as we have it on good authority, that the druidical rites were not practised by the Germans. A writer, however, of great ingenuity, and of considerable learning, thinks that the Saxons, after the abolition of druidism by the Roman emperors, restored the same worship, when they had conquered South Britain. The passage merits attention. For, although the author be viewed as proceeding on a false theory, he has brought forth a singular fact with respect to the meaning, in the Gaelic language, of a designation used by the venerable historian, which, if there be no mistake in his assertion, points out an analogy that could not have been supposed.

“ I have already observed,” he says, “ that those victorious infidels, [the Pagan Saxons] brought the word *Dry* from Germany, [as being the name by which every German priest was called.] Together with the name they certainly introduced the office, being superstitiously devoted to *Tuisto*, *Woden*, and *Thor*. The history of King Edwin’s conversion, in Bede, and the great revolution brought about in the kingdom of Northumberland at that time, in spiritual matters, is a sufficient demonstration of this position. One circumstance is sufficient for my purpose to mention concerning the conversion of Edwin. After Paulinus had exhorted Edwin to embrace the christian faith, agreeably to the instructions he had formerly received from a person sent from the invisible world, the king summoned his friends and great council to have their advice and approbation. One of the counsellors, or princes, was the pagan high priest, or *primus pontificum*.

The name, or rather title, of this high priest, or pontifex maximus, was *Coifi*, or *Coefi*. I know not whether any one has attempted to explain the meaning of this word. It was, in my opinion, the common title of every druidical superintendent of spiritual affairs. The Highland talemakers talk frequently concerning *Caiifi*, or *Coiffie Dry*; and by these two words they mean a person of extraordinary sense, skill, and cunning. *Dry* undoubtedly signifies a *Druid*, a wise man, a prophet, a philosopher, and sometimes a magician in the Galic: *Coiffie Dry*, Bede's *Coiffi*, or *primus pontificum*, stands for the principal *Druid*, or what such a person ought to be, a man supremely wise and learned.”¹

To do justice to this ingenious writer, it should be observed, that he has previously endeavoured to shew, that “the *Tuisco* or *Tuisto* of Germany was the same with the *Teutates* of Gaul;” and that “the *Thor* of the Celto-Scythians of Germany,” as he calls them, “was the *Taranis* of their neighbours to the south,” that is, the God of thunder.”²

There might be *Druids* in *Iona*, even after the arrival of

¹ Dr Macpherson's *Critical Dissertations*, xix. p. 317, 318.

There is a Gaelic Proverb still in use, which confirms the account given above. *Ge jogasg clach do làr, is faisg' no sin cobhair Choibhidh*; i. e. “The stone elines not faster to the ground, than *Coivi*'s help to the needy.”—“*Coivi*, or *Caifi*, the Arch *Druid*. This is expressive of the profound veneration the people of old entertained of their guides. *Cefacus Druidarum*.—Bede.” Macintosh's *Gaelic Proverbs*, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31. Bede writes *Coifi*. Cui primus pontificum ipsius *Coifi*, continuo respondit, &c. Adjectit autem *Coifi*, quia vellet ipsum Paulinum diligentius audire de Deo quem præficabat, &c. *Hist.* lib. ii. c. 13. In king Alfred's version *Cifi* and *Caifi* are used.

Columba. He was opposed by Broichan, who is called a magician. Dr Smith remarks, with respect to the sense of the synonymous term in Gaelic, that this signifies a Druid. ¹ But it is to be observed, that Columba met with Broichan in the Pictish territories, at the court of Brudi, near the river Ness. ² But, although the Picts had undoubtedly priests of their own false religion, it remains to be proved that this was druidical.

“ Broichan had the merit, however,” says Dr Smith, “ of dealing in a more open and avowed manner than some of his brethren. Odonellus (ii. 11.) relates, that when Columba first landed in Iona, on Pentecost eve, some Druids, who had been there, disguised themselves in the habit of monks, and pretended they had come to that place to preach the gospel, with a request that he and his followers might betake themselves to some other place; but that Columba immediately discovered the imposture, and that they resigned the field to him.” ³

Before returning from this digression, I trust that the inquisitive reader will forgive me for inserting a singular proof of the strong hold which ancient superstition takes of the mind. Mr Ferguson, minister of Moulin, who died about twen-

¹ Life of Columba, p. 14.

