

It was the fame of this king which induced the celebrated Columba to come into Scotland. He is supposed to have been a native of Ireland, born about the year 521, and nearly allied to the royal families of both Ireland and Scotland. He received the very best education, having studied with the most learned men in both these countries, as well as in France and Italy. After having labored for some time in his native country, he determined on devoting himself to the spreading of the gospel among the Picts, among whom it had not yet made any very extensive progress, and came over to Scotland in the year 563, attended by twelve of his followers. On account of the sanctity of his character, as well as his own high rank, he seems to have had very great influence; for on occasion of disputes arising between the Scots and Picts, all matters were left to his decision, such was the respect in which he was held by both of their kings. He crowned Aidan, the Scottish king in 569. The account of the coronation, as given by Buchanan, is striking and curious, both as showing the influence of Columba, and containing counsels that might be most profitably attended to in the present day. "Aidan received the ensigns of royalty from Columba, for in such high authority was this holy man then held, that neither the prince nor the people would undertake any thing without his advice. When he had crowned the king, in a speech of considerable length he exhorted him to reign in equity, and admonished the people to a cheerful obedience. Then raising his voice, he solemnly charged the whole that they should remain steadfast in the pure worship of God, and thus all would go well with them; but if otherwise, they might prepare for a miserable issue." His labors among the northern Picts were attended with much success; for, although he was at first opposed by the Druids, such was his diligence, and that of his fellow-laborers, that in a short time the gospel was generally embraced among them.

Columba travelled very extensively over the country both among the Picts and the Scots, but his favorite residence was at Iona; and having witnessed the good effects of the system which had been there followed, he resolved upon introducing it in other parts of the country. Accordingly, in a number of other places, both among the Scots and the Picts, he induced several of the most learned and pious of the Culdees to settle together, in what may be called colleges. These were, however, very different from Popish monasteries; for besides the fact that the Culdees honored marriage, and did not refrain from it, the members of these associations so far from living in idleness or licentiousness, like the Romish monks in later ages, were diligently engaged in the active duties of life. These institutions were intended chiefly as seminaries of learning. The number associated together in each of them was productive of some decided advantages. The several departments of active Christian labor in which they were engaged afforded ample scope for the employment of every variety

and combination of talent which was found among them. While some of them were employed in preaching and performing pastoral duties through the neighboring country, others were engaged at home in superintending the education of youths intended for the ministry—in transcribing copies of the holy scriptures, and other literary occupations—and sometimes in the labours of the field or the garden. This plan afforded the members of the fraternity the opportunity of engaging in these several departments according as they were disposed and qualified. The education of the youth for the ministry was no slight business. Their course of training was very long. There is mention made in Smith's life of Columba of a person who imagined himself fit for ordination, being obliged to spend seven years longer at one of these institutions. And when we consider that Columba is said to have founded, or along with his colleagues to have been the means of founding, upwards of three hundred churches, and that, in due time, not only were all of these supplied with learned and able pastors, but that numbers went abroad as missionaries to other countries, we must be convinced that the labors performed in those Culdee colleges were arduous and important, and that they were a blessing to the land, and the whole church of God.

The education of this distinguished person had not been exclusively confined to those branches of study more immediately connected with his own profession. He was skilled in medicine, and his practice is said to have been so successful, that his cures were sometimes looked on as miraculous. This doubtless extended his usefulness; and at that time when the clergy were almost the only learned men in Britain, it is highly probable that knowledge of medicine was mainly confined to them. This circumstance may shed light on that celebrated passage, claimed by Romanists as authority for extreme unction, in the epistle of James, if it be considered as referring to any thing beyond the miraculous powers of healing enjoyed in the days of the Apostles. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

In order to furnish any thing like the most moderately competent supply of the holy scriptures, or even parts of them, the work of transcribing would be a most arduous undertaking, and would occupy no small amount of labor in the Culdee colleges. Columba and his associates are described as being frequently engaged in this work. On the very day of his death in extreme old age, he had been at work for some time on a copy of the psalter. Dr. Smith mentions a copy of the four gospels transcribed by him as existing in the last century, and it appears that there is at least one specimen of his writing which has come down to the present day. In Chambers' *Gazetteer* of Scotland, under the article *Icolmkill*, it is stated that Sir William Bethan, Ulster king of arms, and