



# **The Gaelic New Testament leatherbound**

## **BIBLE**

**belonging to and which always accompanied**

## **The Reverend Doctor JOHN BETHUNE A.M.**

**Minister for Dornoch 1778 - 1816**

### **1778 Translated from Harris to Dornoch**

He found the Cathedral in disrepair with a ruined nave and the west aisle a "nauseous and unhealthful" place where the dead were buried within the church. The churchyard which had no wall made a part not only of the market place but also the common high road. He petitioned the Presbytery and the young Countess of Sutherland for funds. The roof of the nave was repaired, a wooden platform seven feet above the floor was erected in the aisle and pews provided for the worshipers and finally the kirkyard surrounded by a wall.

### **1793 He wrote an article on his parish.**

This gave details of the Cathedral building, the churchyard, the market and the road. He gave a short history of the monastries founded on the site which became Dornoch and a passage on the history of Bishop Gilbert. He continued by describing the everyday life of his parish, the poverty and crimes, the absence of trade or any manufacturing or means of earning, that potatoes were the staple diet and how peat was harvested for fuel. Thus he provided an insight to the life of those times.

### **1812 Doctor of Divinity.**

This honorary degree was conferred upon him by Aberdeen University for his ability and faithful ministry.

### **1816 Died aged 71**

His grave is at the south door of the cathedral and a plaque in his memory is on a wall of the south aisle.

**The Rev. Donald Sage**, the minister at Kildonan in the same era, describes him as:-

“an elegant classical scholar, a sound preacher, and one of the most finished gentlemen I ever remember to have seen. His manners were so easy and dignified that they would have graced the first peer of the realm, and his English sermons, which he always read, were among the neatest compositions I ever heard. In preaching in the Gaelic language he used very full notes, as his mind was of that highly intellectual character that it could not submit to, nor indeed be brought to work in, mere extempore or unconnected discussions. With all his other qualifications he had a delicate sense of propriety, and from anything, even the slightest word, come from what quarter it might, that touched upon this *terra sacra*, he shrunk back as from something positively loathsome.”

**Memorabilia Domestica** published in 1889.

### **Provenance.**

John Bethune married Elizabeth Campbell of Colgrain. Their son, Walter Angus, emigrated to Tasmania taking this bible with him. His nephew returned it to Major Colin Kinloch Campbell, Black Watch, living on Benbecula. He in turn passed it on to a fellow officer living at Davochfin, Dornoch, whose wife was Bridget Campbell. Bridget was an elder of the Cathedral until her death in 1995. Elizabeth was her Great Great Great Aunt.