² Eodem in tempore vir venerandus quondam a *Broichano* Mago *Scoticam* postulavit seruum, humanitalis miseratione liberandam.—Et hoc coram *Brudeo* rege dicens, domum egressus regiam, ad *Nesam* venit fluium. *Vit. Columbae*, lib. i. c. 13. Messingham, p. 165.

³ Life of Columba, p. 92.

ty years ago, assured a friend, from whom I had my information, that there was in his parish an old man, who, although very regular in his devotions, never addressed the Supreme Being by any other title than that of *Arch-Druid*; accounting every other derogatory to the divine majesty. Notwithstanding the great difference between the Celtic and Gothic modes of worship, it is singular that, in Islandic, *Drutten*, a term so nearly allied to *Druid*, should be the name given to God, as denoting his dominion. Shall we suppose, that this designation was transmitted to them from the Gauls, who left the name of the *Cimbric* Chersonese to that country, which, in later ages, has been called *Jutland*, that is, the land of the Jutes or *Goths*? I need not say, that this country is divided from Scandinavia only by the Baltic; and that it has itself been inhabited by Goths for more than two thousand years.

The doctrine of the Culdees, as far as we may judge from that of Columba, was at least comparatively pure. As he was himself much given to the study of the holy scriptures, he taught his disciples to confirm their doctrines by testimonies brought from this unpolluted fountain; and declared that only to be the divine counsel which he found

³ Nullum autem unius horae intervallum transire poterat, quo non aut orationi, aut lectioni, aut scriptioni, vel etiam alicui operationi incumberet. Adaman. Vit. Columb. lib. i. c. i. Alio in tempore cum sanctus vir in Hymba commaneret insula,—per tres dies totidemque noctes intra obseratam, et repletam cœlesti claritudine domum manens, nullum ad se accedere permetteret, neque manducans, neque bibens.—Scripturarum quoque sacrarum obscura quæque, et difficillima plena et luce clarius aperto mundissimi cordis oculis patebant. Ibid. lib. iii. c. 12.

there.¹ His followers, as we learn from Bede, would receive those things only, which are contained in the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles; diligently observing the works of piety and purity.² Hence, it has been said, that “for several generations,—with the errors which at that time prevailed in the church of Rome, they seem not to have been in the least tainted.”³

They observed a certain rule in their monasteries, composed, as it is said, by Columba himself, and sometimes denominated *the Rule of Iona*. For a considerable time before this era, many truly pious men, knowing their obligation to separate from the world, had, from human weakness, interpreted the divine precept in a sense which it was never meant to bear; and, if they did not retire singly to solitudes and caves, yet viewed it as most subservient to the interests of religion to form regular monastic societies. But their mode of life was very different from that of the generality of those who have been called monks in later ages. According to Bede, “after the example of the venerable fathers,—they lived by the labour of their hands.”⁴ When giving an ac-

¹ Smith's *Life of Columba*, p. 114.

² *Tantum ea quae in Prophetis, Evangelicis et Apostolicis literis discere poterant pietatis et castitatis opera diligenter observantes. Hist. lib. iii. c. 4.*

³ Smith's *Life of Columba*, p. 114.

⁴ Speaking of *Muigeo* or *Mayo*, an early Culdean establishment in Ireland, he says; *Conversis jauidudum ad meliora omnibus, egregium examen continet monachorum, qui de provincia Anglorum ibidem collecti ad exemplum venerabilium Patrum sub regula et Abbate canonico, in magna continentia et sinceritate proprio labore manuum vivunt. Hist. lib. iv. c. 4.* Colgan says, that

count of Aidan, who was one of them, he says ; “ He neither sought, nor regarded, any of the things of this world. All the gifts, which were conferred on him by kings, or by the rich of this world, he immediately distributed, with the greatest cheerfulness, to the poor who came in his way. So far was his mode of living removed from the indolence of our time, that he required of all his associates, whether clergy or laity, that they should give themselves to meditation, either by reading the scriptures, or by being at pains to learn the psalmody.”¹

We know, that, although their successors, in later ages, lived together, and had some things in common, their wives and children, or their nearest relations, after the death of any of them, divided their property, and even claimed the offerings which had been made at the altar. This is mentioned with regret by a Romish writer.² But it shews that they had not, like the monastic bodies of subsequent ages,

he had in his possession a copy of the rule composed by Columba. V. Smith ut sup. p. 135. Ware informs us, that this rule was yet extant in his time, and was commonly called *The Rule of Columbkil*. Writers of Irel. p. 18.

