

but the execution of it was prevented first by the invasion of Scotland by the Emperor Severus, and shortly afterwards by the death of the king.

For a considerable time after this, owing to the weakness or wickedness of some of the kings, and the wars and troubles in which others of them were involved, little or nothing was done to facilitate the further progress of the Christian faith, till about the year 277, when Crathilinth ascended the throne. He immediately took measures for expelling the Druids, which he found to be no easy task, in consequence of their influence and popularity, which they still, to a considerable extent, maintained; but, by great exertion and perseverance, he finally succeeded. He likewise destroyed almost every memorial of them.

The Christian religion gradually advanced from this time, and, under the fostering care of Crathilinth the knowledge of the true God and the Christian faith, prevailed pretty generally throughout the country.

In the beginning of the fourth century, the cause of Christianity in Scotland was very materially advanced, in consequence of the persecution carried on by the emperor Dioclesian, which drove multitudes, both of ministers and private Christians, particularly from the south of Britain, to seek for safety in Scotland. These persons, among whom there were many who were eminent both for their learning and their Christian excellence, were all kindly received by Crathilinth, and well provided for, that they might be induced to remain, and assist in establishing the Christian religion over all the kingdom.

The little information that has been handed down to us respecting the Culdees, the preachers of the Christian faith, of these times, in Scotland, presents them in an exceedingly interesting point of view. They were distinguished for their humility, and the simplicity of their manners—the purity, holiness, and piety of their lives—their seclusion and retirement from the world, and their indifference to its pomps, and vanities, and pursuits—their devotedness to the service of God, and their laborious efforts to instruct and benefit their fellow men in reference to their eternal well-being—and for the harmony they maintained among themselves. Their manner of worship was exceedingly simple, and their form of church government was decidedly Presbyterian. They preached the great essential doctrines of the cross, that make the soul wise unto salvation; and when the church, in other parts of Europe, sunk into error and corruption, they preserved and preached the gospel in all its purity for ages.

Some historians have supposed that the term *Culdee* was a contraction of *Cultores Dei*, worshippers of God; but it is more probable that it was indicative of their retirement and seclusion from the world; especially as many of the places where the Culdees lived, retain their name to this day, with the syllable *kil* prefixed; as, for instance, Kil Marnock, or the cell of Marnock; Kil Ninian, or the cell of Ninian.

It is originally a Gaelic word—*Culdich*—meaning a sequestered person. "There is, I am informed," says Dr. Jameison, in his history of the Culdees, "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 *Cuildeach*, as delighting, like the priests of heathenism, in retired situations. The reader may lay what stress he pleases on this tradition, but it deserves to be mentioned, that, according to a writer in *Statist. Acct.* vol. xiv. 199, the Druids undoubtedly possessed I, (Iona,) before the introduction of Christianity." It was, no doubt, on account of their retired habits they received this name, for Buchanan tells us that "they led a solitary life, with such a reputation for sanctity among all ranks, that, upon their decease, the cells they had inhabited were changed into churches; and from that custom it still continues that the ancient Scots call churches, cells." Their love for retirement was just what was to be expected from the circumstances in which they were placed. The first teachers of Christianity in Scotland had fled to save their lives from the persecutions which raged within the pale of the Roman empire, and in doing so, it is but natural to suppose, that, with the full knowledge before them that the people among whom they were going were heathens, they would seek for refuge in the most retired places. And being separated from their friends—in poverty—amongst strangers and heathens in all probability only less hostile to them than those from whom they had fled, it is not to be wondered at that they should cultivate retirement. We are not, however, to imagine, that, although they sought a refuge in sequestered retreats, they, on that account, led the idle life of hermits or recluses. On the contrary, their assembling congregations around them, and Christianity making the progress we find it did throughout the country, are facts that bear the most ample testimony to their zeal, activity, and diligence, prompted by the purest Christian benevolence. But, even after they had disseminated the truths of the gospel to a considerable extent, and congregations had begun to assemble themselves together on the first day of the week, it is to be remembered that, with the exception of the reign of Donald I., Christianity was for nearly two centuries after its introduction, uncountenanced and unprotected by the civil power, and that the Druid or heathen party, exasperated at the prospect of losing their power, and by the actual encroachments, which, through the influence of Christianity, were made on their privileges, would use every means to raise the suspicion, and to stir up the hatred of the heathen part of the population against the Christians. The infant congregations which had begun to assemble for worship and religious instruction, would, in such circumstances, feel that they were only obeying the dictates of common prudence when they held their meetings in the same sequestered places where individual

\* Macpherson's Dissertation on the Era of Ossian.