¹ Nihil enim hujus mundi quaerere, nil amare curabat. Cuncta quae sibi a regibus vel divitibus saeculi donabantur, mox pauperibus qui occurrerent erogare gaudebat.—In tantum autem vita illius a nostri temporis signetia distabat, ut omnes qui cum eo incedebant, sive adtonsi, seu laici, meditari deberent, id est, aut legendis Scripturis, aut Psalmis discendis operam dare. Hist. lib. iii. c. 5.

² Sublatis vero a presenti vita Sanctis, quorum supra mentionem fecimus, qui cum reliquiis beati Apostoli advenerant, et eorum discipulis atque imitatoribus, cultus ibi religiosus deperierat, sicut et gens barbara et inculta fuerat. Habebantur tamen in ecclesia S'ti Andreae, quota et quanta tunc erat, tredecim per successionem carnalem quos *Keledeos* appellant, qui secundum suam aesti-

formed any ideas of aggrandizing their order, or of enriching the particular monasteries belonging to it.

So far were they from reckoning the connubial relation inconsistent with their character, that it seems to have been held in honour. For, even in the later period of their existence as a society, they, in some places at least, like the priests under the law, succeeded by inheritance. From the work last quoted, we learn that, in the church of St Andrews, the Culdees came into office hereditarily. In Ireland, also, where this body had great influence, there was a hereditary succession, in the bishopric of Armagh, for fifteen generations.* The Culdees at St Andrews, however, were not permitted, after they had entered into this monastic establishment, to keep their wives in their houses.† But, perhaps, this ordinance was not framed, till, through the increasing influence of that system of superstition which “forbids to marry,”

mationem, et hominum traditionem, magis quam secundum sanctorum statuta patrum vivebant. Sed et adhuc similiter vivunt, et quaedam habent communia pauciora sciz. et deteriora; quaedam vero propria plura sciz. et potiora; prout quisque ab amicis suis aliqua necessitudine ad se pertinentibus, viz. con sanguineis et affinibus, vel ab iis quorum animae charae sunt, quod est amicorum amici, sive aliis quibuslibet modis, poterit quis adipisci. Excerpt. Regist. Sti Andr. V. Pinkerton's Enquiry, i. Append. p. 462.

* Mos pessimus inoleverat quorundam diabolica ambitione potentum, sedem sanctam obtenturi haereditaria successione. Nec enim patiebantur episcopari, nisi qui essent de tribu et familia sua. Nec enim parum processerat execranda successio, decursis jam in hac malitia quasi generationibus quindecim, &c. Bernard. Vit. Malach. c. 7.

† Postquam Keledei effecti sunt, non licet eis habere uxores suas in domibus suis, sed nec alias; de quibus mala oriatur suspicio mulieris. Excerpt. ut sup.

they were in so far forced to yield to the tide of popular prejudice in favour of celibacy. This is the more probable, as Alexander Myln, prebendary and official of Dunkeld, says, that the Culdees, who, “after the usage of the eastern church, had wives, abstained from them, when it came to their turn to minister.”²

Although it appears that they observed a certain institute, yet, in the accounts given of them, we cannot overlook this remarkable distinction between them and those societies which are properly called monastic, that they were not associated expressly for the purpose of observing this rule. They might deem certain regulations necessary for the preservation of order: but their great design was, by communicating instruction, to train up others for the work of the ministry. Hence it has been justly observed, that they may more properly be viewed as colleges, in which the various branches of useful learning were taught, than as monasteries. These societies, therefore, were in fact the seminaries of the church, both in North Britain and in Ireland. As the presbyters ministered in holy things to those in their vicinity, they were still training up others, and sending forth missionaries, whenever they had a call, or any prospect of success.

² MS. V. Dalrymple's Collections, p. 244.